



AN AMERICAN

RHAPSODY

caLefax



AN AMERICAN

RHAPSODY

caLefax

AN AMERICAN RHAPSODY

George Gershwin (1898-1937) arr. Raaf Hekkema
Rhapsody in Blue

1	I.	4. 55
2	II.	4. 37
3	III.	1. 53
4	IV.	2. 35
5	V.	3. 07

Harry Burleigh (1866-1949) arr. Jelte Althuis
Southland Sketches

6	III. Allegretto grazioso	2. 53
7	IV. Allegro	2. 01

Samuel Barber (1910-1981) arr. Jelte Althuis
Excursions, Op. 20

8	I. Un poco allegro	3. 13
9	II. In slow blues tempo	3. 58
10	III. Allegretto	2. 44
11	IV. Exuberant and joyous barn dance	2. 16

Florence Price (1887-1953) arr. Jelte Althuis
Sonata in E Minor

12	II. Andante	5. 29
13	I. Andante - Allegro	7. 15

Billie Holiday (1915-1959) /Arthur Herzog Jr. (1900-1983)/
Eric Dolphy (1928-1964) / Raaf Hekkema (b. 1968)

14	God Bless the Child	7. 57
----	---------------------	-------

Duke Ellington (1899-1974) /Billy Strayhorn (1915-1967) arr. Raaf Hekkema
15 Satin Doll

3. 49

Duke Ellington arr. Oliver Boekhoorn
16 In a Sentimental Mood

4. 36

Stevie Wonder (b. 1950) arr. Raaf Hekkema
17 Overjoyed

4. 06

Kinan Azmeh (b. 1976) /Raaf Hekkema
18 Airports for Reed Quintet

7. 14

Moondog (1916-1999) arr. Raaf Hekkema
19 New Amsterdam

4. 31

Total playing time: 79. 16

CALEFAX
Oliver Boekhoorn Oboe, English Horn, Duduk
Bart de Kater Clarinet
Raaf Hekkema Alto Saxophone, Solo Voice
Jelte Althuis Bass Clarinet
Alban Wesly Bassoon

An American Rhapsody

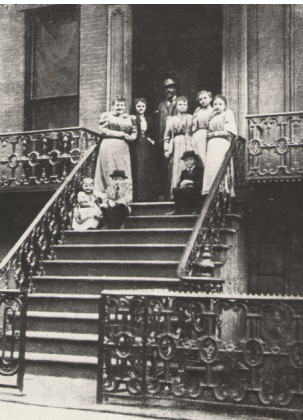
Since the turn of this century, we have been travelling across the Atlantic with Calefax once a year on tour. By now, we have appeared on stage in half of the United States and crisscrossed a few others on our travels. Touring in such a large country forges a bond with the population and its culture. We've gotten to know the country from the inside out. We've had adventures, made friends, and acquired fans. The US is also the country where Calefax has inspired the greatest number of followers: at the time of writing, the US has twenty-eight reed quintets with various activity levels. That's more than one-third of the reed quintets worldwide.

America — or more precisely, the United States — is always fascinating, both politically and culturally. Given the number of cultures and the country's complex immigration history, we're impressed by how all those people, in the two-and-a-half centuries since the country's founding, have become united. But that's only more or less the case because, of course, the differences — or contradictions — come to light when you take a closer look. Yet the American flag's *Stars and Stripes* seem to connect the people who, through the centuries, have made this their home. This album reflects America's kaleidoscopic diversity.





Jeannette Thurber



Dvořák with his family, New York

The National Conservatory of Music

In 1884, Jeannette Thurber (1850-1946), an American composer with Danish roots, opened the doors to her newly founded National Conservatory of Music. She envisioned a music school unlike any other, open to 'all races, both sexes and the disabled, irrespective of their financial position.' In 1892, in line with her visionary mission, she coaxed the Czech composer Antonín Dvořák to teach and run the new school. In so doing, she aspired to gradually shape the image of the American music world, hoping ultimately for a 'new national style of music,' which, according to Thurber, was sorely needed. The fifty-one-year-old Dvořák was initially reluctant, but he set aside his teaching duties at the Prague Conservatory and soon embarked with his entire family, eventually spending three years in New York.

In that 'new world', many European immigrants dominated musical life. Fifteen years earlier, following a tour of North America, Jacques Offenbach noted, 'America is today like a giant of a hundred

cubits, endowed with every physical gift, but lacking the one essential thing — a soul. Art is the soul of nations; it expresses in words what the purest sentiments create.' So, we can well imagine that thirty years after the devastating civil war that ended slavery (1861-1865), the United States was hungry for social and economic maturity. And crystalizing an artistic identity was undoubtedly part of that.

But why Dvořák? Dvořák had proven to be an unofficial ambassador for his mother country through his compositions, inspired by Slavic and Bohemian folk tunes. In this, he was in line with a broader European trend, because in the second half of the nineteenth century, everywhere in the arts, nationalism was beginning to make its mark. Bringing Dvořák to America was Jeannette Thurber's masterstroke.

The spirituals of Harry Burleigh's grandfather

At the new conservatory, Dvořák became acquainted with Harry Burleigh, a young African American man. Because of his formidable musical talent, Burleigh was granted a scholarship to attend the school at the somewhat advanced age of twenty-six. However, Burleigh still had to work to make ends meet, and he cleaned the building while singing spirituals he'd learned from his grandfather, who had been born into slavery. Dvořák was taken by Burleigh and his spirituals, convinced that such songs, along with the continent's indigenous music, should be a source of inspiration for American composers. The New York Herald quoted Dvořák in 1893: 'In the Negro melodies of America, I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music. They are pathetic, tender, passionate, melancholy, solemn, religious, bold, merry, gay or what you will. It is music that suits itself to any mood or purpose. There is nothing in the whole range of composition that cannot be

supplied with themes from this source. The American musician understands these tunes, and they move sentiment in him.' Dvořák later noted that it didn't much matter if American music was inspired by Black music, Creole songs, Native American tunes, or the homesick melodies of German or Norwegian immigrants. He firmly believed that the basis for good music lay within all races of that vast nation.



Harry Burleigh
© Maude Cuney

A friendship developed between Burleigh and Dvořák, leading to a close collaboration. Burleigh later became a renowned Lieder singer and a composer, primarily of art songs. In addition, he became an influential champion of African American culture. His composition *Southland Sketches* — a musical portrait of the Southern states with melodies based on traditional spirituals — has various versions. Of these, the most well-known is the one for violin and piano.

A controversy

Dvořák's statements, in the meantime, sparked a lively controversy. A group of composers calling themselves The Boston Six were up in arms. One of them, George Chadwick, said: 'Such Negro melodies as I have heard I should be sorry to see become the basis of an American school of composition.' And another member of the group, Amy Beach, opined: 'The African population of the United States is far too small for its songs to be considered "American".' In December of that same

year, 1893, Dvořák's *Ninth Symphony*, 'From the New World,' was premiered in New York's Carnegie Hall: it was a triumph. But a short time later, a performance of the work in Boston received a cooler reception. One critic claimed that the Slavic Dvořák was 'himself a member of a semi-barbaric ethnic group that was incapable of producing works on the level of a Germanic composer such as Beethoven, Brahms, or Wagner.'

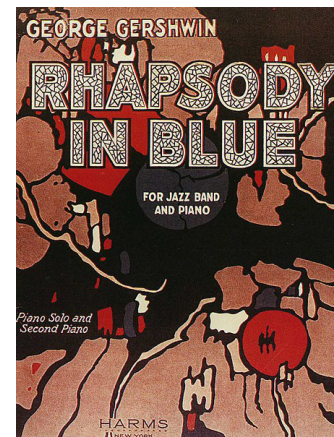
The debate reached Europe, where violinist Joseph Joachim and pianist Arthur Rubinstein were curious to hear the results of Dvořák's beliefs. However, composer Anton Bruckner and conductor Hans Richter were firmly opposed to such a tack. In this, they focussed on the unbridgeable gap between the traditions of written music and music passed down aurally.

Once Dvořák's stint at the National Conservatory of Music was over, the

school's days were numbered. Thurber's ideal-based efforts to garner government funding failed repeatedly, and the conservatory eventually lost out to private music schools.

Rhapsody in Blue

George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* is seen as the first successful American composition in line with Dvořák's principles as described above: it's a European form of composition — a rhapsody — based on jazz melodies and harmonies.



It's hard to imagine a more illustrious audience than the one at the work's premiere on 12 February 1924, including violinists Fritz Kreisler and Jascha Heifetz, along with composers Sergei Rachmaninoff, Leopold Stokowski, John Philip Sousa and Igor Stravinsky. Although they were all undoubtedly in attendance for Paul Whiteman and his Palais Royal Orchestra, they happened to witness the birth of a musically hybrid international hit. Gershwin, born to Russian Jewish parents, started his career recording piano rolls. Then, at a young age, he found work on Broadway, where the celebrated bandleader Paul Whiteman discovered him. When Whiteman asked the young Gershwin to contribute to what was billed as a spectacular *Experiment in Modern Music*, he said he didn't have the time. But shortly afterwards, when Gershwin's name appeared in the promotional campaign, he nevertheless felt obliged to provide a piece.

Plagued by a busy schedule, Gershwin describes composing *Rhapsody in Blue*

in just three weeks: 'it was on the train, with its steely rhythms, its rattle-ty bang, that is so often so stimulating to a composer... I frequently hear music in the very heart of the noise. And there I suddenly heard — and even saw on paper — the complete construction of the rhapsody, from beginning to end. [...] I heard it as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America, of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our metropolitan madness.' *Rhapsody in Blue* became an overnight success. Incidentally, the iconic clarinet glissando with which the piece opens was a little joke added by Whiteman's clarinetist to make the work sound even jazzier than it was. Gershwin insisted on keeping the glissando, which was borrowed from the Klezmer tradition.

Excursions

Samuel Barber was born to a well-to-do family, where his talent was recognised early. A brilliant career as a composer awaited him after the success of his now all-too-familiar *Adagio for Strings*, which is,

in fact, the slow movement of a string quartet he composed when he was just twenty-six.

Arturo Toscanini, who conducted the premiere of the *Adagio's* string orchestra version, is credited with the work's fame; it has become standard repertoire at many memorial concerts.

Regarding his 1942 piano work, Barber wrote, 'these are "Excursions" in small classical forms into regional American idioms. Their rhythmic characteristics, as well as their source in folk material and their scoring, reminiscent of local instruments, are easily recognised'. And indeed, listeners can recognise boogie-woogie, blues, a varied melody with a Caribbean flair, and a warm-blooded *Barn Dance* in the Bluegrass tradition.



Florence Price
© G. Nelidoff

The first successful female African American composer

Florence Price grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas. She studied organ and piano at the New England Conservatory in Boston, where she passed as Mexican to avoid racial issues. After college, she returned to Arkansas. But in the late nineteenth-twenties, following a series of racist incidents in their hometown, her family was forced to relocate to Chicago. There, she continued her studies in composition, orchestration, and linguistics.

A few years later, in 1933, her first symphony was performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, marking the start of a successful composing career. Her *Piano Sonata in E Minor* is one of her most frequently performed works. In the Calefax version, we switched the order of the first and second movements to heighten the musical drama. After Price died in 1953, her music was somewhat neglected, but in recent years, interest in her work has picked up. In 2009, many musical scores were rediscovered in an abandoned house in Illinois that turned out to have been Price's summer home. The extent of her enormous body of work proved to be even greater!

A musical relay race

Jelte Althuis plays the same notes that came out of Eric Dolphy's bass clarinet during his famous 1960s solo improvisation based on Billie Holiday's *God Bless the Child*. Dolphy went on to refine that solo. Later, another zealous bass clarinetist wrote down the notes of

that recording to preserve them for future generations. Today, the solo has become standard repertoire for serious bass clarinet students, making the piece a true 'classic.' Now, Raaf Hekkema has created a new composition based on that solo; it has a relatively free tonality and calls to mind an ecstatic gospel choir. The original song was the fruit of a collaboration between Holiday and pianist Arthur Herzog Jr. According to Holiday, the creative spark came from an argument with her mother about money. As she stormed out, she shouted, 'God bless the child that's got his own!'

Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn

Over the years, Calefax has built an extraordinary relationship with the body of works by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, that celebrated composing duo. The two worked together so intensively for so many decades that in many cases it's difficult to determine who wrote what, and to what extent. Big-band leader Duke Ellington was

introduced to Dvořák's artistic principles by his musical mentor, the violinist and composer Will Marion Cook. Cook had taken lessons with Dvořák at Thurber's school. It seems that over the years, the younger Strayhorn increasingly lured Ellington toward classical music, the very arena in which Strayhorn felt at home. In the duo's oeuvre, there is a tendency towards increasingly lengthy and serious works, namely, the suites. In 2005, Calefax and the Tony Overwater Trio released an album featuring two of those suites: the *Far East Suite* and *The River*, as part of an extensive, multi-year project inspired by the Duke Ellington Orchestra's early-1960s trip to the middle and far east. In addition to shorter numbers, the version of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite* made by Ellington and Strayhorn, in the arrangement by Oliver Boekhoorn, has long been a popular Calefax hit. More recently, the Shakespeare-inspired suite, *Such Sweet Thunder*, has also appeared on the group's music stands.

Satin Doll dates from 1953, when Strayhorn had been a fixture in Duke Ellington's ranks for almost fifteen years as a composer, arranger, and occasional substitute for The Duke himself. As Ellington said about Strayhorn after his early death: 'he was my right arm, my left arm, all the eyes in the back of my head, my brain waves in his head, and his in mine.' *Satin Doll* was the Duke Ellington



Duke Ellington

Orchestra's standard closing number for many years.

According to Duke Ellington (who liked a good story), *In a Sentimental Mood* came about during a party in Durham, North Carolina, where an acquaintance got into hot water with two ladies. 'To pacify them, I composed this there and then, with one chick standing on each side of the piano.' There are countless recordings of the number made by well-known jazz musicians, and the piece was a perennial favourite in Ellington's Orchestra as the featured song of tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves.

A classically oriented Stevie Wonder

The mother of blind 'Little' Stevie Wonder signed a record deal on her son's behalf with Motown, the famous Rhythm & Blues label, when her golden-voiced boy was just eleven years old. However, in the ensuing years, no significant hits materialised, despite the meddling of record company executives, which began to weigh heavily

on the artistic integrity of the no-longer-so-little Stevie Wonder. After dissolving that stifling contract, Wonder started his own studio where he could record numbers he wrote as a one-person band. He made his breakthrough in the 1970s, demonstrating his social engagement: as a public figure, he championed equal treatment of Blacks and greater ecological awareness. In 1979, he presented his primarily instrumental and almost classical LP, *Journey Through the Secret Life of Plants*. It formed the soundtrack for a nature film of the same name. At the last minute, one of the numbers, *Overjoyed*, was scrapped from that record. It was later released as a single and became a modest hit. This marks the first time that Calefax has recorded a pop song.

The appeal of New York

In 2010, Calefax introduced the composer/clarinettist Kinan Azmeh to Dutch audiences. Since then, we enjoy working together whenever the opportunity presents itself. Azmeh, from Damascus,

Syria, studied in New York at the Julliard School of Music, and after he graduated, he continued to live there. In addition to his activities as a soloist and composer, he is a member and the leader of numerous groups, including Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble, which won a Grammy in 2017. Azmeh's *Airports for Reed Quintet* recalls a fantasy he once had during one of the many times he was detained and questioned at New York's JFK Airport because of his Syrian passport. A melody popped into his head, and he imagined it being hummed by the people locked up with him in that fluorescent-lit back room. Then the guards started humming, too, and the melody soon spread to the farthest reaches of the airport. Feel free to hum along!

A blind street artist in New Amsterdam

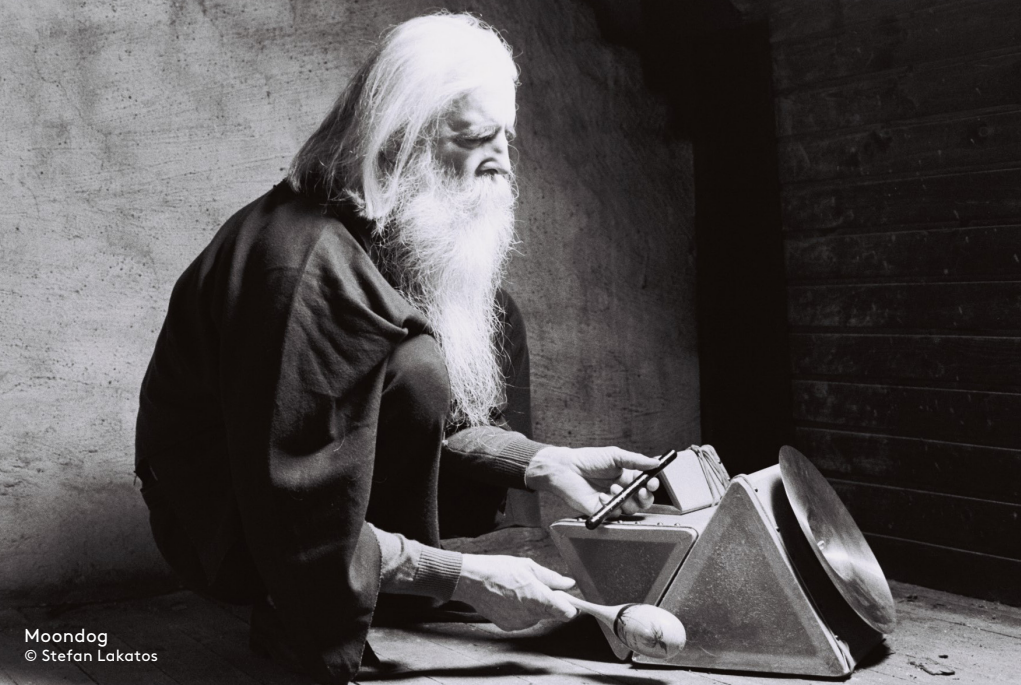
While travelling in America, we occasionally encounter people who knew Moondog, born Louis Hardin Jr., also known as 'The Viking of Sixth Avenue'. He would stand on a street corner wearing a cloak and

a Viking helmet. For decades, this blind busker played music and recited his poems while trying to sell them to passing businesspeople. Most would have been blissfully unaware that Moondog was also a composer of serious music. He had mastered the art of braille notation after an accident that deprived him of his sight when he was sixteen. From a young age, Moondog found inspiration in indigenous music, jazz, and counterpoint. In turn, he influenced early minimalist composers like Philip Glass and Steve Reich. Such illustrious figures as Frank Zappa and Igor Stravinsky also expressed appreciation for his music.

We would like to close this album with his canon, *New Amsterdam*, an ode to New York City's Dutch predecessor, thus forming a link with Amsterdam's Calefax. We often play this piece 'on the other side of the pond' as an encore. The vocal melody will be introduced by:

Raaf Hekkema, 2022

(translation: Eileen Stevens)



Moondog
© Stefan Lakatos

*New Amsterdam was her name
Before she was New York
New Amsterdam is a dame
The heart and soul of big apple city*

*No matter what name she goes under
I dig her deeply and no wonder
For she's been lovely to me
And I'm the better for having met her*
Moondog

Acknowledgements

PRODUCTION TEAM

Balance engineer & producer **Nicolas Bartholomée** (Little Tribeca)

Sound engineer, editing & mastering **Ambroise Helmlinger** (Little Tribeca)

Assistant sound engineer **Oliver Boekhoorn** (Calefax)

Cover design **Jowan de Haan**

Liner notes **Raaf Hekkema** | English translation **Eileen Stevens**

Recording photography **Marieke Wijntjes**

Product management & Design **Kasper van Kooten**

General Manager **Hannah Soepenbergh** (Calefax)

Marketing & PR **Larissa Kaptijn** (Calefax) | Production **Stef Koenis** (Calefax)

This album was recorded at Doopsgezinde Kerk, Haarlem, The Netherlands, in July 2022.

Cover images are used under license from Shutterstock.com

PENTATONE TEAM

Vice President A&R **Renaud Loranger** | Managing Director **Sean Hickey**

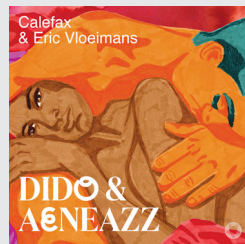
Head of Catalogue, Product & Curation **Kasper van Kooten**

Head of Marketing, PR & Sales **Silvia Pietrosanti**

Also available
on Pentatone



PTC5186840



PTC5186758



PTC5186696

Publisher credits

God Bless the Child, Composed and written by: Arthur Jr. Herzog and Billie Holiday Published by: Edward B Marks Music Company (Strengolt Music Publishing BV)

Excursions, Op. 20, Samuel Barber, © 1945 (Renewed) by G. Schirmer, Inc, (ASCAP). This arrangement © 2022 by G. Schirmer, Inc. (ASCAP). Used By Permission.

Sonata in E Minor, Florence Price, © 1959 (Renewed) by G. Schirmer, Inc. (ASCAP). This arrangement © 2022 by G. Schirmer, Inc. (ASCAP). Used By Permission.

In a Sentimental Mood, Writer(s) of original work ("INST"): Ellington, Duke (composer); Publisher(s) of original: EMI Mills Music Inc. (Sony Music Publishing). Is approved as a cover.

Overjoyed, Writer(s) of original work: Wonder, Stevie (composer) Publisher(s) of original: Black-Bull-Music Inc.; Jobete Music Co. Inc. (Sony Music Publishing). Is approved as a cover.



Calefax & engineer Ambroise Helmlinger



Sit back and enjoy