

# *Tom-Tom Overture*

*by*

*Shirley Graham*

*Edited and Engraved by David Kempers*  
*Women's Philharmonic Advocacy – [www.wophil.org](http://www.wophil.org)*





## *Tom-Tom Overture*

Shirley Graham's opera Tom-Tom was premiered in Cleveland in 1932. Although it was performed at a grand outdoor venue to an audience of what was estimated to be 25,000 people over two nights, the work did not stay in the public view, and as Graham's own interests moved to social activism, and she married W.E.B Du Bois in 1951, Tom-Tom was believed lost.

In 2011, Lucy Caplan (then a junior at Harvard University), found the work in Graham's archival materials at the Schlesinger Library at Harvard University. Dr. Lucy Caplan is now a member of the music faculty at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Tom-Tom grew out of a play that Graham wrote in 1929, and was described as "a drama of the development of Negro music from the first faint beatings of the African tom-tom to the most finished products of our trained musicians today."

David Kemper has orchestrated the Overture based on Graham's surviving short score, and it was performed by the Boston Landmarks Orchestra at the concert "Seen/Unseen: The Symphonic Legacy of Black American Women on July 26th, 2023." An arranger, composer and violinist, Kemper frequently collaborates with the Landmarks Orchestra and the Akron Symphony.



Women's Philharmonic Advocacy is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization,  
incorporated in Santa Rosa, CA, USA. Our EIN is 83-4274435.

WPA was founded in 2008 to work for equity for women composers and  
celebrate the legacy of The Women's Philharmonic (1980-2004)

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## *Instrumentation*

2 Flutes  
2 Oboes  
2 Clarinets in Bb  
2 Bassoons  
Contrabassoon

4 Horns in F  
2 Trumpets in Bb  
2 Trombones  
Bass Trombone  
Tuba

Timpani

**Percussion 1:** Bass Drum (or Tom-Tom), Crash Cymbal

**Percussion 2:** Snare Drum

**Percussion 3:** Tom-Toms

Harp

Piano

Strings

*Duration ca. 5 minutes*



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Allegretto ♩=104 rit. Andante ♩=88

Flutes 1, 2  
Oboes 1, 2  
Clarinets 1, 2 in B♭  
Bassoons 1, 2  
Contrabassoon  
Horns 1, 3 in F  
Horns 2, 4 in F  
Trumpets 1, 2 in B♭  
Trombones 1, 2  
Tuba  
Timpani  
Percussion  
Snare Drum  
Tom-toms  
Harp  
Piano  
Violin 1  
Violin 2  
Viola  
Violoncello  
Contrabass

*mp* *mf* *f* *pizz.*

a2

Bass drum (or toms)

The score is for a full orchestra and includes the following parts: Flutes 1, 2; Oboes 1, 2; Clarinets 1, 2 in B♭; Bassoons 1, 2; Contrabassoon; Horns 1, 3 in F; Horns 2, 4 in F; Trumpets 1, 2 in B♭; Trombones 1, 2; Tuba; Timpani; Percussion; Snare Drum; Tom-toms; Harp; Piano; Violin 1; Violin 2; Viola; Violoncello; and Contrabass. The piece is in 4/4 time, with a key signature of two sharps (D major). It begins with an Allegretto tempo of 104 beats per minute, followed by a ritardando and then an Andante tempo of 88 beats per minute. The score features various dynamics including *mp* (mezzo-piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), and *f* (forte). The percussion section includes a bass drum (or toms), snare drum, and tom-toms. The woodwind and brass sections have specific markings such as 'a2' and '8'. The string section includes a piano part with a *pizz.* (pizzicato) marking. The harp part is marked *f* in the later sections.



