



1732

MANOEL THEATRE

THE MANOEL THEATRE
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

In association with

THE UNITED STATES INFORMATION SERVICE

present

A Recital of the Music

of

GEORGE GERSHWIN

Soloist - GLORIA ROBERTS - Pianist

with the

MANOEL THEATRE ORCHESTRA

Leader: GEORGE SPITERI

Conductor: JOSEPH SAMMUT

Wednesday 20th February 1974.



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**GLORIA
ROBERTS**

Miss Roberts was born in Los Angeles, California, U.S.A., where she began studying the piano at an early age. She won her first competition when she was eight years old and gave her first concert when she was nine years. With the first prize money from this contest, a violincello was purchased for her and she concentrated herself on this instrument for two years. However, the piano was her first love and she returned to it for exclusive study. In the following years she won many competitions.

Miss Roberts was the youngest student ever admitted to the Gray Conservatory of Music. She studied with John Gray, Marguerite Bitter, Lilian Steuber, Joseph Battista, Doris Foerichs, and Carl Roeder. She has studied and worked with Hall Johnson and with Jester Hairston on Negro Spirituals and Negro Folk Music, Gloria Roberts has in addition gained a reputation for being a specialist in the music of George Gershwin.

PROGRAMME

OVERTURE — *CUBAN* GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898 - 1937)

More conspicuously than any other single composer, George Gershwin proved that jazz could be used with serious purpose in larger musical compositions. This was his greatest contribution to music, and the one that will make his name live. True, as a composer he had palpable faults, largely due to inadequate technical training. His structure was usually rambling; he showed little ability in developing his ideas; his harmonic language is often elementary. But his innate gifts were unmistakably rich. Above everything else, Gershwin had melody; the tunes in his songs, and the thematic ideas in his larger works are lyrically fresh, seductive, enchanting. Both as man and as composer he had vitality; his music is today as brilliantly alive and vigorous as it was on the day he composed it.

AN AMERICAN IN PARIS GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898 - 1937)

The first performance of George Gershwin's orchestral Tone Poem, "An American in Paris", took place at Carnegie Hall, December 13, 1928, by the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York, under the baton of Walter Damrosch. The unusual programme commentary prepared for the occasion by Beems Taylor is so closely wedded to the work itself that we quote it: "You are to imagine an American, visiting Paris, swinging down the Champs-Élysées on a mild, sunny morning in May or June. Being what he is, he starts with preliminaries, and is off at full speed at once, to the tune of The First Walking theme, a straightforward, diatonic air, designed to convey an impression of Gallic freedom and gaiety.

Our American's ears being open, as well as his eyes, he notes with pleasure the sounds of the city. French taxi-cabs seem to amuse him particularly, a fact that the orchestra points out in a brief episode introducing four Parisian taxi horns. These have a special theme allotted to them (the driver, possibly?) which is announced by the strings whenever they appear in the score.

Having safely eluded the taxis, our American apparently passes the open door of a café, where, if one is to believe the trombones, La Sorella is still popular. Exhilarated by this reminder of the gay nineteen-hundreds, he resumes his stroll through the medium of the Second Walking Theme, which is announced by the clarinet in French with a strong American accent.

Both themes are now discussed at some length by the instruments, until our tourist happens to pass something. The composer thought it might be a church, while the commentator held out for the Grand Palais — where the Salon holds forth. At all events, our hero does not go in. Instead, as revealed by the English horn, he respectfully slackens his pace until he is safely past.

Now the orchestra introduces an unhallowed episode. Suffice it to say that a solo violin approaches our hero (in soprano register) and addresses him in the most charming broken English; and, his response being inaudible or at least unintelligible — repeats the remark. The one-sided conversation continues for some little time".

CONCERTO IN F FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898 - 1937)

Allegro — Andante con moto — Allegro Agitato.

Following the Rhapsody in Blue and its instantaneous success, Walter Damrosch, conductor of the New York Symphony Society, commissioned Gershwin to write a Concerto for piano and orchestra. It was a supreme test, but the Concerto In F resulted and was performed for the first time with Gershwin as soloist under Damrosch with the New York Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall December 2, 1925.

In the opinion of this chronicler, it is his greatest work, Gershwin, for the first time in his life, came to grips with a severe musical form, a form known to the masters and assiduously avoided by many of them. He was confronted with the problems of symphonic orchestration and instrumental balance, and with the solo piano. He was obliged to bring to this formidable structure a musical idiom hitherto never attempted — and he succeeded on all accounts, resulting in a work which today, after repeated hearings, has lost none of its greatness, freshness or brilliance.

INTERVAL

SYMPHONIC PICTURE

PORGY AND BESS

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898 - 1937)

It took Gershwin eleven months to write Porgy and Bess, an opera in three acts, libretto by Ira Gershwin and Dubose Heyward, and another nine months to orchestrate it. In Porgy and Bess, Gershwin aimed at creating a folk tale of the South. "Its people naturally would sing folk music", he explained. "When I first began work on the music, I decided against the use of original folk material because I wanted the music to be all of one piece. Therefore I wrote my own Spirituals and folk songs. But they are still folk music, and therefore, being operatic in form, Porgy and Bess becomes a folk opera".

RHAPSODY IN BLUE — FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898 - 1937)

It was while George Gershwin was putting the finishing touches on the score of "Sweet Little Devil" back in 1923, just prior to its Boston opening, that Paul Whiteman asked him to compose "something" for his epoch-making concert of symphonic jazz at Aeolian Hall on Lincoln's Birthday 1924. Gershwin, at the moment, was against it and, indeed, had almost forgotten about it were it not for the shock of learning from an item

in the New York Herald Tribune early in 1924 that he, Gershwin, was busy on a symphony for the much heralded Whiteman concert.


Here indeed was a challenge which could only be answered by "doing something about it". The symphony idea was definitely out. Gershwin originally thought of doing a conventional "blues" and let it go at that, but he realised that something more important was at stake and promptly set to work with a purpose. He worked the composition out in his mind and in three weeks turned out the Rhapsody in Blue.

The famous Whiteman concert which gave the Rhapsody to the world is now a matter of history. The concert itself proved conclusively that genius and artistry existed and flourished in Tin Pan Alley. The Rhapsody proved to be the cornerstone of what has now become a type of music thoroughly divorced from European influence and formalism, and magnificently American. So far as Gershwin was concerned, the Rhapsody merely proved his point-jazz was not confined to strict rhythm!

Gershwin composed the Rhapsody in Blue for Piano and Jazz Band. Ferde Grofé, the brilliant innovator in orchestration for the Whiteman band scored the Rhapsody for the following instrumentation: 8 Violins, 2 String Basses, Banjo, 2 Trumpets, 2 Trombones, 2 Pianos, Drum, 3 Saxophones and 2 Horns. With such an instrumentation, nearly every player "doubled" on some other instrument or instruments other than his principal one. This then, was the first available score of the Rhapsody. As demand for performances increased, it became necessary to, in a measure, recast the score, though retaining its original intent, but permitting the standardization of the instrumentation in such fashion that concert orchestras could cope with the work. This Grofé accomplished with much skill so that balance and colour was maintained. It was not long, however, before the Rhapsody found its way into the standard symphonic literature. Again Grofé was consulted, but rather than recast the entire instrumentation for one of symphonic proportions. Grofé cautiously and wisely added only such instrumental voices as would provide greater clarity and brilliance, still retaining to the original instrumental concept.

Consequently the score, at first reading, appears quite as unorthodox as the composition itself; the addition of the 3rd Horn, 3rd Trumpet and 3rd Trombone are quite obvious; the 1st Violin part still retains its original investiture, and yet comes off logically in symphonic renditions; the three Saxophone parts together with the Banjo too, remain as they were originally intended, but with the added instrumentation, these parts are, in the present score, almost optional.

The greatness of the score as of the composition is in the sheer power of its inspiration. Condemnation through structural faults failed to deter the immense popularity of the work which holds its own with undiminished strength in an orchestral repertoire for which, after all, it was not written.

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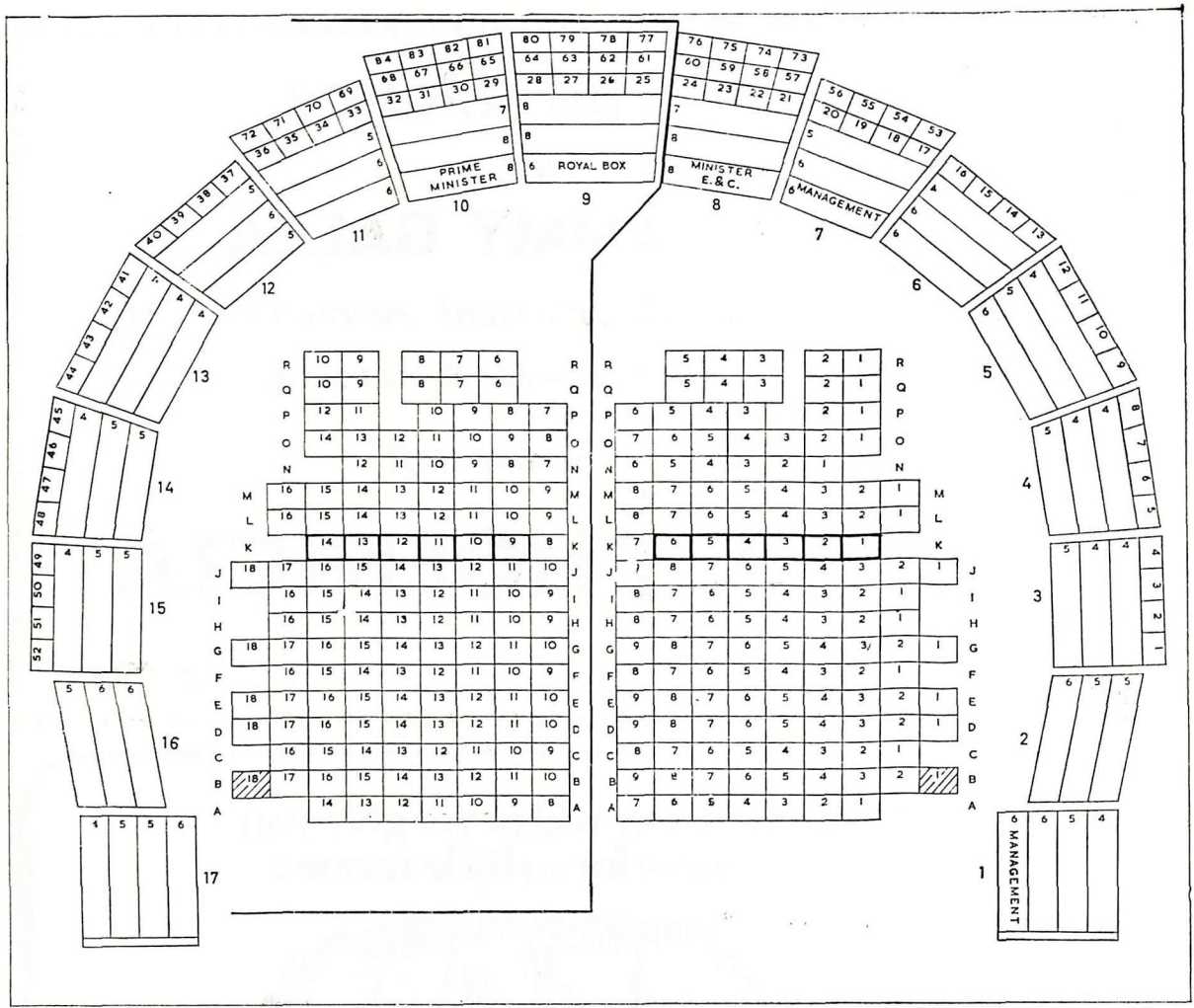


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Late comers will not be admitted to the Auditorium.

Smoking is not permitted in the Auditorium, in Boxes and in the Gallery.

The Management reserve to themselves the right to vary or omit any part of the programme without previous notice.

Patrons are reminded that taking of photographs during the performance is not allowed.

Children, even when accompanied by their parents, will be required to occupy a seat.

