

# GOLDSTONE AND CLEMMOW



## GERSHWIN

Rhapsody in Blue

Cuban Overture

'I Got Rhythm' Variations

divine art

**Boléro**  
Ma mère l'Oye  
Sites auriculaires

## RAVEL



# MUSIC FOR PIANO DUO

**GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898-1937) AND MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)  
WORKS FOR PIANO DUO**

1	<b>Gershwin</b>	Rhapsody in Blue (original version for two pianos)	15:34
	<b>Ravel</b>	Ma mère l'Oye (Mother Goose), for piano duet	
2		Pavane de la Belle au bois dormant	1:39
3		Petit Poucet	2:29
4		Laideronnette, Impératrice des Pagodes	3:29
5		Les entretiens de la Belle et la Bête	3:35
6		Le jardin féerique	3:08
7	<b>Gershwin</b>	Cuban Overture (original version for piano duet)	9:49
	<b>Ravel</b>	Sites auriculaires, for two pianos	
8		Habanera	2:35
9		Entre cloches	3:12
10	<b>Gershwin</b>	'I Got Rhythm' Variations (original version for two pianos)	9:07
11	<b>Ravel</b>	Boléro (the composer's version for piano duet)	14:00
total CD duration			68:39

**GOLDSTONE AND CLEMMOW**

Recorded at the Church of St. John the Baptist, Alkborough, North Lincs, England in 2007  
(except track 10 recorded 1997)

Piano technicians: Philip Kennedy (works for two pianos); Benjamin Nolan (duets)

A Maxim digital recording

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## Ravel, Gershwin and the Piano Duo

In the morning of 11 July, 1937, in Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, Hollywood, a musical genius, the son of Russian Jewish immigrants, who wrote the first great American opera (*Porgy and Bess*), a 'popular' composer who had largely redefined 'serious' American music for the twentieth century by enriching it with diverse styles, including jazz, died at the age of only thirty-eight after an operation on a brain tumour. He was George Gershwin, a man with a positively Schubertian gift for creating memorable memories, as demonstrated by the plethora of wonderful songs written in partnership with his brother Ira as lyricist, and among his admirers could be counted such respected and disparate 'serious' composers as Schoenberg, Bartók, Vaughan Williams and Prokofiev - and the Frenchman Maurice Ravel.

Just over five months later, in Paris, the sixty-two-year-old Ravel also underwent an operation for a suspected brain tumour; none was found but he lapsed into a coma and died on 28 December. A cruel degenerative illness, thought to be Pick's disease, still incurable today, had rendered him unable to compose, even to write or speak. This complex, private man, so different from the ebullient Gershwin, also embraced jazz influences; his music ranges from the most tender and intimate (*viz* track [2]) to the voluptuous (*Introduction et allegro* for harp etc.) to the brutality of the *Danse guerrière* from the ballet *Daphnis et Chloé*. He wrote what is possibly the most frequently performed piece of classical music, *Boléro*, which is reputed to be performed somewhere in the world every fifteen minutes and has generated countless millions in royalties, the subject of legal battles, mystery and intrigue.

In January 1928 the world-famous French composer had embarked on a four-month tour of North America. In New York in March he asked if Gershwin could be present at a party which was to be given for his fifty-third birthday. The hostess, mezzo-soprano Eva Gauthier, related how 'Gershwin played the *Rhapsody [in Blue]* and, in fact, his entire repertoire, and fairly outdid himself. It was an unforgettable evening, the meeting of the two most outstanding composers of the day, the young man just beginning to scale the heights, the other at the very pinnacle.

'The thing that astonished Ravel was the facility with which George scaled the most formidable technical difficulties and his genius for weaving complicated rhythms and his gift

for melody.' Through Gauthier as interpreter Gershwin, who always sought to develop his art, asked if he could study with Ravel, but he received the reply that 'it would probably cause him to write bad "Ravel" and lose his great gift of melody and spontaneity.' Ravel was taken by Gershwin to hear authentic jazz in Harlem, and soon afterwards he endorsed in a lecture the development of 'a veritable school of American music' embodying 'a great deal of the rich and beguiling rhythm of your jazz, and ... your popular melodies and songs, worthily deriving from, and in turn contributing to, a noble heritage in music.' He clearly believed Gershwin to be on the right track.

The genesis of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* [1], now acknowledged as a seminal work of the early twentieth-century, was haphazard to say the least. In early January, 1924, Ira, much to his and George's surprise, read an article in the New York *Tribune* announcing that Paul Whiteman (the famous band leader) was to perform a concert with his jazz orchestra five weeks later entitled 'An Experiment in Modern Music'. There had been vague talk of George's writing something for the band, but this concert was to include a jazz concerto at which he was reportedly already 'at work'!

Although his schedule was full, somehow - with Whiteman's 'encouragement' - he completed what we now know as *Rhapsody in Blue* in two-piano form in his spare moments over three weeks, and the second piano part was scored for the band by the composer and arranger Ferde Grofé in consultation with the composer. Even at a rehearsal the writer Henry O. Osgood hailed the work as 'the finest piece of serious music that had even come out of America.' The Aeolian Hall, New York, concert was attended by many musical luminaries including Rachmaninov, Walter Damrosch and Galli-Curci, and the New York *Times* reported 'tumultuous applause' for this work by a composer 'fresh and new and full of promise.' Naturally Gershwin was the soloist.

The piece has become such a fixture that one accepts the final title (it was originally to be called *American Rhapsody*) without question. The word 'blue' long ago became a colloquial term for 'in low spirits', possibly because of the custom of sailing ships which, in the event of losing the captain or any of the officers during a voyage, would fly blue flags and have a blue band painted along the hull when returning home. Blue is a 'mortuary colour', and the expression 'to look blue' goes back to 1550 or earlier.

The term 'blue note' came to be used mostly for the third and seventh degrees of the major scale when 'flattened', i.e. inflected downwards, notably in the work songs and spirituals sung by the black peoples during the time of slavery in America. The effect of blue notes is to create a poignant ambivalence between major and minor modes, and of course a whole genre of music, 'the blues', later emerged - the very epitome of soulful lamentation. 'The blues is one of [America's] great musical treasures,' opined Ravel. (In 1922 Gershwin wrote a twenty-five minute Afro-American tragic 'opera' called *Blue Monday*.)

With *Rhapsody in Blue*, Gershwin had written a free-form 'symphonic' work, a rhapsody, but one in jazz idiom, which of course, growing out of the music of the black races, makes extensive use of blue notes. The title, suggested to Ira by Whistler's titles for his paintings such as 'Nocturne in Black and Gold', cleverly makes it impossible to place the work in either category - symphonic or jazz, even though some critics have ineffectually tried to judge it by attempting to do so. It is too familiar to require detailed description.

Ravel's *Ma mère l'Oye* (*Mother Goose*), here receiving its first recording in Roger Nichols's corrected edition for Peters, is an original piano duet work, based on French children's stories, and celebrates the innocence of childhood. It was written in 1908 for a young brother and sister, Jean and Mimi, the children of staunch friends, the Godebskis. When it proved too difficult, two young girls, one of whom was a pupil of the pianist Marguerite Long, a close friend and great interpreter of the composer, gave the first performance in 1910. Ravel was a small man and, for this reason and because, Peter Pan-like, he never really accepted adulthood, he loved the company of children. These five exquisite pieces, while not technically very difficult, are fashioned with the utmost subtlety of detail: Ravel was a true watchmaker among composers.

The princess who is the subject of *Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood* [2] has fallen asleep for a hundred years. As there are twenty becalmed bars, each containing four crotchet beats, I calculate that every crotchet beat is equivalent to fifteen months of the story. *Tom Thumb* [3] is prefaced by the following, from Perrault: *He thought he would find his way easily by means of the bread that he had scattered wherever he had passed; but he was very surprised that he could not find a single crumb again: the birds had come and eaten everything.* The gently meandering mood turns to panic; we hear the birds and then the sobs of the little boy.

*Laideronnette, Empress of the Pagodas* (the name of the ruler of this race of miniature people means Little Ugly Lady) [4] has the following explanation, from the story by Mme d'Aulnoy: *She undressed and got into the bath. Soon pagodas and pagodinas began to play their instruments: some had lutes made from a walnut shell; others had viols made from an almond shell; for the instruments had to be well proportioned to their size.* This orient-inspired gem, in which the *primo* player uses only the black ('Chinese' pentatonic) notes, contains three 'tam-tam' strokes near the start of the spacious middle section, indicated by Ravel but omitted from the original published version.

*The Conversations of Beauty and the Beast* [5] has the following excerpts from Mme Leprince de Beaumont: *'When I think of your good heart, you do not seem to me so ugly.'* - *'Oh! lady, yes! I have a good heart, but I am a monster.'* - *'There are indeed men who are more monstrous than you.'* - *'If I had the spirit I would pay you a great compliment to thank you, but I am only a beast.'* ... *'Lady, will you be my wife?'* - *'No, Beast!'* ... *'I shall die content as I have the pleasure of seeing you once again.'* - *'No, my dear Beast, you will not die: you will live to become my husband!'* ... *The Beast had disappeared and now at her feet she saw none other than a prince more handsome than Cupid who was thanking her for having broken his spell.* Beauty is portrayed by a girlish waltz, then the Beast by a strange, gruff phrase in the bass. Later we hear the two motifs combined, there is a sudden silence, a pre-Disneyesque upward glissando breaks the spell, and the Beast's theme is liberated from the bass into the high treble before settling on a manly baritone as Beauty looks on, awestruck.

*The Enchanted Garden* [6] may have been for Ravel a metaphor for childhood itself - a spellbinding evocation of a timeless paradise he was reluctant to relinquish, crowned at the end by a radiant sunburst.

Early 1932 found Gershwin in Cuba, where he soaked up the music of this hedonistic playground of America in the Caribbean, from her lethargic, sensual songs to her breathlessly energetic rumbas employing arrays of earth-shaking percussion instruments with their exciting, complicated syncopations. Back in New York, obviously overwhelmed by his experiences, he drafted a work in piano duet form, originally calling it *Rumba*. The title later became ***Cuban Overture*** [7], and his orchestration included Cuban percussion instruments, the players of which were to stand in front of the orchestra.

While containing his own themes, the work, Gershwin wrote, 'embodies the essence of the Cuban dance.' Having been criticised three years before by the celebrated Russian composer Alexander Glazunov, who was visiting New York, for having 'not the slightest knowledge of counterpoint,' Gershwin in this work showed what he could do. The slower middle section, while sounding utterly natural, is written largely as a canon: Bach would no doubt have approved. The première of this effervescent party piece (then still called *Rumba*) took place in an all-Gershwin concert in New York in August 1932 in front of eighteen thousand people (five thousand more tried unsuccessfully to get in) - in the composer's words, 'the most exciting night I have ever had.'

Spanish music has always exercised its seductive magic on French composers; the exoticism and passion just out of reach across the Pyrenees, with its heady mix of influences including the Moors and the Gypsies, has proved irresistible. Ravel was drawn to Spain, metaphorically, time and again, which resulted in works such as *Alborada del grazioso*, *Rapsodie espagnole*, the comic opera *L'heure espagnole*, *Boléro* and *Don Quichotte à Dulciné*. Amazingly, he did not see Spain until he was fifty-two, according to Long, but he succeeded nevertheless in capturing the quintessence of that country in sound.

He did have an advantage in that his mother was a Basque from the Basses-Pyrénées who had been brought up in Madrid and, again according to Long, was said to have met his father in the beautiful gardens of Aranjuez (later the inspiration for Joaquín Rodrigo's most popular work, the *Concierto de Aranjuez*). She even affirms, 'all his music is a glorification of Spanish rhythm and dance,' and the supreme Spanish composer of the twentieth century, Manuel de Falla, was deeply impressed by its 'subtly genuine Spanishness' from his first meeting with Ravel in Paris in the summer of 1907, when he heard him play through his new *Rapsodie espagnole* as a piano duet with the Catalan Ricardo Viñes.

Falla noted Ravel's predilection for the *habanera* (originally a dance from Havana, Cuba, and related to the tango), which had been fashionable during his mother's Madrid years. The *Habanera* third movement of the *Rapsodie espagnole* had in fact been composed as early as 1895 for two pianos, and this first incarnation, together with *Entre cloches*, composed two years later, makes up **Sites auriculaires [8-9]**. The title, literally meaning 'places perceived aurally', was probably suggested by the odd descriptions given by the eccentric French composer Erik Satie, whom Ravel admired, to his works (for example

*Three Pear-shaped Pieces*). The atmospheric *Habanera*, prefaced by an evocative quotation from Baudelaire, 'Au pays parfumé que le soleil caresse...', and to be played 'in half-tones and with a listless rhythm', could hardly be lazier, rooted to the spot by one note repeated over and over again in an obsessive rhythm (prescient of the device Ravel used in *Boléro* over thirty years later with such an opposite effect). The companion piece, *Among Bells*, is a study in sonorities, the clashing peals of the outer sections being balanced by a delicate central episode.

Long wrote of the first performance of *Sites auriculaires* in 1898 that Marthe Dron and Viñes 'were sight-reading, or nearly so, an almost illegible manuscript,' and not surprisingly the reception was disastrous and the work withdrawn. We can now recognise it as representing an intriguing stage in Ravel's early stylistic development.

One of Gershwin's most vivacious songs was '*I Got Rhythm*' from the musical show *Girl Crazy*, written in 1930 with Ira. Its punchy syncopations, sung with gusto by the irrepressible Ethel Merman, could hardly fail to bring the house down. When George needed a new showpiece for piano and orchestra for a concert tour in early 1934 to take in twenty-eight cities in as many days, celebrating the tenth anniversary of *Rhapsody in Blue*, he came up with a brilliant set of variations on this song hit and dedicated the new work to Ira; the two-piano version of the '*I Got Rhythm Variations* [10] is his own and, as in the case of the versions of *Rhapsody in Blue* and *Cuban Overture* recorded here, was the original form of the work.

Especially noteworthy among the six variations are a slightly ironic *valse triste*, a 'Chinese' variation capitalising on the pentatonic character of the song (*viz* track [4]), 'in which I imitate Chinese flutes played out of tune, as they always are,' stated Gershwin, and a seductive nightclub scene, after which all restraint is abandoned in the race to the finish.

We end as we began, with an iconic work from the 1920s. I hope I may be excused for quoting, verbatim from an Italian website, this description of the ballet danced by Ida Rubinstein to Ravel's *Boléro* [11]. I find it amusing and I think the sense is graspable:

*To the center of a taverna, a gitana dancer dance on a table. Around to she men go around themselves make thirsty out of drunkenness. The gitani dance with to the dancer until when the paroxysm of the dance sweeps up them.* (The choreographer of this romp was Bronislava Nijinska, the younger sister of Vaslav Nijinsky.) Russian-born Ida Rubinstein

had danced in Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, but then struck out on her own and created her own company. With her family wealth she commissioned stage works, including *Boléro*, which would showcase her talents.

Now usually heard in the concert hall, the piece, written in 1928 after Ravel's return from his triumphant American tour, was thus conceived by him as a ballet, but apparently with a quite different scenario. (Incidentally, it was originally to be entitled *Fandango*, making it the third item on this recording to have had its name changed.) Improbable as it may seem, according to René Chalupt, poet and editor of Ravel's letters, he visualised male and female workers emerging from their factory workshops, the throbbing rhythm and thematic repetition representing the machinery of the assembly line. They would join in the dance with the crowd, and a clandestine tryst between a bullfighter and a young lady would provide the climax to the ballet when her jealous lover arrived and stabbed the *torrero* (pace *Carmen*.) However the composer's ideas were, naturally, ignored. Could he have been jesting anyway?

The compositional procedure is simple but mesmerising in its effect. There are two parts to the non-modulating tune with its literally monotonous accompaniment; let us call them A and B, the latter employing 'blue' notes and managing to sound both jazzy and somewhat Arabic. In the course of a gradual crescendo we hear AABB, AABB, AABB, AABB, AB, interrupted by a completely unexpected and electrifying modulation and its ensuing reversal, culminating in a final explosion.

*Boléro* has become a byword for sexual lust expressed in music. Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, a fine violinist and close friend of the composer, wrote, 'Ravel was extremely surprised at the mass success of *Boléro*... Deep down he felt that the obsessive, musico-sexual element in the piece was probably behind its enormous popularity.' He once said, ironically, to the composer Arthur Honegger, 'I have written only one masterpiece - *Boléro*. Unfortunately there's no music in it.' The present version for piano duet is Ravel's own.

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## GOLDSTONE AND CLEMMOW

With over forty CDs and a busy concert schedule stretching back almost a quarter century, the British piano duo Goldstone and Clemmow became firmly established as a leading force. Described by Gramophone as 'a dazzling husband and wife team', by *International Record Review* as 'a British institution in the best sense of the word', and by *The Herald, Glasgow* as 'the UK's pre-eminent two-piano team', internationally known artists Anthony Goldstone and Caroline Clemmow formed their duo in 1984 and married in 1989. Their extremely diverse activities in two-piano and piano-duet recitals and double concertos, taking in major festivals, sent them all over the British Isles as well as to Europe, the Middle East and several times to the U.S.A., where they received standing ovations and such press accolades as 'revelations such as this are rare in the concert hall these days' (*Charleston Post and Courier*).

In their refreshingly presented concerts they mixed famous masterpieces and fascinating rarities, which they frequently unearthed themselves, into absorbing and hugely entertaining programmes; their numerous B.B.C. broadcasts often included first hearings of unjustly neglected works, and their equally enterprising and acclaimed commercial recordings, numbering over forty, include many world premières.

Having presented the complete duets of Mozart for the bicentenary, they decided to accept the much greater challenge of performing the vast quantity of music written by Schubert specifically for four hands at one piano. This they first did in 1993 – and have since repeated several times – in a mammoth cycle of seven concerts, which in its completeness (including works not found in the collected edition) and original recital format was probably a world first. *The Musical Times* wrote of this venture: 'The Goldstone/Clemmow performances invited one superlative after another.' The complete cycle (as a rare bonus including as encores Schumann's eight Schubert-inspired *Polonaises*) was recorded on seven CDs, 'haunted with the spirit of Schubert' – *Luister (Netherlands)* and re-issued by Divine Art as a luxury box set in 2017.

Anthony Goldstone died in January 2017 bringing to end the illustrious career of this exciting and innovative duo. At Divine Art we hope that their recordings will continue to keep their art alive for many years.



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