

2023–2024 | 124th Season

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Thursday, January 18, at 7:30

Friday, January 19, at 2:00

Saturday, January 20, at 8:00

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor

Marcus Roberts Trio:

Marcus Roberts Piano

Martin Jaffe Bass

Jason Marsalis Drums

Stravinsky *Petrushka* (1947 version)

- I. The Shrovetide Fair (First Tableau): The Magic Trick—Russian Dance
- II. *Petrushka's Room* (Second Tableau)
- III. The Moor's Room (Third Tableau): Dance of the Ballerina—Waltz
- IV. The Shrovetide Fair, Toward Evening (Fourth Tableau):
Dance of the Nursemaids—Dance of the Coachmen and the
Stable Boys—The Mummers

Intermission

Weill Symphony No. 2

I. Sostenuto—Allegro molto

II. Largo

III. Allegro vivace—Alla marcia—Presto

Gershwin/orch. Grofé *Rhapsody in Blue*

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 50 minutes.

These concerts are sponsored by **Elaine Woo Camarda and A. Morris Williams, Jr.**

The January 20 concert is also sponsored by the **Zisman Family Foundation.**

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM and are repeated on Monday evenings at 7 PM on WRTI HD 2. Visit www.wrti.org to listen live or for more details.



The Philadelphia Orchestra

The world-renowned Philadelphia Orchestra strives to share the transformative power of music with the widest possible audience, and to create joy, connection, and excitement through music in the Philadelphia region, across the country, and around the world. Through innovative programming, robust education initiatives, a commitment to its diverse communities, and the embrace of digital outreach, the ensemble is creating an expansive and inclusive future for classical music, and furthering the place of the arts in an open and democratic society. In June 2021 the Orchestra and its home, the Kimmel Center, united to form The Philadelphia Orchestra and Kimmel Center, Inc., reimagining the power of the arts to bring joy, create community, and effect change.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his 12th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. His connection to the ensemble's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics, and he is embraced by the musicians of the Orchestra, audiences, and the community.

Your Philadelphia Orchestra takes great pride in its hometown, performing for the people of Philadelphia year-round, in Verizon Hall and around the community, in classrooms and hospitals, and over the airwaves and online. The Orchestra's award-winning education and community initiatives engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members of all ages through programs such as PlayINs; side-by-sides; PopUP concerts; Our City, Your Orchestra Live; School

Concerts; sensory-friendly concerts; open rehearsals; the School Partnership Program and School Ensemble Program; All City Orchestra Fellowships; and residency work in Philadelphia and abroad. The Orchestra's free online video series, Our City, Your Orchestra (OCYO), uncovers and amplifies the voices, stories, and causes championed by unique Philadelphia organizations and businesses. Joining OCYO in connecting with the community is HearTOGETHER, a free monthly podcast featuring artists and activists who discuss music, social justice, and the lived experiences that inform the drive to create a more equitable and inclusive future for the arts.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global ambassador and one of our nation's greatest exports. It performs annually at Carnegie Hall, the Mann Center, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. The Orchestra also has a rich touring history, having first performed outside Philadelphia in its earliest days. In 1973 it was the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, launching a five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange.

Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording with 13 celebrated releases on the Deutsche Grammophon label, including the GRAMMY® Award-winning *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM. For more information, please visit www.philorch.org.

Music and Artistic Director

London Nordeman



Yannick Nézet-Séguin is currently in his 12th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. An inspired leader, Yannick is both an evolutionary and a revolutionary, developing the mighty "Philadelphia Sound" in new ways. His collaborative style, deeply rooted musical curiosity, and boundless enthusiasm have been heralded by critics and audiences alike. The *New York Times* has called him "phenomenal," adding that "the ensemble, famous for its glowing strings and homogenous richness, has never sounded better."

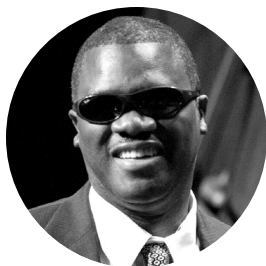
Yannick has established himself as a musical leader of the highest caliber and one of the most thrilling and sought-after talents of his generation. He became the third music director of New York's Metropolitan Opera in 2018. In addition, he has been artistic director and principal conductor of Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000. In 2017 he became an honorary member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He served as music director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic from 2008 to 2018 (he is now honorary conductor) and was principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic from 2008 to 2014. He has made wildly successful appearances with the world's most revered ensembles and at many of the leading opera houses.

Yannick has shown a deep commitment to expanding the repertoire by embracing an ever-growing and diverse group of today's composers and by performing the music of under-appreciated composers of the past. In 2018 he signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon. Under his leadership The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to recording with 13 releases on that label, including *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*, which won a GRAMMY® Award for Best Orchestral Performance in 2022.

A native of Montreal, Yannick studied piano, conducting, composition, and chamber music at Montreal's Conservatory of Music and continued his studies with renowned conductor Carlo Maria Giulini; he also studied choral conducting with Joseph Flummerfelt at Westminster Choir College. Among Yannick's honors are an appointment as Companion of the Order of Canada; Companion to the Order of Arts and Letters of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Montreal; an Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres; *Musical America's* 2016 Artist of the Year; ECHO KLASSIK's 2014 Conductor of the Year; a Royal Philharmonic Society Award; Canada's National Arts Centre Award; the Prix Denise-Pelletier; the Oskar Morawetz Award; and honorary doctorates from the University of Quebec, the Curtis Institute of Music, Westminster Choir College of Rider University, McGill University, the University of Montreal, the University of Pennsylvania, Laval University, and Drexel University.

To read Yannick's full bio, please visit philorch.org/conductor.

Soloist



Pianist **Marcus Roberts**, who made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 1998, is known throughout the world for his many contributions to jazz music as well as his commitment to integrating the jazz and classical idioms to create something wholly new. His melodic and soulful group improvisational style uses musical cues and exotic rhythms as the foundation for his modern approach to the jazz trio. He grew up in Jacksonville, Florida, where his mother's gospel

singing and the music of the local church left a lasting impact on his music. He began teaching himself to play piano at age five after losing his sight but did not have his first formal lesson until age 12 while attending the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind. At age 18 he went on to study classical piano at Florida State University. In 2014 Mr. Roberts's life and work were featured on a segment of the CBS television show *60 Minutes*.

Mr. Roberts has won numerous awards and competitions, including the Helen Keller Award for Personal Achievement and the 2024 Dorothy and David Dushkin Award by the Music Institute of Chicago. His critically acclaimed legacy of recorded music includes solo piano, duets, and trio arrangements of jazz standards as well as original suites of music for trio, large ensembles, and symphony orchestra. His first recording with orchestra (*Portraits in Blue*, Sony Classical) featured his innovative arrangement of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and was nominated for a GRAMMY. His DVD recording with the Berlin Philharmonic showcases his ground-breaking arrangement of Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F as well as *Rhapsody in Blue* (*A Gershwin Night*, EuroArts). Mr. Roberts launched his own record label, J-Master Records, in 2009. One of his more recent endeavors is the Modern Jazz Generation (MJG), a multigenerational band that is the realization of his long-standing dedication to training and mentoring younger musicians.

Mr. Roberts is also an accomplished composer. He has been commissioned by such organizations as Chamber Music America, Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Atlanta Symphony, the Saito Kinen Orchestra, and the American Symphony Orchestra. He was awarded a grant by South Arts and the Doris Duke Foundation for the creation of the audio-video project *Tomorrow's Promises*. In addition to providing support to younger musicians, he continues to find ways to serve the blind and other disabled communities. In 2021 he served as the artistic director for the American Foundation for the Blind's centennial gala and was a featured speaker/performer at the Disability:IN annual conference. Mr. Roberts is a professor of music at the Florida State University College of Music and a distinguished professor of music at Bard College.

Soloists



Martin Jaffe, who is making his Philadelphia Orchestra debut, is an exciting new voice on the double bass. He is known for his deep sense of groove and his rich and lyrical sound. His musical roots are in jazz, but his background includes both classical and Brazilian music. He is one of New York City's most in-demand young bassists and has frequently shared the stage with such musical icons as Marcus Roberts, Harold Mabern, Sergio Mendes, and Wynton Marsalis. Originally from Conway,

Massachusetts, Mr. Jaffe moved to New York in 2012 to enroll at Columbia University and the Juilliard School where he studied with bassists Ron Carter and Ray Drummond, among others. In 2012 he was named a Presidential Scholar in the Arts and in 2013 won the International Society of Bassists' annual jazz competition. His compositions and arrangements have been widely performed including at the Kennedy Center and Lincoln Center. He has recorded with such artists as Jen Allen, Miro Sprague, Ben Rosenblum, and Chris Pattishall. Mr. Jaffe co-leads an innovative trio with guitarist Jason Ennis and pianist Miro Sprague, which features original compositions by each member drawing on influences from Brazilian music, classical chamber music, and free improvisation.



Jason Marsalis is one of the most gifted drummers in jazz today. He is the youngest son of the late pianist Ellis Marsalis. During his last year of high school at the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, he joined the new trio founded by pianist Marcus Roberts. Mr. Marsalis began touring regularly with Mr. Roberts the next year while studying at Loyola University. While he has performed with many other musicians, including Michael White, John Ellis, Shannon Powell,

the Marsalis family, and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, Mr. Marsalis has been the drummer in the Marcus Roberts Trio for 29 years. He has been featured on all of Mr. Roberts's recordings since joining the Trio and has also released five of his own recordings. His recording *The 21st Century Trad Band* showcases his remarkably creative approach to soloing while *Melody Reimagined, Book 1* (Basin Street Records) highlights his creative imagination by reinventing a series of historic standards for a modern audience. His style is heavily influenced by the greats of both jazz and classical music. With Mr. Roberts, he has performed with symphony orchestras all over the world, making his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2017. When he is not touring, he can be found working on music or helping to train other young musicians.

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1911
Stravinsky
Petrushka

Music
Strauss
Der Rosenkavalier
Literature
Wharton
Ethan Frome

Art
Braque
Man with a Guitar

History
Chinese Republic proclaimed

1924
Gershwin
Rhapsody in Blue

Music
Berg
Chamber Concerto
Literature
Forster
A Passage to India

Art
Hopper
New York Pavements
History
Lenin dies

1933
Weill
Symphony No. 2

Music
Copland
Short Symphony
Literature
Colette
La Chatte

Art
Matisse
The Dance
History
Prohibition repealed

Petrushka was Igor Stravinsky's second ballet for Sergei Diaghilev's legendary Ballets Russes, coming between the dazzling *Firebird* of 1910 and the revolutionary *Rite of Spring* in 1913. He originally conceived of the work as a concert piece for piano and orchestra. The piano remains prominently featured in the ballet, which tells the story of a puppet who comes to life—with complicated consequences.

Kurt Weill was already famous for his theatrical collaborations with Bertolt Brecht (particularly *The Threepenny Opera*) when he fled Germany after the Nazis seized power in 1933. He had just begun writing his Second Symphony, completed in Paris and premiered in Amsterdam the next year under the baton of Bruno Walter.

The jazz impulse continues with George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, which caused a sensation at its 1924 premiere in New York's Aeolian Hall at a concert presented by the legendary bandleader Paul Whiteman. On that occasion, Gershwin was the piano soloist and Whiteman conducted a jazz band in an instrumentation by Ferde Grofé, who also crafted the version for full symphony orchestra we hear today.

The Music

Petrushka

Igor Stravinsky

Born in Lomonosov, Russia, June 17, 1882

Died in New York City, April 6, 1971



"After the success in 1910 of his first ballet, *Zhar-Ptitsa* (known in French as *L'Oiseau de feu* and in English as *The Firebird*), Igor Stravinsky began to plan his next work, which was to be a ballet taking as its subject the fertility rites of pagan Russia. But he realized that composing such a score would be a "long and difficult task" and so decided "to refresh myself by composing an orchestral piece in which the piano would play the most important part—a sort of *Konzertstück*." (Of course, Stravinsky was right: His sketches for *Vesna svyashchennaya*—better

known as *The Rite of Spring*—testify to the almost superhuman concentration that the composer had to summon within himself in order to complete this transcendent score in 1913.) Searching for a title for his concert piece, whose subject the composer described as a "droll, ugly, sentimental, shifting personage who was always in an explosion of revolt," Stravinsky suddenly hit upon a solution: "One day I leapt for joy. I had indeed found my title—*Petrushka*, the immortal and unhappy hero of every fair in all countries."

From Orchestra Piece to Ballet Score Who, or what, exactly, is this *Petrushka*? A venerable comic figure who is called Pulcinella in Italy and Punch in England, a figure of indignation and violence, a trickster whose tricks all too often turn back upon himself. In Stravinsky's native city of St. Petersburg, the *petrushka* shows in their colorful booths were played at the fairs put on during Shrovetide, that midwinter period of uninhibited carnival that occurred a week before the austerities of the penitential season of Lent. As the music historian Richard Taruskin writes, "The earliest account of what is arguably a *petrushka* play is found in a book published in 1636 by Adam Olearius, the Dutch Ambassador to the Russian court, who gives both a written description and a drawing of a puppet performance." By 1830, the period in which Stravinsky's ballet is set, the influence of Italian *commedia dell'arte* had considerably modified the ancient *petrushka* plays.

Once Stravinsky sharpened the focus of his invention by embracing the figure of *Petrushka*, he quickly completed two sections of the score, including the scintillating Russian Dance. Sergei Diaghilev, the great impresario who founded

the Ballets Russes and who had commissioned *The Firebird*, visited Stravinsky in Switzerland to inquire after the progress of what would become *The Rite of Spring*. Instead of sketches for that score, however, Stravinsky played to an entranced Diaghilev the completed sections of his *Konzertstück* about *Petrushka*. Diaghilev grasped instantly the potential of this music for ballet, forcefully persuading the composer to transform it into a dramatic work.

Diaghilev then brought Stravinsky together with Alexander Benois, the artist and set designer, and the choreographer of *The Firebird*, Mikhail Fokine. The eldest of this group, Benois remembered well the Shrovetide fairs of his childhood in St. Petersburg and sketched colorful sets and costumes as well as helped to devise its scenario. Fokine's innovative choreography violated the traditional suavity of ballet by creating jerky, marionette-like movements for the incandescent Vaslav Nijinsky, the star dancer of the Ballets Russes, who created the title role. The coruscating brilliance of Stravinsky's orchestration is unparalleled.

Given the strong and conflicting aesthetic opinions of these three collaborators, it is hardly surprising that the scenario they wrote for *Petrushka* contains a healthy dollop of ambiguity: How, for example, can a puppet have a ghost that, like Till Eulenspiegel in Richard Strauss's tone poem, returns after death to have the last word? Far from detracting from the dramatic impact of the ballet, however, this ambiguity allows the audience to enter imaginatively into the action themselves.

The first tableau seems to be a realistic recreation of a Shrovetide fair in St. Petersburg, but this expectation is transmogrified once the sinister Magician enters and commands three puppets to dance. At this point the audience is ushered into the fantastic realm of Russian symbolism; as Andrew Wachtel writes, "by combining the realistic and fantastic worlds in the finale, the authors called the very distinction between the stage world and the real world into question." Audiences were enchanted rather than disconcerted: *Petrushka* was an immense success at its Paris premiere by the Ballets Russes on June 13, 1911, in the Théâtre du Châtelet. Since then *Petrushka* has never left the ballet repertory.

A Closer Look The action of *Petrushka* unfolds over four tableaux. The curtain rises upon a set that evokes Admiralty Square in St. Petersburg, replete with a puppet theater with closed curtain, a carousel, and a boisterous crowd, more than a few of whom are inebriated. The revelry grows wilder until the Magician appears, playing the flute by which he animates his three puppets: a resplendent Moor, a pretty Ballerina, and the awkward *Petrushka*, who is clearly in love with the indifferent Ballerina, who prefers the virile Moor.

In the Second Tableau, set in *Petrushka*'s room, Stravinsky illustrates the duality of his protagonist's frustrated nature by a piercing harmonic amalgam that combines two unrelated chords—(F-sharp major and C major)—the famous "Petrushka Chord." The Ballerina enters, but *Petrushka*'s anguished gyrations frighten her and she flees.

The Third Tableau takes place in the Moor's voluptuously Oriental room. The Magician places the Ballerina close to the Moor, who commences to seduce her: A distraught Petrushka discovers them and makes a fuss. Furious at this intrusion, the Moor draws a scimitar and chases Petrushka out of the room.

The Fourth, and final, Tableau returns to Admiralty Square, where the celebration continues with a series of dances interrupted by a trained bear. To the dismay of the crowd, the two puppets suddenly enter into their midst: The Moor kills Petrushka with a single stroke of his blade. Night falls, the revelers are dispersed, and the Magician, carrying the limp body of his puppet, is terrified to see the angry ghost of Petrushka, who thumbs his nose at his erstwhile tormentor to the mocking sound of "his" chord—and at the audience as well.

—Byron Adams

Petrushka was composed from 1910 to 1911 and the orchestration was revised in 1947.

Stravinsky himself conducted the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the work, in January 1925. Yannick Nézet-Séguin led the most recent subscription performances in January 2017, in the 1947 version.

The Philadelphians have recorded Petrushka four times: in 1937 for RCA with Leopold Stokowski; in 1954 and 1964 for CBS with Eugene Ormandy; and in 1981 for EMI with Riccardo Muti.

Stravinsky scored the piece for three flutes (III doubling piccolo), two oboes, English horn, three clarinets (III doubling bass clarinet), two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, snare drums, suspended cymbal, tam-tam, tambourine, triangle, xylophone), two harps, piano, celesta, and strings.

Petrushka runs approximately 35 minutes in performance.

The Music

Symphony No. 2

Kurt Weill

Born in Dessau, Germany, March 2, 1900

Died in New York, April 3, 1950



Born in Germany in 1900, Kurt Weill died at age 50 in New York. Not unlike Franz Schubert, another composer who perished prematurely, the prolific Weill excelled in a wide variety of genres and magnificently merged popular and serious styles with an apparent unwillingness to make artificial distinctions between them. His widow, the formidable singing actress Lotte Lenya, once remarked in an interview: "Weill has a lot of Schubert in him—he reminds me of him. In his simplicity." George Gershwin and Leonard Bernstein

were likewise kindred spirits.

Over the course of his career Weill concentrated on dramatic works, from the early masterpieces he wrote in Weimar Germany to successes on Broadway near the end of his life. His collaborations with the playwright Bertolt Brecht, including *The Threepenny Opera* (an updating of the 18th-century *The Beggar's Opera*) and *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, proved theatrical landmarks.

Yet Weill's compositional output extended beyond music for the stage (and for radio and film) to include choral and concert works—chamber music, two symphonies, and a Concerto for Violin and Winds. His musical gifts had been evident at an early age, which led to elite training in Berlin with teachers that included Engelbert Humperdinck (composer of the opera *Hansel and Gretel*) and Ferruccio Busoni. At age 21 Weill composed an impressive First Symphony, which was never performed during his lifetime. He fled Germany in March 1933, soon after the Nazis seized power, and lived first in Paris before settling in America, where he eventually became a citizen.

A Symphony from Berlin and Paris Weill had begun composing his Symphony No. 2 before fleeing Germany but once in France was sidetracked by a new project, a "ballet with songs" called *The Seven Deadly Sins*, another joint venture with Brecht. After that piece premiered in June he returned to the Symphony, which was completed by February. The work was commissioned by the legendary patron Princesse Edmond de Polignac, who also elicited pieces from Stravinsky, Satie, Poulenc, Falla, and others. A princess through her second marriage, the former Winnaretta Singer (born in America to the family known for sewing

machines), she hosted the most celebrated musical salon in Paris, not only commissioning formidable works but also performing them in her home. It was in these circumstances that Weill's Symphony received its private premiere.

The eminent German conductor Bruno Walter, who had premiered several works by his friend Gustav Mahler, led the first official performance of Weill's Second Symphony with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam on October 11, 1934. While the orchestra enjoyed performing the piece and the audience embraced it, the critical reception was negative and, at least in one case, anti-Semitic. Some complained of a similarity to *The Threepenny Opera* and charged that the piece was not truly symphonic but rather an assemblage of songs. Weill reported to a friend: "It was a great success with the audience—catastrophic press ('banal,' 'disjointed,' 'empty,' 'Beethoven in the beer garden,' etc. Not one friendly word").

But Walter believed in the Symphony and soon performed it in the Hague and Rotterdam and by the end of the year with the New York Philharmonic. For that occasion, he suggested that Weill add the title *Three Night Scenes: A Symphonic Fantasy*, corresponding to what he felt was "its nocturnal, uncanny, mysterious atmosphere." The program note for those New York concerts states that the proposal was "adopted with approval" by Weill, although one may well be skeptical about this. The work's first real critical success came when Walter conducted it in Vienna in 1937 but after that the Symphony vanished from the repertoire for decades and remained unpublished until 1966.

A Closer Look The three-movement Symphony is scored for a modest-sized orchestra and displays an eclecticism and mixture of styles, from Neo-Classicism to popular, with nods toward Romanticism reminiscent of Mahler. (Walter's advocacy of the Symphony is understandable.) The first movement (**Sostenuto—Allegro molto**) begins with a slow introduction that includes thematic material that forms the basis for the entire Symphony. The second movement (**Largo**) offers a Mahlerian funeral march. The more optimistic finale (**Allegro vivace—Alla marcia—Presto**) is a rondo with march that ends with a brilliant coda ingeniously transforming the opening theme of the second movement.

Despite the troubled times in which he composed the Symphony, Weill was reluctant to reveal a "program" for it. Walter persuaded him to provide the following brief note for the Amsterdam premiere (translation by Antony Beaumont):

The first movement is cast in straight sonata form, except that the so-called development section does not expand on the ideas of the first and second subjects but draws instead on fresh material. An appropriate heading for the second movement might be "Cortège." In 4/4 time throughout, it is based on one rhythmic and one melodic theme. The final movement is a rondo, of which the second interlude is a march for winds alone. The culminating stretto takes the form of a tarantella ...

It is impossible for me to comment on the "content" of the work, because it was conceived as a purely musical form. A lady friend of mine in Paris was perhaps right when she said, if one could find a word that signified the opposite of "pastoral," it would be the title for this music. I cannot tell."

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Weill's Symphony No. 2 was composed from 1933 to 1934.

The first, and only other, Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the work were in April 2016, with Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

The score calls for pairs of flutes (both doubling piccolo), oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets, and trombones; timpani; percussion (bass drum, cymbals, gong, snare drum, suspended cymbal, tenor drum, triangle), and strings.

Performance time is approximately 30 minutes.

The Music

Rhapsody in Blue (orchestrated by Ferde Grofé)

George Gershwin

Born in Brooklyn, September 26, 1898

Died in Hollywood, July 11, 1937



George Gershwin's career is a great American success story, tempered (as with Mozart and Schubert) by early death in his 30s that cut it short. Born to Russian-Jewish immigrants in Brooklyn, he grew up in a poor household. As Aaron Copland, his slightly younger Brooklyn contemporary, also discovered, music offered opportunities. But while Copland went to study abroad as an American in Paris, Gershwin dropped out of school and started working his way up as a "song-plugger," playing Tin Pan Alley songs for perspective customers at a music store. Soon he was writing his own songs (his first big hit was "Swanee" in 1919) and enjoying success on Broadway.

An Experiment in Modern Music The signal event of his early career came at age 25, on Tuesday afternoon, February 12, 1924, at a concert in New York's Aeolian Hall given by Paul Whiteman and his Palais Royal Orchestra. Billed as "An Experiment in Modern Music," it featured a variety of familiar pieces, including popular fare and comedy, as well as pieces by Edward MacDowell, Victor Herbert, and concluding with one of Edward Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* marches.

Whiteman explained that the purpose of the experiment was to highlight "the tremendous strides which have been made in popular music from the day of the discordant jazz, which sprang into existence about ten years ago from nowhere in particular, to the really melodious music of today which—for no good reason—is still being called jazz." The comment that the music came "from nowhere in particular" is striking. As the music historian Richard Taruskin keenly observed, this event was "in essence an attempt to sanitize contemporary popular music and elevate it in public esteem by divorcing it from its roots in African American improvised music and securing endorsements from luminaries of the classical music establishment, many of whom were in attendance that evening." (Among those said to have been there were Sergei Rachmaninoff, Leopold Stokowski, Jascha Heifetz, and Fritz Kreisler.) It was not so much that the music was unusual but rather the idea of presenting performances by a dance band in a concert hall.

Gershwin had written the piece in the space of just a few weeks in a two-piano version that was quickly orchestrated by Whiteman's favored arranger, Ferde

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Grofé (1892–1972), best remembered today for his own composition *The Grand Canyon Suite*. Grofé was intimately familiar with the marvelous instrumental colors Whiteman's band could produce; he followed suggestions outlined in Gershwin's piano score, which were supplemented by almost daily meetings with the composer. The famous opening clarinet glissando was contributed by Ross Gorman, who asked permission to change a written-out scale to something more enticing.

The *Rhapsody* proved to be the highlight of the concert, an enormous success before a capacity audience, as well as with most of the critics. Deems Taylor said the piece "hinted at something new, something that had not hitherto been said in music." Gershwin, he believed, provided "a link between the jazz camp and the intellectuals." Even a grumpy voice from *Theatre Magazine* acknowledged that the wildly popular concert "was often vulgar, but it was never dull." Whiteman repeated the program a month later and then again at Carnegie Hall in April, as well as in Philadelphia and Boston. In June he and Gershwin made their first recording of the *Rhapsody*, which sold over a million copies. Over roughly the next decade performances, recordings, and sheet music earned the composer some \$250,000, an almost unimaginable sum at the time.

A Closer Look Gershwin originally titled the work American Rhapsody, perhaps to capitalize on the popularity of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies, but his brother Ira suggested using something inspired by paintings of James McNeill Whistler, such as *Nocturne in Blue and Silver*.

The *Rhapsody* basically unfolds as a sequence of five Tin Pan Alley–like songs with virtuoso connecting passagework. The piece has been criticized by some as a loose patchwork of relatively interchangeable parts (Gershwin's own early recordings made cuts so as to fit on one 78 disc), but Howard Pollack has observed that the work might be viewed as a "compressed four-movement symphony or sonata," along the lines of Schubert's "Wanderer" Fantasy. For his part, Gershwin said that he "wanted to show that jazz is an idiom not to be limited to a mere song and chorus that consumed three minutes in presentation," which meant putting the blues "in a larger and more serious form." Twelve years after its successful premiere he commented that the piece was "still very much alive," while if he had "taken the same themes and put them in songs they would have been gone years ago."

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Rhapsody in Blue was composed in 1924.

Roy Bargy was the soloist in the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the *Rhapsody*, in November 1936; Paul Whiteman conducted. The last time the piece appeared on subscription was in October 2021, with pianist Aaron Diehl and Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting.

The Orchestra has recorded the *Rhapsody* twice, both for CBS and both with Eugene Ormandy: in 1945 with Oscar Levant and in 1967 with Philippe Entremont.

The score calls for solo piano, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two alto saxophones, tenor saxophone, two bassoons, three horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, gong, snare drum, triangle), banjo, and strings.

Rhapsody in Blue runs approximately 16 minutes in performance.

Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

Chromatic: Relating to tones foreign to a given key (scale) or chord

Coda: A concluding section or passage added in order to confirm the impression of finality

Fantasia: A composition free in form and more or less fantastic in character

Fugue: A piece of music in which a short melody is stated by one voice and then imitated by the other voices in succession, reappearing throughout the entire piece in all the voices at different places

Glissando: A glide from one note to the next

Harmonic: Pertaining to chords and to the theory and practice of harmony

Harmony: The combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions

Konzertstück: A short concerto in one movement and free in form

Neo-Classicism: A movement of style in the works of certain 20th-century composers who revived the balanced forms and clearly perceptible thematic processes of earlier styles to replace what were, to them, the increasingly exaggerated gestures and formlessness of late Romanticism

Nocturne: A piece of a dreamily romantic or sentimental character

Rhapsody: Generally an instrumental fantasia on folksongs or on motifs taken from primitive national music

Rondo: A form frequently used in symphonies and concertos for the final movement. It consists of a main section that alternates with a variety of contrasting sections (A-B-A-C-A etc.).

Scale: The series of tones which form (a) any major or minor key or (b) the chromatic scale of successive semi-tonic steps

Sonata: An instrumental composition in three or four extended movements contrasted in theme, tempo, and mood, usually for a solo instrument

Sonata form: The form in which the first movements (and sometimes others) of symphonies are usually cast. The sections are exposition, development, and recapitulation, the last sometimes followed by a coda. The exposition is the introduction of the musical ideas, which are then "developed." In the recapitulation, the exposition is repeated with modifications.

Stretto: A division of a fugue in which subject and answer follow in such close succession as to overlap

Tarantella: A Neapolitan dance in rapid triple time

Tonic: The keynote of a scale

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

Alla marcia: In march time

Allegro: Bright, fast

Largo: Broad

Presto: Very fast

Sostenuto: Sustained

Vivace: Lively

TEMPO MODIFIERS

Molto: Very

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