

# The Lost Village of Seneca

THOMAS FLIPPIN



Co-Commissioned by  
The Juilliard School's Preparatory Division,  
American Composers Forum, and the  
New York Philharmonic

Commissioned for  
"Composing Inclusion,"  
powered by the Sphinx Venture Fund

for string quartet

## COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY

Thomas Flippin is an original and versatile voice in the world of contemporary classical music. An accomplished classical guitarist praised for his “sheer musicality” (Stereophile), Flippin has premiered dozens of works and performed at Carnegie Hall and as soloist with several orchestras. As a composer, his music focuses on American life, the African-American experience within it, and the historical and spiritual writings that inform the present.

Flippin graduated with honors from the University of Chicago, where he was awarded the undergraduate composition prize. He then earned Master of Music and Artist Diploma degrees in guitar performance from the Yale School of Music. He has given lectures on composition for Juilliard, the New York City Classical Guitar Society, the Université de Montréal with the Société de Guitare de Montréal, the Cleveland Classical Guitar Society, and the Seattle Classical Guitar Society, among others.

Recent commissions include: The Cleveland Orchestra in partnership with the Cleveland Classical Guitar Society; a joint commission between The Juilliard School, the New York Philharmonic, and the American Composers Forum; the Guitar Foundation of America; Johns Hopkins University’s Peabody Conservatory; Benjamin Verdery and the Yale School of Music guitar department; and the New York City Classical Guitar Orchestra.

Currently, Flippin is Guitar Department Head and composition faculty at the Diller-Quaile School of Music in Manhattan.

## PROGRAM NOTE

Seneca Village was a community located in what is now western Central Park. It was established through land purchases in 1825 by African-Americans trying to escape the violent anti-Black riots, kidnappings, discrimination and poor living arrangements they faced in lower Manhattan. Spanning decades, the community grew to roughly 300 people of Black, Irish, and German heritage and featured interracial churches, Colored School No.3, single family homes, and community cemeteries.

Seneca Village also included some of the rare Black landowners who satisfied New York’s property requirements to vote. In 1857, New York used eminent domain to acquire their land and evict them for the creation of Central Park. Many residents were offered questionable compensation which they protested through court petitions. Many others were uprooted with no compensation. In 1871, bodies were discovered that had not been removed during Central Park’s creation. Fifty years later, an entire graveyard was discovered that had not been relocated during Central Park’s creation.

Commissioned by The Juilliard School Preparatory Division, in partnership  
with American Composers Forum and the New York Philharmonic,  
powered by the Sphinx Venture Fund

*duration: 8 minutes*

### **Recommended reading**

Rosenzweig, Roy and Elizabeth Blackmar. *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*. Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1992.

Miller, Sara Cedar. *Before Central Park*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2022.

## PERFORMANCE NOTES

**Trills:** Begin on the note written followed by the note above.

**Ossia:** Students should play the lower parts (downward stems), and professionals should play the higher line (upward stems). Whenever possible, advanced players should play both parts (e.g. octaves & cello double stops).

**“X” noteheads:** The lower pitch X is a foot stomp, and the higher X pitch is a hand slap on your chest or thigh.

**Glissandi:** Linger on the starting pitch before descending.

### I. Juba

Enslaved Americans were often forbidden from having drums due to a fear of them sending coded messages. Instead, they would clap their hands and stomp their feet in a Juba dance at musical gatherings. A common juba pattern was a foot stomp followed by two quick pats on the chest. It would sometimes feature a fiddler playing with increasing virtuosity as the piece approached its conclusion.

### II. Planning Committees

Optional text may be read at a moderately fast pace by a dramatic speaker, perhaps embodying the presence of Bishop Christopher Rush of A.M.E. Zion church in what is now Central Park. Quotes 1–3 begin at the repeat of the A section and conclude by the measure before the D section or sooner. Quote 4 begins at D. Players may sustain their final chord until the reading concludes.

1. To the Committee on Finance: “The owner objects to the report of the Commissioners on the grounds that [they] have not allowed to [him] a sufficient sum for the aforesaid lots—...\$2,335. He... declares said lots with the house at \$4,000—...he has been offered the sum of \$3,500—for said lots and...he refused.”  
—Petition of Andrew Williams
2. To the Committee on Lands and Places: “A very great number of poor families... who worked a number of years on their squatter or lease ground, will be entirely ruined when they must give up their cultivated land and move away without compensation. Please have mercy with the Poor, then the Lord will have mercy with you.”  
—Petition of Jupiter Hesser
3. To the Board of Commissioners of the Central Park: “It may well be, that in some instances the commissioners may have erred in their judgement as to the value of property taken for this great improvement. It would, indeed, be surprising if they had not. There are a few cases of individual hardship which have my sympathy.”  
—Verdict of Judge Ira Harris
4. To the Commissioners of Estimate and Assessment: “The resting place of the dead is indivisible and under no circumstances whatsoever for the purposes of public utility or the most urgent considerations that the human mind can conceive are those that Faith permitted to disturb the graveyard.”  
—Petition of President Louis Levy, Shaaray Tefila synagogue.

### III. Gilhooley’s Graveyard

Gilhooley was a Central Park gardener who discovered bones, and then an entire African-American graveyard at the Seneca Village site. A chacona (chaconne) is a 16th century musical form that originated from the colonized people of South America (see: Ross, Alex. *Listen to This*. New York, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2010).

—Thomas Flippin

Commissioned by The Juilliard School Preparatory Division, in partnership with American Composers Forum and the New York Philharmonic, powered by the Sphinx Venture Fund

# The Lost Village of Seneca

## I. Juba

Moderato (♩ = c. 108)

Thomas Flippin

**A** slap hand on chest or thigh

Violin I  
Violin II  
Viola  
Violoncello

5

Vn. I  
Vn. II  
Va.  
Vc.

9

**B**

mf  
f  
mf  
pizz.  
mf

13

Vn. I

Vn. II

Va. (pizz.) arco

Vc.

17

Vn. I

Vn. II

Va.

Vc.

*poco rall.*

*Cant.*

**C** *a tempo*

21

Vn. I

Vn. II

Va.

Vc.

*mp*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*accel.*

26

Vn. I

Vn. II

Va.

Vc.

*ossia: play lower notes*

*pizz.*

Andante (♩ = c. 82)

**D**

31

Musical score for measures 31-34. Vn. I: *p*. Vn. II: *mp* to *mf*. Va.: *mp* to *mf*. Vc.: *mp*. Includes triplets and dynamic markings.

35

Musical score for measures 35-37. Vn. I: *sfz* to *mf*. Vn. II: *f* to *mf*. Va.: *f*. Vc.: *mf*. Includes triplets and a trill.

38

Musical score for measures 38-40. Vn. I: *f*. Vn. II: *f*. Va.: *f*. Vc.: *arco*, *mf*. Includes triplets and dynamic markings.

41

Musical score for measures 41-43. Vn. I: *mf* to *ff legato*. Vn. II: *ff*. Va.: *ff*. Vc.: *f* to *ff*. Includes triplets and dynamic markings.

ossia: play lower notes

*poco rit.*

Musical score for measures 44-47. The score is for four staves: Vn. I, Vn. II, Va., and Vc. The key signature is one sharp (F#). Measure 44 starts with Vn. I playing a series of eighth notes. Vn. II and Va. have long notes with tremolos. Vc. has a bass line. Dynamic markings include *mp* and *ff*. The tempo marking *poco rit.* is at the top right.

**Moderato** (♩ = c. 108)

Musical score for measures 48-50. The score is for four staves: Vn. I, Vn. II, Va., and Vc. The key signature is one sharp (F#). Measure 48 starts with Vn. I playing a series of eighth notes. Vn. II has a tremolo. Va. and Vc. have long notes. Dynamic markings include *pp* and *ppp*.

Musical score for measures 51-53. The score is for four staves: Vn. I, Vn. II, Va., and Vc. The key signature is one sharp (F#). Measure 51 starts with Vn. I playing a series of eighth notes. Vn. II has a tremolo. Va. and Vc. have long notes. Dynamic markings include *mf* and *ppp*. A box containing the letter 'E' is above measure 51.

Musical score for measures 54-56. The score is for four staves: Vn. I, Vn. II, Va., and Vc. The key signature is one sharp (F#). Measure 54 starts with Vn. I playing a series of eighth notes. Vn. II has a tremolo. Va. and Vc. have long notes. Dynamic markings include *f*, *pizz.*, and *mf*.