

Vorwort

Die *Rhapsody in Blue* entstand innerhalb nur weniger Wochen Anfang des Jahres 1924 im Auftrag des Bandleaders Paul Whiteman (1890-1967), der für ein breit angelegtes Konzertprogramm mit dem verheißungsvollen Titel „Was ist amerikanische Musik“ noch ein zugkräftiges Stück suchte, welches den neuartigen Typus des „sinfonischen Jazz“ verkörpern sollte. Whiteman war beim Publikum äußerst populär, seit er mit seinem 1919 gegründeten eigenen Orchester und Starsolisten der Jazzszene wie Bix Beiderbecke, Jack Teagarden, Red Norvo und vielen anderen erfolgreich auftrat. Er selbst war keinesfalls Jazzmusiker, sondern von seiner Ausbildung her klassischer Bratschist, der vor seiner Zeit als Dirigent in verschiedenen Sinfonieorchestern und sogar kammermusikalisch im Minetti-Streichquartett mitwirkte. Sein eigenes Orchester war nach heutigen Begriffen eher ein Tanzorchester als ein (damals gerade erst neu geschaffenes) Jazzorchester vom Schlage Fletcher Hendersons. Whitemans Idee vom „sinfonischen Jazz“ fußte auf dem Gedanken, dem sich zu dieser Zeit in den Großstädten immer stärker etablierenden Jazz mit den Mitteln der klassischen sinfonischen Musik zu einem neuen (quasi „kultivierten“) Status zu verhelfen und somit einen neuen Musikstil zu schaffen. Für dieses Vorhaben schien ihm der junge Gershwin gerade der Richtige zu sein. Dieser zögerte zunächst, da er sich dieser Aufgabe noch nicht gewachsen fühlte: Weder hatte er genügend handwerkliche Erfahrung hinsichtlich der Instrumentation, noch fühlte er sich – bei aller Begeisterung für die Jazzmusik – als Jazzmusiker. Der zupackende und von der Sache sehr überzeugte Whiteman setzte allerdings Gershwin durch eine Voranzeige in der Tageszeitung mit der – noch ungeschriebenen – Rhapsodie als festem Programmbestandteil derart unter Druck, dass dieser sich schließlich doch ans Werk machte. Das Problem seiner technischen Unerfahrenheit im Umgang mit dem Orchester wurde dadurch gelöst, dass ihm Whitemans Arrangeur Ferde Grofé zur Seite gestellt wurde, der aus Gershwins Originalfassung für zwei Klaviere in enger Zusammenarbeit mit dem Komponisten die sinfonische Fassung für Klavier und Orchester erstellte. Das Stück wurde bei seiner Uraufführung am 12. Februar 1924, zu der auch zahlreiche hochrangige Musikerpersönlichkeiten gekommen waren, größtenteils begeistert aufgenommen.

Wenngleich auch aus der *Rhapsody in Blue* nicht, entsprechend Whitemans ursprünglicher Vorstellung, eine Jazzkomposition mit sinfonischem Gepräge, sondern eher eine sinfonische Komposition mit koloristischen, dem Jazz entlehnten Elementen geworden ist, so hat sie dennoch oder gerade deswegen bis zum heutigen Tag nichts von ihrer Originalität und Frische eingebüßt. Gershwin hat mit ihr in der Tat einen eigenen, sehr ehrlichen und höchst amerikanischen Stil entwickelt, der die Grenzen zwischen der „ernsten“ und der populären Musik verschwimmen lässt und der als ergiebiger Nährboden für weitere, nicht minder geniale Werke wie das *Concerto in F* für Klavier und Orchester, die Orchestersuite *Ein Amerikaner in Paris* oder die *Kubanische Ouvertüre* diente. Die immense Popularität des Werks zog auch eine große Anzahl weiterer Arrangements und Bearbeitungen für die verschiedensten Besetzungen nach sich.

Die vorliegende Orgeltranskription stellt, musikalisch gesehen, ein gewisses Wagnis dar, die ganz und gar pianistisch inspirierte Musik auf ein Instrument zu übertragen, welches zwar unter den spieltechnischen Aspekten des modernen Virtuositums kaum irgendwelche Hemmschwellen bietet, klanglich gesehen jedoch mitunter die klavieristischen Einfälle unerwünscht in die Nähe des Grotesken zu rücken droht. Grundsätzlich wird selbst ein virtuoser Organist nicht unbedingt den Versuch unternehmen wollen, sich den originalen (durch erhaltene Tonaufnahmen überlieferten) Tempovorstellungen Gershwins zu nähern; dies würde wohl in den wenigsten Fällen zu musikalisch überzeugenden Ergebnissen führen können. Stattdessen dürfte der Spieler gut beraten sein, stärker auf Agogik, dynamische Flexibilität und farbliche Abstufung zu setzen. Kleinere Veränderungen durch den Bearbeiter im figurativen Bereich sollen demzufolge auch keine substantiellen Eingriffe in die Komposition darstellen, sondern lediglich die instrumentengerechte Interpretierbarkeit des Werks unterstützen. Die leichte Straffung der Form geht auf die bei Warner Bros. erschienene Klavier-Soloversion zurück; für alle anderen Belange entscheidend waren jedoch vorrangig die Originalfassung für zwei Klaviere sowie die Grofé-Instrumentation von 1942.

Foreword

Rhapsody in Blue was written in just a few weeks in early 1924 for the band leader Paul Whiteman (1890-1967), who wanted another attractive piece for a wide-ranging concert programme with the promising title “What is American music?” which should embody the new type of “symphonic jazz”. Whiteman had become extremely popular since appearing with the orchestra he had set up in 1919 and star soloists of the jazz scene like Bix Beiderbecke, Jack Teagarden, Red Norvo and many others. He himself was not a jazz musician, but had rather trained as a classical viola player who, before becoming a conductor, had played in various symphony orchestras and even as a chamber musician in the Minetti String Quartet. In today’s terms, his own orchestra was more of a dance orchestra than a Fletcher Henderson-style jazz orchestra (a type just being invented). Whiteman’s idea of “symphonic jazz” was based on the concept of using the means of classical symphonic music to help the jazz music which was becoming more and more prevalent in the cities at this time to gain a new (more “cultivated”) status, thereby creating a new musical style. The young Gershwin seemed to him to be just the right person for this. Gershwin initially hesitated, because he did not feel up to the job: he neither possessed enough practical experience with orchestration, nor did he feel himself to be a jazz musician – despite his enthusiasm for jazz. However, Whiteman was not one to let things slide and, fully convinced of his project, he put an advance notice in the daily paper including the – as yet unwritten – *Rhapsody* as a firm part of the programme, putting Gershwin under so much pressure that he finally started work on the piece. The problem of his lack of technical experience in handling an orchestra was solved by bringing in Whiteman’s arranger Ferde Grofé; in close co-operation with the composer, he created the symphonic version for piano and orchestra out of Gershwin’s original version for two pianos. The piece met with a largely rapturous reception at its first performance on 12 February 1924, which was attended by a large number of leading musicians.

Even if *Rhapsody in Blue* did not turn out to be a jazz composition with symphonic features, as originally intended by Whiteman, but rather a symphonic composition with colourful elements borrowed from jazz, it has not – perhaps for this very reason – lost any of its originality and freshness today. In it, Gershwin did indeed develop a style of his own, very honest and very American, which blurs the boundaries between classical and popular music and which proved to be a fruitful source of inspiration for other equally brilliant works like the *Concerto in F* for piano and orchestra, the orchestral suite *An American in Paris*, or the *Cuban Overture*. The work’s immense popularity has also resulted in a large number of other arrangements for all sorts of combinations.

In musical terms, this transcription for organ is a rather bold attempt to transfer music inspired entirely by the piano to an instrument which, whilst modern virtuosos have the technique to play almost anything, is occasionally at risk making the pianistic passages sound almost grotesque. Normally, even a virtuoso organist will shy away from coming close to the original tempi envisaged by Gershwin (and preserved in sound recordings); in most cases, this is unlikely to produce convincing musical results. Instead, the performer is probably well advised to rely more on variations in tempo, dynamic flexibility and graduations of colour. Similarly, minor figurative alterations by the arranger are not intended as substantive interventions in the composition, but merely as aids to interpreting the work in a manner appropriate to the instrument. The slight tightening of the form is based on the version for solo piano published by Warner Bros.; for everything else, however, the main source here was the original version for two pianos and the Grofé orchestration of 1942.

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Rhapsody in Blue

George Gershwin
Bearbeitung: Tobias Zuleger

Molto moderato ♩ = 80

Man. *SW p Solo* *tr* *mf con licenza* *Pos.*

3 *b tr tr tr*

7 *b tr tr tr* *[b] tr* 3 3

Scherzando (commodo)

24

SW *mp*

Pos. *p*

27

pochissimo rall.

pochissimo rall.

30

a tempo

a tempo

SW *p*

Pos. *mp*

ten.

ten.

p

mp

32

+SW/Pos.

+SW/Pos.

mf

HW f

mf

f

48

Musical score for measures 48-51. The piece is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The tempo is *Pos. p tranquillo*. The score features a treble and bass clef system. The right hand plays a melodic line with slurs and ties, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. A double bar line is present at the end of measure 51.

52

Musical score for measures 52-54. The tempo is *HW f deciso*. Measure 52 contains a triplet of eighth notes. Measure 53 is marked *SW Solo* and *p scherzando*. The right hand features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 52 and a melodic line with slurs in measure 53. The left hand has a steady accompaniment. A double bar line is present at the end of measure 54.

55

Musical score for measures 55-56. The tempo is *Poco agitato*. The right hand plays a melodic line with slurs and ties. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. The tempo marking *Pos. poco cresc.* is present. A double bar line is present at the end of measure 56.

57

Musical score for measures 57-60. The tempo is *Poco agitato*. Measure 57 contains a triplet of eighth notes. The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and ties. The left hand has a steady accompaniment. The tempo marking *Pos. cresc.* is present. A double bar line is present at the end of measure 60.

Tempo giusto

115

118

121

125

141 *rall.* **Meno mosso e poco scherzando**

Pos. *p*
p

143

espr.
p

146

149

SW f
Pos. mf
SW
Pos.

197 **a tempo** **[rall.]**
ad lib.

Pos. *mf*

201 **a tempo**
SW *mf*

205

209

Andantino moderato

con espressione

SW Solo

244

Musical score for measures 244-249. The system consists of three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass clef staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is Andantino moderato. The first staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The second staff (bass clef) contains a harmonic accompaniment with slurs and accents. The third staff (bass clef) contains a simple bass line. Dynamic markings include *HW p* (half-whisper piano) and *SW Solo* (solo). Measure numbers 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, and 249 are indicated.

250

SW Solo

Musical score for measures 250-255. The system consists of three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass clef staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is Andantino moderato. The first staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The second staff (bass clef) contains a harmonic accompaniment with slurs and accents. The third staff (bass clef) contains a simple bass line. Dynamic markings include *HW p* (half-whisper piano) and *SW Solo* (solo). Measure numbers 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, and 255 are indicated.

256

HW *mf*

Musical score for measures 256-260. The system consists of three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass clef staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is Andantino moderato. The first staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The second staff (bass clef) contains a harmonic accompaniment with slurs and accents. The third staff (bass clef) contains a simple bass line. Dynamic markings include *HW mf* (half-whisper mezzo-forte) and *SW Solo* (solo). Measure numbers 256, 257, 258, 259, and 260 are indicated. Triplet markings (3) are present in measures 258 and 260.

261

rit.

Grandioso
ma non troppo
a tempo

ff

Musical score for measures 261-266. The system consists of three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass clef staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is Grandioso ma non troppo a tempo. The first staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The second staff (bass clef) contains a harmonic accompaniment with slurs and accents. The third staff (bass clef) contains a simple bass line. Dynamic markings include *rit.* (ritardando), *ff* (fortissimo), and *SW Solo* (solo). Measure numbers 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, and 266 are indicated. Triplet markings (3) are present in measures 262 and 264.

320

Leggiero

324

HW *f* assai stacc. **SW *p***

Agitato e misterioso

*start slowly and gradually increase in speed **

328/332

HW *mf* sempre stacc.

336

* Das Tempo langsam beginnen und nach und nach beschleunigen

[stacc. sempre]

386

Musical score for measures 386-389. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It begins with a *f* *pomposo* marking. The middle staff is in bass clef, and the bottom staff is also in bass clef. The music features complex chordal textures and melodic lines with various articulations.

390

Musical score for measures 390-393. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps. The middle and bottom staves are in bass clef. The music continues with complex textures and includes a *sc* marking in the final measure.

394

Musical score for measures 394-397. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps. The middle and bottom staves are in bass clef. The music features complex textures and includes a *sc* marking in the final measure.

398

Musical score for measures 398-401. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps. The middle and bottom staves are in bass clef. The music features complex textures and includes a *sc* marking in the final measure.