

EDITORIAL NOTES

In this edition, you will find that the given work is titled "AMERICAN RHAPSODY". This is not an error, but instead a deliberate restoration of George Gershwin's original vision. When he first set pen to paper in early 1924, he conceived the piece with an "American" mindset. Aiming to capture the pulse, passion, and energy of New York City at the time. Although his brother, Ira, famously suggested the change to the title we know today, this transcription humbly retains Gershwin's primary title.

Within this edition, several distinct thematic labels have been included to guide the performer through the work's rhapsodic structure. These include the RITORNELLO, TRAIN, STRIDE, SHUFFLE, DINNER, and LOVE themes. Each represents a unique facet of the American experience: The iconic bluesy "call" of the Ritornello, the forward momentum of the Train, the ragtime virtuosity of the Stride, the humor of the Shuffle, the sophisticated "metropolitan" atmosphere of the Dinner, and the sweeping romanticism of the Love theme. While these specific classifications are modern analytical tools - largely established by scholars such as David Schiff to help map the piece's complex form - they are rooted in Gershwin's own creative process. Gershwin famously noted that the "thematic" seeds for the Rhapsody germinated during a train trip to Boston, where he was inspired by the "steely rhythms" and "rattle-ty-bang" of the locomotive. These labels are not intended to restrict interpretation, but instead to honor the "American" imagery that birthed the composition.

A defining characteristic of this restoration is the dual-numbering system used for the rehearsal cues. While modern symphonic editions of the Rhapsody typically employ 40 standard markers, Gershwin's original two-piano holograph contains only 34. These primary structural divisions are identified in this score with the suffix "(MS)". By restoring these 34 original points of reference, this edition allows the performer to see the work's "skeleton" as Gershwin initially drafted it. For the benefit of contemporary study and performance, modern rehearsal markers have been integrated alongside these historical cues, providing a bridge between the composer's 1924 thought process and the standard performance tradition used today.

It is essential to acknowledge the legendary debut of this work. The Rhapsody In Blue was commissioned by Paul Whiteman for his "An Experiment in Modern Music" concert, which premiered at Aeolian Hall in New York City on February 12, 1924. In the orchestral conductor's score prepared by Ferde Grofé, the famous music instruction "Wait for Nod" was included - a cue for the band to pause while Gershwin improvised his piano solos. Because this edition prioritizes Gershwin's own two-piano holograph over the orchestral arrangements, that specific cue is omitted here. However, a profound mystery remains: Gershwin did not formally write down the complete piano sections until after the concert, so the exact sound of the original premiere remains unknown. This transcription serves to bridge the gap between that legendary improvisation and the formal manuscript, offering a vision that honors both the composer's intent and unwritten legacy.

AMERICAN RHAPSODY

(Rhapsody in Blue)

GEORGE GERSHWIN

BASED OFF OF ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT (1/7/1924)

MODERN INDICATIONS ARE ADDED

Ritornello Theme

Slowly

from

17

Slowly

tr

mp

17

ppp **

4

pp

Red. *Red.* *(sost.)* *****

(sost.) *Red.* *Red.*

1(MS)

1

8

(sost.)
(Red.)

Red. *Red.* *(sost.)*

mf

1

5 1 2 1

12 ****

3

pp 3

7

***Phrases, slurs, portamentos, and staccatos on this page are Gershwin's, except grace notes on bars 6 and 8.**

****Gershwin's** - as in original manuscript. The performer may substitute *mf* if wished.

****(sost.)* denotes middle sostenuto pedal. It is important to "catch" only the notes indicated.

***Phrases, accents, and slurs are Gershwin's except on the last system.