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## ABOUT THOMAS HENDERSON KERR JR.

Thomas Henderson Kerr Jr. (1915–88) was born in Baltimore, Maryland. He began playing and studying piano at an early age. He taught himself the organ and, as early as fourteen, played for church services, as well as in Baltimore’s nightclubs. As a young man, Kerr wanted to attend Peabody Institute, but, at that time, African Americans were not admitted. He instead attended Howard University for one year, then transferred to the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, where he earned three degrees: a bachelor of music in piano, a bachelor of music in theory, and a master of music in theory. At Eastman he studied piano with Cécile Genhart (1898–1983). He graduated summa cum laude. In 1943, Kerr returned to Howard University as Professor of Piano and served as chair of the piano department until his retirement in 1976.

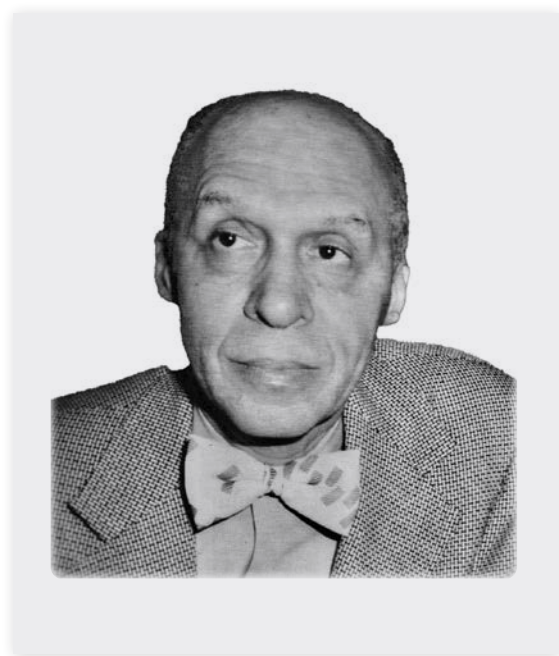
During his tenure at Howard, his career flourished. He composed and arranged music for significant events that directly and indirectly affected the University, such as the Howard University Centennial and the installation services for James Nabrit Jr., president of the university. He also composed for events of national significance, such as the US Bicentennial, the deaths of presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy, and the death of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.

For over thirty-five years, Kerr served as the organist at Plymouth Congregational Church in Washington, DC, where he composed organ, choral, vocal, and ensemble works for services. His organ compositions have been performed at the National Cathedral, the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the Mormon Tabernacle, and in more than twenty cathedrals and churches in Europe. As a pianist, he performed both on the Howard campus and at venues including the National Gallery of Art and the Phillips Collection. He appeared twice as a concert soloist with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, DC.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Kerr Jr. raised two children, Judith Elaine Kerr and Thomas Henderson Kerr III, with his first wife, Norma McAllister Kerr (1922–91).<sup>2</sup> His second wife, Hortense Reid Kerr (1926–2002), was Professor of Piano at Howard University. She performed, catalogued, and lectured on his music and career.<sup>3</sup> Thomas H. Kerr Jr. died on August 26, 1988, as a result of an automobile accident. He is buried in Washington, DC, near Howard University.

Kerr’s catalogue lists over 150 compositions for piano,

1. Thomas Henderson Kerr Jr. Papers.
2. Fitz-Fitzharris, “Compositional Techniques,” 6.
3. Hortense Reid Kerr’s papers are found in the Kerr Collection at the Schomburg Center.



Thomas H. Kerr Jr.  
Photo courtesy of Stuart and Cynthia Reid

The following table illustrates the design of the piece and is correlated with the program notes for the 1985 Hobson-Kerr Piano Duo performance.

***Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?: Concert Scherzo for Two Pianos, Four Hands (1940)***  
**Theme with Six Variations and Coda**

Section	Subsection	Description	Measures	Tonality	Hobson-Kerr Piano Duo concert program notes from 1985
A	Theme	<i>Allegro scherzando</i>	1–10	G minor	“Accompanied by a bumpity rhythmic figure, the theme is introduced in octaves.”
		Introduction	1–2	An interrupted cadence at the end of the phrase moves seamlessly to variation I.	
		Chorus (theme in Piano I)	2 (beat 4)–10		
	Variation I	Chorus (theme in Piano I)	10 (beat 4)–18	G minor	
	Transition	Verse (theme in Piano II)	19–30	F major (V/B♭) blues inflection modulation to B-flat major	“Variation I is also set off in octaves against a syncopated figure, which tapers off quietly before erupting violently into variation II, marked <i>Allegro barbaro</i> .”
B	Variation II	<i>Allegro barbaro</i>	31–74	B-flat minor	“This second variation is a greatly expanded version of the original period theme, barbaric in nature, punctuated with extreme accents and agitations.”
		Introduction	31–34		
		Chorus. The theme is stated twice:			
		Piano I	35–51		
		Piano II (thematic material)	51 (beat 4)–61		
	<i>Imitando</i>	61 (beat 3)–74			
		An extension with contrapuntal development of the phrase “And why not every man?”			
	Transition	<i>Interlude</i>	75–78	B-flat minor A ii <sup>o7</sup> /V cadence prepares E-flat major.	“A thoughtful, contemplative bridge (mm. 75–[78]) leads to Variation III, ‘Andante Sognando’...”

# DIDN'T MY LORD DELIVER DANIEL?

Concert Scherzo for Two Pianos, Four Hands  
Based on the Traditional Afro-American Folk Tune

Thomas H. Kerr Jr.  
(1915–88)

**Allegro scherzando** ♩ = 120

**Piano I**

*mf* *non legato e giocoso*

**Piano II**

*mp ben ritmato sfz* *sfz* *sfz*

*senza ped.*

4

VARIATION I

8 (8va)-----

*cresc.* *p* *f* *molto dim.*

3 1 4 2 5 3

1 2 2 5

11 (8va)-----

*pp* *sfz* *p*

*cresc.*

5 3 2 1 4

3 2 1 2 5 4

RH 1

15 (8va)-----

*poco sost.* *legato* *dim.* *poco rit.*

*a tempo* *a tempo* *poco rit.* *p*

2 4 5 3 5 4 2 5 2 1 4 5 2 1

3 5 1 2 5 1