

Montgomery Philharmonic 2014 - 2015 Concert Season – SINGULARITY

January 29, 2015

[Canticle for the Sun](#)[Le Froid de l'hiver](#)[Overture for Winds](#)[An American in Paris](#)[Tromphonium Musik](#)[Variations on America](#)

About George Gershwin

George Gershwin was an American composer and pianist. Gershwin's compositions spanned both popular and classical genres, and his most popular melodies are widely known. Originally a pianist and then a composer, Gershwin studied piano with Charles Hambitzer and composition with Rubin Goldmark and Henry Cowell. In mid-1920's, Gershwin applied to study composition with Nadia Boulanger and Maurice Ravel, but he was rejected. Their response was that if he entered into rigorous composition study, he might lose his wonderful jazz influence. Maurice Ravel was also impressed with Gershwin's abilities, commenting, "Personally I find jazz most interesting: the rhythms, the way the melodies are handled, the melodies themselves. I have heard of George Gershwin's works and I find them intriguing."

His composition career started with composing songs and then spread to Broadway Theater works with his brother Ira Gershwin and Buddy DeSilva. He went to Paris for a short time, where he met with Boulanger and Ravel. Gershwin was influenced by French music and wanted to be immersed in the tradition. While in Paris, he wrote An American in Paris. It met with mixed reviews following its 1928 Carnegie Hall premiere, but later became one of his most popular pieces.

Along with the French tradition, Gershwin stated that the works of Alban Berg, Dmitri Shostakovich, Igor Stravinsky, Darius Milhaud, and Arnold Schoenberg also influenced him.

Gershwin's film composition career started in 1929, when he was contracted by the Fox Film Corporation (later 20th Century Fox) for the film score to the movie Delicious. In the end, only two of his pieces made it into the film and this infuriated Gershwin. He was so angry that he didn't work in Hollywood for another seven years. At that time, Gershwin moved to Hollywood and composed numerous film scores until his death in 1937 from a brain tumor. The hallmark of Gershwin's compositional sound was his ability to manipulate musical forms to his unique style. Gershwin took jazz and spliced it together with classical idioms to compose music that was uniquely Gershwin.

* **Born:** September 26, 1898, Brooklyn, NY

* **Died:** July 11, 1937, Los Angeles, CA

* **Compositions:** Porgy and Bess, Rhapsody in Blue, Summertime, Concerto in F, I've Got Rhythm, Embraceable You, An American in Paris, Preludes, Second Rhapsody, Cuban Overture, several works for solo piano, several works for musical theater, several songs, scores for eight musical films

* **Siblings:** Ira Gershwin, Arthur Gershwin, Frances Gershwin

* **Nominations:** Academy Award for Best Original Song

* **Awards:** Grammy Hall of Fame Award, More

George Gershwin – *An American in Paris* (1928)

George Gershwin was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic to write a new piece for the orchestra in the mid-1920's. On a trip to Paris, he got his inspiration while shopping for taxi horns to take back to the US. He would write a piece that would catch the clamor of the Paris streets in sound. Back in New York, Gershwin put the finishing touches on the work and presented what he called "American in Paris, A Tone Poem for Orchestra," to the New York Philharmonic. In an interview for the August 1928 edition of Musical America, Gershwin said: "this new piece, really a rhapsodic ballet, is the most modern music I have ever attempted." He also gave a "program note" for the new piece:

"The opening gay section is followed by a rich blues with a strong rhythmic undercurrent. Our America...perhaps strolling into a café and having a couple of drinks, has succumbed to a spasm of homesickness.

The harmony here is both more intense and simpler than in the preceding pages. This blues rises to a climax, followed by a coda in which the spirit of the music returns to the vivacity and bubbling exuberance of the opening part with its impression of Paris. Apparently the homesick American, having left the café and reached the open air, has disowned his spell of the blues and once again is an alert spectator of Parisian life. At the conclusion, the street noises and French atmosphere are triumphant."

Although the work was not a critical success, it has always be a huge success with both musicians and audiences. It truly is the essence of George Gershwin's Americana.

Instrumentation – 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets in Bb, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns in F, 3 trumpets in Bb, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, triangle, woodblock, cymbals, low toms, taxi horns, xylophone, glockenspiel, celesta, 4 taxi horn, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, violin 1, violin 2, viola, cello, double bass

Artifacts –

American In Paris first page manuscript

<http://www.music.umich.edu/ami/gershwin/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/AmericanInParis2PianoAutograph-web.jpg>

Gershwin composing *An American in Paris*

<http://www.musicacademyonline.com/composer/biographies.php?bid=58>



1. Gershwin: Rhapsody In Blue & An American In Paris - Leonard Bernstein & New York Philharmonic

2. George Gershwin - The Ultimate Collection - Various Artists

3. Gershwin: Rhapsody In Blue, An American in Paris, Piano Concerto in F - André Previn & Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

4. Russo: Street Music; Three Pieces & Gershwin: An American in Paris - Corky Siegel, San Francisco Symphony, Seiji Ozawa & Siegel-Schwall Band



1. Gershwin: Rhapsody In Blue / An American In Paris

2. Gershwin: Rhapsody In Blue / Concerto in F / Variations on 'I Got Rhythm' / An American In Paris

3. An American in Paris

4. Gershwin: An American in Paris and Rhapsody in Blue; Ives: Symphony No. 2

5. George Gershwin: His Life and Work

6. George Gershwin: An Intimate Portrait (Music in American Life)

YouTube Video Links –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ros66y1aZ-E>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUfl6v6SwL4>