

George Gershwin



BY: DANISHA LARSON

Early Life



- Born September 26, 1898
- Morris (Moishe) Gershowitz (Russian-Jew from St. Petersburg, Russia) immigrant to the United States in the early 1890's.
- Married to Rosa Bruskin

Commencement of Music Career



- Piano for older brother Ira Gershwin at ten
- 13- Lessons with Charles Hambitzer
- Left school at 15 to begin his career

Compositions



- ***La La Lucille***
 - 1919 first full Broadway musical
 - collaborated with Arthur Jackson and B.G. De Sylva
- ***Swanee***
 - great hit because of the modern Jazz age
 - George Gershwin and Irving Caesar
- ***Rhapsody in Blue***
 - First concert hall music
 - 1924

Compositions



- ***An American in Paris***
 - 1928 visited Paris
 - atmosphere of Paris
- ***Porgy and Bess***
 - 1935 folk opera
 - hard to classify as an opera or as an “ambitious Broadway musical”
 - music and drama and was inspired by a novel called *Porgy* by: DuBose Heyward

Listening guide



- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLTManObB4o>
- **0:05** Introduction: This piece begins with a solo clarinet portraying a sound famous “yawn” sound; this is when a clarinet slurs a low note to a higher note. This action consists of about 4 octaves which also creates a type of blues sound.
- **00:07** The solo clarinet ends this glissando by gently flowing into the main theme of this piece (song A). At this time it is accompanied by a trombones playing a slowly descending scale.
- **00:21** By slow increments the trombones play ascending unattached chords.
- **00:33** The French horns join in the monody the trombones continue to play.
- **00:42** The French horns take over the melody that is meant to introduce the first song, A; the drums play at the same time, a duple meter.
- **00:51** the string section slips in with a chromatic scale of 4 allowing the next transition to take place.
- **00:53** the clarinet leads in this transition by repeating the glissando it did in the beginning of the piece, only this time playing about 3 octaves before settling into a steady melody.
- **00:57** the trumpet portrays the main melody of this piece once again, still keeping its blues feeling.
- **1:06** the piano plays a solo somewhat climactic transition allowing the full orchestra to join the piece giving a more full and intense feeling for the audience.
- **1:13** The orchestra joins and plays the song A in a much more forceful way. This sudden shift in tone and mood permits the piece’s irregular form to feel more comforting.

Listening Guide Cont..



- **1:22** the piano now plays a solo part. The tempo does not stay the same (as you may notice through-out the piece); this piano solo emphasizes this fact and shows that only with this “trick” Gershwin was able to free the rhythm a little more adding the rhapsodic environment. It also shows the great improvisation skill Gershwin had by combining many different types of rhythms and dynamics into familiar yet unique moods.
- **2:10** The orchestra enters with a quicker repetition of strings and a low clarinet in the background.
- **2:16** The orchestra cuts out allowing the piano to play solo.
- **2:24** The orchestra returns repeating the same quick repetitive notes as before with the string instruments.
- **2:29** The orchestra fades out with a melodic note, concerning the piano, giving way for the piano to perform solo.
- **2:41** The piano becomes a little harsher on dynamics than before.
- **2:52** the piano begins what seems to be a separate section with-in the piece, perhaps a little bit of improvisation, a very new and distinct melody with some disconjunct figures.
- **3:10** the piano begins to build this part of the piece into another climactic transition
- **3:24** then at this moment the full orchestra springs in the full version of song A, the brass at the lead of this great moment with the strong timpani playing a duple meter. Song A is played in an AABA form from 3:24- 3:59.
- **3:30** The flute section gets a turn at a solo part leading to the next high moment.
- **3:34** the full orchestra jumps back in repeating Song A; form A.
- **3:42** The whole mood of the piece changes gears to being more settled. The piano repeats the simple chords after the strings play them.
- **3:51** The brass section carry the melody with a strong focus in the direction of the next song, song B. The rest of the orchestra play alongside them with disconjunct figures.
- **3:59** A trumpet holds a note creating an approaching train feeling giving an intense feeling. This becomes the short transition to the “Train” theme in jazz.
- **4:03** The “Train” theme in jazz rhythm (a rhythm of 3+3+2) begins the song B which is also in AABA form. The piano plays a very disconjunct dissonance as the background to portray a feeling of business.
- to its end and is emphasized by the fading in and out and in and out again of the orchestra.
- **17:37** the piece ends

Listening Guide Cont..



- **4:16** clarinets (some wind instrument) comes in and ties the two “A’s” together
- **4:23** song B; form A is repeated.
- **4:30** The orchestra seems to release all its energy turning to the clarinet solo..
- **4:33** The piano and orchestra come in again attempting to finish their part
- **4:36** The orchestra seems to collapse again turning to the clarinet to show them which part will be next
- **4:45** the trombones begin by slurring descending notes leading the orchestra into the usual introduction for song A
- **5:01** the piano leads in a sort of bridge; the string section partner up with the piano taking over this short melody.
- **5:15** the clarinet leads in a short decending melody
- **5:19** the trumpet repeats the decending melody the clarinet just played
- **5:26** the flutes play and hold one note while 1 second after another lower sounding wind instrument repeats the decending melody the clarinet and trumpet just played.
- **5:31** the flutes release the note they were holding into a gradually descending scale.
- **5:35** a transition to Song C is made by a harsh strikes to several notes
- **5:38** song C begins and is staccato based with all the orchestra and syncopated block chords on the piano. The style is AABA form.
- **6:05** Brass come in, slowly leading into the next climactic moment
- **6:10** The whole orchestra comes in again repeating the song C; form A 5 times with 2 chromatic melodies (from song C; form A) after the second repetition.

Listening Guide Cont..



- **6:39** the piano goes off on a huge solo playing and improvising most of the different songs played already within the piece.
- **8:50** The clarinets come in on the improvisation taking place on the piano; they carry the melody along playing song A
- **9:24** The piano sneaks a solo again by improvisations of song C
- **11:28** the strings come in, beginning song D; the romance theme. This song is also AABA form.
- **11:34** the French horns join in with a different unattached chords in the background creating a more romantic, calming scene.
- **11:49** the romantic theme begins to carry a brighter, lighter feeling portrayed by the orchestra, lead by the French horns.
- **11:56** the brass bring out their sound fuller in this section of song D.
- **12:15** a transition begins to occur that will lead to a greater feeling of light and happiness
- **12:25** the whole orchestra softly but strongly enter the climactic part of song D.
- **12:52** song D hits an even higher point in its climb to its climax
- **13:06** the piano slowly begins a solo part by using repetitive chords. A triangle chimes in the background, creating a light feeling.
- **13:14** the piano creates a very gradual ascending scale and ends it by transitioning into the improvisation of song D.
- **14:18** Piano transitions and then at 14:29 introduces a short bridge
- **15:32** the brass section join in with the piano creating an inspirational forward feeling. They are headed towards song A
- **16:28** song A finally has returned!!
- **17:09** the song has come to its climax using the song A
- **17:20** the piece comes

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