

THE GEORGE GERSHWIN INITIATIVE

Noted Brooklyn-born songwriter, composer, pianist, recording and piano-roll artist, and “Celebrity” during what is referred to as “The Jazz Age”, the music produced by George Gershwin (1898-1937) has remained immortal as few others have.

These notes correspond to “Dana Paul Perna Power Hour Show”

Episodes 25 and 26 - George Gershwin and the Piano

Part One: Fri Nov 9 <http://mixlr.com/moog1-radio/showreel/dpp-25>

Part Two; Fri Nov 16 <http://mixlr.com/moog1-radio/showreel/dpp-26>

Both broadcasts: **12 noon and 6 PM, EST**
Archive available shortly after broadcast



Over these two episodes, Gershwin’s celebrated melodies, both as they served songs, or as music intended for the concert and/or recital hall, are explored as they relate to them being performed, interpreted, or as vehicles for improvisation by pianists of renown, and equal measure to Gershwin’s own prowess on the instrument.

Apart from provided commentary, it was Perna’s intention to reveal the glories of Gershwin’s writing without feeling it necessary to have the lyrics included as they would have been if recordings by singers had been utilized (e.g. thereby having limited the music only as it would have pertained to Gershwin as songwriter). With that in mind, the listener is provided as having a personal encounter with this music in a way they would not enjoy given the presence of a vocalist, and the emotional (or not) direction lyrics may lead them to.

Encouraged for use by educators from all areas of the education spectrum - from elementary, right up to college and adult levels, these audio episodes are available for:

- a) use in the classroom;
- b) to underscore study within subjects related to this period of history;
- c) for use in private studios;
- d) for personal exploration and study by the individual listener; or
- e) to supply additional material for discussions to ensue based on the contents of them.

In addition, the following questions have been supplied as a means of opening pathways toward creative, informative, enlightening, and engaging discussions as to the value and relevancy of Gershwin’s

music in our current time. In order to facilitate these discussions, the following questions may be utilized as one sees fit:

- 1) What elements do you hear in Gershwin's music, or, that are comprised within his music's sonic profile?
- 2) In your opinion, does Gershwin's music constitute a "Fusion", or a "Mash-up", or do you feel that it is wholly unique unto itself?
- 3) Do you agree, or disagree with the long-held observation that the "Rhapsody in Blue" is an entirely original, or ground-breaking composition, and why?
- 4) Based on the music you have heard over these two episodes, discuss those performances that were your favorite, as opposed to those you disliked, and why? Identification of the performers will prove most important towards your response.
- 5) What observations can you conclude from having actually heard Gershwin perform some of his own music?
- 6) On a personal basis, in listening to this music, how did you engage with it? Did you find it entertaining?; did it illicit any particular imagery?; did you find it as being melodious?; did you find it to be inspirational?; did it measure up to your expectations, or did you have any expectations to begin with? Explanation of your responses will prove additionally insightful to you personally.
- 7) Do you feel that Gershwin's music continues to communicate, whether to you specifically, or to anyone, and what did his work, on a base level, communicate to you specifically?
- 8) Was this the first time you have heard Gershwin's music within this (almost entirely) all-piano context? Did it provide any new insights as to his music, particularly his songs, to hear them in such a different manner than you may normally have heard them previously - how so, and why?
- 9) In conjunction to his "Three Preludes for Piano", in your opinion, how did Gershwin's own recording compare to that of Oscar Levant's? Did you prefer one over the other, and why?
- 10) Over these episodes, other artists of merit were heard. Apart from - yet including - George Gershwin, proceed in providing a profile regarding all of them:

Nat King Cole (and what was the King Cole Trio?)

Morton Gould Oscar Levant Percy Grainger André Previn Art Tatum

George Shearing Earl Wild

Richard Rodney Bennett Donna Amato

Paul Whiteman

Leslie Howard (the pianist, not the actor of the same name)

Penelope Thwaites and John Lavender, Ferde Grofé