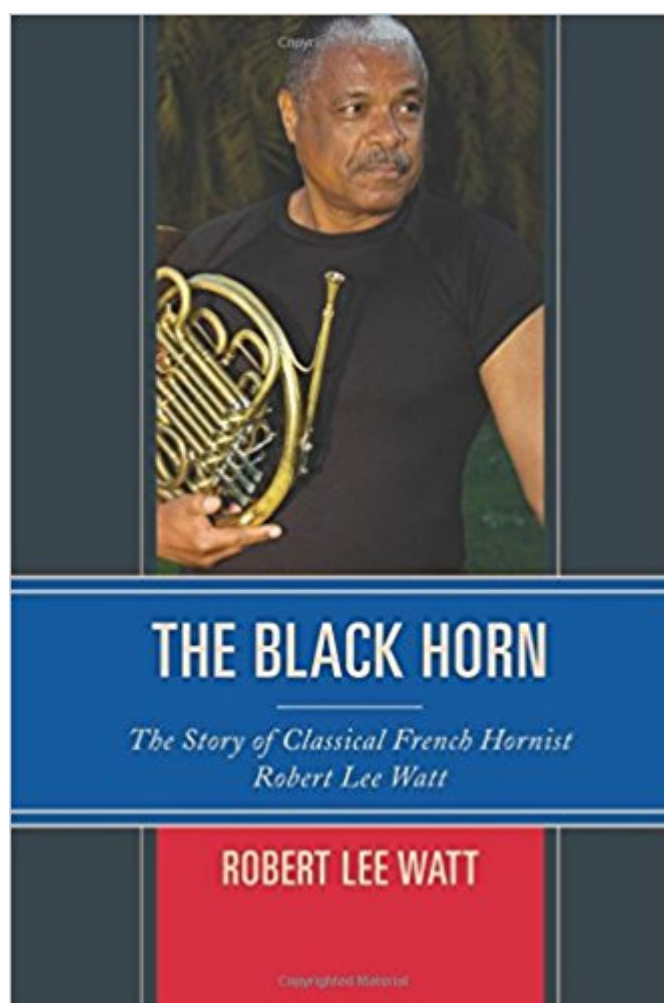


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The Black Horn: The Story Of Classical French Hornist Robert Lee Watt (African American Cultural Theory And Heritage)



Synopsis

The Black Horn: The Story of Classical French Hornist Robert Lee Watt tells the story of the first African American French Hornist hired by a major symphony in the United States. Today, few African Americans hold chairs in major American symphony orchestras, and Watt is the first in many years to write about this uniquely exhilarating—and at times painful—experience. The Black Horn chronicles the upbringing of a young boy fascinated by the sound of the French horn. Watt walks readers through the many obstacles of the racial climate in the United States, both on and off stage, and his efforts to learn and eventually master an instrument little considered in the African American community. Even the author's own father, who played trumpet, sought to dissuade the young classical musician in the making. He faced opposition from within the community—where the instrument was deemed by Watt's father a “middle instrument suited only for thin-lipped white boys”—and from without. Watt also documented his struggles as a student at a nearly all-white major music conservatory, as well as his first job in a major symphony orchestra after the conservatory canceled his scholarship. Watt subsequently chronicles his triumphs and travails as a musician when confronting the realities of race in America and the world of classical music. This book will surely interest any classical musician and student, particularly those of color, seeking to grasp the sometimes troubled history of being the only “black horn.”

Book Information

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Ethnic & National > African-American & Black

Customer Reviews

Black Horn takes on the life of Watt with raw honesty, humor, and diversity. Watt describes every situation with precise detail. Nothing is left to the imagination. Through intimate encounters, the feeling of being disrespected by peers, and a lack of support throughout his early years as a musician, Watt evokes the emotions behind what it's like for him to be a successful African-American classical musician. (International Musician) Certainly there is wisdom to be imparted by a musician of Watt's experience. One has to admire his perseverance and tenacity in remaining with what was obviously a contentious section for so many years. (Fanfare Magazine) Robert Lee Watt didn't allow racial stereotypes and the low expectations of others to hold him back. From the beginning, the classical musician used that negativity as his fuel to excel. The Black Horn is candid and often humorous. Watt's stories of transcending racial and class discrimination are especially edifying. (Los Angeles Review of Books) The Black Horn: The Story of Classical French Hornist Robert Lee Watt tells the story of the first African American French hornist hired by a major symphony in these United States. Today, the number of African Americans who hold chairs in major American symphony orchestras are few and far between, and Watt is the first in many years to write about this uniquely exhilarating and at times painful experience.

Robert Lee Watt studied French horn at the New England Conservatory of Music with Harry Shapiro of the Boston Symphony. In 1970, he was hired by the Los Angeles Philharmonic as assistant first French horn under maestro Zubin Mehta.

A very personal and interesting account of the man and what he went through to live his dream in an often time very difficult series of situations.

A true story of a man's inspiration and challenges to become a black orchestral horn player 40 years ago, when playing classical music was thought to be only for white musicians. He speaks warmly of his highly influential teacher in Boston, Harry Shapiro. His detailed descriptions of preparing and taking auditions will speak to all musicians, young and old, though few musicians can relate to his making the finals of two major symphonies within a single week. Stories about orchestra and studio politics and prejudice are blunt and their message obvious. Along the way there are some spicy stories of the novelty of a black musician in a predominantly white institution. One of my favorite sections involved the natural friendship and conversations with another black horn player in New

York, Jerome Ashby. More than coincidence, the younger Jerome had caught his eye when the author was walking up for an audition years before. Neither realizing that years later they would become close and important friends, and that both of them would remember that chance crossing of their paths. A vivid portrayal of overcoming challenges, both personal and societal. A good read!

You know, I love classical music, and I'm also a bit of a film score geek. When I was a kid, the saxophone was my favorite horn. But then I saw *Out of Africa* ... and *Dances with Wolves* (both scores by John Barry, by the way) ... and that big bold powerful sound that lifts your spirit while you're looking out over the vast landscapes in both of those movies ... that's the French Horn. So, yeah, I'm a fan. Well, I was running an errand during my lunch break today, and drove a few blocks west to the ocean to soak in a little balmy sun. On my way back to my car, I struck up a brief conversation with a charming man. I was in a rush so I made my apologies, and he said, "The Black Horn ... it's on ." Cryptic, right? Well, I remembered that much. Long story short, the friendly gentleman I met is the man on the cover of this book! Isn't life interesting? Well, I look forward to reading this book. His is an important story in the history of Los Angeles, the history of classical music and the history of Africans in America. A pleasure meeting you today, Mr. Watt! :o)

My rating has nothing to do with the book. It's the price that I take issue with. There might be a few people interested in the story of Robert Watt but why would anyone other than perhaps his mother pay such an outrageous price? Me, I'll have to be content with the Kindle sample.

Excellent account of a true story of a musician who worked harder than others to be accepted for his art and talent.

Inspirational

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