

West Virginia University  
College of Creative Arts  
School of Music

presents the

# West Virginia University Symphony Orchestra

Jeffrey Siegfried, *saxophone*  
Mitchell Arnold, *conductor*

Thursday, November 17, 2022  
7:30 p.m.

Antoinette E. Falbo Theatre  
Canady Creative Arts Center



~Program~

**Afro-American Symphony**

William Grant Still  
(1895-1978)

“Longing” – Moderato assai

“Sorrow” – Adagio

“Humor” – Animato

“Sincerity” – Lento, con risoluzione; Vivace

**Façades**, from *Glassworks*

Philip Glass  
(b.1937)

Jeffrey Siegfried, *soprano saxophone*

Patrick Smith, *soprano saxophone*

*Brief pause*

**An American in Paris**

George Gershwin  
(1898-1937)

---

# **The West Virginia University Symphony Orchestra**

Mitchell Arnold, *conductor*

## **Graduate Assistant Conductor**

Shaun Hancher

### **Violin**

Sean Elliott, *concertmaster*  
Irene Guerra Rudas,  
*principal second violin*  
Trixie Calissie  
Isaac Chorpening  
Shaun Hancher  
Ana Lasker  
Julianna Perkowski  
Shairah Sanchez  
Hannah Tackett  
Jeremiah Woods

### **Viola**

Clayton Heinecke, *principal*  
William Alderman  
Elyssa Allen  
Savannah Hochberg  
Andrew McGuire  
Talitha Muggeridge  
Madison Shaffer

### **Violoncello**

Gerardo Sánchez Pastrana,  
*principal*  
Nicholas Bedway  
Jocelyn Gilliam  
Ruth Hartmann  
Avery Knutsen  
Paige Wallace

### **Contrabass**

Hilda Aviles, *principal*  
Mason Nixon  
Quinn Roberts  
Aurora Stone

### **Harp**

Katherine Przybylski

### **Celesta**

Ryan Walker

### **Flute/Piccolo**

Greta Hulterstrum  
Hanna Noh  
Ethan Nylander

### **Oboe/English Horn**

Opal Curry  
Evan Klein  
Geoffrey Madge

### **Clarinet/Bass Clarinet**

Mandi Bearjar  
Margaret Benison  
Nicholas Schlie  
Natalie Alfera

### **Bassoon**

Madison Cardenas  
Eli Hall

### **Saxophones**

Phillip Keefover  
Luke Mazure  
Benjamin McFarren  
Patrick Smith

### **Horn**

Ksusha Billings  
Annie Moon  
Jacob Shear  
Haley Smith  
Chloë Sodonis

### **Trumpet/Flugelhorn**

Mark Humbert  
Vanderbilt Singleton  
Philip Wilfong

### **Trombone**

Jakob Baker  
Hunter Karpulk  
Ryan Hogue, *bass*

### **Tuba**

Matthew Tatz

### **Timpani and Percussion,**

George Kester, *section leader*  
Jonah Eggert  
Logan Karwoski  
Brandon Saghy

### **Banjo**

Isaac McCarthy

### **Graduate Assistants**

Shaun Hancher  
Chloë Sodonis

## Afro-American Symphony

William Grant Still

*William Grant Still completed what was his first symphony in 1930. The first performance was given by the Rochester Symphony Orchestra led by Howard Hanson in 1931. It forms the middle of a trilogy of works begun in 1924 that describe the Afro-American reality: The symphonic poem "Africa" represents its roots, the Afro-American Symphony the life of blacks in America, and the Symphony No.2 "Song of a new race" the vision of an integrated society. Still scored the symphony for 3 flutes (3<sup>rd</sup> doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, gong, triangle, cymbals, vibraphone, wood block, harp, celesta, banjo, and strings. WVUSO thanks conductor Charles Latshaw for generously providing us with newly corrected parts and score.*

Still, after leaving his native Arkansas, studied for a time at Wilberforce College and Oberlin College, then eventually made his way to New York city where by 1916 he was working for W.C. Handy as an oboist and arranger. After joining Eubie Blake's pit orchestra for Blake's musical, *Shuffle Along*, a key musical event of the "Harlem Renaissance," Still studied composition with George Chadwick and then became a protégé of Edgard Varèse. Still's early compositions reflected Varèse's ultra-modernist style, but by the middle 1920's Still began to compose using the traditions and aesthetics of his own Black cultural heritage.

With its mix of blues and spiritual, both in its melodic shapes and, significantly, in much of the symphony's harmonic structures, *The Afro-American Symphony* broke new ground in the symphonic concert hall. Still wrote: "I knew that I wanted to write a symphony, I knew it should be an American work. I wanted to show how blues, often considered as a low-level genre of expression, could be raised to the highest musical level." For him, the *blues* and *spiritual* represented related forms of expression, one secular, one religious. One can hear this in the first two themes of the opening movement.

After completing the symphony, Still added excerpts of four poems by Paul Laurence Dunbar to the score for each movement. The first three are in dialect; all four reflected what Still considered at the time to be the poetic essence of each movement. Although he later felt he had erred in tying the symphony to such specific verbal images, the words of the third excerpt, taken from a longer Dunbar poem about Emancipation, suggest an ironic, even subversive interpretation. Notably, and for the first time in symphonic music, Still included the banjo in this movement, familiar in minstrel music and the modern version of an instrument brought to the US by African slaves. I quote the words of the late musicologist Rae Linda Brown:

It ("Humor") plays on the meaning of the word "scherzo" as a joke, revealing Still in the role of Trickster. The whole of Dunbar's poem shows how effectively Still used the "minstrel mask" to reflect his sense of racial doubleness. However trivial the lines quoted, the poem is in fact about Emancipation and citizenship, matters not at all trivial, thus pointing to the Scherzo as the crux of the symphony.

In this same movement, Still briefly includes a secondary tune that is unmistakably reminiscent of Gershwin's "I got rhythm" heard in Gershwin's musical *Girl Crazy* which opened earlier in 1930. The relationship between Gershwin and Still is direct: for a while, Gershwin studied orchestration with Still. Many around Still in 1930 have expressed their belief that Still composed the tune/rhythm first, but Still himself never made any explicit claims of ownership. What is fact is that for Still it lasts for a few measures, is notably accented at the front of the figure, not in the middle, and the entire phrase is differently shaped. As quickly as it appears, it disappears, never to be used again in the movement. Gershwin built an entire song out of it.

On the first page of the conductor's score are two statements by Still framing the excerpts from Dunbar's poetry. I have added Still's movement titles in parentheses.

\*\*\*\*

With humble thanks to God, the source of inspiration.

*William Grant Still*

**I. Moderato assai ("Longing")**

All my life long twell de night has pas'  
Let de wo'k come ez it will,  
So dat I fin' you, my honey, at last,  
Somewhah des ovah de hill.

**II. Adagio ("Sorrow")**

It's moughty tiahsome layin' 'roun'  
Dis sorrer-laden earfly groun',  
An' oftentimes I thinks, thinks, I  
'Twould be a sweet t'ing des to die,  
An go 'long home.

**III. Animato ("Humor")**

An' we'll shout ouah halleluyahs,  
On dat mighty reck'nin' day.

**IV. Lento, con risoluzione ("Sincerity")**

Be proud, my Race, in mind and soul.  
Thy name is writ on Glory's scroll  
In characters of fire.  
High 'mid the clouds of Fame's bright sky,  
Thy banner's blazoned folds now fly,  
And truth shall lift them higher.

*Paul Laurence Dunbar*

He who develops his God-given gifts with view to aiding humanity, manifests truth.

Still's daughter Judith more recently said that "the First Symphony shows him recognizing, with joy, that God had given him a gift that would change the thinking of the public."

### **Façades**, from *Glassworks*

Philip Glass

*Philip Glass initially composed Façades for the New York "Wall Street" sequence of Geoffrey Reggio's groundbreaking experimental film Koyanisqatsi, "Life out of Balance" released in 1982. The music ultimately was not used in the film and so Glass retitled it and included it in his 1982 LP Glassworks recorded by The Glass Ensemble. It was originally scored for two synthesizers, two soprano saxophones, viola and cello although most often it is performed by two synths and two saxophones only. The version we play tonight is re-scored for strings and two soprano saxophones.*

Apart from a 2-measure "introduction" and 8-measure "coda" the structure of *Façades* is a 22-measure harmonic pattern, containing, with some minor voice-leading based non-chord tones, only 3 different harmonies. The pattern is played 6 times. Glass layers the solo and secondary saxophone parts to create an arch of activity that builds and subsides. The music's process is readily evident, and it is reminiscent of Javanese Gamelan music where repeating cycles form the foundation for a master musician's solo.

### **An American in Paris**

George Gershwin

*George Gershwin's tone poem was first performed by the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York (shortly to become known as the New York Philharmonic) in 1928. It was recorded in early 1929 by the so-called Victor Symphony Orchestra (with Gershwin himself at the celesta and supervising the production) in February of 1929. Gershwin began sketching and developing his musical ideas during a trip to Paris in 1926. During a second trip to Paris in 1928 he developed more ideas and completed the work in New York. Tonight's performance uses a newly edited score that restores the original orchestration, articulations, dynamics, etc. including, most noticeably, having the 3 saxophonists playing 8 saxophones and the taxi horns pitched as Gershwin intended. Gershwin orchestrated the work for 3 flutes (3<sup>rd</sup> doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 3 saxophonists (playing combinations of soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, snare drum, wood blocks, cymbals, triangle, tom-toms, ratchet, glockenspiel, xylophone, 4 taxi horns, celesta, and strings.*

To some extent the subject of the music's narrative could very well be Gershwin himself, or a fictional version of the composer. The sights and sounds of Paris are encountered by the fictional American briskly walking from scene to scene. At

one moment he hears sounds from a dance hall, encounters perhaps a wagon drawn by a braying equine, and of course is startled time and again by the sounds of taxi horns. Perhaps even a “lady of the evening” saunters by and attempts to engage in conversation.

Specific references may be unclear, but without doubt the second portion of the work signals a change from outer experience – Paris – to inner experience: wistful, longing memories of home. The “American” becomes homesick for, rather specifically, New York City. Still physically in Paris, our American turns inward to memories of blues, Charlestons, and soft-shoes. Ah, to be back home in Manhattan, comfortably sipping a Manhattan in a dark bar. Gershwin introduces the saxophones at this very moment; they have been silent throughout the entire first half. The sounds of saxophones signal the blues – perhaps as much a memory of hearing “the blues” as sentimentally *feeling* the blues. There color marks the American’s withdrawal from the Parisian world of noisy taxi horns, Debussy cakewalks, and can-cans.

Ultimately, the American, according to Gershwin, “rises out of his stupor to realize once again that he is in the gay city of Páree.” From here on, Gershwin integrates the sounds of Paris with memories of New York.

A note about taxi horns. Gershwin searched Paris supply shops for the specific pitches he wanted, purchased a set, and brought it home to the States in 1928. Due to a somewhat misleading notational convenience, conductors since 1928 assumed different pitches. The horns we are using tonight are pitched exactly as those Gershwin purchased.

During the preparations for the opening performance by the New York Philharmonic, Gershwin was encouraged to remove articulations, slides, and even some passages thought to be a bit too blues-y for the stodgy concert hall; much is restored in the edition we use tonight. The NYPhil management also asked Gershwin to cut down on the number of saxophones required of the three musicians, from eight to only one alto, one tenor, and one baritone. Saxophonists are not regular members of an orchestra. The orchestra had to hire three and management felt it too costly to pay the contractually required doubling and tripling fees to change instruments twice. Tonight, our saxophonists play all the original eight instruments. They start on alto, tenor, bari, then switch to three sopranos and finish on three altos. Until recently, one never heard these changes.

– notes by Mitchell Arnold

---

*We thank Jamie Whoolery, Coordinator of Production Services and Facilities, Peter McCumber, Jason Zeh, and Mike McGinley of CCAC Operations, Mark Benincosa, Recording Technician, and Jodie Lewis, Administrative Associate of the School of Music, for assistance this concert, along with the College of Creative Arts, Keith Jackson, Dean, the School of Music, Sandra Schwartz, Interim Director, and West Virginia University for support of this evening's event.*

*Thanks also to Kirill Tyulkov and Timothy Richards, Piano Technicians, and to Joshua Wiger for producing the video stream of this concert.*

\*\*\*

*Dearest Friends,*

*We would like to invite you to join us by considering a gift to support our mission to educate our students and delight our audiences. Tax-deductible gifts in support of the orchestra help with music acquisitions and rentals, bringing in guest artists, taking our orchestra on tour, supporting scholarships, etc. Gifts can be made online at <https://ccarts.wvu.edu/give> by selecting "Specify Designation" and typing WVU Orchestra/2V599 into the box. You can also write a check payable to **WVU Foundation** with WVU Orchestra/2V599 in the memo section.*

## **Upcoming WVUSO concerts**

### **Sunday February 26, 2023, 2pm**

Clay Center

Charleston, WVU

Joint concert with WVU Wind Symphony


### **Thursday March 9, 7:30pm**

Young Artist Competition Concert

### **Thursday April 27, 7:30pm**

Check our website, [symphony.wvu.edu](http://symphony.wvu.edu) or <https://www.facebook.com/WVUSO> for information about our concerts.



 [wvu symphony orchestra](https://www.facebook.com/wvuorchestra)    Instagram: @wvuso

 [wvucca](https://twitter.com/wvucca)     [wvuschoolofmusic](https://www.facebook.com/wvuschoolofmusic)

[symphony.wvu.edu](http://symphony.wvu.edu)