



# Waterbury Symphony Orchestra

LEIF BJALAND, MUSIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR

## Rhapsody in June

A Celebration of Two Masters of Swing

Andrew Armstrong, piano • Alex Rybeck, piano • Maria Wirries, vocals

Sunday, June 13, 2021 • 4 p.m., Five Points Center for the Arts

**John Stafford Smith**  
(1750 – 1836)  
Lyrics: Francis Scott Key  
arr: Paul Clark

**Star-Spangled Banner**

**George Gershwin**  
(1898-1937)  
original arr/orch: Don Rose  
orch: Jeremy Goodman

**Girl Crazy (Overture)**

**Edward “Duke” Ellington**  
(1899-1974)  
arr: Howard Jackson

**It Don’t Mean a Thing**

**Edward “Duke” Ellington**

**I’m Beginning to See the Light**  
Maria Wirries, Vocals  
Alex Rybeck, Piano

**George Gershwin**

**Summertime**  
Maria Wirries, Vocals  
Alex Rybeck, Piano

**George Gershwin**  
**Edward “Duke” Ellington**

**Medley: Someone to Watch Over Me/In a Sentimental Mood**  
Maria Wirries, Vocals  
Alex Rybeck, Piano

**Edward “Duke” Ellington**  
arr: Morton Gould, add’l orch: Jeremy Goodman

**Solitude**

arr: Lou Halmey

**Jubilee Stomp**

**George Gershwin**

**By Strauss**  
Maria Wirries, Vocals  
Alex Rybeck, Piano

**I’ve Got a Crush On You**  
Maria Wirries, Vocals  
Alex Rybeck, Piano

**Edward “Duke” Ellington**  
**Billy Strayhorn**

**Take the A Train**

**Edward “Duke Ellington & Juan Tizol**  
arr: Will Hudson

**Caravan**

**George Gershwin**  
arr: Jeremy Goodman

**Strike Up the Band**

**George Gershwin**

**Lets Call the Whole Thing Off**  
Maria Wirries, Vocals  
Alex Rybeck, Piano

**Embraceable You\***

**Edward “Duke” Ellington**  
add’l arr: Jeremy Goodman

**New World A-Comin’**  
Andrew Armstrong, Piano

**George Gershwin**  
arr: Ferde Grofé

**Rhapsody in Blue**  
Andrew Armstrong, Piano

\**Embraceable You* is a sing-a-long.  
Lyrics are included in this program.



# Waterbury Symphony

## Personnel

Leif Bjaland, Music Director & Conductor

Andrew Armstrong, Piano Soloist

Alex Rybeck, Piano Soloist

Maria Wirries, Vocals

### VIOLIN

Alyce Cognetta Bertz, Concertmaster  
Janet Jacobson

### BASS

Dave Daddario

### CLARINET

Jim Forgey, Principal  
Mary Jane Kubeck-Rodgers

### FRENCH HORN

Bob Hoyle, Principal  
Eric Brummitt

### SAXOPHONE

John Mastroianni  
James Antonucci  
Jon Ball  
Jeff Taylor

### TRUMPET

John Charles Thomas, Principal  
Ryan Storms  
Gino Villarreal

### TROMBONE

Jordan Jacobson, Principal  
Garrett Mendez

### PERCUSSION

Gene Bozzi  
Lee Caron

### PIANO

James Santucci

### BANJO/GUITAR

Nicholas DiFabbio

### INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dr. Matthew Krumholtz

### LIBRARIAN

Amy Jones

### MARKETING & ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

Andrea Nyquist

### OPERATIONS MANAGER

Doug Donato

### PERSONNEL MANAGER

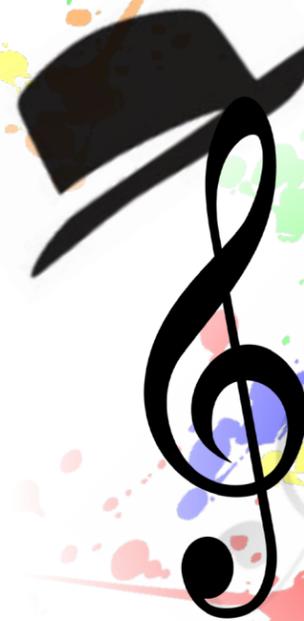
John Charles Thomas

### PRODUCTION MANAGER

Keith Paul

# In Gratitude

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Norman Drubner is a long-time supporter of the Waterbury Symphony Orchestra and the *Great American Songbook Project*, intensive weekend-long workshop for talented young singers, who are coached in music from the 1920's, 30's, 40's, and 50's, collectively known as "The Great American Songbook." The week culminates in a concert for the community.

His generosity represents a larger commitment to fostering opportunities for young artists.



# Embraceable You

Please sing along!

Embrace me, my sweet  
embraceable you!

Embrace me,  
you irreplaceable you!

Just one look at you, my heart grew  
tipsy in me

You and you alone bring out  
the gypsy in me!

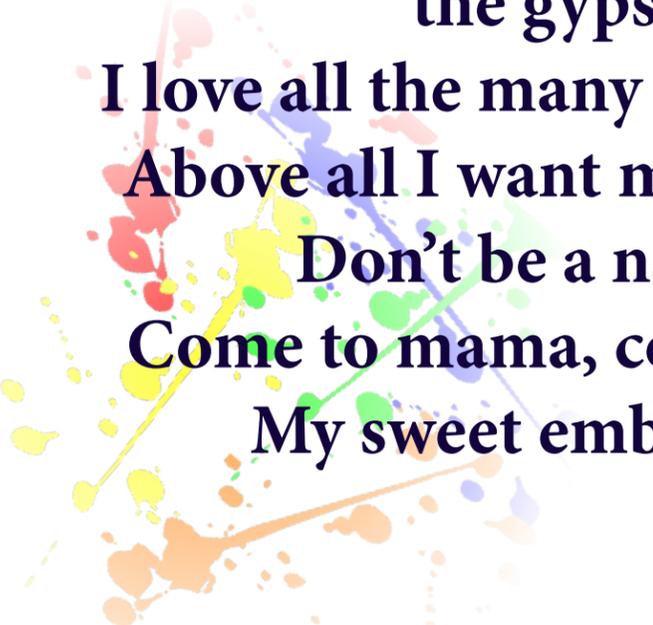
I love all the many charms about you!

Above all I want my arms about you

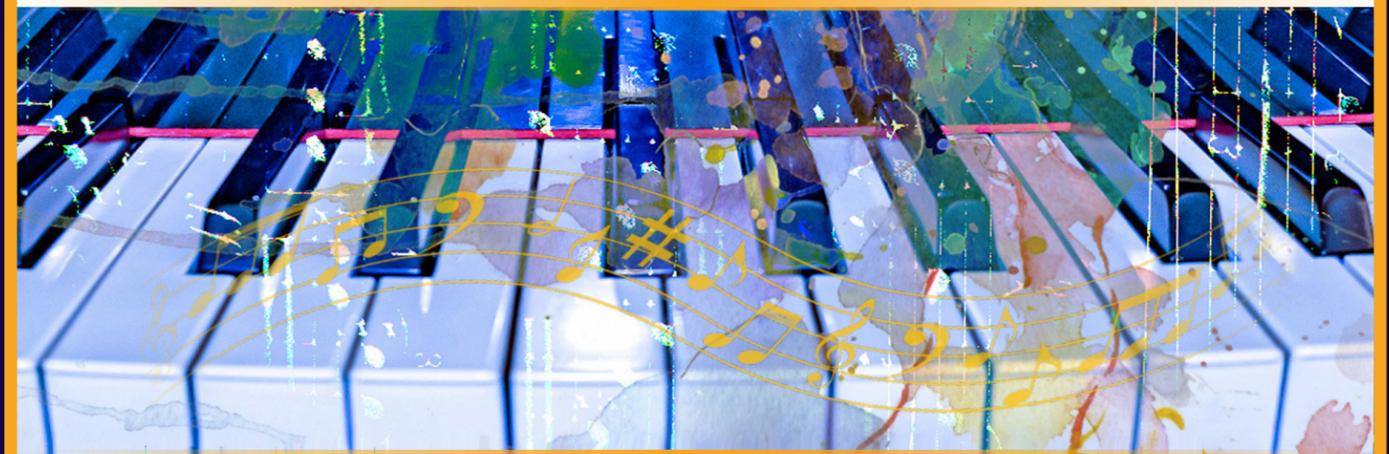
Don't be a naughty baby

Come to mama, come to mama, do!

My sweet embraceable you!



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# Andrew Armstrong

Praised by critics for his passionate expression and dazzling technique, pianist **Andrew Armstrong** has delighted audiences across Asia, Europe, Latin America, Canada, and the United States, including performances at Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, and Warsaw's National Philharmonic.

Andrew's orchestral engagements across the globe have seen him perform a sprawling repertoire of more than 55 concertos with orchestra. He has performed with such conductors as Peter Oundjian, Itzhak Perlman, Günther Herbig, Stefan Sanderling, Jean-Marie Zeitouni, and Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, and has appeared in chamber music concerts with the Elias, Alexander, American, and Manhattan String Quartets, and also as a member of the Caramoor Virtuosi, Boston Chamber Music Society, Seattle Chamber Music Society, and the Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players.

In addition to directing Chamber Music on Main at the Columbia Museum of Art (SC) and the Chamber Music Camp at Green Lake Festival of Music (WI), Andrew is devoted to outreach programs and playing for children. In addition to his many concerts, his performances are heard regularly on National Public Radio and WQXR, New York City's premier classical music station.

Mr. Armstrong lives in Massachusetts, with his wife Esty, their three children Jack (14), Elise (9), and Gabriel (2), and their two dogs Comet & Dooker.



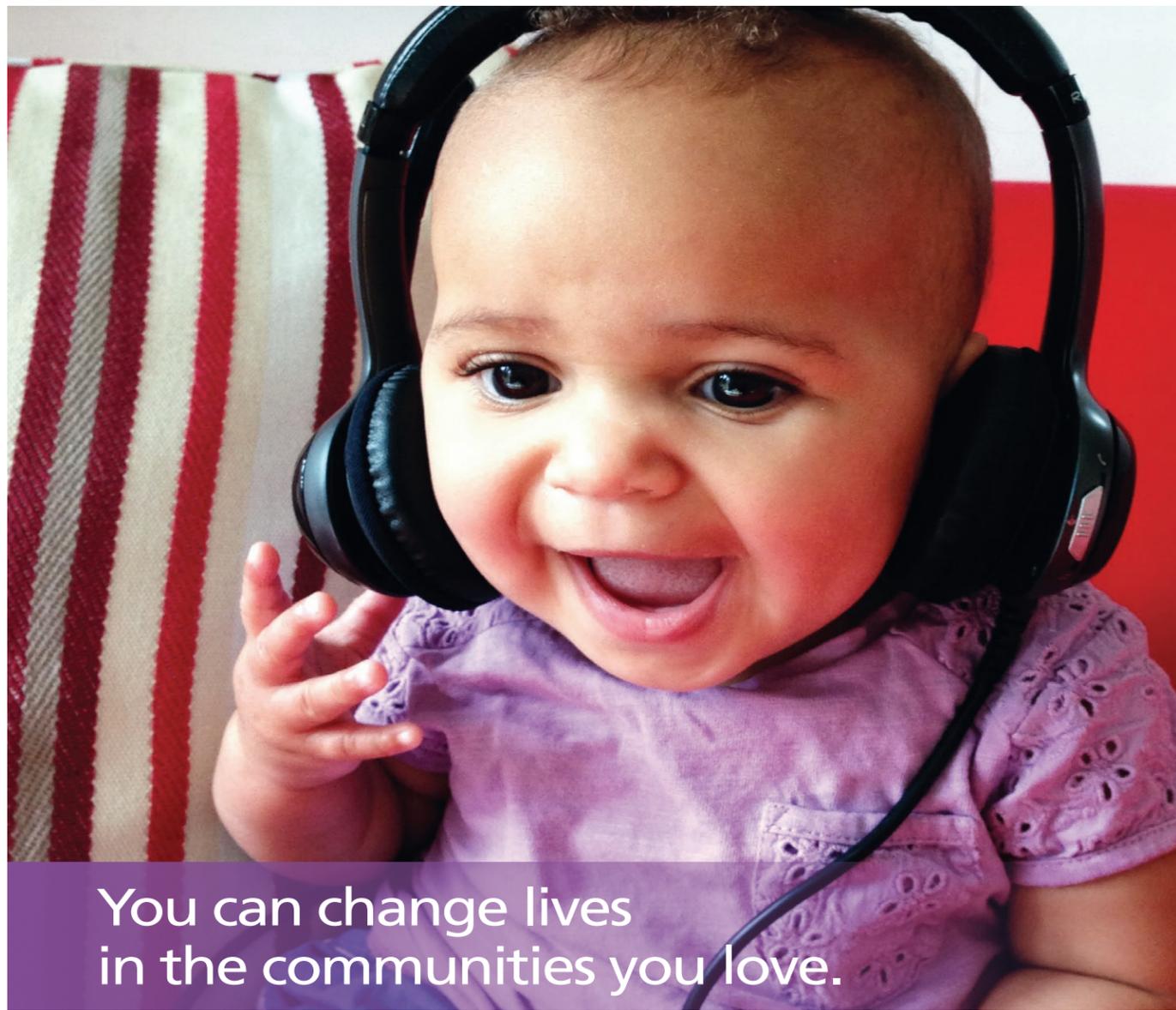
# Alex Rybeck

**Alex Rybeck** is a musical director, composer, arranger, and pianist, best-known for his work in concerts and cabarets, on recordings, and in the theater. His Broadway credits include *Merrily We Roll Along* (directed by Hal Prince) and *Grand Hotel* (directed by Tommy Tune). Regionally, he conducted the world premiere of *What the World Needs Now* (at The Old Globe), starring Sutton Foster, earning personal praise from Burt Bacharach. Among the many artists he has worked with are Liz and Ann Hampton Callaway, Faith Prince, Michael Feinstein, Julie Wilson, Karen Mason, Jeff Harnar, The McGuire Sisters, Eartha Kitt, Amanda McBroom, Donna McKechnie, Jane Olivor, Jason Graae, Lee Roy Reams, Todd Murray, Tovah Feldshuh, Celia Berk, Metropolitan Opera diva Roberta Peters, "Voice of Hollywood" Marni Nixon, and the legendary Kitty Carlisle Hart, to mention merely a few. His song "What a Funny Boy He Is" was recorded by the late Nancy LaMott.



A graduate of Oberlin College, and the NYU Musical Theater Writing Program (where he was mentored by Stephen Sondheim, Arthur Laurents, Stephen Schwartz, Leonard Bernstein, and Comden & Green), he has presented several evenings of his music in New York, selling out 54 Below and The Metropolitan Room. Among the lyricists he has written with are Carol Hall, Bob Levy, Barbara Fried, Sally Mayes, and the late Michael Stewart. He has earned numerous awards (MAC, Bistro, Nightlife, BroadwayWorld.com, etc.) for musical direction and songwriting. He is a member of ASCAP, the Dramatists Guild, and the New York Songwriters Alliance.





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**Maria Wirries** is a graduate of the musical theatre program at Penn State. She was most recently seen in the Broadway traveling company of *Dear Even Hansen*. Her other theatre credits include the Broadway revival workshop of *Once on This Island*; *The Artist Series Hot and Cole*; Penn State School of Theatre's *Be More Chill*, *Sweet Charity*, *Hair*, *Titanic*, and The Players Theatre's Master Class. Maria also performs solo cabarets and often collaborates with the Sarasota Orchestra on their Master Works series.

Maria has a huge appreciation for new work and has performed newly commissioned pieces by composers and artists James Grant, Dick Hyman, Alex Rybeck, and Sheridan Seyfried. At Penn State, she also participated in a commission project of a new theatre piece written by Mike Reid and Sarah Schlesinger as well as participating in the world premier of *Love in Hate Nation*, a Joe Iconis musical.



Maria also writes her own songs that can be heard on Spotify, iTunes, and all other streaming services.



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*for sharing his many talents with the  
Waterbury Symphony Orchestra!*



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## Program Notes

Is there such a thing as “American” music, melodies and sounds that portray the American experience? American music is indeed varied and wondrous, and it was George Gershwin and Duke Ellington who were among the great composers who captured an American sound in their compositions. They knew each other, studied each other’s works, and left a glorious and enduring legacy of music, jazz-inflected music, American music. This afternoon, the WSO and guest soloists, under the baton of Maestro Leif Bjaland, will offer a broad selection of beloved and favorite tunes and masterpieces from these two American icons.

### Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington (April 29, 1899 – May 24, 1974)

*New World a-Comin’*  
*It Don’t Mean a Thing if it Ain’t Got that Swing*  
*I’m Beginning to see the Light*  
*In a Sentimental Mood*  
*Solitude*  
*Jubilee Stomp*  
*Take the A Train*  
*Caravan*



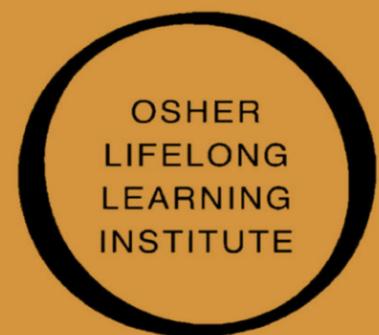
Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington was an American composer, pianist, and jazz orchestra leader, who blazed a musical trail in an extraordinary and highly successful career spanning six decades. He wrote over one thousand compositions, creating not only many jazz classics but also leaving the largest recorded personal jazz legacy in American history.

The Waterbury Symphony Orchestra and Duke Ellington have an important historical relationship. On March 26, 1963, Ellington and a jazz trio from his famed orchestra joined the WSO in an extraordinary concert at the State Theater. (The State Theater stood across the street from the Palace Theater, on the current site of the University of Connecticut Waterbury campus). In a concert bookended by Mendelssohn and Mozart, Ellington and his sidemen offered *Take the A Train*, *Sophisticated Lady* and several other jazz classics, and then Ellington performed as piano soloist with the full WSO orchestra in his 1943 work, *New World A-Comin’*.

The musicologist Paul Philips has written on the origins of this symphonic composition: In his 1973 autobiography *Music Is My Mistress*, Ellington recalled that he composed *New World a-Comin’* in 1943 during his band’s four-week engagement in New York City “at the Capitol Theater on Fifty-first and Broadway with Lena Horne as co-star ... The title was suggested by Lushinton Roi Ottley’s best-selling book of the same name, “*New World A-Coming: Inside Black America*.” It was premiered at Carnegie Hall on 11th December 1943.

Ottley envisioned improved conditions for blacks in postwar America: “...a new world is a-coming with the sweep and fury of the Resurrection.” Ellington wrote in his memoirs that “I visualized this new world as a place in the distant future, where there would be no war, no greed, no categorization, no non-believers, where love was unconditional, and no pronoun was good enough for God.” In 1983, Ellington’s original version was later orchestrated for piano solo and jazz band by Maurice Peres, Symphony Orchestra. The WSO will perform the central section of *New World A-Comin’* this afternoon.

No homework. No tests. Just learning fun for adults 50+.



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WATERBURY

*where learning  
never retires*

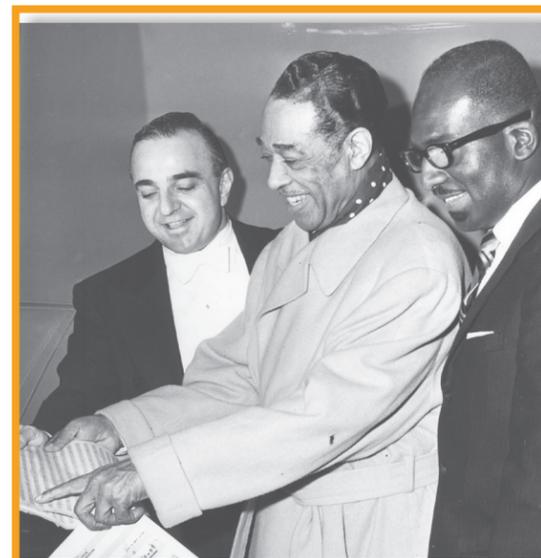
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# Many Thanks!

*The WSO Cultural Ambassador  
is sponsored by  
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## Duke Ellington

### Program Notes Continued



The year 1927 was an annus mirabilis for Ellington. He secured the gig for himself and his orchestra at the prestigious Cotton Club (where he and his band would perform for decades) and in the same year signed a lucrative contract with agent Irving Mills, who also became one of Ellington's favorite lyricists. That year, Ellington wrote *Jubilee Stomp*, based on the tune, *Victory Rag*, by James Price Johnson. It was premiered and recorded in 1928.

Ellington's popular 1931 song, *It don't mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)*, with lyrics by Irwin Mills, became a jazz standard almost instantly, and is particularly well known in the version recorded with the great Ella Fitzgerald. Her syncopated and brilliant scatting on the refrain "Doo-ah, doo-ah, doo-ah, doo-ah, doo-ah, doo-ah," is for the ages. Ellington himself commented that the song was "an expression of a sentiment which prevailed among jazz musicians at the time." Maestro Bjaland points out that the song has instruments speaking like people, through the use of mutes, glissandi and Wawa sounds. It's a gas!

Ellington wrote the music to the song, *Solitude* (actually the title is *In My Solitude*) in 1934, again to lyrics by Irving Mills. A music critic opined that the

"song is both optimistic and somber, with the conflicting emotions of bitter loneliness and fond remembrance." The song is best known in several recordings made in the 1940s and 1950s by legendary jazz vocalist Billie Holiday, which were haunting autobiographical. Ted Gioia, in his jazz bible, *The Jazz Standards: A Guide to the Repertoire* commented that Holiday's covers combined "the world weariness of the words matching to an almost disturbing degree her late-career persona."

As with a number of Ellington tunes, the musical idea for the 1936 song *Caravan* originated from one of the musicians in his band, in this case the trombonist Juan Tizol. The clarinetist Barney Bigard and his Jaztopaters premiered the song on the Variety label in December of that year, with Ellington and his Orchestra recording it on the Master label in May 1937.

It was Ellington's long-time composer and arranger Billy Strayhorn (1915 – 1967) who had the idea for the tune, *Take the A Train*. It soon became both a jazz standard and a signature tune of the Ellington Orchestra. Strayhorn wrote the music in 1939, with the Ellington band using lyrics by Joya Sherrill. The title refers to the then-new subway service in Manhattan, which at that time went from Brooklyn into Manhattan and then up into Harlem using the Eighth Avenue line. The story goes that Ellington had offered Strayhorn a job as an arranger and sent him money to travel from his hometown of Pittsburgh to New York City. Ellington told Strayhorn that when he got to Manhattan to "take the A Train" to get to his house; and thus, another classic was born.

In 1944, Ellington teamed up with his brilliant and longstanding alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges, and the trumpeter Harry James, to compose *I'm Beginning to See the Light*, which quickly entered the canon of jazz standards.

There is another facet to Duke Ellington's brilliant compositional career that is less well-known – his choral and sacred music. His choral music comes from what he called Sacred Concerts. Ellington wrote this music late in life, as he was thinking about his mortality and becoming more spiritual. Between 1965 and his death in 1974, Ellington expressed his spirituality in performances of his three Sacred Concerts at cathedrals and churches throughout the United States and Europe. These concerts were jazz-based, religious musical revues featuring the full Ellington orchestra, with dancers, choirs, and gospel singers. Choral director Philip Berger commented that "Ellington was a very spiritual man, but his music is an expression of all the sides of him. He didn't compartmentalize. That's the beauty of his music. In his sacred music there is the profane. And in his profane music, there is the sacred."

# Program Notes

## George Gershwin

(September 26, 1898 – July 11, 1937)

*Rhapsody in Blue*

*Girl Crazy Overture:*

- *I've Got Rhythm*

- *But not for Me*

*Summertime*

*Someone to Watch over Me*

*By Strauss*

*I've Got a Crush on You*

*Strike up the Band*

*Let's Call the Whole Thing Off*

*Embraceable You*



“George Gershwin is at work on a jazz concerto....” So went an article in the January 3, 1924 edition of The New York Tribune that discussed bandleader Paul Whiteman’s “Experiment in Modern Music,” a project that traced the history of jazz. The problem was that when the composer and pianist George Gershwin read the article the next morning, he had no idea why he was mentioned as he was not working on any concerto!

In fact, in January 1924, George Gershwin was busily ensconced on Broadway, composing and leading rehearsals for the musical, *Sweet Little Devil*. With pressure from Whiteman, Gershwin eventually acceded and began to write a composition in a jazz style for two pianos. It was completed just three weeks later, on February 3rd, 1924. Gershwin was not an arranger, but Whiteman already had that eventuality covered, with his composer/arranger Ferde Grofé (1892–1972) at the ready to convert the two-piano score into a version for solo piano and jazz band. The world premiere took place on February 12th, 1924, at Aeolian Hall in New York City; Paul Whiteman conducted his orchestra with Gershwin himself as piano soloist in that performance. Two years later, Grofé followed up his piano and jazz band version with a transcription for solo piano and symphony orchestra, which is the form in which most concertgoers know it today (Note: This afternoon, the WSO is performing the original piano and jazz band version of *Rhapsody in Blue* as premiered in 1924. The instrumentation is: solo piano, pairs of violins, clarinets, French horns and trombones; 4 saxophones, string bass, banjo and percussion.)

While there is no doubt that *Rhapsody in Blue* is a jazzy composition, with those wondrous skipped beats, brilliantly syncopated chords and bluesy modulations, its central portion is warm and melodic, channeling the romanticism of Sergei Rachmaninoff more than the jazz of Jelly Roll Morton or Charlie Parker.

The first sound you hear in *Rhapsody* is that instantly recognizable ascending glissando by solo Bb clarinet. Gershwin originally wrote out each of the notes, with these very specific instructions to the clarinetist: “trill on low F and follow that with a seventeen-note scale.” However, Ross Gorman, the clarinetist of the Paul Whiteman Orchestra for the premiere performance, had other plans. He had gotten so bored in the many rehearsals, that he decided to change things up a bit. He played the low F trill, but then morphed it, blending and bending the individual written notes into one seamless slide, as if he were playing a high-pitched trombone. That glissando was like a shot heard ‘round the world; the rest, as they say, is history.

# Special Thanks



# Special Thanks



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# George Gershwin

## Program Notes Continued

*Rhapsody in Blue* is brilliantly conceived. It contains a veritable cornucopia of catchy rhythms that seamlessly leads into a sweeping romantic melody. The work transformed Gershwin from novice 25-year old Tin Pan Alley songwriter into American legend, a musical icon who helped bring global fame to that “experiment in modern music” called Jazz.

Gershwin went on to write many other popular tunes, among the most well-known being *Someone to Watch over Me* from the 1926 musical, *Oh Kay!*, *I've Got Rhythm*, *Embraceable You* and *But Not for Me*, which are all from the 1930 musical hit, *Girl Crazy*. The song, *Strike up the Band*, is both title and hit tune from the 1926 eponymous musical. Gershwin's clever 1936 paean to classical music, *By Strauss*, pays homage to those famed Austrian composers of waltzes, Johann Strauss and his son, the “Waltz King” Johann Strauss Jr. Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire famously introduced the song *Let's Call the Whole Thing Off* in a duet dance routine (on roller skates, no less!), from Gershwin's 1937 musical, *Shall We Dance*. You likely know it best by its opening lyric: “You like tomato, I like to-mah-to...”

If any American musical could be considered operatic, *Porgy and Bess* (1935, with music by George and lyrics by Ira Gershwin), would be a top contender. The lovely aria/lullaby, *Summertime*, is a centerpiece of that poignant and lovely American opera. *Summertime* is one of the finest of the many melodies Gershwin wrote, evoking both jazz elements and the song style of blacks in southeastern United States at the turn of the twentieth century.

31<sup>st</sup> Annual Picnic & Pops

# BROADWAY Is Back!



## Waterbury Symphony Orchestra

LEIF BJALAND, MUSIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR

Saturday, July 10, 2021 • 4 p.m.

[www.waterburysymphony.org](http://www.waterburysymphony.org) • 203-574-4283

Hollow Park, Woodbury • General Admission: \$25 (Children 17 & under: \$10)

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Rain Date: Sunday, July 11, 2021 • 4 p.m.

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**Vincent P. de Luise, M.D.**

*Cultural Ambassador, Waterbury Symphony Orchestra  
Assistant Professor, Yale University School of Medicine.*

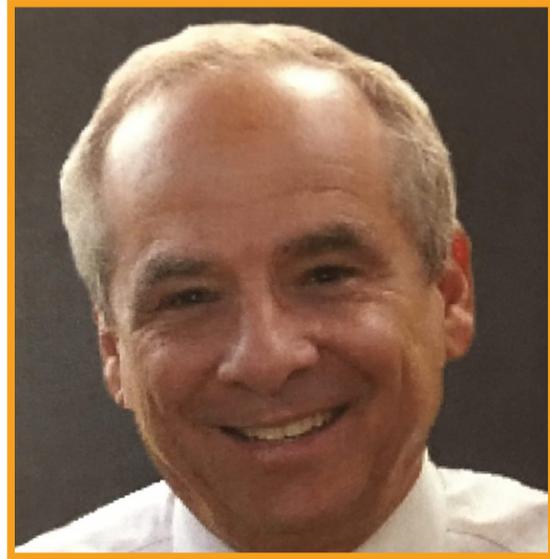
Vincent P. de Luise, M.D. is the Cultural Ambassador of the Waterbury Symphony Orchestra, a post created by the WSO in 2016. In this role, Dr. de Luise offers several of each season's pre-concert insights, area lectures on music, and chamber music recitals, and is a program annotator for the Symphony.

Dr. de Luise is an Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology at Yale University School of Medicine, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology at Weill Cornell Medical College and a Distinguished Visiting Scholar in Medical Humanities at Stony Brook University School of Medicine. He is a Magna cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Princeton University and the Weill Cornell Medical College. He performed his medical internship at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF), his ophthalmology residency at the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute of the University of Miami and was a Heed Foundation Fellow at the Proctor Foundation of UCSF in corneal diseases and transplant surgery.

Dr. de Luise has had a successful 30-year career as an eye physician and surgeon and was named to Woodward-White's "Best Doctors in America." He is a senior honor award recipient of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and program chair of the Connecticut Society of Eye Physicians. He is on the editorial boards of the international journal, *Cornea*, and the journal, *Eye World*. He lectures nationally and internationally in ophthalmology, as well as in the domain of the medical humanities.

Dr. de Luise is deeply involved at the intersection of music, art and medicine. He serves on the Humanities and Medicine Committee and the Music and Medicine Initiative at Weill Cornell Medical College as advisor and program annotator. As a 2013 Harvard University Fellow in its Advanced Leadership Institute, he developed a program, medical humanities education for medical schools, which he is working on at a national level. He is a clarinetist and an active chamber music recitalist. He has studied with the principal clarinetists of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, the Florida Philharmonic and the New York City Ballet, and currently studies with clarinet pedagogue and Van Doren Concert Artist, Jenny McClay.

Apart from his work as Cultural Ambassador of the Waterbury Symphony Orchestra, Dr. de Luise is president of the Connecticut Summer Opera Foundation, serves on the Board of the Connecticut Virtuosi Orchestra and writes frequently about music and the arts. His published articles and essays on the humanities and medicine are archived at the Hektoen International Journal of Medical Humanities (<https://hek-int.org/>) and at his blog, A Musical Vision ([www.amusicalvision.blogspot.com](http://www.amusicalvision.blogspot.com)).



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