

CYNTHIA BLACKWELL ♦ STEPHEN SCOTT

PIANOS & PERU

An Evening to Remember

BENEFITING THE CHILDREN OF COLLIQUE, PERU
THROUGH
OPERACIÓN SAN ANDRÉS



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DR. STEVE WELLS, PASTOR • THOMAS COKER, MINISTER OF MUSIC

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An Evening to Remember

Two Dance Episodes from Rodeo

Saturday Night Waltz

Hoedown

A. Copland (1900-1990)

Spirituals

Poor Wayfaring Stranger

Soon 'Ah Will be Done

Traditional, arr. M. Thompson

Symphonic Dances from West Side Story

Prologue (Allegro moderato)

Somewhere (Adagio)

Scherzo (Vivace e leggiero)

Mambo (Meno presto)

Cha-cha (Andantino con grazia)

Meeting Scene (Meno mosso)

Cool Fugue (Allegretto)

Rumble (Molto allegro)

Finale (Adagio)

L. Bernstein (1918-1990)

Variations on a Theme of Paganini

W. Lutoslawski (1913-1994)

15-MINUTE INTERMISSION

Recuerdos

Chôro

Paseo

Valse Venezolano

W. Bolcom (1938-)

Hymns

Holy, Holy, Holy

Near to the Heart of God/Nearer, My God, to Thee

All Hail The Power of Jesus' Name

Traditional, Arr. Nielsen/Young

Rhapsody in Blue

G. Gershwin (1898-1937)

PROGRAM NOTES

Two Dance Episodes from Rodeo Impressed by Aaron Copland's ballet score, *Billy the Kid*, choreographer Agnes de Mille commissioned him to compose the score for another "Cowboy" ballet, *Rodeo*. DeMille herself played the lead, and the premiere performance at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York on October 16, 1942, received 22 curtain calls. (Of note, the premiere was attended by Rodgers and Hammerstein, who then asked de Mille to choreograph their upcoming production of *Oklahoma*.)

While *Rodeo* was on tour, Copland rearranged the score as a symphonic suite for orchestra titled *Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo*, which reduced the five-part ballet to four sections. With these alterations, the *Four Dance Episodes* resemble a symphonic form, with an ambitious opening movement ("Buckaroo Holiday"), slow movement ("Corral Nocturne"), minuet

("Saturday Night Waltz") and finale ("Hoedown"). It received its successful orchestral premiere with the Boston Pops in 1943 and was subsequently transcribed in the arrangement heard here by the duo-pianists Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale in 1950.

The ballet tells the story of a Cowgirl who seeks to attract the Cowboys gathered for the weekly rodeo. In "Saturday Night Waltz," a Texas minuet plays while the cowboys and cowgirls pair off. Hopeful for a partner but finding none, the Cowgirl is alone until the Champion Roper (who has failed to gain the affections of the Cowgirl's rival, the Rancher's Daughter) approaches her. Finally, she rejects the Champion Roper and chooses as a partner the Cowboy who had shown her kindness previously. "Saturday Night Waltz" begins with the strings tuning up and features Copland's characteristic economy of sound and spare textures. "Hoedown" brings the action to a close in an exuberant celebration.

Spirituals Poor Wayfaring Stranger first appeared in print in Ananias Davisson's Kentucky Harmony, or, A Choice Collection of Psalm Tunes, Hymns, and Anthems, in Three Parts, which was published in 1816. Although sometimes classified as a "white spiritual," the origin of the tune is uncertain; various theories have emerged supporting its inception as an Appalachian folk tune, Old Irish song, or Negro Spiritual. Regardless, the haunting melody and plaintive lyrics have resonated with artists and audiences ever since, whether Emmy Lou Harris, Natalie Merchant or Kristen Chenoweth.

I am a poor wayfaring stranger,
While traveling through this world of woe.
Yet there's no sickness, toil nor danger
In that bright world to which I go.
I'm going there to see my Father;
I'm going there no more to roam.
I'm only going over Jordan,
I'm only going over home.

One of the hundreds of religious folk songs first sung by African Americans in slavery, *Soon Ah Will Be Done* was first published in R. Nathaniel Dett's *Religious Folk-Songs of the Negro as Sung at Hampton Institute*, 1927. As arranged in 1934 by William L. Dawson as part of the Tuskegee Choir series, *Soon Ah Will Be Done* remains one of the most widely-sung spirituals by church and university choirs.

Soon ah will be don' a-wid de troubles ob de worl',
de troubles ob de worl',
de troubles ob de worl'.
Soon ah will be don' a-wid de troubles ob de worl',
Goin' home to live wid God.
I wan' to meet my Jesus
I wan' to meet my Jesus
I wan' to meet my Jesus
I goin' to live wid God.

Symphonic Dances from West Side Story Premiered on Broadway in September of 1957 (51 years ago this month), *West Side Story* was immediately hailed as a landmark in American theater. Based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, The Jets and the Sharks, rival teenage gangs from New York's West Side, act out the doomed confrontation between the Montagues and Capulets, while Tony and Maria mirror Romeo and Juliet in the intensity of their ill-fated passion. The stage production and the film version which followed it (in October of 1961) received numerous awards, including an astounding 10 Oscars for the film. Among many of the musical's innovations was Bernstein's fusion of rigorous classical compositional techniques with jazz- and Latin-inspired idioms. Jerome Robbins's choreography features the hyper-athletic style pioneered by Agnes de Mille in *Rodeo* and *Oklahoma*, and together with the musical score, the dances form an integral part of the progression of the narrative. Bernstein's own arrangement of the *Symphonic Dances* was premiered by the New York Philharmonic on February 13, 1961. By concentrating and re-ordering themes, Bernstein provides a compressed presentation of the conflict between the Jets and the Sharks.

During the prologue, the rivalry between the two gangs grows and then fades into a dream ballet, Somewhere, in which the gangs are united in friendship. In the following Scherzo, the youths escape into a world of pure sunlight, which is then interrupted by a competitive display of dancing between the gangs in the school

gym. In the Cha-cha, Tony and Maria meet for the first time and then speak their first words to one another in Meeting Scene. The jazz-inflected Cool Fugue allows Riff to lead the Jets in harnessing their impulsive hostility. But the fatal confrontation cannot be avoided: in the Rumble, the two gang leaders, Riff and Bernardo are killed. The Finale incorporates Maria's "I Have a Love," which leads to a procession recalling the vision of Somewhere.

Variations on a Theme of Paganini A pianist from the age of six, the Polish composer Witold Lutoslawski conceived and wrote the *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* for two pianos during the Second World War. He spent the occupation in Warsaw earning a living as a pianist in the "Sztuka i Moda" and "U Aktorek" cafés, and the *Variations* is the only work that has survived from that period. After the war, he settled in Warsaw and went on to receive many national and international music awards, primarily as a conductor and composer. The variations are playful, witty, and even at times jarring while preserving the essential contours and character of Paganini's original *Caprice in A minor*, the last and most famous of the set of 24 that he wrote for virtuoso violin. Lutoslawski's *Variations* and Paganini's *Caprice* both present the theme, 11 variations, and a finale.

Recuerdos ("remembrances" in Spanish) was commissioned by the Murray Dranoff Foundation for its Two-Piano Competition held in Miami, Florida in December 1991. In the preface to the work, Bolcom comments:

Recuerdos was inspired by a volume of turn-of-the-century dances given me by the critic and translator Michael Feingold. Falling in love with these wonderful dance pieces from Ecuador, Brazil, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and other Latin American Countries, I became aware of the fact that the Scott Joplin ragtime tradition was only part of the larger tradition of piano dance-music that flourished through the First World War. The three pieces are evocations of that style-period which, I hope, capture the flavor of that music and the time.

The first, *Chôro*, is in the style of Ernesto Nazareth, who invented the form, and is written in memory of the great French popular musician, Jean Wiéner, a friend my teacher, Darius Milhaud. [Wiéner also formed a famous piano duo with another French musician, Clément Doucet.] The second, *Paseo*, is in honor of Louis-Moreau Gottschalk and partakes of his untrammelled romanticism.

The composer I most want to evoke in *Valse Venezolano*, Ramon Delgado Palacios, is not well-known, but considered to be one of the seminal composers of the Venezuelan musical tradition. Palacios' pieces are full of surprising leaps, modulations, and phrase lengths, and quite often are in 5/8 time.

Born in Seattle, Washington, Bolcom studied with Darius Milhaud at Mills College and Olivier Messiaen in Paris. He joined the teaching staff of the University of Michigan in 1973 and from 1994-2008 was the Ross Lee Finney Distinguished University Professor of Composition there. Bolcom won the Pulitzer Prize for music in 1988 for *12 New Etudes for Piano*, and four 2005 Grammy Awards for his setting of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*. He and his wife, Joan Morris, have recorded two dozen albums of songs.

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Hymns Formed in 1971, the piano-duo team of Stephen Nielson and Ovid Young has arranged and recorded an ever-expanding output of their signature hymn-tune arrangements. The lyrics of **Holy, Holy, Holy** were written by Reginald Heber (1783-1826) for use on Trinity Sunday, which occurs eight weeks after Easter. The tune used for this hymn, “Nicaea”, was named after the Nicaean Council in 325 and was composed by John Bacchus Dykes in 1861 specifically for the lyrics. **Near to the Heart of God** is the newest hymn of the set, composed in 1903 by Cleland McAfee after two of his nieces had died from diphtheria. Perhaps more well-known, **Nearer, My God to Thee** first appeared in *Hymns and Anthems*, by William Johnson Fox in 1841 and was then set to music by the prolific American composer Lowell Mason in 1856. Of many inspiring stories associated with the hymn, survivors of the Titanic relayed that it was played by the ship’s orchestra as the ocean liner went down (although controversy exists as to which of several tunes used at the time was actually played). **All Hail the Power** has been referred to as the “National hymn of Christendom.” The lyrics, written by Edward Peronnet while a missionary in India, first appeared in the 1779 issue of *Gospel Magazine*. Two well-known tunes, “Coronation” and “Diadem” are incorporated in the arrangement played here.

Rhapsody in Blue On January 4, 1924, an article “What is American Music?” appeared in the *New York Tribune* claiming that “George Gershwin is at work on a jazz concerto,” which upon reading, prompted George to call the band leader Paul Whiteman. Whiteman had previously asked Gershwin to compose an extended concerto-like piece for an all-jazz concert planned for February, but Gershwin had initially demurred, as he was busy at work on several other projects, including the opening of his musical *Sweet Little Devil* later that January. However, after Whiteman shared that a rival band leader, Vincent Lopez, was planning a similar experimental concert, and that there was no time to lose, Gershwin was finally persuaded to begin work on the piece.

As told to his first biographer, Gershwin began to formulate the ideas for the *Rhapsody* while on the train to Boston:

It was on the train, with its steely rhythms, its rattle-ty bang, that is so often so stimulating to a composer – I frequently hear music in the very heart of the noise...

And there I suddenly heard, and even saw on paper – the complete construction of the *Rhapsody*, from beginning to end. No new themes came to me, but I worked on the thematic material already in my mind and tried to conceive the composition as a whole. I heard it as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America, of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our blues, our metropolitan madness. By the time I reached Boston I had a definite plot of the piece, as distinguished from its actual substance.

According to the original score, the work was called “*American Rhapsody*” during its composition. The title ***Rhapsody in Blue*** was suggested by his brother Ira Gershwin after visiting an exhibition of James Whistler paintings, which bear titles such as *Nocturne in Black and Gold* and *Arrangement in Gray and Black*. The piece was finished in several weeks and then passed to Gershwin’s arranger Ferde Grofé, who finished orchestrating it on February 4, just eight days before the premiere at a noon concert (titled “An Experiment in Modern Music”) on February 12.

Instantly popular, the work had 84 performances by the end of the year, and the initial recording sold over 1 million copies. Yet mainstream critics were skeptical, despite recognizing Gershwin’s emerging talents as a composer. In an article in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1955, Leonard Bernstein, who nevertheless admitted that he loved the piece, wrote:

The *Rhapsody* is not a composition at all. It’s a string of separate paragraphs stuck together. The themes are terrific – inspired, God-given. I don’t think there has been such an inspired melodist on this earth since Tchaikovsky. But if you want to speak of a composer, that’s another matter. Your *Rhapsody in Blue* is not a real composition in the sense that whatever happens in it must seem inevitable. You can cut parts of it without affecting the whole. You can remove any of these stuck-together sections and the piece still goes on as bravely as before. It can be a five-minute piece or a twelve-minute piece. And in fact, all these things are being done to it every day. And it’s still the *Rhapsody in Blue*.

The version performed here is the complete original score for two pianos.



CYNTHIA BLACKWELL

Cynthia Blackwell, while a degreed musician, is presently an at-home mom and school volunteer and has fewer hours of down time than she had while working full time! She and her husband, Jeb, have 5 wonderful sons: James (17), Ryan (15), Eric (13), Philip (10) and Andrew (10). She has served both St. Philip Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church during most of her more than 20 years

in Houston. In addition, Cynthia has been involved in Theatre Under the Stars as a rehearsal pianist and as a music director for the professional school in the Humphreys School of Musical Theatre. She began studying piano as a child because she wanted to play for worship like “Miss Maxie” Wall at her rural church in North Carolina.



DR. STEPHEN SCOTT

Dr. Stephen Scott is an Assistant Professor of Family Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, where he provides clinical care, teaches students and residents, and conducts research on cancer screening and prevention. Previously a student at Baylor College of Medicine and Rice University, Steve returned to Houston after completing residency training in Seattle,

Washington. He and his wife Melissa are the proud parents of five-year-old daughter Audrey and three-year-old daughter Ava. He first started playing the piano in the fifth grade after tagging along to his brother and sister’s piano lessons, and he’s enjoyed playing ever since.