

NEW YORK CITY AT NIGHT

PROGRAM NOTE

My composition, ***New York City at Night*** is based on five Georgia O'Keeffe paintings she made while living in the city from 1924-29.

The first movement is based on her painting *New York, Night 1928-1929*. It depicts her view from the window of her 30th floor apartment in the Shelton Hotel, at the time, the tallest residential skyscraper in the world. The dark image is punctuated by a brilliantly lit narrow ribbon of a street on the right side of the painting snaking into the distance, and two skyscrapers, one in the center foreground and one on the left, whose roof and illuminated windows emphasize their height. To me, this painting pulsed with syncopation, and my music expresses its jagged and shifting beats.

The second movement, *City Night 1926*, is based on the painting of the same name and on the Danish *Valravn*, or raven of the slain, a folktale about a raven who eats the heart of slain heroes killed on the battlefield, giving the bird supernatural and terrible powers. My music is a set of variations on the traditional song associated with *Valravn* which captures the sinister foreboding of the painting.

The third movement, *City Street in Moonlight*, is based on the painting *New York Street with Moon 1925*. I was struck by the pulsating streetlamp in the foreground, contrasting the pale moon surrounded by clouds in the distance, and the dark, geometric buildings jutting at an angle. My music begins with two layers, the gentle undulation of the clouds covering the moon and the throbbing pulsations of the streetlamp. These ephemeral sounds are periodically interrupted by a ferocious chord that obliterates them and gradually fades away, revealing the wispy tendrils of clouds, moon and streetlamp.

The fourth movement, *Manhattan*, is based on *Radiator Building Night New York 1927*. My music is a playful romp that takes a boogie-woogie theme and treats it contrapuntally, placing a dancing rhythm within the rigorous structure of a fugue. In the painting, the irregular patterns of the lit windows contrast with the rigidity of the tall, imposing buildings, and the whimsical jet of smoke issuing from the upper right side of the painting and the red glow on the left, seem to taunt the imposing skyscraper.







