



Smithsonian Associates

Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*: A Centenary Celebration

Dr. Rachel Franklin

Wednesday, May 22, 2024 - 6:45 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. ET

A HAPPY CENTENARY TO GERSHWIN'S RHAPSODY IN BLUE!

Syllabus and media

George Gershwin's groundbreaking fusion of classical music and jazz, *Rhapsody in Blue*, is one of America's most beloved cultural icons, a symbol of the nation's melting pot self-image, its vigor, optimism, and constant reinvention.

Using archival recordings and film, we celebrate this very big birthday by diving into Gershwin's extraordinary and painfully short life, how he conceived the work, the roles of arranger Ferde Grofé and bandleader Paul Whiteman; and the *Rhapsody*'s myriad reincarnations since its exuberant premiere with Gershwin at the piano on February 12, 1924, as part of a concert titled "An Experiment in Modern Music."

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Works discussed, media used:

(All works are by Gershwin unless specified)

Rhapsody In Blue – first recording: Paul Whiteman Orch. & George Gershwin, piano, arranged by Ferde Grofé, recorded NYC June 10, 1924

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGvuUOtHGkk&t=31s>

Arnold Schoenberg remembers George Gershwin

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Cn1L_cgHPY

Gershwin, friends & family home movies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-ECLduZTNI>

Ira Gershwin talks about George

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLL4Hf8e8Jo>

George Gershwin plays I Got Rhythm

- Opening of New York's Manhattan Theatre on 5 August 1931. This performance filmed from three different camera angles.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQdeTbUDCiw>

George Gershwin talks about his music and performs

- Nov 10 1932, Rudy Vallée's "Fleischmann Hour"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shpKCresvwl&t=46s>

I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise, 1922, George & Ira Gershwin

- Sarah Vaughan, Hal Mooney and his Orchestra, 1957

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-AMMjJ4ZSk>

Paul Whiteman discussing Rhapsody history

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEgJZ7inUrY>

Ferde Grofé, 1892-1972 : *Grand Canyon Suite*, Sunrise, 1931

- Leonard Bernstein, New York Philharmonic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVGOUHcdXy4>

"King of Jazz" featuring Rhapsody In Blue, technicolor, 1930

- Paul Whiteman, Roy Bary – piano, Jacques Cartier - clarinet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oadzppD9Rv8>

Los Angeles Olympics, 1984, Rhapsody in Blue

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIUF32pwvtI>

United Airlines ad

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_7-P3sEWhk

"Manhattan" United Artists, 1979. Director: Woody Allen, cinematographer: Gordon Willis

- Piano: Gary Graffman, Clarinet: Stanley Drucker, New York Phil, Zubin Mehta.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyaj2P-dSi8>

Rhapsody excerpt

- Herbie Hancock, Gustavo Dudamel, Los Angeles Phil

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQS Nzqv-P9M>