

Gershwin

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**An American in Paris
Piano Concerto in F
Rhapsody in Blue**

**Geoffrey Douglas Madge
Ilya Stupel**



Artur Rubinstein Philharmonic Orchestra

George Gershwin

(1898 - 1937)

1 **An American in Paris** *19:06*

Piano Concerto in F *33:14*

2 **Allegro** *14:11*

3 **Andante con moto** *11:05*

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George Gershwin was born as Jacob Gershin in Brooklyn on September 26, 1898. His parents emigrated from Russia to the United States around 1891. He grew up in a poor Jewish community on the lower east side of Manhattan. It was not until 1910, when his parents bought an old upright piano, that they discovered his intense interest for music. In no time he learned to play and then started his first serious lessons with Charles Hambitzer in 1912. Hambitzer made him familiar with the music of Chopin, Liszt and Debussy. Gershwin wanted to become a composer of serious concert music and therefore, at a later stage, began taking theory lessons with Henry Cowell and Joseph Schillinger (who wrote an interesting method of composition), among others. At this time he had already made a name as a composer of popular music. Although he didn't have the technical background that results from a conservatory education, he did have a most unusual and sure musical instinct.

In 1914 Gershwin left school to become a pianist and song plugger at Remick's, a Tin Pan Alley publisher. His first hit was the song "Swanee" (1919). A recording was made by Columbia with Al Jolson and the song was sold by the thousands, on discs as well as on sheet music.

His first big commission came from Paul Whiteman, who planned a historic

jazz concert to draw the attention of the music world to the importance of jazz. This resulted in the *Rhapsody in Blue* for Jazz Band and Piano, orchestrated by Ferde Grofé. The concert took place in the Aeolian Hall in New York on February 12, 1924, with Gershwin at the piano. The work was an instant success and became the turning point in Gershwin's career, later to become one of the most famous pieces of serious music making use of elements from the world of jazz. Not many works written before 1924 are so clearly american in style. The colour and history of America are shown in its rhythm and harmonies, while the blending of the serious with the popular elements is highly developed and original.

Following the success of the *Rhapsody in Blue*, Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony Society gave Gershwin his next major commission: a concerto for piano and orchestra. It was premiered with Gershwin again at the piano in New York on December 3, 1925. The work was not immediately successful like the *Rhapsody in Blue*, but the concerto has continued to grow in its popularity and today it is one of Gershwin's most favoured works. This time he orchestrated the work himself. His study of symphonic works helped him to find a more symphonic form in which to enclose his basic thematic material.

Early 1928 Maurice Ravel visited the United States and wanted to meet George Gershwin. A meeting was arranged just before Gershwin left for another trip to the continent. During this trip, while in Paris, he started a major work for orchestra which would later draw world-wide attention. A tone poem telling the story of an American walking through the streets of Paris, "An American in Paris". He completed the sketches there, orchestrated the work in Vienna and then finalized the composition when he returned to Paris. It was premiered by the New York Philharmonic with Walter Damrosch conducting on December 13, 1928.

Gershwin was a great lover of books. Hemingway and Shaw being amongst his favorite authors. In 1929 he followed the footsteps of his brother Ira by taking up painting and soon his talent developed into something much more than an average painter. The portrait he made of his friend Arnold Schönberg is a fine example. In 1929 he even started an art collection that became famous.

During the 20's and 30's he wrote a series of successful musicals and film scores and from 1924 onwards his unforgettably beautiful music to the lyrics by his brother Ira. He started to conduct symphony orchestras and theatre bands with great success and composed the opera "Porgy and Bess" (1934 - 35).

While working on commitments for motion pictures in Hollywood, Gershwin died on July 31, 1937, from a cystic tumor in the right temporal lobe. After his death the musical significance of George Gershwin has become more and more universally recognized.

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Geoffrey Douglas Madge was born in Adelaide, Australia. His father was a businessman and tennis champion, his mother played saxophone and piano. He had his first piano lessons at the age of eight after nagging his parents for a long time and decided to become a professional pianist after hearing Benno Moiseiwitsch in a live recital. He studied at the University of Adelaide with Clemens Leski. At an early age already he became particularly interested in unjustifiably neglected compositions. He toured Australia for three years as pianist in a piano trio and left Australia in 1963 after winning first prize in the ABC piano competition, went to Europe and settled in Holland in 1970 following his appointment as senior lecturer of piano at the Hague's music conservatorium.

Since he left Australia he has given numerous recitals for radio and television, in piano series and in the major festivals in Europe and has steadily established a

reputation in his generation as a very outstanding musician. Next to an extensive concert practice he is also a composer and has a great passion for literature, the Russian writers in particular. He likes to combine classical, 19th century and contemporary works in his recitals and is particularly interested in compositions which are challenging in areas of technique and musical expression and which venture into new aesthetic territory.

Among the many recordings that have been released are Xenakis' piano concerto "Synaphai" and the utterly demanding "Opus Clavicembalisticum" by Sorabji, both of which gained awards. Philips issued a set of 6 CD's of Ferruccio Busoni's major piano works for which he received many international awards, a.o. the Edison- and Caecilia prize and the German "Schallplattenpreis". More recently the French label Dante released a number of compact discs with piano works of Godowsky, Bach/Busoni transcriptions, piano sonatas by Mitropoulos, Reubke and Mossolov. Koch/Schwann issued the piano sonatas by Ernst Krenek and finally CPO, after an enormous success with the production of Stefan Wolpe's piano music, released a CD with Krenek's other major piano works. Danacord has great success with the release of the three piano concertos by Nicolas Medtner with Geoffrey Douglas Madge.

Ilya Stupel - a rising star in the musical firmament who has been described as one of the greatest conducting talents in the world - was born on 13th December 1948 in Vilnius, Lithuania. He grew up in a family whose rich musical traditions went back for several generations. He first started playing the piano aged only three, and was referred to as a child prodigy after he had joined the Conservatory in Vilnius. In 1957 Ilya Stupel moved to Poland where he continued his musical training; at the same time he was engaged as assistant to the famous conductor and teacher Bohdan Wodiczko of the Katowice Radio Symphony Orchestra (WOSPR). Stupel's Jewish descent has had a strong bearing on his fortunes, and every time his career has seemed to be in the ascendant he and his family have been forced to tear up their roots and start again in another country. So it was that in 1968 Stupel and his family left Poland and settled in their present home country, Sweden.

After comprehensive studies in Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, Denmark and Italy (conducting, composition, piano and jazz) Stupel devoted himself to composing and to his new appointment as conductor at the Malmö Municipal Theatre.

After a number of years of work in Scandinavia (as Head of Music at the theatrein Helsingborg and appearances

in Malmö, Stockholm, Gothenburg, Copenhagen, Aalborg, Aarhus etc.) and beyond (U.S.A., Spain, France), he was in 1990 appointed Head of the renowned Artur Rubinstein Philharmonic Orchestra in Lodz, Poland, which has worked with such conductors as Stokowsky, Kletzki and Khatchaturian.

Critics have declared unanimously that Stupel's great strength as a conductor is

his ability, by means of his unorthodox interpretations, full of vitality and sheer musicianship, to reach out to every single member of his audience, as witness the enthusiasm that greets all his performances and follows him from appearance to appearance.

Ilya Stupel **Artur Rubinstein Philharmonic Orchestra** **on Danacord:**

Carl Orff: Carmina Burana

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Nicolas Medtner (1880-1951)

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Soloist: Geoffrey Douglas Madge

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Sonata G minor Op. 22

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Sonata Tragica Op. 39,5

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Piano Concerto no. 3

Sonata Reminiscenza Op. 38,1

DACOD 403 DDD

Geoffrey Douglas Madge clearly has a special affinity with the music of Medtner. Madge's performances are accomplished and brilliant...an astonishingly bold and powerful reading.

Madge's colossal technique is more than capable of making light work of Medtner's exceptionally demanding piano writing, Ilya Stupel and the Artur Rubinstein Philharmonic Orchestra provide some committed and well-prepared accompaniments.

GRAMOPHONE

Rued Langgaard (1893-1952)

The complete symphonies

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DACOCD 404 DDD

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DACOCD 405 DDD

Symphonies nos. 4 and 6
Interdikt and Death of a Hero.
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Symphonies nos. 5, 7 and 9
DACOCD 407 DDD

Symphonies nos. 10, 11 and 12
Sfinx. Tone Poem for orchestra.
DACOCD 408 DDD

Symphonies nos. 8, 14 and 15
DACOCD 409 DDD

Symphonies nos 13 and 16.
Prelude to the opera 'Antichrist'
DACOCD 410 DDD

And can they ever play! The enormous conviction and care which they bring to this often odd and difficult music are evident throughout. I have no hesitation in recommending them.
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Soloist: Oleg Marshev
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An American in Paris
Piano Concerto. Rhapsody in Blue
Soloist: Geoffrey Douglas Madge
DACOCD 412 DDD

Schumann and Dvorák

Cello Concertos
Soloist: Erling Blöndal Bengtsson.
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In preparation:

Tchaikovsky

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Capriccio italien
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Shostakovich

Symphonies nos. 1 and 9
DACOCD 415 DDD

Haydn and Boccherini

Cello Concertos
Soloist: Erling Blöndal Bengtsson.
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DACOCD 412
Gershwin: American in Paris. Concerto.
Madge . Stupel . Rubinstein Philharmonic

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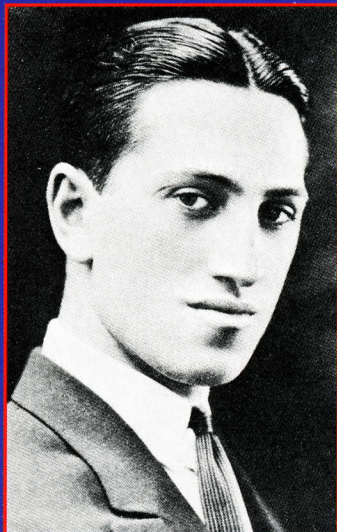
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