

***Rhapsody in Blue* 17'54"**

1924

arrangement for violin and piano by Guerrasim Voronkov

2021

George Gershwin

(1898-1937)

After its premiere on February 12, 1924, Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* became an overnight success. It became a symbol of American music abroad, an inspiration for the generations of composers to come and a beloved piece of concerto repertoire worldwide. Rooted in American popular music of the period, the piece merges jazz, Caribbean, and European musical influences in a free-flowing form of a romantic concerto. As Gershwin recalled, "I heard it as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America—of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our blues, our metropolitan madness." Guerrasim Voronkov's brand-new arrangement for violin and piano highlights the lyrical side of the piece, keeping the excitement of the *Rhapsody in Blue*.

**Three Preludes**

Gershwin, arr. Jascha Heifetz 1942

1. *Allegro ben ritmato e deciso* 1'41"2. *Andante con moto e poco rubato* 3'28"3. *Allegro ben ritmato e deciso* 1'30"

Virtuoso violinist Jascha Heifetz was Gershwin's close friend. He hoped that one day Gershwin would write a violin concerto for him. After Gershwin's untimely death Heifetz arranged Gershwin's Three Preludes, originally composed for piano. Heifetz added a violin part that augments the original piano part by adding pizzicato accents, contrapuntal melodies, sustained notes in the high register, and glissandos. These additions highlight the dance nature of Preludes 1 and 3 and the bluesy lyricism of Prelude 2.

***Hebrew Melody***

1911

Joseph Achron

(1886-1943)

*Hebrew Melody*, the most popular composition by Joseph Achron, was inspired by his childhood memories of cantorial singing in Warsaw's synagogues. The piece starts in a somber mood, as if portraying someone deeply immersed in prayer. The music becomes more agitated and reaches a wailing climax before receding into the somber atmosphere of the synagogue.

A musical prodigy, Achron began performing publicly at age seven. He studied violin with Leopold Auer and composition with Alexander Lyadov at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory in 1899-1904. Achron later became a member of the Society for Jewish Folk Music, where he worked to develop ideas on what contemporary Jewish music should be. In the later part of his life he moved to Hollywood, where he wrote concert pieces for Jascha Heifetz as well as film scores.

***Klezmer Rhapsody***  
1998

Ilya Levinson  
(b. 1958)

*Klezmer Rhapsody* merges the form of a conventional violin concerto with traditional Klezmer slow-fast (*Doina - Freylakh*) performance practice. The ebb and flow of the piece alternates between moments of meditation and dance, reflecting on a quintessential Jewish experience of shifting from a state of religious immersion to joy and exaltation at a moment's notice. *Klezmer Rhapsody* was premiered in 1999 by Alex Koffman (to whom it is dedicated) and the Lincolnwood Chamber Orchestra under the baton of maestro Philip Simmons.

Grammy-nominated artist, composer Ilya Levinson, has called Chicago home since 1988. Levinson's catalogue includes operas, musicals, symphonic and chamber music, film scores, and original music for theatre productions. Levinson is the music director, arranger and pianist of the New Budapest Orpheum Society, an ensemble-in-residence at The University of Chicago, that specializes in performing Jewish cabaret music. Their most recent CD, *As Dreams Fall Apart: The Golden Age of Jewish Film and Stage Music (1925-1955)* recorded on the Cedille label, was Grammy nominated in 2016. Levinson is also a composer-in-residence with American Music Festivals, an organization committed to promoting cultural exchange and American music. He serves as Associate Professor and Coordinator of Composition Studies in the Music Department of Columbia College Chicago.

***Romance for Violin and Piano Op. 23***  
1893

Amy Marcy Beach  
(1867-1944)

Amy Beach was the first American woman whose symphonic works were performed by major American orchestras. A young prodigy, she did not receive any formal training in her youth and unlike many of her contemporaries, did not go to Europe for private composition study. She was largely self-taught and had only one year of private lessons. Notwithstanding her limited formal training, Beach translated works such as Berlioz's treatise on orchestration for herself. During her lifetime she enjoyed a broad national and international reputation as a composer and performer.

Amy Beach was active as an organizer as well: in 1925, she became a founding member and first president of the Society of American Women Composers.