The Jazz Age
for Piano Duo

Mihand
Gershwin

Carmichael

Moyzes
Hill

Seiber

Goldstone & Clemmow
GOLDSTONE AND CLEMMOW

George Gershwin (1898-1937)
1. **An American in Paris** (1928)  - Gershwin’s two-piano version  
   * Total Duration: 18.37

Edward Burlingame Hill (1872-1960)
2. **Jazz Studies (1922-4)** for two pianos  
   * Total Duration: 8.38
   - I. *Allegretto, sempre giocoso*  
   - II. *Allegretto vivace*  
   - III. *Tempo giusto*  
   - IV. *Vivace*

Darius Milhaud (1892-1974)
6. **La création du monde** (1922-3)  - Milhaud’s piano-duet version  
   * Total Duration: 15.43

Alexander Moyzes (1906-1984)
7. **Jazz Sonata for two pianos, Op. 14** (1932)  
   * Total Duration: 14.29
   - I. *Allegro – tempo di slow-fox*  
   - II. *Tempo di valse lento (Andante con moto)*  
   - III. *Andante un poco tenuto – Tempo di fox-trott*

Mátyás Seiber (1905-1960)
10. **selection from Easy Dances (1932)** for piano duet  
   * Total Duration: 7.38
   - Foxtrot I
   - Paso doble
   - Tango (Habanera)
   - Foxtrot II
   - Blues
   - Rumba
   - Tango Argentino
   - Slow-Fox
   - Ragtime
   - Charleston

20. **Star Dust** (1927) for two pianos  
   * Total Duration: 4.13

21. **Embraceable You** (1928) for piano duet  
   * Total Duration: 1.23

* first recording  

Total CD duration 70.43
In 1922 F. Scott Fitzgerald, the American author whose most celebrated novel is *The Great Gatsby*, published a collection of short stories under the title *Tales of the Jazz Age*. The Great War was over and, despite political turmoil, brutal racial repression and Prohibition – the “Noble Experiment” that theoretically banned alcohol throughout the United States from 1920 until 1933, Americans managed to throw caution to the winds and enjoy themselves until the Great Depression struck in 1929. “The jazz age” is now taken to refer to this “anything goes” period, during which jazz flourished and many new, and often silly, popular dance crazes popped up and were frequently displaced equally suddenly. The Charleston and the Fox Trot have endured, but others included such animal inspirations as the Kangaroo Hop, Grizzly Bear, Bunny Hug and Horse Trot.

The word “jazz” has been traced back to 1913, when it could refer to any activity, not specifically music. In April of that year an article entitled “In Praise of ‘Jazz’, a Futurist Word Which Has Just Joined the Language” suggested, “This remarkable and satisfactory-sounding word means something like life, vigor, energy, effervescence of spirit, joy, pep, magnetism, verve, virility, ebulliency, courage, happiness – oh, what's the use?” The term needed explanation then and, since first being applied to music in 1915, has evaded accurate description to this day. It takes in ragtime (“RAGTIME ‘PRODUCES HYSTERIA, INSANITY. RAGTIME IS NOT MUSIC, IT IS A DISEASE’, CLAIMS DOCTOR”, screamed the New York *Times* in 1911) and the popular dances growing out of it, blues, “traditional” jazz, bee-bop, “modern” jazz, free-form improvisation etc., and can inhabit regions as esoteric as those of the most avant-garde “classical” compositions. 1920s jazz involved foot-tapping rhythms, syncopation (“ragged time”), “blue” notes from the natural intonation of the black races, and sheer joie de vivre.

An important catalyst in, and contributor to, the growth of American vernacular music was the Eastern European Jewish community that had fled appalling persecution and found refuge in the USA. Composers such as Irving Berlin (1888-1989), born Israel Baline in the
Urals, the son of a cantor, and George Gershwin (1898-1937), born Jacob Gershowitz to Russian immigrants, added the pungent ingredient of their own folk music to the musical stewpot.

Gershwin, while enjoying huge celebrity in the popular field, longed to be taken seriously as a “legitimate” composer, and to this end he had a few lessons with a pupil of Dvořák, Rubin Goldmark, whom he found too old-fashioned; he later sought tuition from several others – Ravel, Nadia Boulanger and Stravinsky – to no avail; and he was finally considering approaching Schoenberg and Ernst Toch a year before his death. Following the success of his concert works Rhapsody in Blue (1924) and Concerto in F (1925), both intended for himself as piano soloist with orchestra (or band) and the latter orchestrated by himself, Gershwin was eager to compose a purely orchestral work. Inspiration came in 1926 on a trip to Paris, when he conceived what became the opening “walking tune”, and a second Paris sojourn in 1928 was enough to clinch the quasi-autobiographical portrait An American in Paris, which for a period he envisaged as a ballet, though his final description was “tone poem”. Possibly encouraged by the use of a fog horn in Erik Satie’s ballet Parade (1916-7), he auditioned authentic French taxi horns to obtain the right discordant pitches to depict the raucous noise of Paris traffic. He completed the work in two-piano form in August 1928 and then orchestrated it, completing the task on 18 November. The première of the orchestral work took place on 13 December 1928 in New York’s Carnegie Hall, given by the New York Philharmonic, by Walter Damrosch. The audience reaction was enthusiastic.

Early the following year, Gershwin made a personal gift of the two-piano score to his publisher but did not request its publication; it is surprising that when the work was issued after the composer’s death in two-piano form it was not this version that appeared. Gershwin’s two-piano score resurfaced only in 1980 and it was then published, including a few short sections that he had cut from the orchestral score. A recording was made at the time by Katia and Marielle Labèque that included these; however, while it was of obvious
value for the additional music to be heard, our judgment (and evidently that of Gershwin) is that it adds nothing of significance and that, on the contrary, the excessive repetition of material dilutes the effect of the piece, making it more diffuse. Consequently this recording [1] corresponds with the composer’s final decision. As Gershwin’s two-piano version was partly a try-out for his orchestral piece and not intended for publication, in not a few places it lacks some of the texture and even on occasion the melodic material that is so familiar to audiences. These gaps are clearly detrimental and so we have referred to the orchestral score to add what was missing.

The composer outlined his ideas for the work: “My purpose here is to portray the impressions of an American visitor in Paris as he strolls about the city, listens to various street noises, and absorbs the French atmosphere.

“The opening gay section is followed by a rich ‘blues’ with a strong rhythmic undercurrent [7′44″ in this recording]. Our American friend, perhaps after strolling into a café and having a few drinks, has suddenly succumbed to a spasm of homesickness. [Here Gershwin wrote “drunk” in the two-piano score.] This ‘blues’ rises to a climax followed by a coda [16′31″] in which the spirit of the music returns to the vivacity and bubbling exuberance of the opening part... Apparently the homesick American, having left the café and reached the open air, has downed his spell of blues and once again is an alert spectator of Parisian life. At the conclusion, the street noises and French atmosphere are triumphant.”

The fanciful description read by the audience in the concert programme of the première was in fact written by Gershwin’s friend, the composer and critic Deems Taylor. It complements the composer’s thoughts and is worth quoting in part. He began: “You are to imagine an American, visiting Paris, swinging down the Champs Élysées on a mild sunny morning in May or June... Our American’s ears being open, as well as his eyes, he notes with pleasure the sounds of the city. French taxicabs seem to amuse him particularly, a fact
that the orchestra points out in a brief episode introducing four real Paris taxi horns (imported at great expense for the occasion) [0′29″ onwards].

“Having safely eluded the taxis, our American apparently passes the open door of a café, where, if one is to believe the trombones, La Maxixe is still popular. Exhilarated by this reminder of the gay nineteen-hundreds he resumes his stroll.” By way of explanation (and at the risk of digressing): at 1′37″ there is a four-second quotation that sounds familiar but is annoyingly difficult to place. Gershwin knew it as “La Sorella (La Mattchiche)” by the Frenchman Charles-Borel Clerc (1879-1959), which had been published over twenty years earlier and became the rage in Paris. This tune had, improbably, made the journey – by way of a borrowing in a Spanish zarzuela (operetta) – from a Brazilian opera! Premièred to great acclaim at La Scala, Milan, in 1870, Il Guarany by Carlos Gomes (1836-1896), concerns the chief of the Guarany Indian tribe who falls in love with the daughter of a Portuguese gentleman – the plot of Bellini’s Norma in reverse. The Maxixe or Mattchiche (of which “La Sorella” – “The Sister” – is not strictly an example) is a lively Brazilian dance derived from the music of black slaves of the Chopi ethnic group from Maxixe in Mozambique. Who would suspect that this snippet had such multinational roots? The melody is so catchy that it continued to be appropriated, most famously as the children’s song “Chewin’ Gum”, recorded by Ella Fitzgerald (not related to F. Scott!) and others, which is probably the source of the present-day listener’s unconscious memory.

Taylor continued: “After several other minor adventures this American winds up somewhere over on the Left Bank … the end of this section [is] pleasantly blurred, to suggest that the American is on the terrasse of a café, exploring the mysteries of an Anise de Lozo [6′35″ to 6′47″].

“And now [6′47″] the orchestra introduces an unhallowed episode. Suffice it to say that a solo violin approaches our hero (in the soprano register) and addresses him in the most charming broken English; and, his response being inaudible – or at least unintelligible, repeats the remark. This one-sided conversation continues for some little time. [Gershwin
had written, perhaps with more innocent intent, in the two-piano score, “sees girl – meets girl – strolling flirtation – into café – conversation leading to slow Blues.”] Our hero becomes homesick. He has the blues [7’44”]…

“Just in the nick of time the compassionate orchestra rushes another theme to the rescue [12’51”], two trumpets performing the ceremony of introduction. It is apparent that our hero must have met a compatriot… For the moment Paris is no more; and a voluble, gusty, wise-cracking orchestra proceeds to demonstrate at some length that it’s always fair weather when two Americans get together, no matter where... The blues return but mitigated … the orchestra, in a riotous finale, decides to make a night of it. It will be great to get home, but meanwhile, this is Paris.” The commentary is superfluous to our enjoyment of the music, but fun.

Reviews ranged from “easily the best piece of modern music since Mr. Gershwin’s Concerto in F” to “nauseous claptrap”. Outlook perhaps summed it up best: “Gershwin has written a delightful, clever and extremely amusing little [sic] work. To look for profundities where none are intended, or to cavil at resemblances here and there which narrowly graze being quotations, would be like reproaching Beatrice Lillie [famous Canadian comic actress] for not being a Duse [Eleonora Duse, great Italian dramatic actress].”

It is notable that the following two works were written and performed prior to the famous concert given by Paul Whiteman’s augmented orchestra in New York’s Aeolean Hall on 12 February 1924 entitled “An Experiment in Modern Music” and showcasing Gershwin’s brand-new Rhapsody in Blue. While that masterpiece is usually hailed as the pioneer in the fusion of concert music and jazz, Darius Milhaud (see below) and Edward Burlingame Hill, composers on the other side of the “divide”, shared similar objectives to bridge it (as did others including Igor Stravinsky and Aaron Copland).

Hill (1872-1960) was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He graduated from Harvard University and studied with several composers before travelling to Paris to work with the
The distinguished composer, organist and teacher Charles Marie Widor, who was later to teach Milhaud. Hill continued his composition studies back in Boston. In 1908 he was appointed to the faculty of Harvard, where he remained until 1940, eventually becoming Ditson Professor of Music and on retirement being designated Professor Emeritus. His importance is illustrated by his being a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a Chevalier de la Légion d’honneur, as well as by the list of his later-to-be-illustrious pupils, including Elliott Carter, Virgil Thomson, Walter Piston, Roger Sessions, Ross Lee Finney, Randall Thompson and Leonard Bernstein.

For the music (symphonies, symphonic poems, concerti, vocal and chamber works etc.) of such a distinguished figure to be now virtually unknown is surprising. His style is described as progressing from the romanticism of Edward MacDowell to quasi-French impressionism, and he was already forty-eight when he dallied with jazz with the first of the four *Jazz Studies* for two pianos [2-5]. Although they were published between 1924 and 1935, “New Grove” states their period of composition as 1922-4, and in his book *Gershwin: An Autobiography* Edward Jablonski documents a lecture-concert that took place in New York two days before Whiteman’s event, in which Hill “spoke impressively of jazz” (the *New York Times*) and the *Jazz Studies* were performed. Their idiom smacks of the popular dances of the era that had come from ragtime, with perky syncopations but without the “bluesiness” of Gershwin. The harmonic language is spicy and at times ironic, and in this regard the third study, which is the most moderately paced, is uncannily prescient of the work of Kurt Weill. The first is perhaps in the manner of the Turkey Trot and the second is similar in rhythm to the Black Bottom, while number four acquires the characteristics of a Rumba but with glimpses of Rachmaninov!

**Darius Milhaud** (1892-1974), born into a Jewish Provençal family, was a brilliantly gifted and prodigiously prolific composer and a member of the group dubbed “les six”. He brimmed with original – and at times iconoclastic – ideas, for instance writing the shortest
opera, *La délivrance de Thésée*, in six scenes lasting seven and a half minutes, and two string quartets playable independently or simultaneously as an octet. He was immediately enthralled by the American jazz that hit Europe after WWI (he apparently first heard Billy Arnold’s American Novelty Jazz Band in London in 1920), and in 1922 he travelled to New York, immersing himself in the authentic jazz played by African Americans in the clubs of Harlem, which “moved me so much I could not detach myself from it”. He saw its primitive rawness as a potent element to be used in his creative reaction against overblown romanticism in music, and he soon took advantage of a commission from Ballets Suédois (founded in Paris in 1920), for a “ballet nègre” based on creation myths from the Congo region of Africa, to explore this new field. The bizarre storyline was provided by the Swiss-French surrealist writer Blaise Cendrars.

For *La création du monde* Milhaud borrowed the line-up of eighteen soloists used in the 1922 Broadway show *Liza* by the black American composer Maceo Pinkard: two flutes (one doubling piccolo), oboe, two clarinets, bassoon, alto saxophone, horn, two trumpets, trombone, two violins, ’cello, double bass, piano, timpani and percussion. The present version for four hands at one piano [6], described as “partition complète réduite par l’auteur”, is predictably extremely complex. Reactions to the première of the ballet in October 1923 were divided – enthusiasm mixed with the shock of the new and critical dismissal as a frivolity.

Below, in italics, is a synopsis of the ballet taken from Cendrars’ scenario; I have followed each section (there are no breaks) with a short commentary:

*The curtain slowly rises to reveal a dark stage, in the middle of which is a heap of tangled bodies representing pre-creation chaos.* The opening may not be as startling as Haydn’s representation of chaos in his oratorio *The Creation*, but in a way it was as shocking for its time: a meandering, melancholic, almost Bach-like aria in both the minor and the major
mode simultaneously, sung by the un-Bach-like saxophone in the original version. The three masters of creation, the gods Nzamé, Mébère and Nkwa, move slowly around, holding counsel and making magic incantations. This jazz fugue (an idiom fairly familiar to us now) may well be the first ever written.

5’28”: The central mass convulses – a tree pushes up and grows little by little until one of its seeds falls to the ground and becomes a new tree; this in turn sprouts up and when one of its leaves falls to earth it expands, inflates, vibrates and begins to walk – it has become an animal. Milhaud here cleverly combines the opening aria with a slowed-down statement of the jazz fugue’s subject [6’01”]. The gloom gradually lifts as, one by one, new animals are created and starkly illuminated by spotlights: an elephant suspended in mid air, a slow-moving tortoise, a clumsy crab, monkeys gliding from the ceiling.

8’29”: Each creature/dancer springs from the centre, evolves separately and joins a circle that slowly assumes motion around the three deities and then opens to reveal them as they make new incantations. As the lights flash the shapeless mass seethes, and an enormous leg appears, as well as a hairy head, shuddering backs, outstretched arms. Gallic wit, syncopation, acerbic bitonality and jazz phrases mingle in this energetic dance. All at once, two upper bodies surface. Man and woman have been created; they recognise each other and stand face to face. Again Milhaud combines previous themes.

10’17”: The pair execute a dance of desire and then couple, as the remaining formless beings join the circle and lead it to a frenzy: these are the N’Guils, male and female sorcerers. A slow yearning episode bisects two statements of the courtship dance, the second one frenetic.

13’56”: As the couple embrace, the circle calms down and disperses into small groups. The two are left alone in a kiss that bears them like a wave. It is spring. Genuinely affecting reminiscences of earlier material, now in the major mode, lead to a calm final cadence featuring a mischievous hanging major seventh.
It is clear from this synopsis that staging the ballet must present well-nigh insuperable practical problems, and the work is now usually encountered – without choreography – in the concert hall, where it has graduated from bewildering novelty to seminal work and popular favourite. The eminent American jazz pianist Dave Brubeck, who studied with Milhaud in California and named a son Darius, declared, “Milhaud’s Création du monde was the first and remains the best jazz piece from a classical European composer.”

The craze for American dance music reached Central Europe a little later than Western Europe, and so the next two items slightly postdate the others in this programme.

**Alexander Moyzes** (1906-1984), the son of Slovak composer, organist and educator Mikuláš Moyzes, studied composition, conducting and organ at the Prague Conservatory, graduating from Dvořák pupil Vítězslav Novák’s masterclass. He is widely regarded as the founder of the Slovak school of composition, not only because of his synthesis of indigenous folk idioms with mainstream European compositional practices but also because of his great influence on younger generations: he taught composition for over forty years in the principal musical educative institutions of the capital, Bratislava, and was finally appointed Rector of its Music Academy. He was the recipient of several high honours, and a concert hall in the city is now named after him. No fewer than twelve symphonies form the core of his large and diverse body of works.

Moyzes wrote the piquant and virtuosic *Jazz Sonata* for two pianos in 1932 for Rudolf and Silvia Macudzinski. After a rousing opening that is marked, provocatively, *più forte*, i.e. louder (than what?), the first movement [7] appears to settle down to a Slow Foxtrot but soon becomes animated. The motifs are thrown back and forth between the two players in an exuberant mêlée of flying scales and tumbling chords, the brake being unexpectedly applied in the final two bars. The second movement [8] is a sentimental slow waltz, reinforcing the impression that the use of the term “jazz” in relation to this sonata has more to do with the palais de danse than with Harlem clubs, which should cause no surprise.
The sweetly expressive mood is carried forward into the introduction to the finale [9], which in turn leads to the main body of the movement, a lively Foxtrot. The melody of the introduction gradually insinuates itself – as does material from the first movement – in a bringing-together of themes, and the sonata ends with a forceful reference to the close of the first movement.

Mátyás Seiber (1905-1960) was born in Budapest and studied with Zoltán Kodály, who championed him as a composer and with whom he collaborated in collecting folk songs. In his early twenties he was appointed head of the world’s first department of jazz studies – at Dr. Hoch’s Konservatorium in Frankfurt am Main, whose jazz band he conducted on German radio, but, being Jewish, he was ousted in 1933 when the Nazis came to power. Arriving in England in 1935 he remained, becoming a highly respected teacher there, as did Hill, Milhaud and Moyzes elsewhere. His work traverses an amazing variety of styles, ranging from the folk-inspired to serialism, through film music, opera and operetta, a comic spoof for the Hoffnung Interplanetary Music Festival, popular song (he was awarded an Ivor Novello Prize for his hit “By the Fountains of Rome”), pieces for the jazz musician Johnny Dankworth, and a full-blown, progressive work written in collaboration with Dankworth – the Improvisations for Jazz Band and Symphony Orchestra.

The Easy Dances [10-19], written during his tenure in Frankfurt, demonstrate Seiber’s sense of humour and are a distillation of popular dance forms, with a soulful blues added for good measure. They are so brief that one wishes he might have developed them further, but they remain perfect microcosms. Seiber died in an automobile accident in the Kruger National Park while on a lecture tour of South Africa, and fellow Hungarian György Ligeti dedicated his orchestral work Atmosphères to his memory.

We end the disc with two “standards”. Hoagland (“Hoagy”) Carmichael (1899-1981) was born in Bloomington, Indiana, the son of an itinerant labourer father and a silent-movie pianist mother, with whom he enjoyed playing piano duets. He studied law but by the time he was dismissed from his law firm in his late twenties he had already composed his first
(ultimately) successful melody, “Star Dust” (later known as “Stardust”) in 1927 and music, always his love, now became his career. Subsequent hits included “Georgia on My Mind”, “Lazybones”, “The Nearness of You”, “Heart and Soul” and “In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening”, for which he won an Oscar. His melodic and harmonic writing was individual and sophisticated while retaining popular appeal, and he became feted throughout the world.

“Star Dust” was originally composed as a moderately paced jazz instrumental number, but it really took off two years later when Mitchell Parish added nostalgic lyrics and the song is now usually heard at a leisurely tempo. The present two-piano arrangement by Jacob Louis Merkur (1895-1982) [20] has the original two-word title and sets off the prevailing haunting lyricism by means of an up-tempo section two thirds of the way through. Merkur was a jack of all trades: he graduated from New York’s Juilliard School of Music, played piano in the New York Philharmonic, taught the piano, tuned and repaired pianos, worked as an accompanist, sold mutual funds and directed the entertainment on cruise ships! (Thanks to Betty Jean Walters for this information.) He recorded ragtime and composed original works as well as making several arrangements for piano duo of the music of others.

The year after the melody of “Star Dust” was written, Gershwin came up with one of his most enduring songs, “Embraceable You”. It was intended for a musical called East Is West that never materialised, but in 1930 it found its way into Girl Crazy, which ran for two hundred and seventy-two performances on Broadway. The thirty-two-year-old Gershwin wrote excitedly, “I think the notices, especially of the music, were the best I have ever received.” The lyrics were, as usual, by Gershwin’s brother Ira. This version for piano duet by the maverick Australian pianist-composer Percy Grainger (1882-1961) [21] is an expansion of the touchingly understated “paraphrase” (really little more than a short arrangement) for piano solo by the American composer, conductor and award-winning educator Maurice Cary Whitney (1909-1984).

Notes © Anthony Goldstone 2010
Goldstone and Clemmow

With CDs approaching forty in number and a busy concert schedule stretching back more than a quarter of a century, the British piano duo Goldstone and Clemmow is 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, have 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 have 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 mix famous masterpieces and fascinating rarities, which they frequently unearth themselves, into absorbing and hugely entertaining programmes; their numerous B.B.C. broadcasts have often included first hearings of unjustly neglected works, and their equally enterprising and acclaimed commercial recordings 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 have repeated several times in mammoth seven-concert cycles, probably a world first in their completeness (including works not found in the collected edition) and original recital format. 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, The Netherlands.
With grateful thanks to Francis Hornak

Recorded in St. John the Baptist Church, Alkborough, North Lincs., England, in 2010
Piano technician: Benjamin E. Nolan (except tracks 7-9: 1996, Philip Kennedy)
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