NAXOS

AMERICAN CLASSICS

GERSHWIN

Rhapsody in Blue

Second Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra • Cuban Overture

TOWER 1920/2019 • STUCKY Dreamwaltzes

Kevin Cole, Piano

National Orchestral Institute Philharmonic

David Alan Miller

George Gershwin (1898–1937)**: Cuban Overture • Rhapsody in Blue • Second Rhapsody**
Joan Tower (b. 1938)**: 1920/2019 • Steven Stucky** (1949–2016)**: Dreamwaltzes**

George Gershwin (1898–1937)
Gershwin Initiative

The University of Michigan launched its Gershwin Initiative in 2013. In collaboration with the Gershwin family and their publishers, the Initiative's signature project is The George and Ira Gershwin Critical Edition, which seeks "to create clear and definitive publications of musical notation and text that capture the most accurate representations possible of the Gershwin brothers' unique and pioneering creativity." Under the leadership of editor-in-chief Mark Clague, managing editor Andrew S. Kohler and associate editor Jacob Kerzner, the Initiative's team of editors and researchers have consulted all existing original manuscripts and other contemporary sources (including piano rolls and recordings) to produce editions that, while inevitably involving certain artistic choices, provide sufficient annotations and alternates to allow performers to take multiple options into account. Three of those editions – on which the Initiative worked with Jessica Getman (volume editor of the symphonic *Rhapsody in Blue* and founding managing editor of the project), Loras John Schissel (editorial advisor on *Cuban Overture*) and James Wierzbicki (volume editor of *Second Rhapsody*) – are making their debut on this album.

Critical Edition recordings on Naxos of the *Concerto in F* (8.559875) and *An American in Paris* (8.559859) by the National Orchestral Institute Philharmonic are also available.

Cuban Overture (1932)

George Gershwin vacationed in Havana for two weeks in February 1932. While there, he heard numerous local bands and, delighted with what he heard, returned to New York with a collection of Cuban percussion instruments and the intent to write a new concert work inspired by his experiences in the Cuban capital. He finished his short-score sketch in July of that year, and had finished the orchestration barely a week before Albert Coates and the New York Philharmonic premiered the work at the first-ever all-Gershwin concert at Lewisohn Stadium on 16 August with a packed house of 17,000 in attendance. Although it was originally entitled *Rumba* (referring to a popular Cuban dance), the composer soon changed the title to *Cuban Overture*, which he felt was more dignified and in keeping with the character of his "symphonic overture."

Musically speaking, the piece demonstrates the increasing complexity and sophistication of Gershwin's work, as musicologist Howard Pollack has observed. The introduction includes a fragment of a popular dance by Ignacio Piñeiro, as well as hints of two themes to come in the first A section. Between statements of those themes, Gershwin inserts passages of what he called a three-part "polyphonic episode," in which the upper voice plays one of those A themes against an anticipation of the B theme – in invertible counterpoint. The B section itself largely consists of three canons. There are passages that can even be described as polytonal (a word Gershwin himself used in describing parts of the piece) and bitonal.

The orchestration is, for its time, exotic: in addition to a relatively standard symphonic layout, Gershwin includes four coloristic percussion instruments – bongos, gourd, maracas and claves – which he specifies in his score should be placed at the forefront of the orchestra, just in front of the conductor. He even sketched a diagram on the title page of his manuscript, including drawings of the four instruments in case there was any doubt.

Not all contemporary critics were taken with the work (one called it "merely old Gershwin in recognizable form"), but Olin Downes sagely noted that Gershwin's material had been "treated in ways which depart from anything he has done in earlier scores." The number of conductors who have performed and recorded it over the years attests to its enduring popularity.

Rhapsody in Blue (1924)

Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* presents unique challenges to anyone trying to create a "definitive" version. As Ryan Raul Bañagale (volume editor for the Critical Edition of the original jazz-band score) notes in *Arranging Gershwin*, the work is not a "composition" in the traditional sense: "Unlike a Beethoven symphony or even subsequent works by Gershwin for the concert hall, the *Rhapsody* existed as an 'arrangement' from the very start." From Gershwin's original two-piano score, through Ferde Grofé's instrumentation to the countless treatments (from excellent to awful) that have followed over the last century, it's hard to know where the "real" *Rhapsody* lies. Even Grofé orchestrated multiple versions, first for the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, then a flexible scoring for theater orchestra, and another for a traditional symphony orchestra (the latter published five years after Gershwin's death, although the composer had a facsimile of the manuscript in his possession). The Critical Edition used for this recording is based on the symphonic arrangement, giving Grofé near-equal billing on the title page. Pianist Kevin Cole, however, has included 44 measures from the original jazz-band version that were cut for the symphonic iteration.

Gershwin was able to write *Rhapsody in Blue* quickly, in part because the tunes were based on melodic ideas already conceived by the composer (on paper or in his head), perhaps as "trunk song" material (that is, for possible show tunes). Gershwin said that, although he had already begun the work before traveling to the Boston premiere of his musical *Sweet Little Devil*, much of the piece came to him during the train ride: "It was [then] that I suddenly heard – even saw on paper – the complete construction of the *Rhapsody*, from beginning to end. […] No new themes came to me, but I worked on the thematic material already in my mind and tried to conceive the composition as a whole. I heard it as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America […] of our incomparable national pep, our blues, our metropolitan madness." Within a week of his return from Boston, he had completed a two-piano sketch of the entire piece, although several sections of the solo piano were notated only partially, if at all, when it plays with the ensemble.

The work is aptly named. Definitions of the term "rhapsody" in music include such phrases as "no formal structure," "expresses powerful feelings," "suggestive of improvisation," "a free-form composition that stitches different tunes together" and "having a distinct air of spontaneity." *Rhapsody in Blue* fits all these descriptors. After the iconic opening clarinet glissando (a performance tradition started by Ross Gorman of the Whiteman orchestra), Gershwin presents five distinct themes, named by David Schiff in his Cambridge Musical Handbook on the work: "Ritornello" (2 c. 00:10 on this recording), "Stride" (c. 00:39), "Train" (c. 03:35), "Shuffle" (c. 04:52), and "Love" (c. 10:18). There is also a "Tag" motif (c. 00:59, used by the composer in the same year in the song *The Man I Love*) often played in conjunction with the "Ritornello" theme. Notably, most of these melodies are based on the "blues" scale, with flattened sevenths and both major and minor thirds. Gershwin tosses them between soloist and orchestra in a freewheeling, rhapsodic way, excepting that the love theme is not heard until the central *Andante moderato* of his broad A–B–A structure.

Paul Whiteman introduced *Rhapsody in Blue* in its initial jazz-band arrangement to the world on 12 February 1924, at the first of a series of *Experiments in Modern Music* at the Aeolian Hall in New York City; Gershwin played the not-yet-fully-notated piano part. Several additional performances followed in New York (at Carnegie Hall), Pittsburgh, Indianapolis and St. Louis. On 10 June he made the first (acoustic) recording of the work with Whiteman in New York, heavily abridged due to technological limitations. Its journey since then has been epic, changing the trajectory of Gershwin's career and impacting the course of American music in innumerable ways.

Second Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra (1931)

Gershwin drafted his *Second Rhapsody* in Hollywood in early 1931, after having written – with his brother Ira – the songs for David Butler's film *Delicious*, Gershwin's first complete film score. As he wrote to his friend and biographer Isaac Goldberg, "I wrote it mainly because I wanted to write a serious composition and found the opportunity in California to do it. […] I was under no obligation to write this. But, you know, the old artistic soul must be appeased every so often." Fox staffer Hugo Friedhofer then adapted some of what Gershwin had written for an extended, almost balletic scene in the latter part of the picture in which the dazed heroine, disappointed in love and on the run from the police, wanders through the city, alternately buffeted by the populace and overtaken by despair. Since the music was written before any footage was shot, the film was tailored to fit the music, which itself was heavily cut and adapted by Friedhofer. Contemporary film critics took notice, with *Motion Picture Herald* stating, "Gershwin's *New York Rhapsody*, which is presented against a striking background of New York life, is an outstanding feature of the production." The primitive sound recording of the day hardly does the work justice, but the overall effect is still impressive.

Gershwin finished the full orchestration of the concert piece – in which two themes appear in a broad A–B–A structure considerably more extended and developed than in Friedhofer's adaptation – as soon as he got back to New York. He called the opening piano rhythm in the bass register and the joyous syncopated idea that follows the "rivet theme" – *Rhapsody in Rivets* was, in fact, an alternate title considered while the film was in production. (When the composer character in the film demonstrates the first of the two themes on the piano, he describes "riveters drumming your ears from every side.") It reflects the hustle and bustle of the teeming metropolis in musical terms as apt and natural as Leonard Bernstein would achieve over a decade later in *On the Town*. The composer contrasts this with a lyrical, bluesy melody (alternately described by Gershwin as "Brahmsian" and as having a "broad, flowing movement which strikes me as almost religious in effect") that reflects the heroine's loneliness and anguish. (To be fair, the composer insisted there was no program to *Second Rhapsody*; he wished to disassociate it from the film, which was not a success.)

On 26 April 1931 he was able to try out the work with a hand-picked orchestra of 55 players at NBC Studio B in Radio City in New York. As he told Goldberg, "[The] result was most gratifying. In many respects, such as orchestration and form, it is the best thing I've written." The run-through was recorded by NBC, who offered the composer reference discs to use as he refined and completed the work. *Second Rhapsody* officially premiered on 29 January 1932, with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Serge Koussevitzky, followed by its New York debut a week later with the same orchestra and conductor, at which the composer/soloist was greeted with a rapturous ovation from the capacity crowd at Carnegie Hall.

More information about the University of Michigan's Gershwin Initiative can be found at smtd.umich.edu/ami/gershwin

Joan Tower (b. 1938)**: 1920/2019** (2020)

Joan Tower's *1920/2019* was part of a New York Philharmonic initiative, "Project 19," created to commission 19 works by women composers to honor the centenary of the 19th amendment to the US Constitution, which guaranteed women the right to vote. The composer has written, "I began writing this music in 2019 as the #MeToo movement continued to grow. Victims of sexual abuse, assault and harassment are ending their silence, finding strength by sharing their experiences and beliefs. These two years – 1920 and 2019 – are formidable years for the empowerment of women. They changed the whole landscape."

There is nothing musical in the work, however, that overtly relates it to the fight for women's rights – no rousing suffragette marches or strains of Americana. Tower herself describes it as "a piece largely about rhythm and texture (hopefully) set in a dramatic and organic narrative." It begins with a powerful unison G that slowly rises in a series of whole and half steps to a high D sharp in first violins and first flute. The composer then introduces a rising quintuplet figure, spanning a tritone, that will become an important building block. Indeed, rising lines appear throughout the piece – perhaps embodying the idea of a great struggle. These contrast with a dotted-rhythm figure and chordal passages that suggest a more stable sense of achievement. The opening idea returns twice, after which it is succeeded by a quick-moving section in which a constant barrage of eighth notes provides a rhythmic motor that is constantly knocked askew by changing meter signatures.

Once this propulsive section winds down, the composer follows it with a gentler exploration of some of the opening ideas (beginning at 4 c. 05:59) until the eighth-note motor picks up again (at c. 07:14). This leads in turn to another statement of the declamatory opening (at c. 08:26), which is followed by brief, cadenza-like statements from solo clarinet, trumpet, flute (doubled by piccolo) and two French horns. The eighth-note pulse returns, followed by a passage showcasing the three percussion players and timpanist. The stream of eighth notes returns yet again, but it is the opening assembly of rising motifs that brings the composer's "dramatic and organic narrative" to a questing yet ultimately gentle conclusion. As is typical of the composer, the work finds an ideal equilibrium between contrasted musical elements that constantly engages the ear.

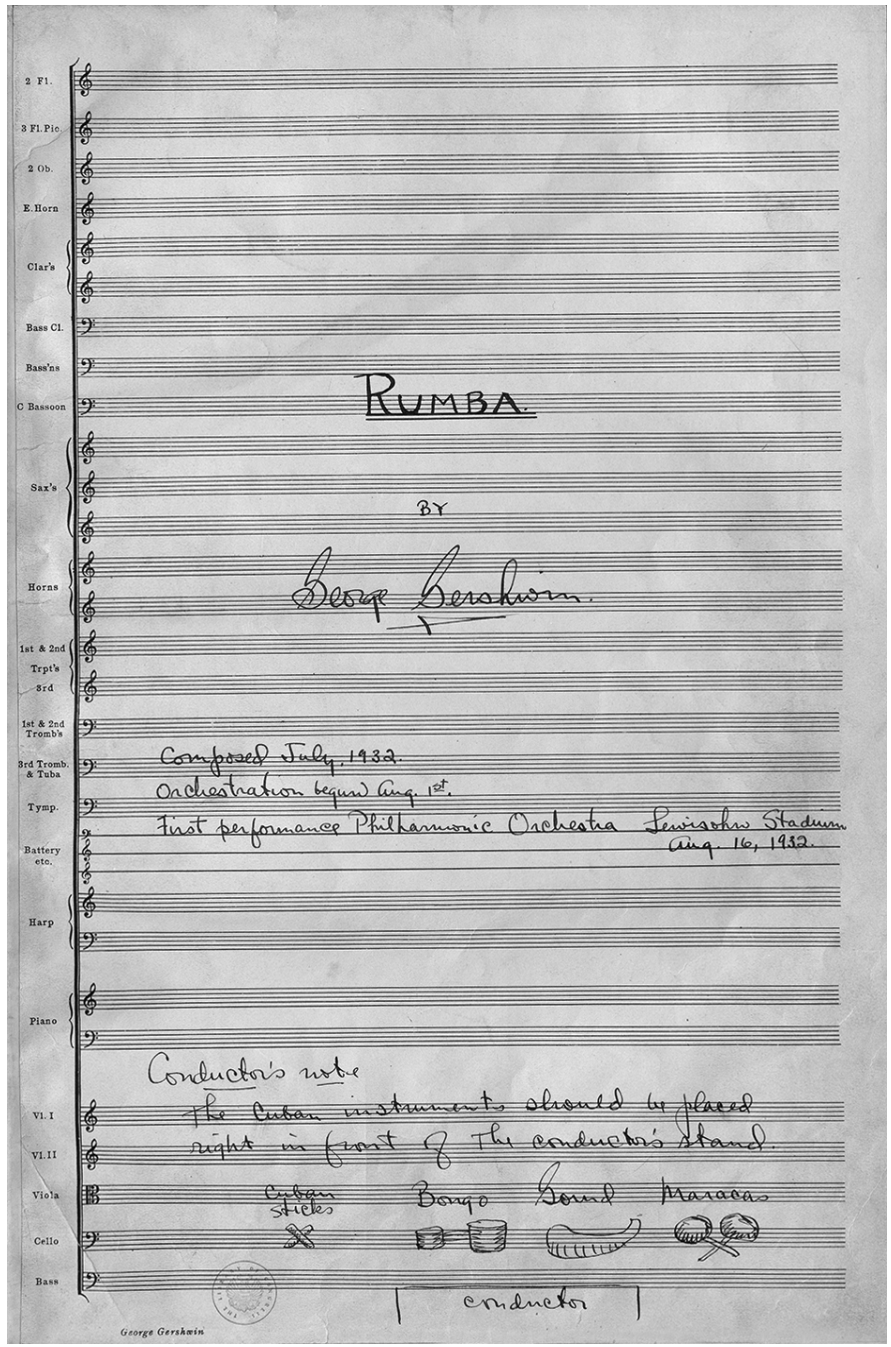
The premiere of *1920/2019* was delayed for over a year by the COVID-19 pandemic but eventually took place on 3 December 2021, under the baton of Jaap Van Zweden. Reviewers uniformly welcomed the new work: Anthony Tommasini in *The New York Times* said, "It was worth the wait to hear this 14-minute work by one of America's most eminent composers – who, at 83, is as inventive as ever." Jay Nordlinger in *The New Criterion* declared, "*1920/2019* is one of the best new pieces, in any genre, I have heard in recent years. […] Joan Tower is a composer to stand up and cheer for, as many of us did on Friday night."

Steven Stucky (1949–2016)**: Dreamwaltzes** (1986)

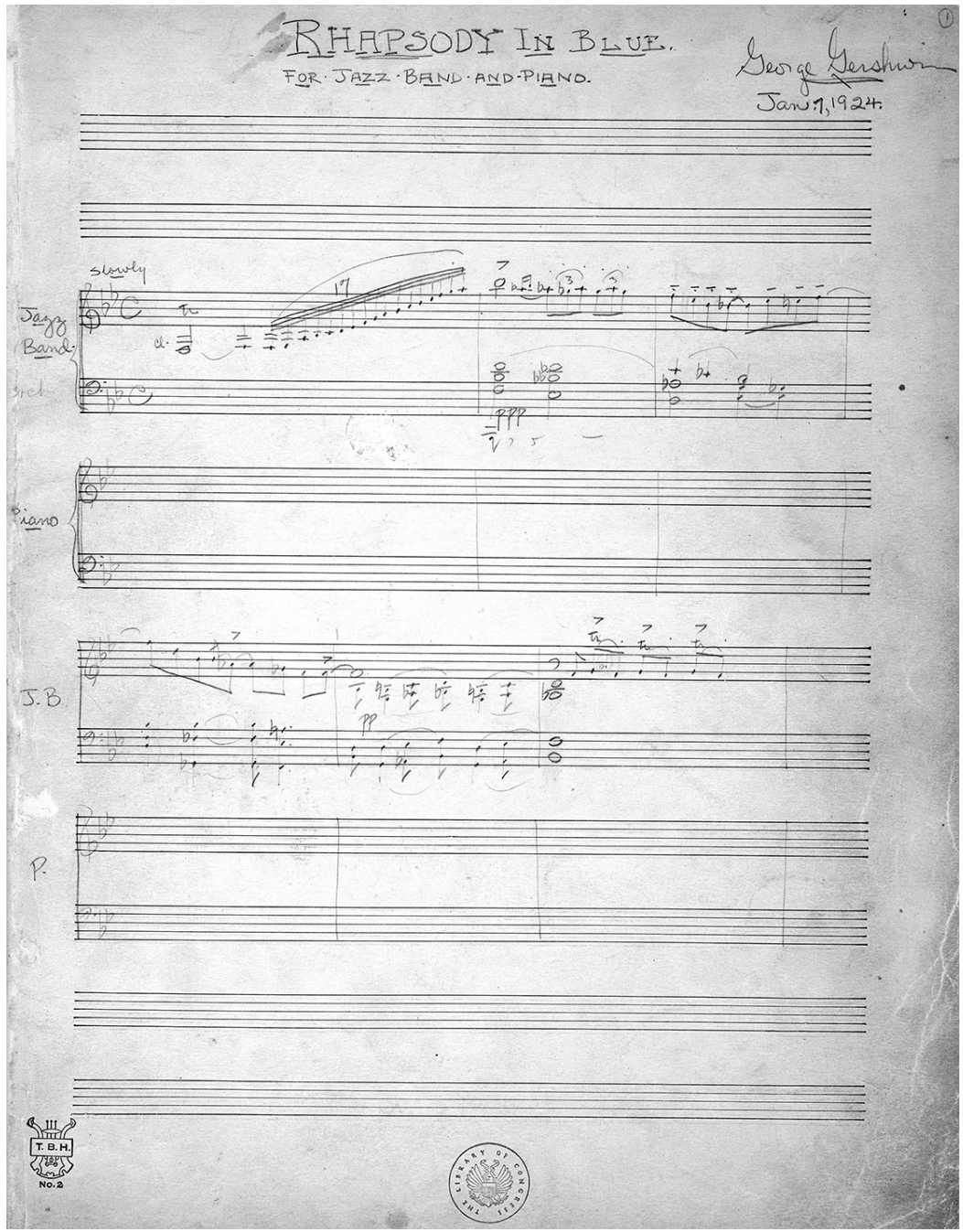
The Minnesota Orchestra commissioned Steven Stucky's *Dreamwaltzes* for its annual Viennese Summerfest series in 1986. The premiere took place in Minneapolis' Orchestra Hall under the baton of Leonard Slatkin on 17 July of that year. Stucky said that the Viennese theme of the festival got him thinking about waltzes: "I found myself daydreaming about the waltz, and about Viennese composers like Schubert, Brahms, Mahler and Berg, all of whom treated the waltz seriously in their music." In a later interview for the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (where Stucky was "Composer of the Year" during the 2011–12 season), he noted that the work had been "old enough to vote for several years now," but still had certain aspects that continued to interest him. "One of those is how do we make a productive relationship with the past that's not merely nostalgia but something more challenging and perhaps more troubling. And that certainly is the subject of *Dreamwaltzes* … kind of dreaming about what it would be like to go back and write music like Brahms and [Richard] Strauss, and facing up to the fact that while we can *look* back, we can't *go* back. So it's a looking back piece, but it continually has to return to our own time." Lukas Foss had achieved something similar in his *Baroque Variations*, composed in 1967, considered an icon of "Dream-state Modernism."

Stucky, who once identified Witold Lutosławski as his greatest inspiration, opens the work with a ghostly, amorphous passage recalling some of the Polish composer's work in which chattering woodwinds and brass play a prominent role against mostly sustained strings. Slowly, the material coalesces into a waltz tune ("Tempo di valse"; 5 c. 02:32 on this recording) that might sound vaguely familiar since it is from one of Brahms' *Liebeslieder Waltzes* (*Op. 52, No. 8*). It is not an outright quote – just fragmented hints of the melody. Later (c. 05:01) there are further hints of more Brahms: the sixth of his *Waltzes for Piano, Four Hands, Op. 39*. Yet another famous waltz, from Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, appears at c. 10:08. As Stucky writes in his program notes: "From time to time these originals float briefly to the surface. The three waltz episodes are surrounded by slower music forming an introduction, interludes, and a coda; this slower music, too, sometimes alludes to *Rosenkavalier*." But just as in a real dream, everything is elusive; the past seems to get away from us. The composer notes that in the crucial third episode, "after a gradually evolving, accelerating development, the orchestra seems just on the point of re-entering fully the late 19th century in some grand, unrestrained waltz music – when suddenly the whole affair collapses, and we are back in our own time. A composer in the late 20th century can admire the waltz from a distance, but he cannot make it his own."

Frank K. DeWald

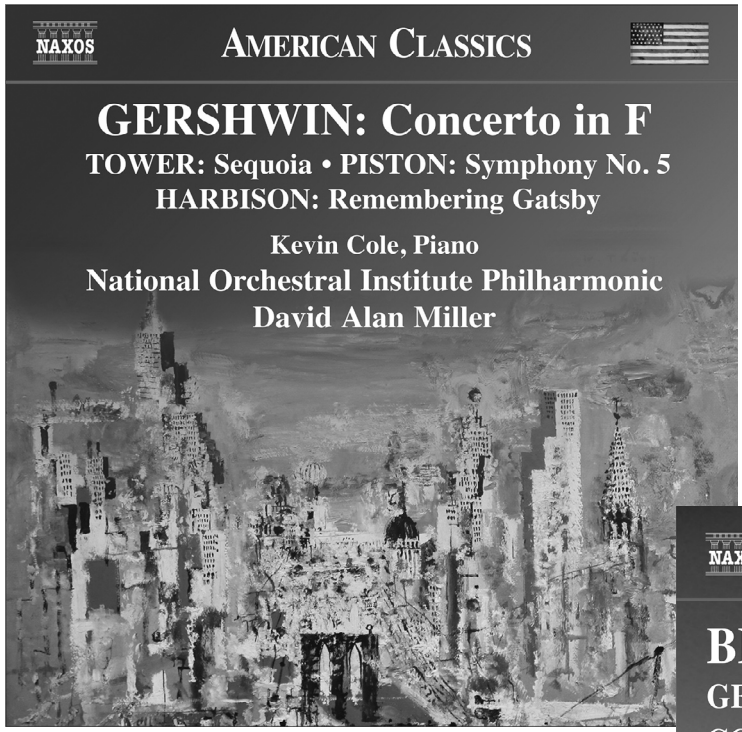


Title page of the orchestral manuscript score of *Cuban Overture*, 1932, George and Ira Gershwin Collection,
Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



The first page of George Gershwin's short-score manuscript of *Rhapsody in Blue*, 1924,
George and Ira Gershwin Collection,
Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Also available



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Kevin Cole


Photo: Andrew Rogers

Kevin Cole has delighted audiences with a repertoire that includes the best of American music, and has garnered sweeping acclaim as a preferred Gershwin interpreter from some of the foremost critics in the United States. Engagements for Cole include sold-out performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, and appearances with the BBC Concert Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall and the National Symphony Orchestra at The Kennedy Center. He has performed with over 100 orchestras, including the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, and at festivals worldwide such as Ravinia, Savannah Music, and Castleton. Cole is an award-winning musical director, arranger, composer, vocalist, and archivist who has been publicly heralded by Irving Berlin, Stephen Sondheim, Marvin Hamlisch, and members of the Jerome Kern and Gershwin families. His discography includes the 1996 *Gramophone* Music Theatre Album of the Year, Gershwin's *Oh, Kay!* (Elektra/Nonesuch) with soprano Dawn Upshaw; his critically acclaimed solo piano release, *Cole Plays Gershwin* (Musicole); and *You Are Tomorrow* (Harbinger Records) with Sylvia McNair featuring rare songs of Harold Arlen and Martin Charnin.

www.kevincolemusic.com

National Orchestral Institute Philharmonic

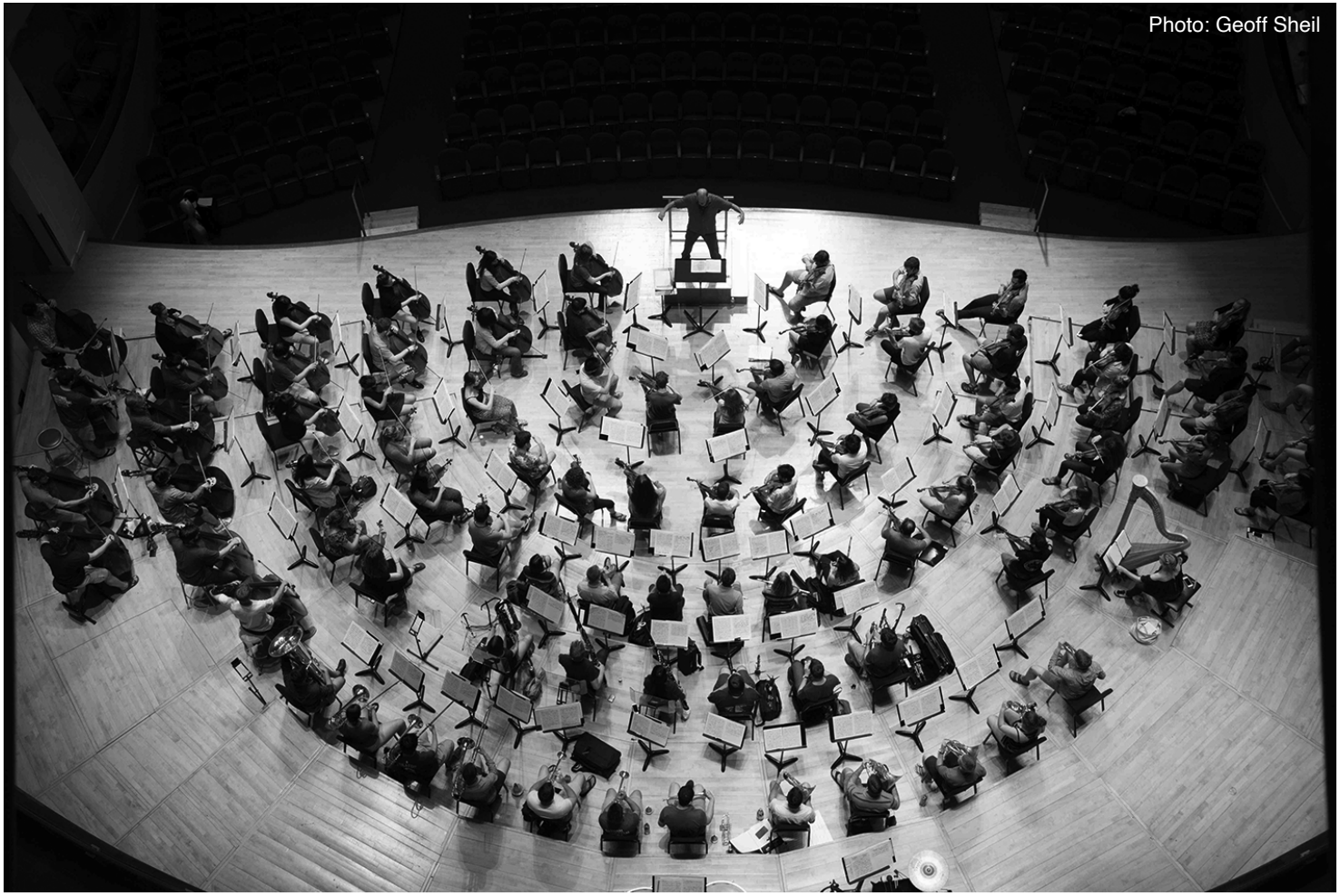
Photo: Geoff Sheil

The National Orchestral Institute Philharmonic is one of the most celebrated festival orchestras in the United States. Having received a GRAMMY Award nomination for Best Orchestral Performance in 2019 for their album of works by Ruggles, Stucky, and Harbison (Naxos 8.559836), its alumni occupy important positions in virtually every major symphony orchestra in the US. Held annually since 1988 at the University of Maryland, the National Orchestral Institute Philharmonic is a leader in orchestral training and creative programming, championing works by underrepresented composers alongside standards of the repertoire.

www.noi.umd.edu

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Joseph Cracolici
Owen Cummings
Dennis Fleitz
Estuardo Gonzalez
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Bryan Ping
Megan Savage
Tsung-Yu Tsai

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Halden Aistrup
Bukky Akinola
Anthony Barone
Asa Dawson
Diego Garza-Romero
Javier Hernandez
Anna Mears
Chad Rogers

Flute
Javier Castro
Honor Hickman
Joanna Lau
Benjamin Smith

Oboe
Gwendolyn Goble
Sebastian Kelzenberg
Jungmin Kim
Sihan Qi

Clarinet
Kah'lin Jordan
Eugene Jung
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Luna Takai

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Matthew Koester
Chance Stein

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Nate Centa
Sofie Friedlander
Nathan Shepherd

Horn
Aiden Call
Sam Hart
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Huimin Mandy Liu
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Cristina Vieytez

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Benjamin Ray Haden
Kole Pantuso

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Spencer Schaffer
Jihong Son

Bass Trombone
Zachary Litty

Tuba
Colby Batchelor

Percussion
Johnny Barker
Jack Fischer
Joanne Kim
Charles Lampert
Parker Meek
Robert Rocheteau
Nehemiah Russell
Braden Vaughn
Ritvik Yaparpalvi

Harp
Emily Stone

Piano/Celeste
Guzal Isametdinova

Banjo
Mark Sylvester

Assistant Conductor
Júlia Cruz

Music Library
Megan Fisher
Olivia Ren

David Alan Miller


Photo: Gary Gold / Albany Symphony

David Alan Miller is one of the leading American conductors of his generation. The two-time GRAMMY Award-winning music director of the Albany Symphony has reaffirmed the orchestra's reputation as the nation's leading champion of American symphonic music. Miller has guest conducted most of America's major orchestras, including the orchestras of Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco, as well as the New World Symphony, the Boston Pops, and the New York City Ballet. In addition, he has appeared frequently across Europe, the UK, Australia, and the Far East as a guest conductor. Miller received GRAMMY Awards in January 2021 for his recording of Christopher Theofanidis' *Viola Concerto*, and in 2014 for his Naxos recording of John Corigliano's *Conjurer*, with the Albany Symphony and Dame Evelyn Glennie. In addition to his work with the Albany Symphony, Miller currently serves as artistic advisor to the Sarasota Orchestra and the Little Orchestra Society of New York.

GEORGE GERSHWIN
(1898–1937)

1	**Cuban Overture** (1932)*	10:35
2	**Rhapsody in Blue** (1924) (arr. Ferde Grofé [1892–1972] for piano and orchestra, pub. 1942)*	16:23
3	**Second Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra** (1931)*	15:08

JOAN TOWER
(b. 1938)

4	**1920/2019** (2019–20)	15:18

STEVEN STUCKY
(1949–2016)

5	**Dreamwaltzes** (1986)	13:57

*World Premiere Recording
of Gershwin Critical Edition

Kevin Cole, Piano 2 3

National Orchestral
Institute Philharmonic

David Alan Miller

Recorded: 15–17 June 2023 at the Elsie & Marvin Dekelboum Concert Hall, The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, Maryland, USA
Producer, engineer and editor: Dr. Bernd Gottinger
Co-producer: Richard Scerbo
Assistant engineer: Antonino D'Urzo (Opusrite)
Booklet notes: Frank K. DeWald
Publishers: Schott Music – The George and Ira Gershwin Critical Edition 1–3 (eds. Jessica Getman 2, James Wierzbicki 3), Associated Music Publishers / G. Schirmer, Inc. 4, Merion Music, Inc. 5
Cover: *Central Park, New York* by Wilhelm Thöny (1888–1949)

American Classics

This album presents three classic Gershwin pieces heard in premiere recordings of the new Gershwin Critical Edition. The edition seeks to create the most accurate representation of the composer's intentions using all existing manuscripts and other sources, such as piano rolls. In the case of *Rhapsody in Blue* the edition is based on Ferde Grofé's symphonic arrangement though 44 measures from the original jazz band version are included. Also featured are the *Second Rhapsody* and the *Cuban Overture*, alongside Joan Tower's propulsive study in rhythm and texture, and Steven Stucky's ghostly waltz evocations.

SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE & DANCE
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Playing Time:
71:36