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)





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Three Preludes (Gershwin)



NOTES BY PAULA ROBISON

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



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Dizzy Fingers

ZEZ CONFREY (1895-1971) Arranged by Paula Robison Special Effects by Timothy Hester Presto, bouncy (not swung)

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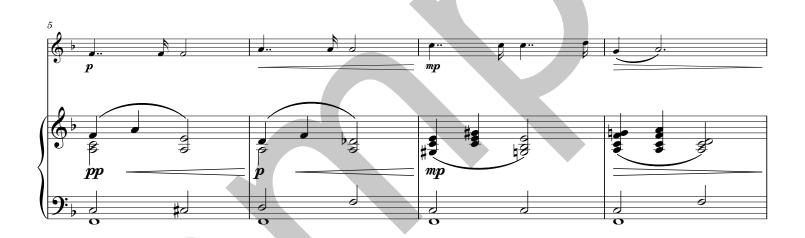
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Steal Away

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







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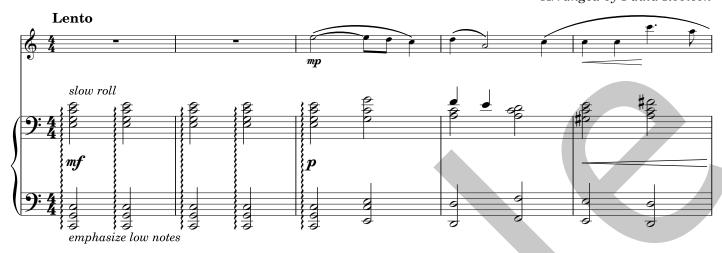
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Deep River

AFRICAN-AMERICAN SPIRITUAL Setting by Harry T. Burleigh

Arranged by Paula Robison







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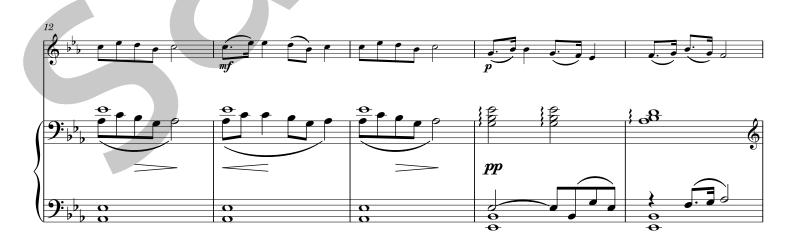
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Goin' Home

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







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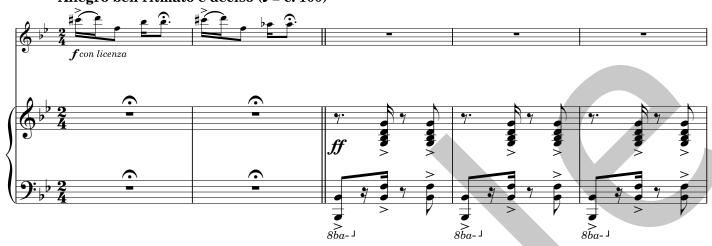
Three Preludes

I.

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898-1937)

Arranged by Paula Robison

Allegro ben ritmato e deciso (= c. 100)







PRELUDES FOR PIANO (aka THREE PRELUDES FOR PIANO)

By GEORGE GERSWHIN

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