



PETER BOYER

Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue

Jeffrey Biegel, Piano

London Symphony Orchestra

Peter Boyer



Peter Boyer (b. 1970)

Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue

This work was conceived by the prodigious American pianist Jeffrey Biegel, who approached me in early 2020 with his ambitious idea for a project to celebrate the centennial of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, in February 2024. I hesitated before accepting the commission, knowing that the piece I was being asked to compose would be performed repeatedly alongside *Rhapsody in Blue* – one of the most iconic and beloved works of American music. I wondered how any piece of mine could withstand the inevitable comparisons to the Gershwin work – especially with Jeffrey's chosen title, *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*. However, he is as persuasive as he is gifted, and so I accepted the commission.

Like the Gershwin work, my *Rhapsody* is in a single long multi-sectional movement. As Gershwin did a century ago, I have attempted to capture a sense of American energy and optimism in much of this music. Though my musical style typically does not employ any jazz elements, in this work it seemed appropriate to include some allusions to a 1920s, "quasi-Gershwin" style. There is one section of the work, largely pastiche, which does this, in the form of a "bluesy *scherzo*." The slow, lyrical section of the work, coming after its midpoint, might be heard as both an allusion to America's wide open spaces, and to my personal belief in the country's promise, despite its many challenges.

Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue was premiered with Jeffrey Biegel and the Utah Symphony, Benjamin Manis, conductor, on 30 June 2023 at the Deer Valley Snow Park Amphitheater in Park City, Utah. In that splendid outdoor setting, the new work received a prolonged standing ovation from an audience numbering over 3,000, which was a joy to experience. That performance launched the "Rhapsody National Initiative," a remarkably ambitious endeavor created by Jeffrey, which will see him performing the work with at least one orchestra in every one of the 50 United States by summer 2026. As of this writing (December 2023), a total of 54 orchestras in all 50 states have committed to this project, a group which, to my knowledge, is unprecedented in its scope for a new piano and orchestra work.

Through its title, intentions, and musical style, my *Rhapsody* clearly celebrates America; and yet to record it with the London Symphony Orchestra seemed both appealing and natural. Of many admired recordings of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, it is the classic one made by André Previn with the LSO in 1971 (employing Ferde Grofé's 1942 orchestration) to which I have returned most often as a personal favorite. Both Jeffrey and I have recorded individually with the LSO for the Naxos American Classics Series, and it is a thrill for us to again collaborate with the LSO in the recording studio, this time working together.

Peter Boyer

Jeffrey Biegel

Jeffrey Biegel's career reflects an unprecedented journey as a pianist having created the most diverse commissioning projects. At age three, he was barely able to hear nor speak, until corrected by surgery. 2020 focused on composing *Waltzes of Hope*, and *Three Reflections: JFK, RBG and MLK*, and the following year saw the premieres of his *Reflection of Justice: An Ode to Ruth Bader Ginsburg* with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's *Remembering Ruth Bader Ginsburg* for mezzo-soprano, piano and orchestra, with mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves. In 2022, he premiered his own concerto, *Three Reflections: Freedom (JFK), Justice (RBG), Equality (MLK)*, and 2023 featured the premiere of Peter Boyer's *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue* with the Utah Symphony. Biegel appeared as soloist in Kenneth Fuchs's *Piano Concerto 'Spiritualist'* with the London Symphony Orchestra led by JoAnn Falletta (Naxos 8.559824) which received a 2019 GRAMMY Award, and digital recordings released on his Naturally Sharp label include *Cyberecital: An Historic Recording*, *A Pianist's Journey*, and Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924 version) with the Adrian Symphony Orchestra and Bruce Kiesling conducting. www.jeffreybiegel.com

London Symphony Orchestra

The London Symphony Orchestra was established in 1904. It is Resident Orchestra at the Barbican in the City of London, and reaches international audiences through touring, residencies and digital partnerships. Through a world-leading learning and community program, LSO Discovery, the LSO connects people from all walks of life to the power of great music. Based at LSO St Luke's, the Orchestra's community and music education center and a leading performance venue, LSO Discovery's reach extends across East London, the UK and the world through both in-person and digital activity. In 1999, the LSO formed its own recording label, LSO Live, with over 150 recordings released so far. Overall, the LSO has made more recordings than any other orchestra, with 2,500 recordings to its name. The orchestra has collaborated with a genre-busting roster of world-class artists through its work in film, video games and bespoke audio-only experiences. In addition to entertaining and inspiring millions of listeners, the LSO's performances have been decorated with multiple honours from the GRAMMY Awards, Oscars, Golden Globes, BAFTAs, and BRITs, not to mention three Mercury Music Prize album nominations. www.lso.co.uk

Peter Boyer

Peter Boyer is one of the most frequently performed American orchestral composers of his generation. His works have received nearly 700 public performances by more than 250 orchestras, and tens of thousands of broadcasts by classical radio stations around the United States and abroad. He has conducted recordings of his music with three of the world's finest orchestras: the London Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia Orchestra, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, all for the Naxos label. His GRAMMY-nominated major work *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*, for actors and orchestra, has received over 275 performances, and was nationally televised with the Pacific Symphony on the PBS series *Great Performances*. Boyer has received commissions from prestigious American institutions and ensembles, including the Kennedy Center for the National Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Symphony Orchestra for the Boston Pops, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra for the Cincinnati Pops, the Pacific Symphony, and "The President's Own" United States Marine Band, which premiered his *Fanfare for Tomorrow* at the inauguration of President Biden. Other orchestras which have performed Boyer's music include The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and Nashville Symphony. In 2019 Boyer received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor. In 2023, his work *Today We Ask*, commissioned by ORA Singers to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III, was premiered at St Paul's Church, Covent Garden, London, and broadcast by Classic FM. www.propulsivemusic.com



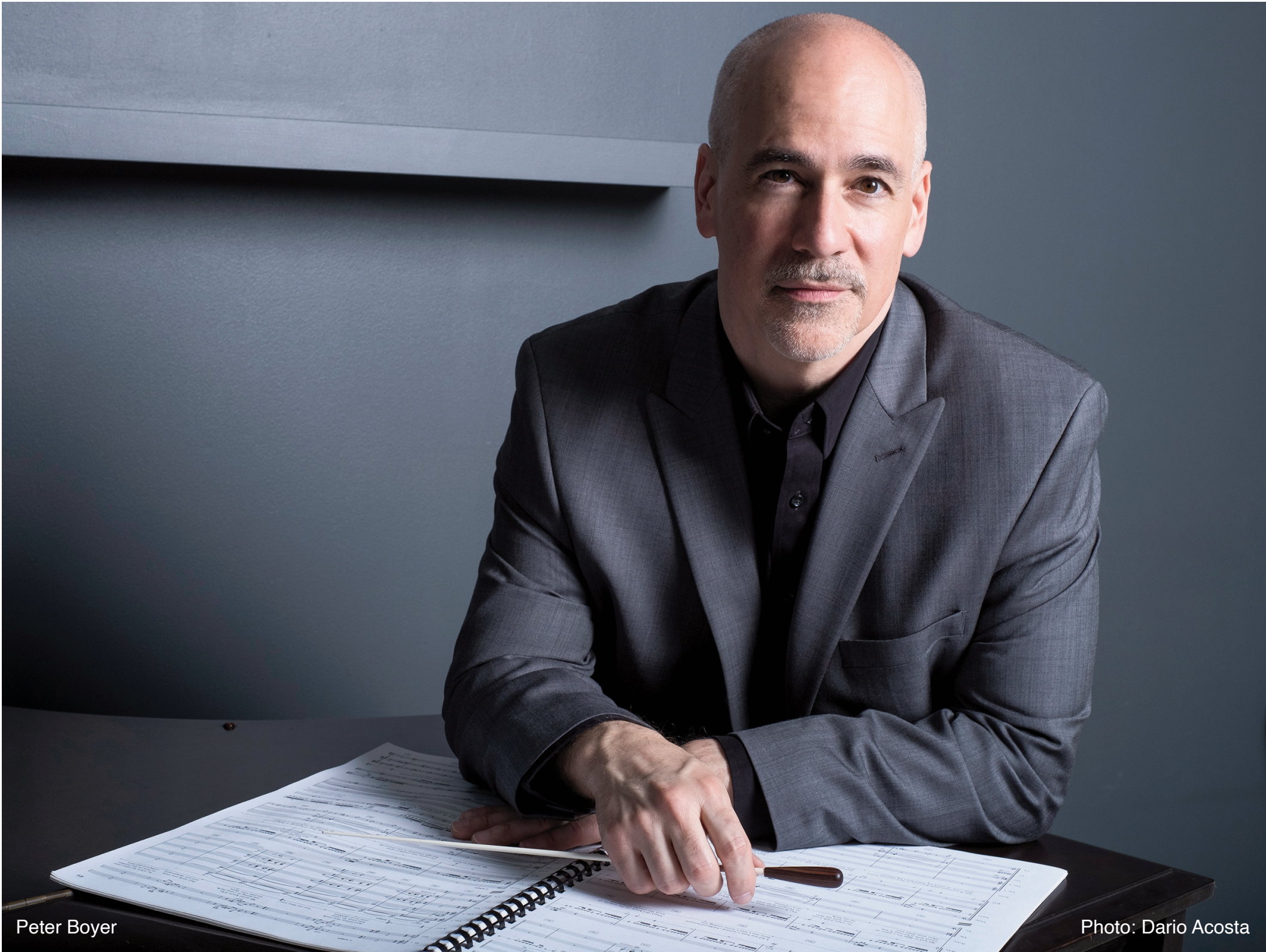
Jeffrey Biegel

Photo: Mark Lerner



London Symphony Orchestra

Photo: John Davis



Peter Boyer

Photo: Dario Acosta



Photo: Benjamin Ealovega





Photos: Benjamin Ealovega



Photo: Benjamin Ealovega

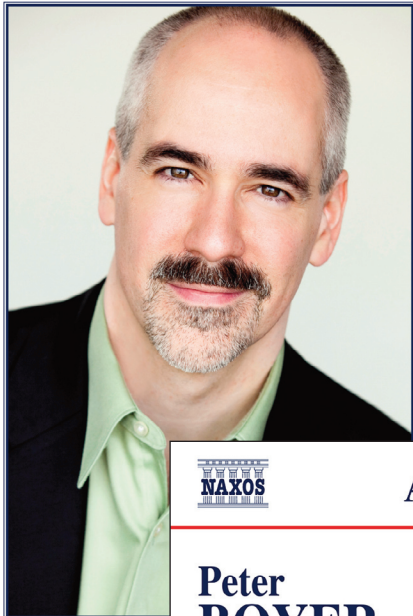
Also available

 **AMERICAN CLASSICS** 

Peter BOYER


Symphony No. 1

Silver Fanfare
Festivities
Three Olympians
Celebration Overture



London Philharmonic Orchestra
Peter Boyer


8.559769

 **AMERICAN CLASSICS** 



PETER BOYER

Ellis Island: The Dream of America

Barry Bostwick • Blair Brown • Olympia Dukakis
Anne Jackson • Bebe Neuwirth
Eli Wallach • Louis Zorich
Philharmonia Orchestra • Peter Boyer



8.559246

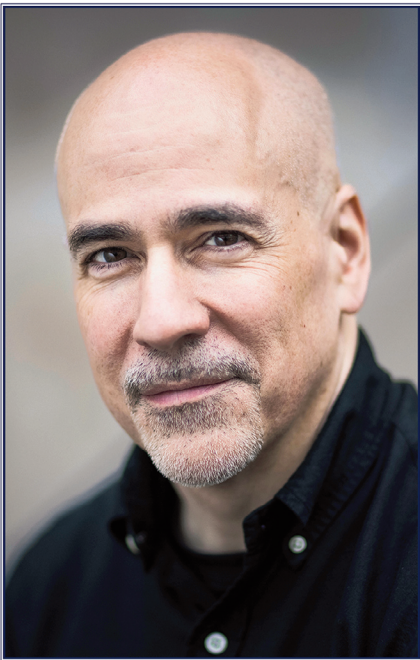
 **AMERICAN CLASSICS** 

Peter BOYER

Balance of Power

Orchestral Works

Curtain Raiser
Fanfare for Tomorrow
Rolling River
Elegy
In the Cause of the Free
Radiance
Fanfare, Hymn and Finale



London Symphony Orchestra
Peter Boyer

8.559915

Peter
BOYER
(b. 1970)

**1 Rhapsody in
Red, White & Blue (2023)**

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

Jeffrey Biegel, Piano
London Symphony Orchestra
Peter Boyer

Peter Boyer and Jeffrey Biegel would like to thank the Billy Rose Foundation for its generous sponsorship of this recording project.

Recorded: 27 November 2023 at AIR Studios, Lyndhurst Hall, London, UK

Producer, engineer, editor and mixer: Simon Rhodes

Mastered at Abbey Road Studios, London, UK

Mastering engineer: Oli Morgan

LSO recordings manager: Mario de Sa

Booklet notes: Peter Boyer

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AMERICAN CLASSICS

Peter Boyer, GRAMMY-nominated and one of America's most prominent composers (his music was performed at President Biden's inauguration), was commissioned by pianist Jeffrey Biegel to compose a work celebrating the 2024 centennial of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. Boyer has responded with a work cast, like Gershwin's, in a single, multi-sectional movement that similarly captures propulsive energy, along with allusions to blues influences and lyrical evocations of American vistas. This brilliantly communicative work was premiered, to great acclaim, in June 2023, and Biegel will be performing it in each of the 50 United States through 2026.

www.naxos.com

Playing
Time:
17:33