

# A Touch of Blue

*Arranged by Paula Robison  
for Flute and Piano*

**ST. LOUIS BLUES**

**DIZZY FINGERS**

**DEEP RIVER**

**STEAL AWAY**

**GOIN' HOME**

**THREE PRELUDES (GERSHWIN)**



THEODORE  
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# NOTES BY PAULA ROBISON

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## PROGRAM NOTES

This collection describes a coming-together of ideas which illuminated the end of the 19th century and shined its way brilliantly into the 20th, continuing to light the way of American music into our own century, and nourishing it to this very day. All the composers in A TOUCH OF BLUE came into contact with each other in New York City between c. 1890 and 1930. Although they were not all African-Americans, they were all vividly aware of the gift of Africa to American culture: a gift brought to this continent at a great price and woven into the fabric of American life as if it had been here forever. Similarly, each of our composers was aware of Native American music and its bright threads, and of the many other cultural colors which together have created our national identity. George Gershwin described his own music as: “a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America, of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our blues, our metropolitan madness.” A TOUCH OF BLUE celebrates this vibrant image.

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

### ST. LOUIS BLUES

W.C. HANDY (1873-1958)

W.C. Handy, the “Father of the Blues,” was born in Florence, Alabama in a log cabin his grandfather built. His father and grandfather were both pastors, and his parents were among the four million slaves freed by the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. In his wonderful autobiography Handy describes the cabin and the woodland surrounding it, filled with singing birds, wildlife, fruits, berries, and flowers. As a young boy Handy would take long walks to visit his grandfather who told him stories of the courage of his ancestors and their struggles to be free. Handy describes the way that music permeated the culture in which he was growing up, the naturalness of the singing and dancing traditions, the verses carried through generations. When his grandmother first noticed Handy’s musical talent he was thrilled, but “discovered almost immediately that life was not always a song.” His father was bitterly against music as a profession and would not allow him to play an instrument. But Handy secretly got his hands on a cornet and by the time his father heard about it he was leading a

band and on his way, contracting shows and touring. Ragtime was all the rage, and he incorporated it into his playing style. Handy’s descriptions of his traveling life are hair-raising. There was violence, little food to eat, often no place to stay. But he was passionate about music and about getting people together to play and hear it despite the difficulty and danger. At 22 he was married and had moved to Clarksdale, Mississippi. One night at a dance he heard a man plunking a guitar and singing a strange complaining tune, and his love of the Blues began. The “longing” he had felt as a young musician, the stories he had heard, the life he’d led, all began to combine into a distinct musical form. When writing a blues tune Handy tried to re-create the style of the folksingers he’d heard his whole life. The “flatted” third which defines the style (the blue note) often rubs up against its resolution, creating an undertow which we as interpreters can take as our own, as we describe our own life experiences with our music.

The *St. Louis Blues*, probably W.C. Handy’s most famous work, was the result of a dark, frustrating few weeks in St. Louis, Missouri, and its words are in classic blues style:

*I hate to see the evenin’ sun go down –  
Hate to see – the evenin’ sun go down –  
’Cause my baby, he done left this town –  
Feelin’ tomorrow like I feel today...  
Feelin’ tomorrow like I feel today –  
I’ll pack my trunk and make my getaway.*

*St. Louis Blues* was a huge hit. Handy became not only a player/composer but a publisher, and he moved his young family to New York City in 1917. He wrote many more songs, launched the careers of many blues artists through sheet music and recordings, influenced countless composers, and published several books including his autobiography and his classic songbook “Blues, an Anthology.” Our collection contains a “classical” version of Handy’s beloved song. I would suggest that you study as many differing performances of this classic as you can and then find your own way to express its captivating sadness.

### DIZZY FINGERS

ZEZ CONFREY (1895-1971)

Edward Elzear “Zez” Confrey was born in Peru, Illinois. He started playing the piano at an early age and was already leading his own dance band by the

# St. Louis Blues

W. C. HANDY (1873-1958)  
Arranged by Paula Robison

Swinging melancholy (swung eighths)

Flute

Piano *mf*

with very little pedal

6

*mp* sweet and melancholy

*mp*

12

17

*mf*

*mf*

# Dizzy Fingers

ZEZ CONFREY (1895-1971)

Arranged by Paula Robison

Special Effects by Timothy Hester

**Presto, bouncy (not swung)**

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). It consists of four systems of music. Each system includes a vocal line (top staff) and a piano accompaniment (bottom two staves). The piano part features a steady bass line with chords in the right hand. The vocal line is characterized by melodic runs and slurs. Dynamics include *f* (forte), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *p* (piano). The tempo is marked as **Presto, bouncy (not swung)**. A specific instruction *f* *bright and sassy* is placed above the first vocal note. Measure numbers 6, 11, and 17 are indicated at the start of their respective systems.

# Steal Away

AFRICAN-AMERICAN SPIRITUAL

Setting by Harry T. Burleigh

Arranged by Paula Robison

*Andante e molto espressivo*

The first system of the musical score consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in 4/4 time and begins with a whole rest. The piano accompaniment starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A *mp* dynamic marking appears in the second measure of the piano part.

The second system begins at measure 5. The vocal line starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a *mp* dynamic marking in the third measure. The piano accompaniment starts with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic and includes *p* and *mp* dynamic markings in the second and third measures, respectively.

The third system begins at measure 9. The vocal line features a *f espr.* dynamic marking. The piano accompaniment starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a *mf* dynamic marking in the second measure.

# Deep River

21

AFRICAN-AMERICAN SPIRITUAL  
Setting by Harry T. Burleigh  
Arranged by Paula Robison

**Lento**

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It begins with a tempo marking of **Lento**. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-5) features a vocal line starting with a *mp* dynamic and a piano accompaniment with a *mf* dynamic and a *slow roll* instruction. The piano part includes the instruction *emphasize low notes*. The second system (measures 6-9) continues the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The third system (measures 10-13) concludes the piece with a final vocal phrase and piano accompaniment.

# Goin' Home

from Symphony No. 9, "From the New World," Op. 95

ANTONÍN DVORÁK (1841-1904)

Setting by William Arms Fisher

Arranged by Paula Robison

Largo

7

12

*p* *mp* *pp* *mf* *p* *pp*

*f* *sfp*



# Three Preludes

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898-1937)

Arranged by Paula Robison

## I.

**Allegro ben ritmato e deciso** (♩ = c. 100)

*f con licenza*

*ff*

8ba-1

8ba-1

8ba-1

6

*f*

8ba-1

11

(RH)

**PRELUDES FOR PIANO (aka THREE PRELUDES FOR PIANO)**

By GEORGE GERSHWIN

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