N. CLARK SMITH AND MILESTONES OF A RACE

By

William E. McKemy

An Abstract
of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
In the Department of Music
University of Central Missouri

April, 2017
ABSTRACT

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N. Clark Smith (1866-1935) was a prominent music educator, composer, bandleader, and musician. First influenced by the careful and pragmatic conservatism of Tuskegee Institute founder Booker T. Washington, Smith later came to embrace the progressive ideals of the Harlem Renaissance. In his work as a composer and arranger, Smith explored in music the same issues that other African American leaders confronted in their dedication to the black community. Many of his compositions address the African diaspora, carrying his message of Afrocentrism not only to the black community but also to the heights of the white musical establishment. Drawing on archival sources at the Black Archives of Mid-America, this thesis analyzes a previously unknown overture Smith composed for Ada Crogman Franklin’s *Milestones: A Pageant of Negro Progress* and contextualizes this music in light of the pageant’s goals as well as Smith’s biography.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In an old West frontier boomtown after the Civil War, N. Clark Smith, one of the most mythologized and least clearly understood figures of early Kansas City jazz, was born. Smith’s story is obscured by the marginalized black America of Reconstruction, the Jim Crow South, and a North that held economic and social opportunities absent in the South. His generation would see the promise of equality in emancipation, evidenced by the election of the first black senator and members of congress in 1870. They would also see the failure of Reconstruction and innumerable setbacks and dreams deferred. Within this context, Smith’s reputation as a stern and commanding presence in the lives of his students, including an anecdotal story that he never appeared in less than full military dress, has persisted among the jazz community of Kansas City.

Smith’s own education was shaped by many prominent black figures in American history. He was first influenced by the careful and pragmatic conservatism of Tuskegee Institute founder Booker T. Washington and later came to embrace the progressive ideals of the Harlem Renaissance. In his work as a composer and arranger, Smith explored in music the same issues that these men and others confronted in their dedication to the black community. Many of his compositions address the African diaspora, carrying his message of Afrocentrism not only to the black community but also to the heights of the white musical establishment.

This thesis examines one of Smith’s works, an overture composed in 1924 for Ada Crogman Franklin’s Milestones of a Race: A Pageant of Negro Progress. This piece has not been examined or otherwise noted in earlier scholarly examinations of Smith and his compositional output. A piano score of the overture along with parts for violin and bassoon were rediscovered by historian Michael Sweeney in 2013 within the Ada Crogman Franklin Collection at the Black
Archives of Mid-America in Kansas City, Missouri. This collection preserves numerous personal documents spanning her lifetime, but is particularly rich in documents relating to *Milestones*, including early drafts, published scripts, production notes, numerous event programs, newspaper clippings, and photographs. Using these resources, I place the overture within the context of Crogman Franklin’s pageant, detailing how Smith’s music relates to the story and educational goals of *Milestones*. In addition, I offer musical and cultural analyses of Smith’s overture. While earlier research on Smith’s music has focused on establishing a complete catalog and a chronology of his output, I examine how musical exoticsisms in the early twentieth-century shaped Smith’s musical reimagining of ancient Egypt.

This thesis begins with a brief biography of N. Clark Smith that places his life and career within the context of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century musical, cultural, and African American social histories. This biography relies on recent research on Smith by Peter Lefferts and seeks to clarify many inaccuracies and distortions found in newspapers of Smith’s time and their subsequent propagation in later academic sources. The creation and evolution of Ada Crogman Franklin’s pageant, *Milestones: A Pageant of Negro Progress*, is examined in the second chapter. I discuss the pageant’s agenda and possible interpretations by black and white audiences. The third chapter contains an analysis of Smith’s overture that examines the work within cultural currents of ragtime and the fascination with exotic sounds and images present in the popular culture of early twentieth-century America.

Overall, my research demonstrates Smith’s deep engagement in building community music and arts infrastructure in black America. He found a like-mind in Crogman Franklin. His work with her on *Milestones* propelled him further on his course toward embracing black pride.

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and a more emphatic and personal Afrocentrism. Addressing the musical and cultural meaning of his overture provides a more complete understanding of his motives, aspirations, and growth as an exemplar within American society.
CHAPTER 2
BIOGRAPHY OF N. CLARK SMITH

Nora Clark Smith (1866-1935) was an African American musician, publisher, composer, music educator, and community organizer. Although he is remembered today primarily for his students’ achievements in early Kansas City jazz, Smith’s own musical experience is rich with connections to nineteenth and twentieth-century popular culture. He was involved as a musician, ensemble leader, arranger, and composer of Negro spirituals. Excepting the blues, he was involved in composing and performing all the important nineteenth-century pre-jazz musical styles, including ragtime, spirituals, minstrelsy, and brass band music.

Little is known about his early history and much of what has been reported about Smith, both in newspapers of his day and in secondary sources, has been called into question by Marian Ohman, Linda Pohly, and Peter Lefferts. Recent improvements in digital access to historic newspapers and genealogical data now allow us to deconstruct the numerous myths created by both newspaper accounts and by Smith himself. For example, one such fabrication by Smith is commemorated in a document titled, *Memorie*, in which he tells the story of a visit Frederick Douglass made to his boyhood home in Leavenworth, Kansas:

Frederick Douglass was a personal friend of our family, especially my father Quarter master [sic] Sergeant at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, who always met Mr. Douglass at the R.R. station and took him to stay at our home 413 Dakota St.

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2 Lefferts, A Chronology and Itinerary of the Career of N. Clark Smith, 3.
Well I do remember the occasion of his last visit a lecture at Lange’s Hall in the town, 1887. Mr. Douglass was seated at our old organ playing what I had never heard before, but which I learned was an old spiritual, ‘Steal Away to Jesus.’

Father had just purchased a violin for my Christmas present and I asked permission to play with Mr. Douglass, who - by the way - was a splendid performer on the violin also. He tuned my little old violin to the organ, then we both played the old tune over and over until father and mother both joined in singing in this, my first concert engagement at the age of 8 years.

So it is natural that I should pen this tribute to the Honorable Frederick Douglass on hearing of his death February 20, 1895 at Washington D.C.⁴

Smith’s Memorie account takes place in 1887, when according to census data, he was twenty-one years old. According to the timeline asserted by Smith, however, he would have been born in 1879 if he were eight years of age at the time of Douglass’ visit. Using his timeline, he composed his Frederick Douglass Funeral March at the age of sixteen. In addition, Douglass, an individual with a well-researched chronology, was travelling abroad in England, Ireland, France, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, and Egypt in 1887.⁵ Douglass was the most famous African American of his day, perhaps the most well-known black man who had ever lived in America. It is inconceivable that Douglass’ visit to Leavenworth, Kansas, at this time would occur without

⁴ N. Clark Smith, Memorie, Major N. Clark Smith Collection, Box 1, Folder 2, LaBudde Special Collections, University of Missouri, Kansas City Library.
⁵ Frederick Douglass and Henry Louis Gates, Autobiographies (New York: Random House Publisher Services, 1994), 1071.
remark in the press. This is one of many examples where Smith grows younger with the passing of time and where he misrepresents his interactions with famous black Americans.⁶

Despite these kinds of exaggerations, historian Peter Lefferts has confirmed several facts of Smith’s biography. N. Clark Smith was born in Leavenworth, Kansas, to Dan and Maggie Smith on July 31, 1866.⁷ His father was a regimental trumpet player in the African American 24th Infantry.⁸ N. Clark was the oldest of the four Smith children. His siblings were Hezekiah (b. 1869), Lavaria (b. 1872), and Barlett (b. 1879).⁹ In 1880, when N. Clark Smith was fourteen years old, he was listed in the federal census as a printer.¹⁰ Smith was involved in one way or another in the publishing business throughout his entire adult life.

It is assumed that Smith received much of his early education in music from his father, but he also may have interacted with the German bandmaster Carl S. Gung’l during his own brief service in the 24th Infantry. Gung’l was a mentor to numerous black army musicians during his lengthy career.¹¹ For about six months in 1880 and 1881, Smith was enlisted in the U.S. Army and served at Fort Sill, Indian Territory.¹² Gung’l was stationed at Fort Sill and other camps in Indian Territory from 1880 to 1888 and may have additionally travelled to Fort Leavenworth during this period.¹³

Smith lived in Leavenworth for the remainder of the 1880s working in the publishing business; his brief tenure with the Army, due to poor vision, did not stop him from working in publishing and organizing musical groups at home. In 1888, he founded, edited, and staffed The

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⁶ Lefferts, A Chronology and Itinerary of the Career of N. Clark Smith, 6.
⁷ Ibid., 4. Smith used only his first initial and never his first name throughout his career.
⁸ Lyle-Smith, "Nathaniel Clark Smith (1877-1934)," 4.
⁹ Lefferts, A Chronology and Itinerary of the Career of N. Clark Smith, 5.
¹⁰ Ibid.
¹¹ Peter Lefferts, US Army Black Regimental Bands and the Appointments of Their First Black Bandmasters (University of Nebraska, Lincoln Digital Commons, 2013), 11.
¹² Fort Sill is located in present-day Oklahoma.
¹³ Lefferts, A Chronology and Itinerary of the Career of N. Clark Smith, 5-6.
Advocate}, Leavenworth’s African American newspaper. He also assumed the leadership of the Harrison and Morton Brass Band.\textsuperscript{14} The following year Smith sold his interest in the \textit{The Advocate}, presumably to W.B. Townsend, who assumed the editorship in 1889. Smith then started the \textit{Afro-American Letter} in March 1890. The \textit{Afro-American Letter} ceased operations after just a few weeks. \textit{The Advocate} was also abandoned by Townsend in 1891.\textsuperscript{15}

Smith married Laura Alice Lawson (1874-1945) on July 31, 1889, his twenty-third birthday. Laura was fourteen years old.\textsuperscript{16} In mid-1890, Smith relocated to Columbia, Missouri, for one year. His occupation is not precisely known, but by July 1891, Smith led the Blind Boone Colored Band for ten months in performances of the Blind Boone Concert Company.\textsuperscript{17} In the fall of 1891, Smith accepted his first position as a school music educator at Wilberforce School in Gallatin, Missouri. He remained in Gallatin for two academic years. While there, Smith also conducted Gallatin’s Ward Chapel A.M.E. Church Choir and the Gallatin Colored Cornet Band.\textsuperscript{18} It is possible that his family remained in Columbia while Smith taught in Gallatin or that they at least spent summers in Columbia, given that newspaper accounts from this time period state Smith is “of Columbia” and was teaching in Gallatin.\textsuperscript{19} In October of 1892, the only child of N. Clark and Laura Smith was born in Columbia, a daughter named Anna Lauretta Smith.\textsuperscript{20}

The family moved to Wichita, Kansas, for about two and a half years between 1893 through 1895. Smith established his first Pickaninny band and led numerous community music

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{18} Abbot and Seroff, \textit{Out of Sight}, 225.
\textsuperscript{19} Lefferts, \textit{A Chronology and Itinerary of the Career of N. Clark Smith}, 13.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
groups. His first compositions also date from this time, most notable among them the *Frederick Douglass Funeral March*. In December of 1895, Smith accepted the position of Music Director at Western University in Quindaro, Kansas, now Kansas City, Kansas. His duties included band, strings, and Commandant of the Junior ROTC program. During this time, Smith worked for the Hoffman Music House in addition to his work at Western. He continued to lead his Pickaninny band, bringing students from Wichita with him. The most notable member of these early Pickaninny bands was Wilbur Sweatman, an important early jazz clarinetist. Sweatman’s recordings from 1918-1919 are among the first jazz recordings made by African Americans.

Smith’s Pickaninny Band toured the world in 1899 and 1900 as a part of M.B. Curtis’s All-Star Afro-American Minstrels. Most of the performers for the tour were hired by Ernest Hogan, a wealthy and successful songwriter and veteran of minstrel shows and the black vaudeville circuit. Smith’s sixteen-piece band for the tour included numerous Western University students and his brother-in-law Will Lawson. The tour expected to make stops in the South Pacific, Australia, New Zealand, South America, South Africa, and the 1900 Paris Exposition. In mid-1899, the company boarded the steamer Warimoo in Seattle and made stops in Hawaii, Australia and New Zealand with the rest of the itinerary discarded. This abbreviated tour lasted for eighteen months.

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21 Ibid., 15, and Abbott and Seroff, *Out of Sight*, 404-405. A pickaninny band is a youth band. The term is a racial slur derived from the Portuguese pequeninho. It entered the American vernacular in the mid-seventeenth century from West Indian Creole patois.

22 N. Clark Smith, *Frederick Douglass Funeral March by N. Clarke Smith*, Library of Congress, 1895, [https://www.loc.gov/item/scsm000165/](https://www.loc.gov/item/scsm000165/).


25 The first recordings of jazz were made by white Original Dixieland Jazz Band in 1917.


27 This is the same Warimoo that Mark Twain took on his Pacific travels.

After the tour the Smith family relocated to Chicago from 1901 to 1907. The Lyon and Healy Company reportedly employed Smith and helped him further his studies at the Chicago Musical College.\textsuperscript{29} The Chicago Musical College was by all accounts a white institution, but it is possible that Smith received instruction from faculty there: Smith recounts study with Felix Borowsky in composition and orchestration and John B. Miller in voice. From this point onward, his signature on manuscripts usually includes “Bac. Mus., Chicago Musical College.”

In January 1904, Smith enlisted in the Eighth Illinois Regiment for three years. He assumed the directorship of the band and was charged with the group’s reorganization.\textsuperscript{30} Around the same time, he also engaged in a flurry of pursuits to build black community music infrastructure. He directed church choirs and other ensembles at Quinn Chapel A.M.E. and Bethel A.M.E. In 1902 he led the Famous Ladies Mandolin Club and in 1903 established his first orchestra at Bethel A.M.E., among numerous other ensembles.\textsuperscript{31} In terms of publishing, he formed the Smith Jubilee Music Company with J.Berni Barbour, which he touted as the world’s first black-owned music publishing house. With Barbour, he co-wrote the song, \textit{Baby, I’m Learning to Love You}, for the Sisters Merideth.\textsuperscript{32} In 1905 Smith began giving lectures on the origin of Negro melody.\textsuperscript{33}

Smith taught at the Tuskegee Institute from 1907 until 1913. The composition of his \textit{Tuskegee March Song} dates from 1903 and may have been an attempt to secure a position teaching at the Tuskegee Institute. If this was Smith’s intention, he was successful, accepting a position at Tuskegee in 1907, where he would lead musical ensembles and direct the JROTC program until 1913. By the end of Smith’s tenure at Tuskegee, he orchestrated many successful

\textsuperscript{29} Ohman, “Major N. Clark Smith in Chicago,” 5.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Chicago Broad Ax}, December 29, 1906.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Indianapolis Freeman}, January 2, 1904.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{New Age} (Portland, Oregon), July 14, 1906.
tours with the Tuskegee Institute Band and Glee Club, including a tour for the entire summer of 1913 that travelled to over thirty states.

The demands of intense touring, along with disagreements with Booker T. Washington over repertoire and Smith’s self-promotion in the press, led to his mental and physical exhaustion and departure from Tuskegee. Smith returned with his family to Wichita to convalesce. During his Tuskegee years, Smith composed and published numerous vocal songs, marches, waltzes, and collections of his arrangements of Negro spirituals and jubilee songs. He also maintained contacts in Wichita and purchased a business block described as “easily worth $10,000” in 1911 dollars.

In 1914, Smith returned to Western University as Commandant for two years and in 1916 began the first of three high profile teaching positions at African American high schools. He first accepted a position at Kansas City’s Lincoln High School, where former Tuskegee colleague J.R.E. Lee was Principal. He stayed at Lincoln until 1922. During this time, his students included Herman “Woody” Walder, Harlan Leonard, Walter Page, Thamon Hayes, Julia Lee, and a considerable number of the first wave of Kansas City jazz musicians. Smith maintained his ambitious compositional pace during this second Kansas City period. The first versions of his larger scale works *Negro Folk Song Suite*, *The Crucifixion*, and *Prayer From the Heart of Emancipation* date from this era.

In the early 1920s, Smith set his eyes on Chicago. Although his role was obscured, he likely assisted former student Pauline James Lee in establishing the Chicago University of Music.

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34 Personal correspondence between Smith and Washington document their many differences of opinion. Washington thought the band should focus on performing spirituals exclusively. Smith favored programs that included transcriptions of European concert music and military marches.
36 Ibid., 43.
and secured the school’s location at 3672 Michigan Avenue, the residence of Ernestine Schumann-Heink (1861-1935). Smith left Lincoln High School at the conclusion of the 1921-1922 academic year.

After a few years of frequent travel to Chicago, Smith made his interest in Chicago more permanent, relocating with his family following his resignation from Lincoln High School. He began teaching at the Chicago University of Music for their 1922 summer session. The Pullman Car Company asked Smith to organize singing groups from the ranks of the Pullman porters for the purpose of entertaining passengers and performing for company events. He began touring Pullman hub cities throughout the country. In 1923, Robert S. Abbott, founder and publisher of the Chicago Defender, asked Smith to create a Newsboys Band. This band would serve the young African American men who sold the Defender on street corners. The group of about seventy-five pieces operated from at least 1923 to 1925, after which Smith began teaching at Chicago’s Wendell Phillips High School. In 1924, during this period in Chicago, pageant writer and director Ada Crogman likely contacted Smith about composing music for her pageant, Milestones: A Pageant of Negro Progress.

Smith continued to teach at Wendell Phillips High School until 1931, when he was recruited by the St. Louis County Board of Education to teach at Sumner High School in St. Louis. Smith’s time in St. Louis would bring many high points. His Negro Folk Song Suite was performed by the St. Louis Symphony under the direction of Vladimir Golchman in January of

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39 Ibid., 45. Schumann-Heink, a contralto, created the role of Klytaemnestra in Strauss’s Elektra among numerous other prolific accomplishments.
40 New York Age, May 6, 1922.
41 Lefferts, A Chronology and Itinerary of the Career of N. Clark Smith, 52-53.
42 Ibid., 53.
43 Smith’s unpublished manuscript score for Milestones of a Race is dated 1924, but Crogman published two versions of a script in 1925 that contain references to Smith’s music.
1933. He also composed his *Negro Choral Symphony* in 1933. Smith retired to Kansas City after he resigned from Sumner High School in mid-1935.\(^4\)⁴⁴

Months following his retirement, Smith fell ill in Kansas City after a visit to Chicago to attend the Joe Louis and King Levinsky fight that took place on August 8, 1935. Newspaper accounts differ on the precise timing of events, but all report that he suffered a stroke later in August 1935. Smith was ill for several weeks and passed away at his home, 2323 Tracy Avenue, on October 8, 1935.\(^5\)⁴⁵ News of Smith’s death spread rapidly. The *Kansas City Call* and other black newspapers throughout the country published extensive obituaries and serialized accounts of his accomplishments. Smith’s legacy has been largely based on his famous former students; however, his influence is impossible to measure, having touched thousands upon thousands of lives over the course of six decades in his dedication to the music education infrastructure of black America.

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\(^{45}\) Ibid.
In the early twentieth century, pageants were popular in mainstream American culture. The manifestation and re-imagining of Classical Greek culture in pageants represented a path to truth and beauty that seemed absent in modern industrial culture. The opportunity for large-scale involvement in community drama carried with it a mechanism for growing and striving communities to speak collectively about political and social issues.

Pageant proponents thought the format, which was a mix of theatrical elements ranging from solo, small group, and chorus songs, audience sing-along numbers, solo and group dance routines, skits, historical re-enactment, poetic oratory, and narration, was ideal for creating inclusive and engaged demonstrations of civic pride. The pageant only needed to be held together by some common theme and therefore could rely on very broad and inclusive approaches to production. Pageant scholar Mary Simonson further argues that “by depicting a unified community capable of triumph over hardships and struggles...pageants generated a common memory and faith in one’s neighbors.”

Pageants were an appealing format for African Americans like Ada Crogman, who were interested in large-scale, community-based theatrical works. Ada Crogman (1886-1983) was the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. William H. Crogman. Her father was a professor of Latin and Greek and later president of Clark University of Atlanta. Crogman graduated from Clark at an early age and continued her studies in drama at Boston’s Emerson College. After completing her studies at Emerson, she took a position with National Community Service, Inc., a part of the National

47 Ibid., 51.
Playground and Recreation Association in New York City. Crogman also taught at Alabama State College and Tennessee State University, although the chronology of her teaching years is unclear. While working for the National Community Service, Inc. of New York in 1923, Crogman was assigned to develop a community theater performance in Hamilton, Ohio. At the time of this assignment, the citizens of Hamilton were planning an Emancipation Day celebration. The director of the local community center, Horace L. Preston, asked Crogman to assemble some tableaux and pantomimes for the occasion.

Crogman created a pageant in six episodes named *Unshackled* with what she considered a small cast of one hundred people. She would later expand this production into nine episodes and change the name to *Milestones: A Pageant of Negro Progress*, also known as *Milestones of a Race*. Crogman cited the gruesome imagery of *Unshackled* as the impetus for the name change. Her later productions of *Milestones* would involve three hundred or more participants. Ada Crogman Franklin continued directing community performances of *Milestones* all across America for the duration of the 1920s.

The nine episodes in the *Milestones* production tell a story that depicts the height of black civilization in ancient Egypt, an idyllic vision of pre-colonial African village life, the horrors of slavery, and modern Christian redemption and progress of the Negro race in America. The 1925 *Director’s Guide* for *Milestones* titles the episodes as follows:

I. Egyptian Court

II. Idol Worship

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50 The pageant’s title is listed in a variety of ways in event programs and in the press.
III. African Village
IV. Slave Market
V. In the Cotton Fields
VI. Evening Worship
VII. American Stars (a Tribute to Col. Charles Young)
VIII. Flanders Field
IX. Progress

The Egyptian court scenes and African village imagery in *Milestones* created a new awareness of black history for many pageant participants. George E. Haynes of the National Commission for Church and Race Relations notes that *Milestones* was “a revelation to the colored people themselves, few of whom know the grandeur of their past in Africa.” Haynes also noted that “the first episodes showing African civilization and Negro achievement in ancient times are instructive contrasts to the tragedy of slavery and struggle back toward modern freedom.”

Crogman’s extensive notes for the fifteen-minute Episode One detail the pageant’s set as a “throne up stage center with elevated platforms running out on either side of the throne.” The set, in red floodlights, was to be dressed with oriental rugs, orange, red and green calico pillows, and animal skins. The main characters in this episode were a Herald in a long flowing robe of purple sateen; the Queen, holding a scepter, in a red robe trimmed in gold paper with a gold paper crown and elaborate beaded ear and breast ornaments; and Moses with flowing brown

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53 Ibid., 3.
54 Ibid., 4.
55 Ibid., 3.
56 Ibid.
These central characters are accompanied by sixteen torch bearers, sixteen urn bearers, sixteen incense bearers, ten harpists, the Queen’s attendants, a solo dancer and eight group dancers.

The scene opened with the Herald reading a text that mentions the Queen sending forth Moses to ask the king of Egypt to release his people. After a lengthy proccessional and dance numbers, the action centered around the assembled cast’s shock when a slave woman is brought into the court. The Queen then sends her attendants out. They return with Moses and the Queen sings to him Harry Burleigh’s arrangement of Go Down, Moses with the chorus of the Egyptian court, comprised entirely of females, joining on the refrain, “let my people go.” This scene contains complicated imagery that contradicts the traditional biblical reading of this story from Exodus. The Queen of the slaving empire asks Moses to “let my people go,” not the other way around. She is sending him to the King, yet the king is absent, as are any other male characters or cast members. Moses may represent the patriarchy of the Western Culture that institutionalized slavery in the Americas. The audience is asked to see Ancient Egyptian culture as representative of past black glory and the possibility of future aspirations, yet it was a culture that practiced slavery and is represented that way in Milestones. The use of Burleigh’s Go Down Moses, rather than exotic or historic sounding music here is a way for Crogman to weave the work of a prominent, well-educated black man into her narrative of the ancient past.

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57 Ada Crogman, Director’s Guide for the Producing of Milestones: A Pageant of Negro Progress, 1925, 4-5.
Plate 1. *Milestones: A Pageant of Negro Progress*, Episode One, Egypt. Photo used by permission of the Black Archives of Mid-America.
The second episode, *Idol Worship*, listed in subsequent event programs as *Worship of the Crocodile by the Africans*, sets up one of the fundamental arguments of the pageant: that Africans and therefore African Americans were in need of Christian salvation.\(^{58}\) This scene was set against a tropical backdrop with a green floodlight. A stuffed crocodile sat in a pond in the center of the stage. As the scene began, the Herald intoned,

Deep in gloomy grove and forest
In the long, long ago,
Frenzied men and women worshipped,
The least of all God’s brutes below.

In the weird and gloomy forest
To the sound of beating tom toms,
Come the stealthy men and women
To appease their angry god.\(^{59}\)

The costumes for this scene were made of brown burlap sacks with a low neck and no sleeves. To the sound of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s *Bamboula*, twenty female dancers performed an elaborate, twenty-minute dance to the crocodile then fell to the ground in submission. In the script, Crogman reminds us in this “typical scene” that idols were worshipped in ancient Africa and that the crocodile was a deity to whom they paid special homage.\(^{60}\) The men mentioned by

\(^{58}\) Event program from Chicago, October 17, 1924, performance of “Milestone’s Negro Historical Pageant,” Ada Crogman Franklin Collection, Black Archives of Mid-America, Kansas City.


\(^{60}\) Ibid., 10.
the Herald are stealthy enough that none appear in the scene. The use of music by Coleridge-Taylor, a creole of Sierra Leonean and British ancestry, is more evidence of Crogman tying the work of successful contemporary black composers to the African past.

Episode Three was set in a typical African village and conveys the “simple happiness and contentment . . . in the daily routine of native life.”\(^{61}\) This twenty-minute episode had a cast of fifty people. The stage was set with three seven-foot tall thatched huts, two downstage at the extreme right and left sides of the stage, the remaining hut upstage center. On each side of the center hut were two eight-foot tall tripods made out of tree limbs with a large iron pot suspended from each with a fire underneath. In the glow of morning light, women entered one by one, each bearing wood for the fire and ingredients for the cook pot. The village chief, clad in animal skin and silver bracelets and anklets, arrived and inspected the proceedings. He then took a seat center stage. Crogman describes the following action:

> At this juncture the Spanish slave traders enter the village. All the natives in astonishment slowly withdraw. The Spaniards offer trinkets attracting the women. The native men interfere by rushing with extended arms between their women and the Spaniards. The Spaniards shoot immediately, causing all the villagers to attempt to escape. A struggle ensues, the chief is shot, others are captured, tied and branded and as they are driven away the curtain falls.\(^ {62}\)

This image of an idyllic African village shattered by the slave trade overlooks the existence of slavery in West African cultures, although slavery in ancient Egypt was previously represented.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 11.
\(^{62}\) Crogman, Director’s Guide, 12.

Photo used by permission of the Black Archives of Mid-America.
The escalation and systemization of the slave trade as practiced by Western European capitalists was, however, a severe and grotesque vision beyond what was known in Africa, which Crogman’s direction portrays.

The middle episodes were set in the South during slavery. The costumes, lighting and scenery were much more similar from scene to scene within this grouping of episodes. The largest number of actors represented slaves while other actors, made up to appear white, were cast in the roles of overseers, bidders, and the auctioneer. The *Slave Market* shows what Crogman calls “pathetic scenes from the block,” as families are broken apart and separated at auction. *In the Cotton Fields* depicts an old man collapsing from exhaustion, then being whipped by an overseer. A profusion of Negro spirituals is a common element of these middle episodes and is most prominent in the *Evening Worship* episode.

In *Evening Worship*, the slaves gathered to worship in secret after an exhausting day of forced labor. The minister sat on a stump stage center; near him is a large overturned iron pot that represents the slaves’ belief that it deadens the sound of their devotional gathering. The music for this scene includes orchestral arrangements of spirituals *Couldn’t Hear Nobody Pray* and *Steal Away to Jesus*, solo with chorus versions of *Old Time Religion*, *Bye and Bye When the Mornin’ Comes*, *Old Black Joe*, *I’m a Rolling*, *I Know the Lord Has Laid His Hands on Me*, *I Wish I Had Died in Egypt Land*, and *Free at Last*, as well as choral reprises of *Couldn’t Hear Nobody Pray* and *Steal Away*. Crogman describes her understanding of the slave’s Christian experience:

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63 Ibid., 15.
We last showed the Negro superstitious in religion. He has now come under the influence of Christianity. This scene of evening worship is most spiritual, describing how the slaves, after the long working day, were so eager for prayer and song, that they stole away in the night to worship God. Here they sing a group of their spirituals, songs that have won their way into the heart of the world. No anger, no resentment, just simple faith, in harmonies so grand that they have been called America’s only real music.\textsuperscript{65}

\textit{Evening Worship} ends with the appearance and pantomime performance of Abraham Lincoln ushering in a new era of freedom, in a seeming answer to the slave’s prayers.\textsuperscript{66} If the pageant’s depiction of Spanish slavers raiding a peaceful African village and the subsequent trauma of the \textit{Slave Market} are divine punishment for the sin of idolatry, here the captive slaves have found their true redemption in Christianity.

The final episodes of \textit{Milestones} enumerate many modern black achievements and contributions to contemporary American society with dramatic illustration. Most prominent among these, sacrifices made by black soldiers who fought in World War I. The pageant ends with the cast assembled around six large adjoined ascending pedestals. The entire pedestal assembly is labeled “Milestones” with individual pedestals labelled in ascending order Religion, Industry, Finance, Education, Power, and Service on the top step. The curtain falls to the singing of the first and third verses of the Negro national anthem, \textit{Lift Every Voice and Sing} by James Wheldon Johnson.\textsuperscript{67} With the exception of Johnson’s anthem and \textit{Dirge for a Soldier} by Gerald Tyler, the final three episodes of \textit{Milestones} feature works by European composers Frederic

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 13. It is interesting to note the parallels between this statement and similar statements about the place of jazz as an American music.
\textsuperscript{67} Crogman Franklin, \textit{Milestones}, 20.
Chopin and Anton Rubenstein and by white Americans John Philip Sousa and Samuel Ward. For Crogman, these choices mirror the patriotic and nationalistic elements of many other pageants and serve to bring *Milestones*’ ending to more “universal” territory.

It was hoped that *Milestones* would be a powerful and informative if not transformative experience for the white audience members who attended. Ada Crogman was deeply interested in cultivating white engagement and inter-racial goodwill.\(^{68}\) An advertisement for *Milestones* from *The Catholic Advance* stated,

> The Negroes of Wichita are all going to see this pageant. The question is: Will the white people of the city realize in time what a wonderful opportunity this pageant affords them. Competent white critics have said that this is the most artistic performance of its sort ever staged in Wichita. However, it is not art for art’s sake; it is art for the sake of Christian good will.\(^{69}\)

There was some evidence that the pageant had been effective elsewhere. George Haynes noted the “educational effect upon public opinion” the pageant had had in metropolitan locations where large numbers of both races were in daily contact. He stated, “I have seen the pageant hold thousands of white people in rapt attention...as they witnessed the remarkable portraiture of Negro life by amateurs, many of whom they knew to be ordinary Negro working people of their community.”\(^{70}\)

It is unclear precisely what myths and stereotypes were dispelled by *Milestones*, but Crogman noted that requests for *Milestones* on behalf of inter-racial committees were so

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\(^{68}\) Ibid., 5-6, 25-31.  
\(^{69}\) *The Catholic Advance* (Wichita, KS), February 28, 1925.  
\(^{70}\) Crogman Franklin, *Milestones*, 3.
numerous that she was not able to fill them all. White audiences likely gained awareness of an African American point of view of these events, the precise context of which had been sanitized in mainstream American culture in a multitude of ways. Or as George Haynes writes,

Milestones worthily expresses in dramatic terms the torturous story of the American Negro in his relations with his white neighbors in America over a period of more than three hundred years, since he first came - not by his own invitation - to supply labor needed to hew American farms, towns and cities out of the forests and waste places of this continent.

In *Milestones*, there is a quality of politically progressive Afrocentrism as well as a very prominent element of Booker T. Washington conservatism. The pageant carefully balances pride in the heights of black history against the shame of slavery. Booker T. Washington’s influence on Crogman might be found in a work by early twentieth century African American educator Helen A. Whiting, who wrote *A Pageant after Up From Slavery*, adapted from Washington’s autobiography *Up From Slavery* in 1912. A script of this earlier pageant is a part of the Ada Crogman Franklin collection at the Black Archives of Mid-America. It tells of covert black education during slavery and also conveys the essence of Washington’s philosophy that envisions Negro advancement through the study and application of industrial and other trade skills. Calls for full citizenship and equality are supported by good acts rather than simply claimed as an American right. *Milestones*’ conception during the height of the Harlem

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71 Ibid., 5.
Renaissance heralded by Alain Locke in 1925 shapes these contradictory impulses, as Crogman was likely aware of ideological shifts that were under way. She was certainly frank and direct in dealing with images of slavery in *Milestones*.

*A Pageant after Up From Slavery* premiered at the Tuskegee Institute in the spring of 1912 during the time N. Clark Smith served as bandmaster and musical director of the school. It is very likely that Smith was involved in or at least aware of this pageant. *Milestones*, then, would have been familiar in terms of its aesthetic and social goals as well as its theatrical format. The first performance of *Milestones* in which Smith was involved contained numerous earlier compositions of his that were recycled for the Chicago performance in October 17, 1924. Smith’s only new compositional contribution to *Milestones* was his *Overture to Milestones of a Race, Egypt*. Smith likely premiered his *Overture* on October 17, as the *Overture* is absent from earlier programs and always included in later programs.  

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75 Crogman also attributed the composition of numerous traditional spirituals to Smith and also to Harry.T. Burleigh.
Beyond being an expression of African American social history, *Milestones: a Pageant of Negro Progress* also has a place within the broader context of exoticism that was sweeping through the popular culture of North America and Europe during the 1920s. Exoticism, as represented in popular films like *The Sheik* starring Rudolph Valentino, captured the public’s fascination with Middle Eastern and Far Eastern or Asian images. The public happily consumed representations of mysterious and remote locales and this imagery found its way into music, art, theater, design and fashion of the day. Smith’s overture to the pageant's Egypt episode reflects this pop culture phenomenon.

The creation of *Milestones* occurred in the year following the discovery of the nearly intact tomb of Ancient Egyptian ruler King Tutankhamun. Sensational accounts of this discovery by British archaeologist Howard Carter filled newspapers and fueled the public’s imagination. Although Crogman Franklin’s narrative flows from biblical events, the setting of Episode One of *Milestones* would have engaged the widespread interest in Ancient Egypt among her audience.

The term “exoticism” suggests a sound or setting that is distant from some normative point of view. Often exotic sounds in the Western musical tradition are only exotic in the broadest sense, and musical devices used in representations of the exotic are not exclusive to exoticism. Musical exotica usually does not offer exact representations of an ethnic style, but instead offer a version of the foreign sounds that the composer hopes will convey the sense of place to the audience. Within this framework, there are many components of Smith’s *Overture*

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77 Ibid., 482.
that convey elements of exoticism, like the use of extended descending chromatic lines and drones or pedal points.\textsuperscript{78}

Marked \textit{Con fuoco}, the \textit{Overture} prominently uses dramatic descending chromatic scales. The chromatic lines in measure 1 occur first after a dramatic rolled G minor chord, descending from the roots of the tonic chord; in measure 4, of the dominant V chord D7; and in measure 7 of a fully diminished F\# seventh chord (see figure 1). These chromatic passages encompass the range of one octave and are all followed by comparatively relaxed rhythmic passages.\textsuperscript{79}

Figure 1. Section A, Introduction, Measures 1-10

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\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.  
The short relaxed passages in mm. 2-3 and 5-6 that follow the descending chromatic scales feature simple shifting harmony over a pedal point, which takes on the quality of a drone (see figure 1). The rhythmic figures used in these relaxed passages suggest the broad context of ragtime style, but do not dominate here, as they give way to dramatic arpeggios with offbeat chordal punctuation in mm. 9-10. Nonetheless, these ragtime rhythms do prefigure the generally relaxed and more syncopated middle sections of the *Overture*.

These middle sections can be labeled structurally as B (mm. 20-35) and C (mm. 36-51), or perhaps as B and B’, as the third section does not differentiate itself in rhythmic structure in a compelling way (see figures 2 and 3). These middle sections are contained within bracketed repeat signs and, in their relatively restful quality, suggest a vamp that might have been used to allow the huge cast of this opening scene assemble on stage.

Figure 2. B section, measures 20-26.
In the B section, Smith uses a well-known ragtime cross rhythm. Beginning at the second half of beat one of measures 2, 4, 6, and 8, there is a pattern of four groupings of three ascending sixteenth notes. These groupings echo accent pattern found in a figure found from Scott Joplin’s *The Entertainer* from 1902 (see figure 4, mm. 4-5). This rhythmic pattern is the most distinctly ragtime element of Smith’s *Overture*, although it stands alone in this treatment and does not connect or relate to an antecedent or consequent compositional element in a meaningful way.\(^80\)

Figure 4. Excerpt from *The Entertainer: A Ragtime Two Step*. measures 1-8.

How precisely Smith’s *Overture* might have been a manifestation of ragtime style largely exists outside his score. I remain curious about what Smith’s performance instructions to the musicians may have been or what interpretive latitude the performers may have been afforded. Further complicating this understanding is Smith’s omission of tempi, dynamic markings, and other interpretive instructions in his score. It is possible to imagine an interpretation of the overture’s opening and closing sections where a brisk tempo for the rolled chords and chromatic passages gives way immediately to a more leisurely walking pace.

Although Smith’s *Overture* is not likely to signal associations with Egypt or the Middle East among audiences today, *In the Sudan* (1908) by Czech composer Gabriel Šebek (1835-1914).

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1921), a work suggested by Crogman Franklin as an alternate to Smith’s Overture for Milestones, may still preserve some of these exotic qualities for modern ears. In the Sudan begins and ends with a muted trumpet call that is answered by the oboes’ snake-like melodic passage that uses a highly chromatic line set over a drone. The middle section of the work retains versions of this chromatic melody against a loping beat that recalls caricatures of camel caravans. Both Šebek and his original version of In the Sudan might have been lost to history if not for an arrangement of the piece that was recorded by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band in London in 1920. The ODJB version is fairly faithful to the themes and structure of the original and operates less as a jazz tune and more as piece of exotic novelty dance music.

Smith’s Overture and Šebek’s In the Sudan do have some similarities, however. The structure is similar in that they both have middle sections with simple melodies and a more regular pulse, which are bookended between the same opening and closing material. They are also both fairly short works. An orchestral reading of Šebek’s work lasts about three and half minutes. Smith’s Overture would likely come in at around two and half minutes in length.

Aside from whatever qualities of ragtime we may attempt to impose on Smith’s Overture, the musical content exists mostly outside of contemporary associations of 1920s black music. It sounds generically European, or to be more precise, Eurological. However, the Eurological qualities of this work take on a different, more nuanced meaning within the aspirations and respectability politics of the black middle class in Smith’s and Crogman Franklin’s time. In Milestones: A Pageant of Negro Progress, Crogman Franklin spells out what racial progress

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means to her. Progress is something to be measured in terms of jobs, educational achievement, literacy, entrepreneurship, and land ownership. Smith himself is the living embodiment of the aspiration and attainment of many of these ideals, and his overture demonstrates his mastery of a Eurological idiom.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

*Milestones: A Pageant of Negro Progress* represented the coming together of many distinct cultural threads. The ideals of Classical Greek revivalists merge with the beginnings of Black Nationalism to form a new variety of patriotic display. Newfound activism melds with displays of inclusive community theater and music. It is fitting that Crogman Franklin sought out Smith to contribute to *Milestones*. He set the standard for building African American community music infrastructure as evidenced through his numerous accomplishments. In some ways Smith’s career mirrors the narrative of Crogman’s pageant. His rising to success and international acclaim from humble beginnings speaks directly to Crogman’s message that literacy, educational achievement, and wealth are the rubric of black progress. The Eurological sound of Smith’s *Overture* is important to black middle class notions of achievement through the assimilation of white cultural values. It was indeed through much striving that N. Clark Smith was able to bring his message of Afrocentrism to the world.
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