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# RHYTHMS OF THE CITY

**SATURDAY, 30 APR 2022 at 7:30 P.M.**

First-St. Andrews United Church

Please join us for **BEHIND THE MUSIC** at 7:00 P.M.

**Stewart Goodyear** pianist and composer  
**Scott Harrison**, conductor

This concert is generously supported by *Serenata Music*

# RHYTHMS OF THE CITY

SATURDAY, 30 APR 2022 at 7:30 P.M.

## Program

*Quiet City*

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

*Quartet for Piano and Strings*

Stewart Goodyear (b. 1978)

## Intermission

*Walking the Dog*

George Gershwin (1898-1937)

*Etudes for Chamber Ensemble*

Scott Good (b. 1972)

I. Introduction

II. Song

III. Rondo

*Rhapsody in Blue*

George Gershwin, orchestrated by Jeff Christmas

The concert run time is 90 minutes

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# PROGRAM NOTES

by Jeffrey Wall

## ***Quiet City* by Aaron Copland (1900-1990):**

When in 1924 Aaron Copland returned to New York after four years of study in Paris—then the acknowledged artistic capital of the world—it was as one of the gifted and promising heralds of a new era in American music, modern, sophisticated and at the cutting edge of the latest trends in composition. He soon had a reputation as an enfant terrible, although nothing he wrote compared in sensationalism to the sirens, propellers and electric bells of George Antheil's *Ballet mécanique* of 1926. But by the 1930s Copland was lamenting the "isolation" of the American composer "from the public as a whole", and it seemed, he wrote, "worth the effort to see if I couldn't say what I had to say in the simplest possible terms." And while he never completely abandoned his earlier asceticism, even adopting serialism in some late works, in turning to the folk music of North America for inspiration he developed a parallel style that came to define America for a generation. It continues to influence her composers today.

Part of that journey involved composing for the plays and films of the day, as well as for dance; in an interview at the Banff Centre in 1976 he observed that music for these media had to be somewhat simpler to be assimilated by an audience whose attention was primarily focused elsewhere. His 1938 ballet *Billy the Kid* truly launched his new style with the public, and 1939 saw him providing a score for future novelist Irwin Shaw's play *Quiet City*, which included among its characters a nervous and frustrated trumpet player. The play failed, but Copland, never one to waste good work, culled a brief suite from his score and orchestrated it for solo trumpet, English horn and strings in 1940. In mood it takes its cue from a character in the play who imagines in his brother's trumpet playing 'the night thoughts of many different people in a great city'.

So, what's with the English horn? It turns out to be a poetic solution to a practical problem: Copland provided it a prominent part in order to give the trumpet player space to breathe. But it's also a good conversationalist.

## ***Walking the Dog*, from the RKO film *Shall We Dance* (1937)**

**by George Gershwin (1898-1937), arr. S. Manz:**

In view of the many great songs derived from their hit Broadway shows, composing for films would appear to have been an obvious alternative for the music-lyric team of George and Ira Gershwin. Yet the movie moguls were quite resistant to the idea, suspicious of three less successful productions in the '30s as well as George's ventures into concert music and opera. Only in 1936, when George averred he was not

"highbrow" but was "out to write hits", did the brothers get a contract allowing them to leave New York for Hollywood.

Their first project was the seventh vehicle for the popular dance team of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, which after considerable gestation became *Shall We Dance*. About 30 minutes into the 1937 classic there is a 2 ½ minute scene in which Fred — a famous ballet dancer in search of a life partner — pursues Ginger — a revue star whose ubiquitous photos have captivated him — onto the promenade deck of the ocean liner on which they are travelling. She, with a number of other passengers, is walking her little dog, and Fred, spying a steward minding a very large dog, bribes the steward to let him take said pooch for a walk in order to get her attention. This whole snippet is without dialogue, accompanied only by Gershwin's music. The choreographer Hermes Pan remembered George watching Astaire and Rogers rehearse: "... and he wrote this wonderful ditty. He sort of caught the tempos of the way they walked, and the way the dog was trotting along. And he did it right there on the set. Just like that. Pure inspiration. He was very dance-wise, you might say."

The movie score was lost for decades, but, reconstructed from memory, the piece was published for piano solo with the title *Promenade*. The orchestral *Walking the Dog* music turned up in 1978 in a box of old studio scores, and since then has found a niche in 'Gershwin evening' concerts. The present chamber arrangement gives the originally prominent clarinet the St. Bernard's share of the work, and replaces the original ending, which faded into dialogue.

In a radio interview Ira was asked whether it was easy to work with George on their song collaborations. After describing their relationship as give-and-take, he made an observation about George "never being dogmatic." Except, you might say, in the present promenade.

## ***Rhapsody in Blue* for Piano and Orchestra**

**by George Gershwin (1898-1937) (orchestrated by Jeff Christmas)**

It was the most American of occasions—a publicity stunt disguised as a concert. On the afternoon of February 12, 1924, the Paul Whiteman Concert Orchestra presented "An Experiment in Modern Music" at New York's elegant Aeolian Hall, with the stated intention of demonstrating how "discordant jazz" had matured to the point of being "really melodious" concert hall fare. In fact it was an 'event' designed to promote Whiteman's band and brand of tame popular tune arrangements, with free tickets to a host of social and musical celebrities to ensure a healthy press and cheap admission for rubbernecks. Thanks to the penultimate item on the program, *A Rhapsody in Blue*, it succeeded like steak sauce.

The pre-concert sizzle had died and the spectators were more than ready for the beef by the time George Gershwin sauntered to the piano nearly two hours into the proceedings. The gear-slipping opening of his new piece (a clarinet glissando improvised in rehearsal) stopped the crowd's incipient exodus in its tracks. Its scintillating passagework popped their peepers. And its final "Good evening, friends!" galvanized their gams and electrified their larynxes. Gershwin and Whiteman were about to become rich.

To understand the impact of the *Rhapsody* in 1924 it must be remembered that radio was in its infancy, jazz records few and primitive, and that the places one could hear actual live jazz—speakeasies, brothels and black nightclubs—were not generally frequented by 'respectable' people. Everyone had heard of jazz and almost no-one really knew what it was. The chance to find out in legal, comfortable surroundings had a certain appeal. Although what the audience heard wasn't really jazz (underlined by an argument Gershwin and Whiteman had during a 1927 recording session over the latter's jazzing-up of the score), what they heard was new to the concert hall and unmistakably American. And they liked it. The result was that American composers gained entry to their own concert halls and Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, George Antheil and others were able to bring their more esoteric jazz-tinged works to the public.

Gershwin's aspirations to be taken seriously as a composer of extended works were not fulfilled in his short lifetime, although the *Rhapsody*, *Concerto in F* for piano and the tone poem *An American in Paris* have always been popular. His opera *Porgy and Bess* has had belated critical recognition since the 1970's. Leonard Bernstein, while recognizing in Gershwin the most inspired melodist since Tchaikovsky, held that *Rhapsody in Blue* was not a composition but "a string of separate paragraphs stuck together", any of which might be removed without harming the outcome. Well, that's essentially what the term 'Rhapsody' means (incidentally, 'in Blue' pays tribute not only to the blue notes of the jazz major scale—including flat third, fifth and seventh degrees—but also to the paintings of the American James Whistler, with their titles like *Nocturne in Blue and Silver*; Gershwin was a talented painter himself).

In fact the tunes of the *Rhapsody* are more than haphazardly collected: they are motivically and rhythmically related if not formally developed. It is true that the orchestration is not Gershwin's own work (although his later compositions are)—his lack of preparation time would have necessitated this in any case, since he learned of his 'commission' from a newspaper only five weeks before Whiteman's concert and had a Broadway show to produce first (originally the instrumentation was for jazz band; the familiar full orchestra version was done in 1942; and tonight's version has been prepared by London composer, conductor and drummer Jeff Christmas). The majority

of listeners—and musicians, including Bernstein—love the *Rhapsody* in spite of its flaws. Pianist Abram Chasins summed it up when he observed that “the telling accident of genius has outweighed every theoretical and technical issue. Otherwise, there seems no sound explanation for the phenomenal and abiding impact of [Gershwin’s] music.”

### ***Etudes for Chamber Ensemble* by Scott Good (composer’s note)**

In 2008, I received a scathing review! I had never experienced this kind of public scrutiny and was unsure of what to do about it.

My eventual decision was to let the critique be framed as a lesson from a great guru, and to compose a new work inspired by their insights. The result is this collection of three etudes.

Each etude is a study in concision, employing a restricted palette, using a 5 note scale and particular rhythmic style – the first is played freely, the second is lyric, and the third employs a consistently changing metric structure inspired by the music of Bali, framed in the form of a classical Rondo.

## **GUEST ARTISTS**

### **Stewart Goodyear, pianist and composer**

Proclaimed “a phenomenon” by the Los Angeles Times and “one of the best pianists of his generation” by the Philadelphia Inquirer, Stewart Goodyear is an accomplished concert pianist, improviser and composer. Mr. Goodyear has performed with, and has been commissioned by, many of the major orchestras and chamber music organizations around the world.

Last year, Orchid Classics released Mr. Goodyear’s recording of his suite for piano and orchestra, “Callaloo” and his piano sonata. His recent commissions include a Piano Quintet for the Penderecki String Quartet, and a piano work for the Honens Piano Competition.

Mr. Goodyear’s discography includes the complete sonatas and piano concertos of Beethoven, as well as concertos by Tchaikovsky, Grieg and Rachmaninov, an album of Ravel piano works, and an album, entitled “For Glenn Gould”, which combines repertoire from Mr. Gould’s US and Montreal debuts. His Rachmaninov recording received a Juno nomination for Best Classical Album for Soloist and Large Ensemble Accompaniment. Mr. Goodyear’s recording of his own transcription of Tchaikovsky’s “The Nutcracker (Complete Ballet)”, was chosen by the New York Times as one of the best classical music recordings of 2015. His discography is released on the Marquis Classics, Orchid Classics, and Steinway and Sons labels. His new album, entitled “Phoenix”, was released on the Bright Shiny Things label in October 2021, and includes Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at*

*an Exhibition.*

Highlights for the 2021-22 season is his first performance at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, return engagements at the Chamber Music Society of Detroit, the Ladies Morning Musical Club (Montreal, Canada), l'Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Buffalo Philharmonic and the Vancouver and Indianapolis Symphonies, and his debut with the National Symphony Orchestra (Washington, DC).

### **Scott Harrison, conductor**

Scott Harrison is a freelance conductor, composer, and musician. After graduating from the Etobicoke School of the Arts, Scott continued his studies at the University of Toronto, and toured Canada as a member of the National Youth Orchestra. Scott is a founding member of the Trillium Brass Quintet and has also performed with a number of ensembles and productions, including the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Canadian Opera Company and The Phantom of the Opera.

Scott is a faculty member of the Interprovincial Music Camp, a Visiting Artist at the Etobicoke School of the Arts and is proud to continue working with his colleagues in London Symphonia.



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**Congratulates the London Symphonia for keeping the music alive in 2022.**

**We are proud to sponsor the appearance of pianist Stewart Goodyear with the orchestra at the April 30th 2022 concert.**

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- A short intermission will occur for the purpose of musician respite. Please stay close to your seats and avoid congregating at this time. Please follow posted signage and the directions from the ushers if you require the use of the washroom facilities.

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Saturday, 28 May 2022 at 7:30pm

***\*First-St. Andrew's United Church, 350 Queens Ave., London***

With her 2008 recording *Tout Passe*, Order of Canada recipient and Grammy winning soprano, Suzie LeBlanc revisited the uprooting of her Acadian ancestors through song and tested the theme of *Mouvance*, or 'migration' as it applied to her own life, having left her native Nouveau-Brunswick at the age of 16 'like a migratory bird' to explore the larger world.

While steeped from birth in Acadian Culture, she also carries a passion for European baroque music of the 17th and 18th centuries: celebrated music that Acadian settlers may have remembered from the old country - sometimes written by composers who also left behind their home and native land.

Through a tapestry of Baroque music and Acadian folk songs chosen while she was walking the 800 miles of the *Compostela*, Suzie will tell a story circling the Atlantic of her ancestors, their Great Upheaval in 1755 and the indomitable spirit of Acadian culture as it continues to thrive to this day.

\*Due to the renovations taking place at Metropolitan United, The Long Way Home will be moved to First-St. Andrew's United Church on the corner of Queen's Ave & Waterloo St.

*Thank you for joining us this evening. Tickets and concert details are available online at [londonsymphonia.ca](http://londonsymphonia.ca) or by calling 226.270.0910.*



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