

**Endorsements for the Rhapsody National Initiative**  
**Jeffrey Biegel, Pianist • Peter Boyer, Composer**  
(as of October 3, 2024)

Emanuel Ax	David Foster	Iлона Oltuski
Steve Brosvik	Marc George Gershwin	Jamie Reeves
Betty Buckley	Denyce Graves	Seth Rudetsky
Julie Budd	P. Joelle Graves	Neil Sedaka
Danny Burstein	Stephen Gunzenhauser	Charles G. Sims
Catherine Cahill	Adolphus Hailstork	Leonard Slatkin
Ann Hampton Callaway	David Hyslop	Donald Sosin
Vincent Caruso	Dan Lauria	Billy Stritch
Mark Clague	Richard Lewis	Charles Strouse
Michael Dawson	Lucie Arnaz Luckinbill	Paulo Szot
Aaron Diehl	Martin Majkut	Preston Trombly
Jed Distler	Melissa Manchester	Matthew Troy
JoAnn Falletta	Sylvia McNair	Scott Woodard
Henry Fogel	Dirk Meyer	Christopher Zimmerman
Elliott Forrest	Kim Noltemy	Ellen Taaffe Zwilich

“What a wonderful idea! I hope it will become just as much of a part of our musical go-tos as the Gershwin—and it would be great if it really was played from sea to shining sea! With affection and admiration for your amazing energy and artistry, Manny.”

— **EMANUEL AX**, pianist

“As the orchestra fortunate enough to give the premiere performance of *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*, we are proud to be part of a national effort to keep not only the great American legacy of George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* present to contemporary audiences, but to bolster that legacy through this wonderful work by Peter Boyer. Our audience truly enjoyed this work written for and performed by Jeffrey Biegel for its playful homage—and—its creativity. This new *Rhapsody* stands well on its own whether or not performed alongside Gershwin’s original. An enduring standing ovation is always a welcome result to a world premiere. It was well deserved.”

— **STEVE BROSVIK**, President and CEO, Utah Symphony/Utah Opera; Past: Chief Operating Officer, Nashville Symphony; General Manager, Houston Symphony; Executive Director, San Antonio Symphony; Vice President and General Manager, Baltimore Symphony

“With a deep respect for the great composers of the past, Jeffrey Biegel has dedicated the last thirty years to bringing people together through music, especially new music. His Rhapsody National Initiative is a project designed to unite all citizens through the power of music. His title *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue* composed by Peter Boyer honors the American flag, the centennial of Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* and “America at 250.” With his dedication to humanity, he has added a few dozen new works to the repertoire as an invaluable contribution to our industry. I applaud the effort and hope it helps bring Americans together regardless of division. Congratulations, Jeffrey.”

— **BETTY LYNN BUCKLEY**, actress, singer, teacher of stage, film, television, recordings and concert work around the globe; Betty Buckley is best known as the quintessential musical theatre actress: 1976 marked her Broadway debut, Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*, a Tony Award for her performance as Grizabella in *Cats*; television’s *Eight is Enough* to *Law & Order SVU*

“It has been a while since I have been this excited about a new piece. After listening to *Rhapsody In Red, White & Blue*, I could not help but feel the excitement from the audience, and to have observed the spontaneous standing ovation... it was so moving. Composer Peter Boyer captured a beautiful energy and heart in his score, the kind that a young George Gershwin represented in his work as well. Pianist Jeffrey Biegel put his entire soul into the emotion of this piece, along with his brilliant and incredible skill as a grand pianist. What a joy he is! And what a pleasure it is to enjoy such a fresh new musical work. Bravo!!!! Beauty is alive and well—in every measure of this score.”

— **JULIE BUDD**, American recording artist and actress; co-starred with Frank Sinatra, Liberace, and performed with orchestras worldwide including the Philadelphia, Dallas, Baltimore, National, and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras, television and film. Latest recording: *Remembering... Mr. Sinatra*

“Music is the great unifier—George Gershwin is America’s quintessential songwriter—*Rhapsody in Blue* is America’s quintessential musical composition. Gershwin wrote *Rhapsody in Blue* just a few blocks from where I live, where there is a plaque outside the building. I get goosebumps every time I walk by his building! From that soaring clarinet solo in the opening phrase, the syncopated rhythms extolled in the brass, the sweeping, lush melodies that transport us, its lure is undeniable & intoxicating and is perhaps the most uniquely American piece of music. What better musical composition to bring all Americans together? What better piece of music to reflect the American experiment? *Rhapsody in Blue* reminds us all of who we are, what we stand for, and begs us all to unite behind the brilliance of George Gershwin. And now, as we remember the past, we reflect on the future with Peter Boyer’s wonderful *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*. Orchestras in all 50 states will join together to celebrate the past and our country’s future—all recognizing the importance of the moment, putting their faith in the healing power of America’s music.”

— **DANNY BURSTEIN**, recipient of the 2021 Tony Award for his performance as Harold Zidler in *Moulin Rouge* on Broadway, which also earned him a Drama League Award, a Grammy nomination and an Outer Critics Circle Award. He is also a 7-time Tony Award nominee; Broadway success includes *South Pacific* (2008 Tony and Drama Desk nominations, Outer Critics Circle Award); *Fiddler on the Roof* (2016; Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Actor in a Musical); he appeared at the Metropolitan Opera as Frosch in the Jeremy Sams/Douglas Carter Beane production of *Die Fledermaus*. Film/TV includes *The Good Fight*, *NCIS: New Orleans*, *Madam Secretary*, Lolly Steinman on *Boardwalk Empire* (directed by Martin Scorsese), *The Good Wife*, all the *Law & Order* series, *Hope & Faith*, and more.

“Jeffrey Biegel is once again seizing the moment. As we approach the centennial year of Gershwin’s famous *Rhapsody in Blue*, Jeffrey is commissioning one of America’s most enduring and beloved composers, Peter Boyer to create a dynamic companion piece, *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*. Jeffrey has been a pioneer over these past 20 years in pushing the envelope in creating new and exciting repertoire for the piano. This remarkable collaboration promises to be another home run. The goal is to have all 50 states showcase this new work—hats off to Jeffrey for taking this initiative!”

— **CATHERINE CAHILL**, President and Chief Executive Officer, The Mann Center; former General Manager, New York Philharmonic; former Executive Director, Toronto Symphony; former Festival Director and Artistic Director, Grant Park Music Festival; former Chief Executive Officer, Brooklyn Philharmonic

“How can music help unite a nation, open hearts to the gorgeous diversity of who we are, and make us human again? The great George Gershwin achieved that with his magnificent *Rhapsody in Blue*. Now, a hundred years later, my dear friend, Jeffrey Biegel, one of the finest Gershwin interpreters and pianists of our time, has commissioned a brilliantly composed new work called *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue* by Peter Boyer. Just as singers like me strive to refresh and celebrate the beauty of the Great American Songbook, Jeffrey is helping bridge the 20th century to the 21st with this inspiring and joyous work that deserves to be heard in every major concert hall of this nation. This project propelled an audience member to say after one performance: ‘This brought tears to my eyes, and renewed my sense of country.’ Politics divides us, music unites us. Congratulations to Jeffrey and Peter for bringing hope and inspiration to us all in the spirit of Gershwin, Copland, and Bernstein. I couldn’t be happier about this musical gift to our time!”

— **ANN HAMPTON CALLAWAY**, Tony-nominated Broadway star, award-winning pop/jazz singer, multi-Platinum selling songwriter, and 2023 inductee to The Women Songwriters Hall of Fame

“I’m a Brooklyn boy. I love the fierce energy and brash, friendly spirit my fellow New Yorkers are known for. It’s a special kind of grit. It’s got heart. It’s got a smart can-do mentality. And it doesn’t like funny business. It hangs around, not noticing itself. It’s wonderfully lovable. And it crosses all of our wonderfully varied backgrounds. It’s born of the American and immigrant stories. Just make sure you don’t patronize it. Smarmy phoniness can be smelled a mile away. What would that grit sound like musically? There’s only one answer: George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody In Blue*. Here’s my take: Gershwin was born in Brooklyn, ok, also part of New York. *Rhapsody In Blue* is music that describes our American spirit. It’s 100 years old this year! Jeffrey Biegel, who’s championed the as-close-to-the-original version, came up with a marvelous idea to light up those birthday candles. That gift is a brand new piano concerto by Peter Boyer called *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*. All 50 states have signed up to have Jeffrey play the new *Rhapsody*. Musical fireworks with an unbeatable bedrock of musical grit. I can’t wait—history in the making!”

— **VINCENT CARUSO**, American classical music and film score program host and producer for SiriusXM Symphony Hall, Sony, Classic FM, WQXR-FM, WNYC-FM, voice-over actor, and audio-book narrator/producer

“George Gershwin’s musical imagination is the sonic signature of the United States, maybe most recognizably in the melodies, motives, and rhythms of *Rhapsody in Blue*. Pianist Jeffrey Biegel has long championed Gershwin’s musical voice, not merely as a signature masterpiece, but as a source of inspiration for the nation. The Peter Boyer/Jeffrey Biegel *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue* centennial collaboration around the Gershwin Rhapsody’s 2024 birthday is emblematic of Gershwin’s power to bring us together as Americans, and thus, to imagine a new creative effort that lives up to our nation’s motto—*E Pluribus Unum*—fusing America’s many voices into one shared experimental chorus of art and democracy.”

— **MARK CLAGUE**, Editor-in-Chief, The George and Ira Gershwin Critical Edition, Gershwin Initiative, University of Michigan

“American composer Peter Boyer’s new composition *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue* is a 21st-century love letter to George Gershwin—and what a love letter it is to *Rhapsody in Blue*! As the world prepares to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Gershwin’s masterpiece, Mr. Boyer has teamed up with the brilliant pianist, Jeffrey Biegel, to tour and perform this exciting new tribute in all fifty United States. Piano virtuoso Jeffrey Biegel brings his formidable skills as a music project producer to the Rhapsody National Initiative. I witnessed Biegel’s dedication to excellence firsthand when we produced a documentary for the Dallas Symphony. That said, it comes as no surprise that Peter Boyer’s *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue* and his Gershwin-inspired masterpiece will inspire us all with flying colors. Bravo!”

— **MICHAEL DAWSON**, filmmaker/musician, Dreamers2Makers Films producer, “A Song for Ruth” for RBG, and upcoming “Ukraine: 2000 Year of Music” documentaries

“What exciting news to have a project that speaks to the spirit of George Gershwin’s ambitious *Rhapsody in Blue* in this collaboration between Jeffrey Biegel and Peter Boyer. It is evidence of the importance in continuing to pursue new works in American music that embodies the character of the unique sound borne out of its identity.”

— **AARON DIEHL**, pianist and composer

“No American pianist of his generation has been so enterprising and inclusive when it comes to supporting and enriching the contemporary American piano concerto repertoire. Jeffrey Biegel channels his exemplary virtuosity and insightful musicianship towards reaching audiences and creating community, and we are all the better for it.”

— **JED DISTLER**, composer/pianist, writer and radio host

“A great project—a fantastic composer, a wonderful pianist and a new piece just as we all are getting ready to celebrate our country’s 250th birthday. The Buffalo Philharmonic is happy to be a part of the *Rhapsody* commission and hope that you will join us!”

— **JOANN FALLETTA**, Music Director, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra

“Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* was a groundbreaking achievement when it was premiered in 1924, a work that brought together the worlds of jazz and symphonic music with remarkable success. As we prepare to celebrate the centennial of that premiere, Jeffrey Biegel has come up with just the right idea to mark the occasion. He has asked composer Peter Boyer to write a 15-minute work for piano and orchestra meant to stand alongside the Gershwin (although it can stand on its own too), titled *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*. The idea of having at least one performance in every one of the 50 states is a brilliant one, a way of making certain that Gershwin’s achievement is, in fact, truly recognized as the national treasure it surely is. This nationwide concept deserves the interest and support of orchestras everywhere.”

— **HENRY FOGEL**, former President, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, League of American Orchestras

“Congratulations to composer Peter Boyer and pianist Jeffrey Biegel for the new work, *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*. A shout-out to all who financially supported such a stirring piece for piano and orchestra. While we celebrate the familiar in Classical Music, it is so important to encourage and hear new works, especially a rhapsody like this that commemorates the American Spirit in such a thrilling way.”

— **ELLIOTT FORREST**, Peabody-winning WQXR broadcaster, producer, stage director

“I can’t wait to witness this incredible collaboration celebrating 100 years of one of the world’s most treasured compositions, *Rhapsody in Blue*, with my dear friend, Jeffrey Biegel at the piano. No one brings the essence of Gershwin and his genius more to our ear than J-man—as I like to call him. He, like Gershwin’s music, is world class! What a fantastic idea to commission the uber talented Peter Boyer to help celebrate this milestone with his composition, *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*. Every orchestra in every state should embrace this powerful and magnificent endeavor with open arms—Congrats to all involved—I will be cheering from the sidelines!!!”

— **DAVID FOSTER**, composer, arranger, songwriter, pianist, recording artist, record producer, music executive

“When my uncle, George Gershwin, set out to compose a new musical work reflecting the diversity of New York City within a few short weeks, *Rhapsody in Blue* was born, and became a national musical tapestry of our country. The pianist, Jeffrey Biegel, has been one of *Rhapsody*’s fondest advocates, having recorded two versions based on historical manuscripts. His love of my uncle’s music, of America, and of people, steered him to have a vision for a diverse America of the 21st-century through music to further reflect our unity. He encountered the acclaimed American composer, Peter Boyer and asked him to honor my uncle with a brand-new composition called *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*. Peter’s music embraces the many fabrics of humanity in this new composition, honoring the American flag we respect and honor as a symbol of freedom. I encourage orchestras in every one of the 50 United States to take part in this celebration of the human spirit, the American spirit, and the soul of our history moving forward.”

— **MARC GEORGE GERSHWIN**, nephew of George Gershwin, son of Arthur Gershwin

“Who else but Jeffrey Biegel could have an idea that would become The Rhapsody National Initiative? While I’m sure we spoke of it when we worked together, during the Pandemic mind you, during the 2021–2022 Season at the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, where his *Reflection of Justice: An Ode to Ruth Bader Ginsburg* was paired in concert with Ellen Taaffe Zwilich’s *Remembering Ruth Bader Ginsburg*, for mezzo-soprano, piano and orchestra — as things go, of course it sounded grand, spectacular, wonderful. The Pandemic though, was a time when hopefulness was at de minimus levels and for singers, future planning, quite bleak as calendars had been decimated.

Just next month — February 2024 — the fruition of years long effort, unremitting faith, creativity, tactical and strategic planning, and simply NEVER stopping will prove Jeffrey Biegel AGAIN, when the

centennial of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and Peter Boyer's *Rhapsody in Red White & Blue*, with a world premiere recording for Naxos digital with the London Symphony Orchestra will be released. The 50-state Rhapsody National Initiative is underway and engaged by orchestras all across the country. The immensity and originality of a creative concept that envisions such a collaboration is borne of a unique and particular spirit, and it is that spirit I celebrate as this initiative is set to soar. Since Dallas, what I've learned about and shared with Jeffrey confirms his stature, excellence, humanity and generosity. I look forward to hearing the fruits of the Rhapsody National Initiative. I will be the first to purchase my download and am singing my highest note of praise (well, lowest note since I'm a mezzo) in support and endorsement of his work on this Project.

Cheers to you Jeffrey: Gershwin is happy, Peter Boyer is happy, and so are all of us. You've done what you set out to do: bring us together through music. Molto Bravo!"

— **DENYCE GRAVES**, American opera singer; Founder & Artistic Director, The Denyce Graves Foundation

"The Rogue Valley Symphony was honored to play Peter Boyer's *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue* as part of the opening of our 23-24 season in August. Programming Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* in celebration of the centennial with Jeffrey Biegel at the piano, we knew, would be a win-win. We never imagined just how much of a win it would be. Two sold out houses, standing ovations and e-mails and letters from patrons took our breath away. The crowning moment was when a brand new patron, who bought a ticket two days before the concert, sent a thank you note with a substantial gift saying, 'I never thought I'd be attending a world class concert in Southern Oregon, performed brilliantly by all involved, but in particular was brought to tears during Boyer's *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*. I needed to feel patriotism in a new way, and this concert did it for me. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.'"

— **P. JOELLE GRAVES**, Executive Director, Rogue Valley Symphony, Oregon

"In a time when symphony orchestras are threatened with their very existence, Peter has stubbornly continued to make the experience relevant to our audiences. I applaud Peter Boyer for his remarkable talent in making the concert experience relevant to people of all ages. But more importantly, I applaud Jeffrey Biegel for continuing along this path and trying to include every state in this remarkable concerto by Peter Boyer."

— **STEPHEN GUNZENHAUSER**, Music Director, Endless Mountain Music Festival

"This is a fine idea. Congratulations to Jeffrey Biegel for his vision. This shows how music can appeal to a nation's heartbeat."

— **ADOLPHUS HAILSTORK**, American composer (commissioned by the Pacific Symphony for 2024-25 with Jeffrey Biegel, soloist)

"As an orchestra executive for many decades, I have seen music old and new, come and go. I have witnessed Jeffrey Biegel's commissioning projects for over two of those decades, and find the initiative of his latest effort spot on. Not only to celebrate the centennial of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, but to bring the country together in an unprecedented 50 state project without buy-ins from orchestras with Peter Boyer's *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue* feels good from the inside out. Every orchestra should consider joining this coalition to celebrate George Gershwin, Peter Boyer and the United States of America."

— **DAVID HYSLOP**, former CEO, Minnesota Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, and Oregon Symphony

"George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* is the clarion call for the American spirit. No one sounds that call more clearly and with more heart than Jeffrey Biegel. One can almost feel George Gershwin smile down on us as Jeffrey approaches the keys. The soul of America soars as we listen, and all are reminded of our calling to strive to make our great country a more perfect union. I could listen to Jeffrey Biegel's rendition night after night, after night. A tip-of-the-hat to Gershwin, the quintessential American composer, Peter Boyer, brings his fresh vision of America in his new *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*—intended to reach 50 states reflecting American diversity and unity through music."

— **DAN LAURIA**, actor/playwright; *Law & Order: SVU*, *The Good Doctor*, *The Wonder Years*, *Lombardi*, *A Christmas Story: the Musical*, *Sullivan and Son*, *This is Us*

“When Jeffrey asked me if I like the piano, I said, ‘Of course, and Oscar Levant.’ When Jeffrey sent his rendition of *Rhapsody in Blue* to me, I said, ‘Oscar would be proud.’ His salute to George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody* centennial with Peter Boyer’s new *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue* is a great tribute honoring George and Oscar, connecting all of us through the magic of music.”

— **RICHARD LEWIS**, American actor, writer, stand-up comedian, currently on *Curb Your Enthusiasm*

“Jeffrey, I am speechless — I was gobsmacked. Your playing!! The excitement of this piece, Peter Boyer’s extraordinarily emotional creation. And that symphony! It literally took my breath away. And, you echo Marvin Hamlisch to me in so many ways. Not just your incredible ability on the keys, but your facial expressions and the way you express yourself. I was so impressed!” (After listening to the London Symphony Orchestra recording)

— **LUCIE ARNAZ LUCKINBILL**, American actress, singer, producer

“Leave it to Jeffrey Biegel, a tireless inventive mind, to honor Gershwin’s legacy in the most apt way—by bringing the country together in one ambitious commissioning project. Peter Boyer’s music contains the all-important American DNA: you can see the grandeur of majestic vistas and you get swept up by the air of American optimism. By inviting Peter into the fold, Jeffrey, a veteran of commissioning projects, has outdone himself.”

— **MARTIN MAJKUT**, Music Director, Rogue Valley Symphony, Oregon

“It is rare for someone to see the moment—and seize the moment! Acclaimed pianist, Jeffrey Biegel, has done just that. In celebration of the 100th anniversary of George Gershwin’s spectacular *Rhapsody in Blue*, Jeffrey has commissioned the deeply talented composer Peter Boyer to create an accompanying piece called *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*, featuring Jeffrey as solo pianist. And the goal?... A symphony orchestra from each of the 50 states to perform it! As Ira Gershwin so aptly wrote, ‘Shining light and inspiration, Worthy of a mighty nation...’ Bravo, Bravo, Bravo!”

— **MELISSA MANCHESTER**, Grammy-winning singer, songwriter, actress

“Jeffrey Biegel dreams big. He has a vision to bring Peter Boyer’s new work, *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*, to all 50 states and to pair it in concerts with the *Rhapsody in Blue* by George Gershwin. Music does have the power to bring us together, and I dare say symphony audiences are in for a treat. Both works are full of virtuosic piano playing and rhapsodic harmonies. A feast for the ears, to be sure!”

— **SYLVIA MCNAIR**, soprano; two-time Grammy Award winner; American opera singer and classical recitalist; notable success in Broadway and cabaret

“I am thrilled to be a part of this incredible artistic initiative with orchestras in GA and MN. Peter and Jeff are creating a welcome and highly creative addition to the repertoire, to go hand-in-hand with Gershwin’s most beloved piece. The perfect way to celebrate history while, at the same time, creating something new!”

— **DIRK MEYER**, Music Director, Augusta Symphony (Georgia), Duluth-Superior Symphony (Minnesota)

“The visionary partnership of pianist Jeffrey Biegel and composer Peter Boyer highlighting the national treasure, George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, through Boyer’s new work, *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*, is an inspirational example of honoring the past while connecting with today’s audiences. I have known Peter and Jeffrey for many years, starting when we collaborated on projects with the Boston Pops. Both are passionate advocates for American music, and creatively think about compelling ways to reach the next generation of concert goers. This is just one more example of their talents and innovations.”

— **KIM NOLTEMY**, President & Chief Executive Officer, Los Angeles Philharmonic

“I have always known the great pianist and pedagogue, Jeffrey Biegel, as one of the most courageous and influential pioneers of multi-commissioned works. Always a visionary, he spares no effort to put them into reality. As soon as he told me about this incredibly exciting project—in the middle of the pandemic—I became aware of it, and since then I have been following with great interest the map that is increasingly filling up with participating orchestras throughout America. You have described your commitment wonderfully at the time, for my article: ‘Surely, I always tell composers, this project is not about me, and sorry to say, not about you either. We are creating something important together to add to the ongoing, ever-evolving continuum of music. One day, people will look back and see what was done, so they could perform and listen to music from this part of the 21st century. While I love to perform, I did it for reasons much bigger than any one of us. Music is much bigger than us.’ In our current politically divided society, music, on its own level, can serve to move us beyond our conflicts to believe in and work together for a better future. This has never been more important than today.”

— **ILONA OLTUSKI**, music journalist; art historian

“We at the Montgomery Symphony are thrilled to join this national collaboration which gives us the honor of working with such renowned artists as Peter Boyer and Jeffrey Biegel. Peter’s *Rhapsody* is well-crafted and very meaningful, while remaining approachable for any orchestra. The opportunity to host the premiere in our state combined with a performance celebrating the centenary of Gershwin’s iconic *Rhapsody in Blue* will be the highlight of our season and will leave a lasting impression on our community.”

— **JAMIE REEVES**, Music Director, Montgomery Symphony, Alabama

“Everybody loves *Rhapsody in Blue*. But not everyone can play it. Jeffrey Biegel can! Everybody wants more *Rhapsody in Blue*, but not everyone can get a brand-new piece in the style of *Rhapsody In Blue* commissioned. Jeffrey Biegel can. And he has! And now music fans can look forward to Peter Boyer’s *Rhapsody In Red, White & Blue* with Jeffrey Biegel at the piano! Hooray!”

— **SETH RUDETSKY**, American musician, actor, writer and radio host; currently the host of *Seth’s Big Fat Broadway* and *Seth Speaks* on Sirius/XM Satellite Radio’s *On Broadway*

“George Gershwin has always been my favorite composer, as he was one of the very few that could compose classical music, show tunes and pop songs to equal success. When I set out to compose my own piano concerto, *Manhattan Intermezzo*, like when Gershwin wrote his *Rhapsody in Blue*, I wanted to celebrate the diversity and sounds of New York City. My great friend, Jeffrey Biegel, keyed into that influence and did me the tremendous honor of including my concerto, alongside *Rhapsody*, as the title track in a CD collection of Classical works for Piano and Orchestra. This incredible new piece, composed by the incredibly talented Peter Boyer, continues in that tradition and celebrates the diversity and the unity created through music. Biegel is a phenomenal player and a great interpreter and champion of the Classical canon. He’s also an artist that is a steadfast advocate in what he’s passionate about. I’m so happy this is happening. Gershwin deserves this tribute and would be so very proud.”

— **NEIL SEDAKA**, legendary singer/songwriter, first teen pop sensation in the 1950s, international superstar through Elton John’s Rocket Records in the 1970s; at 16, Arthur Rubinstein voted Neil as “The Best High School Pianist” in NYC; student of Edgar Roberts and Adele Marcus, The Juilliard School

“The American writer Sarah Dessen said, ‘Music is the great uniter. An incredible force. Something that people who differ on everything and anything else can have in common.’ We need healers and advocates for peace and unity. As a United States Army combat veteran, I deeply appreciate and respect the Red, White, and Blue — the banner of our nation, something we can all be united behind. I believe this Rhapsody National Initiative will help this worthy goal.”

— **CHARLES G. SIMS**, Iraq War Veteran; founder of “The Dream 2020”

“As we approach the 100th anniversary of George Gershwin’s game changing *Rhapsody in Blue*, there is a project underway to help the celebration. With acclaimed pianist Jeffrey Biegel, the *Rhapsody in Red, White &*

*Blue* will be written by composer Peter Boyer. This promises to be one of the most exciting events of that special year, with plans to perform the work in all 50 states. I look forward to the result and encourage everyone to participate, if possible.”

— **LEONARD SLATKIN**, conductor; former Music Director, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra

“Jeffrey Biegel has created a unique and unprecedented opportunity for orchestras across the US to add another Rhapsody to the world—a *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue* by Peter Boyer. I strongly urge conductors and orchestras in the few remaining states who have not yet joined this project to do so soon.”

— **DONALD SOSIN**, composer/arranger; major performer creating vocals and instrumentals for classic silent films; “The top of the line of film pianists!” according to Leonard Maltin, film critic

“The incredibly gifted pianist Jeffrey Biegel came up with a fabulous and original idea—and ran with it. He had the idea to commission a companion piece to stand alongside of that most quintessentially American composition—George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*—a *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*! And, who better to create this new work than the equally gifted composer, Peter Boyer? Together these two visionaries have created an initiative that honors Gershwin and brings awareness of him and his *Rhapsody* to a new generation of music lovers. What an amazing idea, and how timely as well, since 2024 marks the 100th anniversary of this immortal work. I have my own small but personal connection to *Rhapsody in Blue* as it premiered on February 12th, 1924 and that happens to be my birthday! I’ve always loved knowing that—and I love these two artists for creating this groundbreaking new work!”

— **BILLY STRITCH**, pianist, singer, musical director, arranger and Grammy-winning songwriter

“Congratulations on this major accomplishment, as we celebrate this glorious music. Gershwin would be proud—as am I!”

— **CHARLES STROUSE**, three-time Tony Award, two-time Grammy and Emmy Award winning composer and lyricist; pupil of David Diamond, Aaron Copland, Nadia Boulanger; *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Applause*, *Annie*, “Those Were the Days” theme song, *All In the Family*; “Concerto America” composed for Biegel, premiere Boston Pops (2002) reflecting 9/11 and the spirit of New York City

“‘If music be the food of love, play on’—and how much we are in need of that peaceful love! This fantastic 50-state initiative celebrates the ‘universal language’ in times we need now more than ever. What a great tribute to American music created by pianist Jeffrey Biegel and composed by Peter Boyer. *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue* honoring the centennial of George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* is a relevant and unifying celebration of great music across the country.”

— **PAULO SZOT**, opera singer, actor; Tony award for Best Actor in a Musical for *South Pacific*; Metropolitan Opera (10 seasons: *The Nose*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Carmen*, *Manon*, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Madama Butterfly*, various concerts), Paris Opera, La Scala, The Barbican, Opera Australia, Real de Madrid. Currently in the hit musical *and Juliet* on Broadway

“I was in grade school when I first heard Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*. I loved it then, and still do. On the eve of the 100th anniversary of the premiere of Gershwin’s work, there is a new piece by Peter Boyer that captures that same spirit of America, *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*. It was written for and premiered by Gershwin specialist, pianist Jeffrey Biegel. They’ve almost reached their goal of performances scheduled in each of the 50 states, so look for and go hear Peter and Jeffrey’s stunning homage to Gershwin and America in a concert near you.”

— **PRESTON TROMBLY**, American musician, composer, conductor; visual artist in painting and drawing; program host, Sirius XM Symphony Hall; previously host for WQXR-FM

“Projects such as this that seek to connect and bridge diverse viewpoints, while celebrating our distinct history as Americans, are needed now more than ever. Jeffrey Biegel’s vision, combined with Peter Boyer’s



compositional brilliance, are an artistic powerhouse, and we are honored to bring this to life for our community. We look forward to this important musical endeavor and bringing our community together to celebrate the true spirit of America. The musicians, staff, and board of the Western Piedmont Symphony are thrilled to be representing the state of North Carolina in this unique and historic project.”

— **MATTHEW TROY**, Music Director, Western Piedmont Symphony

“As we prepare to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of George Gershwin’s momentous *Rhapsody in Blue*, I am certain that 100 years from now, we will be celebrating the trio of Gershwin, (Peter) Boyer, and (Jeffrey) Biegel! This 50-state initiative marks a turning point in our nation’s musical history. It is a moment in which musicians from across our great nation will rise in tribute to the power of the American musical voice, made real by Gershwin’s original *Rhapsody*, and perpetuated by Boyer’s new *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*. Add to this, the inspired playing of Jeffrey Biegel. I have no doubt the realization of this initiative in all 50 states will be a tour de force! I am excited to be involved with my orchestras in Ohio and West Virginia. It is my sincere hope that we all realize the tremendous artistic debt we owe to Peter and Jeffrey. *Bravi tutti* to all involved!”

— **SCOTT E. WOODARD**, Artistic Director, Butler Philharmonic Orchestra; Music Director, West Virginia State Philharmonic Orchestra

“I continue to remain awed by your seemingly tireless energy and ability to commission, premiere and bring to life so many works, let alone your impeccable pianism. I am really looking forward to conducting the premiere of Peter Boyer’s new piece this coming season with both the Fairfax and Fargo-Moorhead Symphony Orchestras. Coupling this with *Rhapsody in Blue* should bring the house down! Orchestras yet to join the project might want to take notice.”

— **CHRISTOPHER ZIMMERMAN**, Music Director, Fairfax Symphony Orchestra and Fargo-Moorhead Symphony Orchestra

“Jeffrey Biegel is a remarkable musician and contributor to the musical community. He has also been able to raise considerable funds to support his idealistic musical goals. *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue* is one more example of Jeffrey wanting to bring to life, in music, an important American ideal.”

— **ELLEN TAAFFE ZWILICH**, 1983 Pulitzer Prize in Music (the first woman ever to receive this coveted award), elected to the American Classical Music Hall of Fame, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters