Talent and Technique: George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" and John Paul II's Mayday 1984 Address to New York Gay and Lesbian Socialists' League at Cooper Union's Great Hall (Transcribed into Verse from Unauthorized French and Italian Versions of the Official Soviet Translation of the Polish Original by Norman MacAfee) for Tenor Solo, Chorus (SATB), and Eight Players

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Maisel, Arthur, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1989
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GEORGE GERSHWIN'S "RHAPSODY IN BLUE"

and

JOHN PAUL II'S MAYDAY 1984 ADDRESS
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(TRANSCRIBED INTO VERSE FROM UNAUTHORIZED FRENCH
AND ITALIAN VERSIONS OF THE OFFICIAL SOVIET TRANSLATION
OF THE POLISH ORIGINAL BY NORMAN MACAFEE)
FOR TENOR SOLO, CHORUS (SATB), AND EIGHT PLAYERS

by

ARTHUR MAISEL

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1989
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

1/31/89
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Professor Barry S. Brook
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Professor Steve Larson
Professor Carl Schachter
Professor Sherman Van Solkema

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York
Abstract

TALENT AND TECHNIQUE: GEORGE GERSHWIN'S RHAPSODY IN BLUE

and

JOHN PAUL II'S MAYDAY 1984 ADDRESS

by

Arthur Maisel

Adviser: Professor Hugo Weisgall

The dissertation consists of two parts, an analytical essay and a composition.

The essay starts from the fact that the musical worth of the Rhapsody in Blue has often been questioned, despite its having been a fixture of the repertoire since its premiere. A close (Schenkerian) analysis shows the flaws of the piece in detail. It also reveals considerable structural coherence, however, comprising very sophisticated treatment of motives in the foreground and middleground, and, in the background, the unfolding of a tritone as the boundary of a tonic that is both B-flat major-minor and a whole-tone collection. Since Gershwin was mostly untrained at the time and the Rhapsody was his first large work, the question arises as to how he was able to achieve such sophistication. The answer proposed is that through improvisation he was able to tap his great talent, though lacking the technique to write a completely convincing work. The essay concludes with a brief consideration of Schenker's concept of talent as it relates to our ability to comprehend music in general, particularly in light of recent thought about cognition.

In form, the composition falls somewhere between a cantata and a monodrama (overlaid with elements of the Mass) for solo tenor and chorus (SATB). It is scored for flute (piccolo, alto), B-flat clarinet (E-flat soprano, bass), E-flat alto saxophone, percussion (one player), celesta, piano, electric piano, and organ (two keyboard players), violin (viola), and cello.
Preface

Why would anyone devote an intensely analytical theoretical dissertation to George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue?* Surely it is not worth the sustained effort involved. Admittedly, it is a classic of a kind—but a dissertation on it must be of that unfortunate (and all too prevalent) class that can be described as “trying to make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear.”

I do see the point and I do not entirely disagree. But however much it tends to sound like the sort of pastiche we associate with the “overtures” to Broadway shows, it seems as if Gershwin himself wanted to write a piece that met Classical standards. Maybe we should take his intentions seriously, rather than prejudging the results of a close study of the music.

Having made a close study of the music, my reasons for this presentation of the results are of two kinds, personal and professional. The professional reasons will, I hope, become clear in the course of the dissertation—though perhaps I should summarize them here.

It seems to me that Heinrich Schenker’s theories of tonal music—while widely influential (in fact, probably constituting the “paradigm” of current tonal theory)—have not been deeply understood. It is always easier to adopt the superficial aspects of any system than to grasp its profoundest ideas. The reception of Freud’s theories is a prime example of this tendency: It has now proceeded from superficial and uncritical acceptance to rejection often based on an equally superficial understanding. Lest this happen to Schenker
as well, we owe it to the music we love and want to understand to gain a comprehensive understanding of the ideas before we add to or subtract from them.

The *Rhapsody in Blue* provides us with an interesting “test case” for Schenker’s ideas, because it is the work of a very talented, but largely *untrained* composer. Does a Schenkerian analysis correspond to what we already feel about the piece, confirming its status both as a minor masterpiece and a work with serious flaws? Does it confirm these general reactions in detail? Further, does such an analysis help to explain how such a piece could have been created in the first place by such a composer? Finally, does the analysis suggest more universal truths about musical creation and musical apprehension?

I believe that the analysis not only meets the first condition of corresponding to what we already feel, while illuminating both the successes and failures in the musical workings of the piece, but it also provides the basis for addressing the more general concerns mentioned.

One key to tonal music that Schenker dwelt on, but that is often neglected nowadays, is the fundamental importance of improvisation in the Classical tradition. Here is a link with Gershwin’s compositional practice that can explain some of the impressive compositional control, otherwise very difficult to account for, shown in the piece. Moreover, if mastery of improvisation is a key factor in Gershwin’s success, we are led to consider whether intuition might play a greater role both in the creation and apprehension of music than it is fashionable to acknowledge, just as Schenker’s ideas imply.

My personal reasons for so protracted a study of this piece are simpler to describe: It is one of those pieces that got me interested in music at an early age—you might say that I am repaying a debt.

In both the personal and professional realms, therefore, it boils down to my owing
something to the music.

I also owe a lot to some people: my adviser, Hugo Weisgall, and the other members of the defense committee, H. Wiley Hitchcock, Steve Larson, Carl Schachter, Sherman Van Solkema, and Henry Weinberg; my teachers in Schenkerian analysis, David Loeb, the late Ernst Oster, the late Felix Salzer, and Carl Schachter; and (because, despite my strong interest in theory, I persist in thinking of myself as primarily a composer) my composition teachers, Peter Pindar Stearns, Henry Weinberg, and Hugo Weisgall. My friend and colleague, Frank Samarotto, helped at various stages, not the least of which was his assistance in the final stages of processing the words.

When what seems to be a cliche is really the truth, we can at least hope that it will be seen as the truth and not a cliche: Most of all, I owe a lot (and it has been quite a year—what with this, and moving, and Sam) to my wife, Jane.

Arthur Maisel

December 1988
# Table of Contents

Preface ................................................................. v

Part I. Talent and Technique: George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*

Introduction ......................................................... 1

Form ................................................................. 3

Harmonic Language ............................................... 10

The Core of the Piece: Bars 1-29 ............................. 11

The Analysis .......................................................... 16

Bars 30-137 ............................................................ 16

Bars 138-302 .......................................................... 33

Bars 303-509 .......................................................... 44

Talent and Technique ............................................. 71

Gershwin’s Technique: Improvisation .................... 76

Talent ................................................................. 86

Appendix ............................................................. 94

Bibliography ......................................................... 97

Part II. John Paul II’s Mayday 1984 Address ............ 100
Introduction

The *Rhapsody* is not a composition at all...[even though] the themes, or tunes, or whatever you want to call them ... are terrific—inspired, God-given.

—Leonard Bernstein

Many musicians do not consider George Gershwin a serious composer. But they should understand that, serious or not he is a composer, that is, a man who lives in music and expresses everything, serious or not, sound or superficial, by means of music, because it is his native language.

—Arnold Schoenberg

Sometimes what comes out of that piano frightens me.

—George Gershwin

The year 1984 saw the 60th anniversary of the premiere of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, a piece that continues to occupy a special place in the repertoire: It is almost universally admired, and yet at the same time condescended to, often even by its
professed admirers. The Bernstein quotation above is an example of this ambivalence.\footnote{Bernstein, “A Nice Gershwin Tune”; the Schoenberg quotation comes from “George Gershwin” in \textit{Style and Idea} (first published in Armitage); for the Gershwin quotation, see footnote 33 below.}

Virgil Thompson takes the slightly different tack of praising Gershwin for his success in writing a rhapsody, but then pointing out how easy it is to write one.\footnote{In Armitage.} The general impression seems to be that early in his career Gershwin was a talented but not very skilled composer. (Recall that he was only twenty-five when he wrote the \textit{Rhapsody} and almost completely untrained as a composer in any formal sense.\footnote{See Schwartz, \textit{Life}, 52-56.} Moreover, the piece was written in a matter of three or four weeks, when—at least according to legend—Gershwin read in the newspaper at the beginning of January 1924 that he was writing a piece for a concert on February 12.) Today, the piece is one of the staples of the “light classic” genre—much as certain movements of Haydn’s symphonies once were.

I do not mean to imply that Haydn and Gershwin are equals, but the comparison is not an idle one: In both cases true “gems,” though not neglected, were undervalued by being programed and played automatically. This came of their having fallen into that particular niche of the repertoire. At any rate, it was probably inevitable that Haydn’s symphonies would be “rediscovered” because of their high value; in the case of something like the \textit{Rhapsody in Blue} rediscovery is perhaps less than inevitable. And yet such pieces
do not enter the repertoire for no reason.

This analysis will not contradict the general impression, but the most fundamental justification for any analysis is that it can reveal artistic subtleties normally not present (at least consciously) to the listener. My analysis will show that Gershwin’s first large piece works not only in its details, but, surprisingly enough, as a unified whole if one with a rather unusual structure.

My analysis will be Schenkerian; I hope even those who feel they are against or above or beyond Schenker will find a close examination of the work (a desideratum whatever the analytic methodology employed) worthwhile.4

Form

That the *Rhapsody in Blue* is a highly sectionalized series of themes—as befits the genre of rhapsody—has often been remarked. What has not been noted in print (probably

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4 In a recent article, Harold Bloom writes: “I hear and read continually the complaint that criticism is now too much concerned with itself, and too little devoted to the clarification of work more primary than itself. I am moved to the countercomplaint that criticism is still too little concerned with itself, because it manifests too much anxiety over method. The quest of contemporary criticism is for method, and the quest is vain. *There is no method other than yourself.* All those who seek for a method that is not themselves will find not a method, but someone else, whom they will ape and involuntarily mock.” In the concluding section of this paper we will see that some of Schenker's ideas have profound implications that usually escape those who get caught up in methodological wrangles, both pro and con.
because it is so obvious) is that some of the themes and figures recur in various keys throughout the piece, whereas others occur once in but a single key. I believe this distinction, important in itself, may have further ramifications: The themes that recur can be said to be the source of the structure. “Source” here means the origin of details peculiar to the structure of the *Rhapsody in Blue*, but can also be understood in the sense that the recurrence of these themes signals significant structural events. In contrast, themes that occur once can be viewed as being at the service of the structure: that is, they appear for a local structural purpose; once that purpose is served, they disappear. In the Table of Themes and Figures (Example 1) I have followed this distinction by numbering

**Example 1: Table of Themes and Figures**

**Theme 1**

equals both: and:

"pentatonic interpretation"

**Theme 2**
Example 1 (continued)

C major theme

G major theme

E major theme

"Insertions" figure

from:

see also: bars 24ff., 41ff., 55ff., 75ff., 123ff., 387ff., and 508

Structural applied dominants figures
### Example 1 (continued)

#### Formal Analysis

* = solo piano

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bars:</th>
<th>Key:</th>
<th>Theme 1 sequence (cf. 347-356)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>(Theme 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>(Eb)</td>
<td>Theme 1 insertion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-14</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>C major theme (transition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>II V of Gb</td>
<td>Extension of Theme 1 and cadenza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-20</td>
<td>Gb</td>
<td>C major theme (transition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-24</td>
<td>II V of A</td>
<td>C major theme (transition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-29</td>
<td>V of A</td>
<td>C major theme (transition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-37</td>
<td></td>
<td>C major theme (transition)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bars:</th>
<th>Key:</th>
<th>Theme 1 sequence (cf. 347-356)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38-47</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(Theme 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48-71</td>
<td>VI (III) V of A</td>
<td>Extension of Theme 1 and cadenza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72-80</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C major theme (transition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-90</td>
<td>→V of C</td>
<td>C major theme (transition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91-105</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C major theme (transition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105-114</td>
<td></td>
<td>C major theme (transition)</td>
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<tr>
<td>115-127</td>
<td></td>
<td>C major theme (transition)</td>
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<td>127-137</td>
<td></td>
<td>C major theme (transition)</td>
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<th>Key:</th>
<th>Theme 1 sequence (cf. 347-356)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>138-172</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>(transition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172-180</td>
<td>G (A)</td>
<td>Theme 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181-222</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Theme 1 insertion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>223-225</td>
<td>II V of C</td>
<td>&quot;development&quot; of Theme 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>226-227</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>G major theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>228-241</td>
<td>→V of G</td>
<td>G major theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>242-255</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>G major theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>256-296</td>
<td></td>
<td>G major theme</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<th>Bars:</th>
<th>Key:</th>
<th>Theme 1 sequence (cf. 347-356)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>297-302</td>
<td>→V of E</td>
<td>E major theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>303-346</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E major theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>347-382</td>
<td>E5-6</td>
<td>E major theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>383-424</td>
<td>V/II of E</td>
<td>Cadenza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>425-486</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E major theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>487-504</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>E major theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>505-508</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>E major theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>508-509</td>
<td></td>
<td>E major theme</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bars:</th>
<th>Key:</th>
<th>Theme 1 sequence (cf. 347-356)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cadenza</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E major theme</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cadenza</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(E major theme referred to in orchestra)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E major theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E major theme</td>
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</table>

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the themes that recur but naming the one-time themes by their keys.5

A seeming contradiction to this distinction is perhaps the “E major Theme,” which occurs only once but has a pivotal structural role. But, as we shall see, this theme has strong connections with Theme 1.

Over the years the piece has been arranged for ensembles of different size. The first arrangement, performed at the premiere, was for a 1920s “jazz” band and solo piano. But Gershwin himself wrote only a two-piano score; the part for second piano was orchestrated by Ferde Grofé.6 The published edition closest to the original differs from the manuscript in many trivial and several significant respects.7

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5 One aspect of the Rhapsody that is easily overlooked is that, contrary to expectation, Gershwin, who had written almost nothing but songs and vocal music previously, was able to write characteristically instrumental melodies. These melodies are unlike the songs in that they have a breadth desirable in a large-scale composition. Theme 1, for example, is not built up from the repetition of short-breathed motives as a song like “The Man I Love” is.

6 Schwartz, Life, 78ff. The band (with doublings indicated in parentheses) consisted of B♭ clarinet (bass clarinet, oboe, Eb soprano and Eb alto saxophones), Eb alto saxophone (B♭ soprano and Eb baritone saxophones), B♭ tenor saxophone (B♭ soprano saxophone), 2 horns in F, 2 trumpets in B♭, 2 trombones, tuba (string double bass), percussion, timpani, banjo, celesta, piano, and 4 first and 4 second violins.

Gershwin’s abilities as an orchestrator were called into question throughout his career.

7 The manuscript score is in pencil and consists of 56 pages. The parts (“Jazz Band” and “Piano Solo”) are written in the usual two-piano format seen in reductions of piano concertos. Gershwin was only intermittently careful in supplying dynamics and other indications. Many of those he did provide are altered in the published version; where there are serious musical ramifications to the alterations, I will comment. There are also occasional indications of instrumentation in the jazz band part—but it is unclear whether Gershwin or Grofé made them. The original version can be seen on microfilm in the
The overall scheme of the piece involves the unfolding of a tritone from the B♭ major of the opening through the G major of the extended piano solo (bars 138ff.) to the “E major theme” (bars 303ff.). The tritone is then rationalized as a motion to a neighbor of the main embellishing chord of the background progression (IV♭7, bars 484ff.) which moves in turn to I6—presenting the 3 of the upperline descent in the bass—and then, V-I. The Urlinie is buried for most of the piece, more implicit than explicit, while the top voice presents a superposed inner voice, b♭-a♭-g-f (see Examples 2a and 2b).
Example 2

a. 

Also compare inner voice with:

b. NB: superposed inner voice

as seen in bars 305ff.
Harmonic Language

Although it is conservative (for 1924), the *Rhapsody in Blue* has harmonic aspects which are very much of the 20th century—particularly in the use of collections of tones that remain stable throughout, though their meanings are changed by context. The most striking example of this comes in the projection of the harmonic structure of the entire piece, which, as was mentioned, involves a bass motion through a tritone from B\(\flat\) to E. Both of these notes support the dyad \(d-a\flat/g\#\), that is, third and seventh of B\(\flat\), seventh and third of E. The connections are brought out by motives centered around the dyadic notes:

Theme 1 introduces two important motives that serve to unify the piece, and help make long-range connections perceptible, one centered on \(d\) (\(e\flat\-d\-d\flat\)) and one centered on \(a\flat\) (\(a\flat\-g\#\-a\flat\)).

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10 Though this technique was in use well before this century (see my article on *The Fourth of July*, 25-27n.).

11 The former motive is introduced as \(f\-d\flat\-d\flat\), but the first note can be detached for three reasons. First, it figures more importantly in the initial motive \(b\flat\-a\flat\-g\#\-f\). Second, \(f\-d\flat\-d\flat\) is “answered” immediately by \(e\flat\-d\#\-f\), suggesting that a three- rather than a four-note motive is involved. Third, as will become apparent, it is in its three-note form that the motive recurs throughout the piece. Strictly speaking, in Schenkerian terms, a motive ought to unfold *from* a member of the prevailing harmony *to* a member of that
Of the three possible dyadic relationships between the three notes of the \( e^p - d - c^p \) motive, the relationships of the dyads \( e^p - d \) and \( d - c^p / d^p \) are most commonly expressed melodically, while \( e^p - d / c^p \) is expressed both melodically and harmonically. It seems that the choices were forced on Gershwin by his limitations—because in working with the details his ear was quite conventional. For example, \( d^p - c \) is more likely to be a melodic entity in A major (as part of a tonicization of V), whereas in G, as \( E - c^p \), it can be used harmonically (as an augmented 6th applied to V). I will have more to say about the \( a^p - e^p - a^p \) motive in the discussion of the E major theme (bars 303ff.) below.

**The Core of the Piece: Bars 1-29**

I will later make the case that the act of improvisation is what allowed Gershwin to compose a unified work. Improvisatory works tend to grow out of an initial idea, and in the *Rhapsody* the first three pages of the manuscript (bars 1-29) constitute this “inspired” core of the piece. They consist of three statements of a theme alternating with the introduction of other material. A superficial impression might almost be one of disparate bits of music just strung together. I think there is a deeper unity to be found, however. The

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harmony; what I am calling a motive is submotivic diminution. Unfortunately, there is no other term to refer to diminution that is consistent throughout a piece besides “motive.”
manuscript shows evidence of being interrupted at the end of these measures: There is the (presumably mnemonic) word “gliss.” written in the margin at the bottom of page three. (Was Gershwin finished for the day and reminding himself of how to pick up the thread?) This glissando eventually was to come in bar 37 after what appears to be an interpolated cadenza of two pages. Gershwin also thought of bringing the jazz band back for the fourth statement of the same theme (in A major) but this was also postponed (to bars 72ff.). In addition, the last two left-hand chords of manuscript page 3 (bars 28-29) are indicated by a bass note (E) and the word “chords.”

Compared with such evidence of hesitation, the first three pages show only quick and, in a word, inspired composition.

The first 29 measures can also be shown to be a unit from internal evidence. First, note that the three statements of Theme 1 are in B♭ and A♭ and G♭ major—the first three notes of the theme itself. In other words, the melody suggests its own transpositions. But because the modulations descend through the circle of fifths, the harmony moves to E, outlining a tritone, instead of continuing to F as the melody does. In this way, the tritone

\[12\] The a♭ in a B♭ major context might be viewed as motivating the inception of the descent through the circle of fifths. I do not find this a completely satisfactory explanation of this passage, however, because the a♭ is not heard here as the seventh of an applied dominant chord so much as the seventh step of the parallel minor mode in mixture with the major tonality of B♭. Schwartz (Life, page 296, note 32), on the other hand, relates the succession of key changes to Gershwin’s habit of frequent modulations when improvising at the piano.
comes to serve as the structural agenda of the piece as a whole.

Second, notice the pitch consistency of the embellishing chords of bars 3, 17, and 22. All three include the dyad $e\flat-d\flat$ (from the motive surrounding the note $d$, $e\flat-d-d\flat$) despite the changes of key (see Example 3). The pitch consistency indicates the structural unity of the passage; i.e., that the modulations are only surface phenomena, representing a larger progression within $B\flat$ major-minor, $I-B\flat-VII-B\flat-VI$. (The dyad $e\flat-d\flat$ also figures in Theme 2 [see Example 1] both when first heard in bars 1ff. and last heard in bars 489ff. The latter occurrence of Theme 2 represents a large-scale *embellishing* chord in the background progression of the piece, as shown in Example 2. The presence of a clear reference to a theme to be used later does not mean that the first 29 bars are not a unit.
Gershwin had probably tried out different themes before beginning to write the piece down. Nor does it mean that the piece was not improvised: he was undoubtedly aware of certain melodic ideas he wanted to use ahead of improvising the piece as a whole. The linkage of bars 11ff. and 489ff. both by the theme and its function, however, was probably the product of improvisation.

Finally, compare a sketch of the voice leading of bars 2-26 with bars 28-29 (Example 4). These latter measures clearly represent a summary of the voice leading up this point, thus bracketing the first section. Note that the motion of $b^2$-$b^2$ is only implied by the suspension of $c^\sharp$ in bar 24 (see Example 4). But the implication of the resolution of 9-8 is supported by the passage at bars 19-20 where the suspension is literally resolved in the jazz band part. This is not, by the way, an editorial addition as one might suspect, but present in the original manuscript in Gershwin's hand. (The motion of $b^2$-$b^2$ will occur prominently in the G major passage, in bars 183, 187, etc.—i.e., at the dividing point of the tritone descent, see Example 2.)

While much is sometimes made of the various cuts with which the Rhapsody is performed, it is noteworthy that (as far as I know) no one ever cuts the first 30 measures or leaves out the E major section (bars 303ff.)—the most salient sections from the

13See Bernstein.
structural point of view. The most commonly made cuts, following the piano solo version, are in structurally redundant parts of the tritone progression in the bass, B♭-E—particularly within the section at the dividing point, G (see the Formal Analysis in Example 1, and the background graph, Example 2).

For the remainder of the analysis I will proceed more or less straight through the piece. There are other details of the first 29 measures worth mentioning but I prefer to
discuss them in connection with later events to which they relate.

The Analysis

Bars 30-137

The first phrase of the short cadenza on an E dominant chord beginning in bar 30 shows a line, e\textsuperscript{2} -f\textsuperscript{2} -g\textsuperscript{2}. This motive has been heard before in bars 5, 7, and 9 as G-A\textsubscript{b}-B\textsubscript{b}, C-D\textsubscript{b}-E\textsubscript{b} and f-g\textsuperscript{b}-a\textsuperscript{b} respectively—and its source lies further back, in bar 3 with what seems to be an “answer” to the important motive e\textsuperscript{b2} -d\textsuperscript{2} -c\textsuperscript{2}, that is, e\textsuperscript{b2} -e\textsuperscript{2} -f\textsuperscript{2}. One might say the chromatic progression is a “mistake” of which the diatonic progressions are attempted “corrections.”

The second phrase of the cadenza on the E dominant chord (bars 33-37) is based on the descent b\textsuperscript{2} -a\textsuperscript{b2} -g\textsuperscript{b2} -f\textsuperscript{2} (bars 2-3), which becomes e\textsuperscript{2} -d\textsuperscript{2} -c\textsuperscript{2} -b\textsuperscript{1} in bars 33-34. The frequent use of g and f throughout the passage—even in ascent (bars 30-32)—creates the sort of cross-relation so much a part of the sound of the piece, and first heard in bar 2.

The next section of the piece, beginning in bar 38, repeats the Theme 1 in A
For the first time the theme is repeated in an antecedent-consequent phrase structure, and is extended and repeated again (in C minor) making a section with a phrase structure $A^1A^2BA^3$. Between the statements of the theme in $A^1$ and $A^2$ are inserted passages similar to those at the beginning (compare bars 41-42 and 46-47 with bars 19-20 and 24-29). What is especially noteworthy is the long-range connection that Gershwin draws between this section and the opening through several means: the inserted material derives ultimately from the opening trill in the clarinet (f-g). Gershwin assigns the motive to the clarinet again in the original manuscript, and in the same register (e-f$^\#$). In this regard it is also interesting that the solo piano enters for the first time, in bar 19, in this same register—which entrance Gershwin notated in the manuscript with the right hand part in the bass staff, not—as in the published edition—changing the clef on the upper staff. His notation graphically (if probably unconsciously) represents the physical sensation of playing e below middle c with the right hand—very similar to playing f below middle c (the first note of the piece) with the right hand, and very different from playing the e with the

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14 As is shown in the background graph, Example 2, the A in the bass is a passing tone between B$^\flat$ and G. The use of A major rather than F as the governing harmony (what one would expect in B$^\flat$) in fact results from the contrapuntal spinning out of the conventional progression I-V6-VI. How this occurs will be examined after some of the more recondite features of the foreground have been clarified. Any reader who is interested in gaining a sense of the background before proceeding should consult Example 10.

15 It was probably Ferde Grofé who thought of using the bass clarinet an octave lower, which makes the passage much more effective, yet maintains via color some connection with the opening.
left hand.

Also worth noting is the presence of the \(\text{e}_b\text{-d}\text{-d}'\) motive (here spelled \(\text{d}^\#\text{-d}'\text{-c}^\#\text{-c}^\#\)) in phrases \(A_1\) and \(A_2\), bars 38-39 and 43-44 despite the change of key to A (it is quite striking because the \(\text{d}^\#\) clashes with the harmony). Example 5 shows this and several other instances of the use of this motive. The motive in bars 38-39 occurs in the same register as bar 3 but has also been prepared in the background (also in the same register) by the \(\text{d}^\#\) in bars 24-25 and the \(\text{d}'\) in bars 26-27—after which Gershwin quits this register until the \(\text{c}^\#\) in bar 38. The cadenza—again, perhaps interpolated later—passes through the \(\text{d}\), but since it prolongs an E dominant 7th chord, there is no difficulty hearing the retention of the \(\text{d}\); besides, the cadenza focuses primarily on the lower register from which it bubbles up and to which it subsides. (I do not hear any linear connection between the \(\text{d}\) of bars 26-27 and the \(\text{e}, \text{f}, \text{g}\) of bars 30-32, which are reaching up toward the eventual \(\text{a}\) of bar 38.)

The contrasting \(B\) phrase, in F major, exemplifies the improvisatory character of the piece: The melodic contour is suggested by the piano filigree in bars 41-42 and 46-47 and will in turn suggest its own successor when it recurs in bars 81-84 (see below). Also, note the ubiquitous motive, here spelled \(\text{e}_b\text{-d}\text{-d}'\) in the bass, and the \(\text{e}^\#\text{-f}^\#\) (from bars 3-4) in bar 48.

The harmonic meaning of the succeeding measures (bars 55ff.) is difficult to follow
at first, at least in detail. Evidently, a prolongation of A is occurring, because Theme 1 returns once again in A major (in the band) at bar 72 after a practically literal repetition of the cadenza on the dominant, E. Working back from the E, we find that it is preceded by a passage (bars 61-64) which once again outlines the tritone B♭-E—this time all in dominant 7th chords with raised 11ths, maximizing the similarity between the B♭ and E chords. In addition, this time the F chord is included as a passing chord within the unfolding, as if to make clear both the derivation of the passage from the opening theme (and by implication, the derivation of bars 1-29 from the same thing), and, moreover, the connection of E to F (see Example 9 below; when this passage recurs near the end it will serve to link E with E♭.) We can thus assume that the passage in question moves from A somehow to B♭ in the bass, and thence via the tritone unfolding to E, and so once again to A.

The intervening bass tones are clear at first: F (bars 48-51) and then C (bars 52-55). The passage beginning in bar 55 starts with C in the bass and has moved to C♯ by the end of the phrase (see Example 6 for the voice leading); the C♯ skips as an applied V to F♯, from which the bass moves to B♭. (Note the intriguing symmetry of the bass, shown in Example 7: This feature, though not fully significant of the true nature of the passage, does perhaps help the ear connect A with B♭.)

What all this amounts to will be clarified by an examination of the upper line of bars
Example 6

Example 7

38-65. The uppermost line, from the beginning, has shown b♭² (bars 2-23) divided into b² and g♯² (bars 24-29); having reached a² in bar 38 it shows an enlarged (transposed) secondary interpretation of the Theme 1, that is to say, not as a descending minor scale, but
Example 8

as a pentatonic descent, B♭-A-♭-f. In Example 8 the a² of bars 38ff. is implicitly retained in the F major phrase, but in bar 51 moves chromatically to g in a lower register; g² is reached—notice how markedly—in bar 53, and is retained through the arrival of C♯ (!) in the bass (bar 57), making the latter sound like a neighbor of C. Then the upper voice moves pentatonically to e¹ (coinciding with F♯ in the bass) which is prolonged by a motion up in minor thirds to e² in bar 61 (with the arrival B♭ in the bass). Note that g² and e² have been “postponed” by arrivals in other registers, and in effect “cap” their respective progressions. This recalls a², which (being modeled after B♭² in bar 2) also caps a large upward gesture in bar 38. The “pentatonic interpretation” beginning as a feature of the
background (though quite clear registraly) will become a prominent foreground feature. 
(See Example 9 for a complete graphic analysis of the passage.)

That the background sources of the progressions in bars 38-65ff. involve the 
unfoldings, A-F and B♭-E, and a neighbor motion, C-D♭/C♯, suggests F major-minor—or 
V of B♭ major-minor, the tonic of the piece as a whole. This implies a closer connection 
between A major and B♭ than could be accommodated by a theory measuring relatedness 
solely via the circle of fifths: Here A can be understood as VII♯ of B♭, or the upper third of 

Example 9
Example 9 (continued)

becomes

inner voice:
ed-D#-g-a(D#)

NB: embellishing harmony includes
dyad Eb-C#, cf. Example 3

(=A:V?)
V in that key. But I find a contrapuntal explanation more plausible: The A triad is the result of several coincidental aspects of voice leading (see Example 10), given the importance of the lower neighbors of d and f, that is, c♯(d♭) and e respectively. The foreground F major shown in Example 10 is thus a vestige of the background, rather than a background event as such. (Compare the prominence sometimes given in the second themes of Classical sonata-allegro movements to IV of V, i.e., I, which amounts to a sort of irony: allowing the tonic to be seen in radically altered circumstances.) Only the bass note A belongs to the background, as Example 10 shows. But then the V6 chord in I-V6-VI is really only a second-species solution, 5-6-5, to first-species parallel fifths. The similarity between bars 2-138 and 2-29 revealed in Example 10 will be discussed further below (see Examples 12 and 15, and compare Example 4).

Returning to bars 38-65, we find the motion of the upper voice to g2 and e2 has been a temporary motion to an inner voice, for when A returns in the bass at the Tutti of bars 72ff., there is a straightforward recapitulation of the preceding section—with a2 on top again—through bar 87. As intimated above, the pentatonic interpretation of the first theme

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16To cite but one Classical example: the conclusion of the development section of the first movement of Beethoven’s Symphony no. 2 comes on a C♯ major chord. This chord is magically transformed via the common tone, c♯, into the V7 of D major, the tonic of the piece. Gershwin’s use of this harmony, though similar to Beethoven’s in principle, is different in two ways: First, it is much more prolonged—in both senses of the word; second, the VII chord is not the upper third of a V that has structural significance—rather, it functions as a passing chord between I and VI, much as V6 often does, or as ♭VII does in minor keys.
Example 10
(hypothetical source in commonplace progression)

becomes

see Exx. 12 and 16 for greater detail

see Ex. 15 for comparison of voice leading of bars 2-26 and 2-138
emerges into the foreground in bars 75-76. This serves to relate Theme 1 with Theme 2 (which will predominate in the next part of the piece) since Theme 2 incorporates an exact inversion of the pentatonic interpretation.\footnote{Phrases A₁ and A₂, before 5 + 5, are now 5 + 4. It should also be noted that the bass figure of bar 80 does not appear in the original manuscript. Another interesting variant between the manuscript and published versions is the 6 chord of bar 89. It is a minor chord in the manuscript and a major chord in the published score. (The flat sign before the e in the manuscript is drawn emphatically large and dark.) No matter whose idea the et was—and Gershwin does play et in his 1925 piano roll of the Rhapsody—the et version is worth considering: It has the effect of delaying the “brightening” of the music to coincide with the new section beginning in bar 91. By contrast, the major 6 “telegraphs” the shift of modes, making a smoother but less dramatic impression.}

With the F major phrase (B formally) the preparation of the next section commences: how this works is best shown graphically (see Example 11). Note the gradual diminution of the rhythm as the triadic motive moves from background to foreground. (That the F major phrase occurs over an A pedal tends to confirm the reading of an unfolding, A-F, in the previous occurrence of the material, bars 48-51, see Example 8, above.)

The C major theme in bar 91 (see Table of Themes, Example 1) is the only theme in the entire piece to be heard once and then disappear. In a programmatic way, it seems to breezily poke fun at the preceding section’s minor harmonies and canonic imitation: the light-hearted world of popular music triumphing over the serious world of the concert hall.
But it serves a structural function as well, and that is what determines its uniqueness.

The primary structural function of the passage in question is to summarize once again the upper voice progression (thus far, b\(_4\) - a\(_2\) - g\(_2\) ) while at the same time reinstating the b\(_\flat\) on top. (The motion to g is one to an inner voice with the b\(_\flat\) ultimately moving to an a\(_\flat\)_, spelled as g\(_\#\)_, the 3 in E major. This in turn will require the b\(_\flat\)_ to accommodate by being inflected—thus making G major rather than G minor the dividing point of the tritone descent. This chromatic inflection, which is also a prominent foreground melodic feature of the G major section, especially bars 181ff., is constantly referred to during the C major
theme by the alternation of the dominant sevenths of C and G.) It should be pointed out that the $g^2$ of the background motion to an inner voice from $b^b_3$ does not arrive until bar 138 when G is reached in the bass as well. The $g^2$ of the C major theme is a passing tone between a and $f^\#$, resulting from an additional level of diminution (see Example 12).

The summary alluded to takes place on the foreground and middleground levels simultaneously. In the foreground, the piano figure reiterates $b^b_3$-$a$-$g$ in various registers. Of somewhat greater subtlety is the middleground expression of the same figure. The $b^b$ is expressed in a very unusual way—though paradoxically one based on a most commonplace procedure, namely the use of interrupted antecedent-consequent phrase structure.

Usually the descent to the tonic of a tune is interrupted on the second degree of the
scale in the antecedent phrase, to be completed only with the repetition of the tune in the consequent phrase; in the present instance the goal is not the tonic at all, but the lowered 7th—constantly present in the harmony, but only reached melodically as the final note of the consequent phrase. While it may seem strange to assert the primacy of the b♭ over c when it could just as well be heard as a passing tone between c and a, I favor the b♭ because of the context. After all, not all 7ths are passing tones, even when they appear literally to be so on the surface.18 In this case the b♭ is (in a loose sense) a “suspension” from the very beginning of the piece, even though on a more local level it does indeed seem to be a passing tone—between a and b (not c and a, see Examples 10 and 12).

The next note in the line is a1 (bars 99-102). Notice that it depends from c in much the same way and in the same register as the melodic b♭1, supporting the notion of c as a retained tone rather than one involved in linear motion. A nice touch is the presence of a in three registers—like the b♭ in the piano figure—but in the melody itself because the piano has dropped out.

The arrival on the repeated and accented g2 is finally not merely asserted but achieved in bar 103, and occasions the broadening of the rhythm of the foreground descent to c into triplets. The b♭ is retained in the piano and picked up almost immediately by the

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18For example, see bar 36 of the second movement of Mozart’s Piano Sonata, K. 282, where the b♭2, though more consonant that the a♭2, is plainly an appoggiatura to it, nonetheless. Not quite so obvious, but I think the same, is the c2-b♭2 of bars 154 and 156 of the third movement of K. 280.
jazz band (bar 107). The short cadenza that follow states B♭-A G yet again, now in the bass. Note especially the chord on B♭: Its placement at the beginning of an 8-measure phrase (see reduction, Example 13) tends to support the reading of B♭ as more important than A despite surface parallelisms between A and C. This in turn reinforces the reading of the previous passage. Recall that, in the background, the B♭ continues to govern the bass until G is reached. One might almost want to consider the chord at bar 107 an instance of the background “shining through” into the foreground. How this can happen will be understood by a study of the progress of the “diminutions” in the bass (see Example 14a) and a comparison with a sketch of the middleground (Example 14b). (The chord progression in the latter example does not represent the background, but “reconstructs” a keyboard-harmony-like source for the counterpoint.)

With the arrival on G (bars 111-15) the b♭ seemingly moves decisively to b♭. But the first full statement of Theme 2 follows in C major; this can be viewed as a structural weakness. In Gershwin’s defense, it could be said that Theme 2 is first (and last) heard associated with the subdominant and, since the local tonic is G, C is an appropriate
The move to C cannot be completely exonerated because it is structurally redundant. It does serve to establish the note e on top as preparation for the voice exchange (see Example 10); one cannot help but feel that a more skilled composer would have been more concise.

The rounding of Theme 2 into a popular song form (AABA) occasions another reference to the climactic point of the Theme 1 in bars 3-4, e-f: here e3 (bars 117, 121) and
f\(^3\) (bars 123, 125). The connection is not capricious. As Example 14b shows, the e is in fact connected to the f of the beginning, which is being reasserted here because e is about to continue to e\(_b\) via the voice exchange, and f to move to g (on its way to joining the a\(_b\)/g\(^\#\) of the superposed inner-voice descent, b\(_b\)-a\(_b\)-g-f, see Example 2a).

In any case, after the C is established in the bass with e on top (b\(_b\) is retained in an inner voice—though it again descends in the foreground, b\(_b\)-a-g), an exchange of voices:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
e \leftrightarrow c^\# \\
C \leftrightarrow E^b
\end{array}
\]
yields the German 6th chord (N.B.: still the same characteristic embellishing interval noted earlier in bars 2, 17, and 22). This resolves on the dominant of G, with a \(\frac{6}{4} - \frac{5}{3}\) motion in the upper voices. The little figure in bars 135-36 is a reminiscence of the cadenza in bars 30-37, especially 36 and 37, and serves the same function, i.e., filling in the key-defining tritone, in this case f\(^\#\)-c. It will recur again at the next point of background arrival, on the dominant of E.

**Bars 138-302**

Once G, the dividing point of the tritone descent in the bass, is definitively reached in bar 138, another feature can be discerned. Recall the voice leading of bars 2-29 (summarized in bars 28-29)—two main features were the inflection of b\(_b\) to b\(_\#\) and the
inner-voice activity of the still-covered head tone, d (3), through a motion to its lower
neighbor, c, returning over a chromatic passing c#. This same voice leading structure has
been expanded to encompass bars 2-138! (See Example 15.)

Example 15

It is also just at this point (bar 138) that d (3) does in fact emerge in the highest
register—at first by implication, and then explicitly after the elaborate "boundary play"19
around its lower neighbor, c (see Example 16).

The G major section from bar 138 to bar 298, the longest and, as I will show,
structurally the weakest portion of the work, is where most of the performance cuts
traditionally have been made.

The theme in G major, bars 138ff., is often cut in performance because the
published solo piano version omits bars 138-76—the material being repeated almost

19See Schenker, Free Composition, §260 (pages 103-5).
literally in bars 260-95. (In that version, d emerges as 3 in what corresponds to bar 180 here.) It is evidently related to Theme 1 through the descent of a fourth from the tonic, here g-f-e-d.\textsuperscript{20} The e\textsuperscript{b} is an inflection prepared (in the bass) by the c-Bb-A\textsuperscript{b}-G of the previous section—though in that case the motion was not directly related to Theme 1. The G major

theme seems to be especially related to the pentatonic interpretation (of Theme 1), both in inversion and in its original form. Moreover, it is saturated with motivic references to other themes, as is shown in Example 17.

Example 17 (see Table of Themes and Figures, Ex. 1)

Note that the piano part (which is not in the manuscript [page 14]) in bars 138-41 attempts a descent, d\(^3\)-c\(^3\)-b\(_\#\)\(^3\) (because the head tone has now emerged?)—but this cannot be achieved because of the shift to G major. Example 18 shows that a similar descent is attempted in the middleground of the melody: d-c, d-c-b\(_\#\), bars 138-41, 142-44-46.

The transposition of the theme through minor thirds (G, bars 138ff., B\(_\#\), bars 156f., D\(_b\), bars 148ff., E[=F\(_b\)] bars 168f., G, bars 170ff.), with particular emphasis on the tritone transposition, is of some interest because of its similarity to the background
progression of the piece as a whole.

Example 18

(continued...)
Example 18 (continued)
In passing, I also ought to mention that one (not very important) connection is lost by cutting bars 138-76: The cadenza of bars 170-76 makes the chromatic passage of bars 177-80 seem less unprepared. It also states the boundary play, d-f-d, which will be an important feature in succeeding pages. The chromatic passage runs from d to $f^2$ (bars 177-80), and is subdivided in a suggestive way at $b^\flat (a^\#)\, ^1$, referring to the 6th between d and $b^\flat$ which constitutes the tonal space opened by Theme 1 and the locus of most of the voice leading of the piece. This presumably marks the second definitive arrival on G, where the piano takes over for a while.

An argument for the traditional cuts could thus be made that, by eliminating one of the several seemingly definitive arrivals on G (i.e., the one in bar 138), the cuts tighten the structure considerably. But even with the cuts of bars 138-76 and 226-46 the G major section has several “definitive” arrivals.

The other events of the section are “redundant” as well (from a structural point of view)—consisting of boundary plays around d in the upper voice and G in the bass, as summarized in Example 18. In fact, no true linear motion occurs until very shortly before the E major section begins in bar 303.

Despite its structural weakness (which I am convinced is experienced by listeners in some way and perhaps has unconsciously emboldened performers to make cuts), there are several foreground features of this section that deserve mention. The prominent recollection
of the $d^\#-d^\#-c^\#$ motive in the solo horn (bars 213-14) is especially beautiful.

Also, the whole note $e^\#$ in bar 220 (almost never held long enough in performance) is very important to the sense of the passage: Even-numbered measures are accented at this point in the piece; if the $e^\#$ is held for a full measure, the $g^3$ of the quotation of Theme 1 falls on weak bar 223—note also that the theme appears without the characteristic upbeat of bars 1, 37, etc. making clear its subordination to $d^3$ which falls on the downbeat of strong bar 224. (Although it is not absolutely clear in the manuscript, Gershwin may have considered having the jazz band play what the soloist now plays in bars 223-25—but the band’s entrance on $g$ would have emphasized $g$ rather than $d$).

A section in the manuscript which was cut before publication continues the figuration of bars 214ff. for eight measures after the present bar 220 over the chords $D^4_3-C^4_3-D^4_3$, making one more reference to the motion to the lower neighbor of the head tone.

With the wonderful dive that ends the cadenza of bars 247-55, the $d$ returns to the inner voice and the $g$ is again established on top. The $g$ is embellished with chromatic neighbors, $g^\#_1$ (bar 261) and $f^\#_1$ (bar 262) as if to signal its reinstatement (this embellishment having been prepared by the Phrygian harmonies of the preceding section, see bars 247ff., and especially, 255). Besides its chromatic adornments, the $g$ is emphasized in another way, that is, by allusion: The G major theme, which first occurred (assuming that it was not cut!) at the emergence of $d$ in the highest register, by its return
reinforces the renewed emphasis on g which had been suppressed in favor of d.

But the d is not to be supplanted without some “struggle”: Note the echo of bar 259 in bar 263, in an isolated high register. (The next time this register is reached, in bar 280, the e\#-d\# of 263 is continued d\#\#, completing yet another rather oblique, but registrally clear reference to the ubiquitous motive.) The d is heard one last time in the upper register (although clearly subordinate to g) in bars 292-95, but then it is finally displaced to c and then to b in bar 299 (approached from below: a, bars 296-98—a\#, bar 299). While not a true linear motion in the background, but only a motion to an inner voice, this progression does not seem to be yet another instance of boundary play because, for the first time, the c is supported by a V chord (see Example 19). Note how the resemblance of the G major theme to Theme 1 is enhanced by the approach to the third degree from below (cf.: d\#, bar 3, d\#\#, bar 4).
In terms of what I have been describing half facetiously as a struggle between d and g (which may lend a subliminal frisson to this repetitive passage that it would not otherwise have), it is noteworthy that the manuscript has what is shown in Example 20a in bars 293 and 295—as if the g were being insisted upon—rather than what appears in the published version, shown in Example 20b. The latter is more practical, and in any case the resolution of g to f# in preparation for its inflection of g# is clear without extra emphasis.

Example 20

a. manuscript, bars 293 and 295 (page 28)

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{Example 20}
\end{array} \]

With the reestablishment of g, the background inner-voice motion, b-a-g, is completed and the next linear goal, a\(g\#\) can be approached (see the background graphs, Example 2). Note that the foreground impression of bars 299-302 is that b emerges from a\(b\) (b) —but that the latter also moves literally to a\# and thence to g\# (ab), connecting the g\# to the b\# of bar 2; the first three notes of the theme in E major (bar 303) also fill the tonal space thus opened, g\#-b\#.

In the background, the linear movements are b-a\(g\#\) and f-e (see Example 21).
The d is "retained" as the center of the motive $d^\# - d^\natural - c^\#$, or perhaps it is more accurate to say that the $c^\#(d')$ stands in (i.e., as $\flat 3$ in B$^b$) for d. The ambiguity of $c^\#/d'$—is it a lower neighbor of d or a lowered $3'$?—can be said to be a flaw of the piece (if not a flaw of the analysis). At any rate, as is often the case, quasi-linear connections between the voices also abound:

- The motion to an inner voice, b$^b$-a-g, connects the b$^b$ strand to an implied strand starting on f (cf. Examples 4 and 16).

- When the inner voice g moves to f$^\#$ it is to facilitate both the ultimately theoretical background connection between f and e and the chromatic inflection g-$g^\#(d'_b)$.

- The d strand splits in two: The d-c-b (shown in Example 19) is a motion to an inner voice which picks up the inflection of b$^b$-$b^\natural$, necessitated by the bass motion B$^b$-E;

\[\begin{align*}
21 & \text{Because, though hinted at in the details—see bars 298-99 and 300, for example—it is relatively unrealized in the foreground.} \\
22 & \text{See Schenker, } \textit{Free Composition}, \ §249 \text{ (pages 91-92) and Figure 114, especially Example 2.}
\]
but, as was mentioned above, the d is also retained motivically—although on the surface it moves linearly over d# to e.

Bars 303-509

The connections of Theme 1 and the E major theme have been mentioned above. Example 22a shows how the a♭ -g♭ (N)-ab♭ of bar 2 later becomes the middleground of g♭ -g♭ of the E major theme (bars 303ff.); the motive of e♭-d-d♭, which first appears in the melody in bar 3 (and recurs frequently between bars 3 and 305, see Example 5 above) is repeated both in the foreground and middleground in the E major section, respelled d#-d♭-c♯, as shown in Example 22b. (While enumerating connections between the beginning of the piece and the E major section, I also ought to mention the exact inversion of bars 2-3 in bars 303-10, also shown in Example 22.)

23Charles Schwartz (Life, 329) has noted some inversional connections, but not this one. The motivic connections he mentions often seem rather vague; as a result, I find them questionable. (He may well be on to something, but either I am not catching on or—if I understand him aright—I am not convinced.) I also question whether an unskilled composer like Gershwin would—as Schwartz has to assume—unconsciously make the “sophisticated motivic transformations” Schwartz finds. From my compositional experience I can believe that, where either exact pitch content or exact interval content is involved, motivic links are audible to the subconscious (which is basically pretty unsophisticated). Once either the pitches or intervals are altered, I doubt that the subconscious would make a connection unless something like rhythmic identity were involved. (See Schwartz’s set of examples on page 331, where I agree with him but am not convinced by his explanations.) It should be added for the sake of clarity that in tonal music half steps and whole steps can be heard as equivalent intervals if the scale steps involved are the same, e.g., 5-6 = 5-♭6.
Example 22

(see Ex. 25)

\[ \text{Note: exact inversion} \]

The Referential Collection

\[ (= B^b: I^7) \]

(see Exx. 2, 4, 9, 14b, 15, 34, 36, and 37)

After Gershwin had begun to study with Joseph Schillinger (1932), inversion began to play a conscious role in his compositions. For example, the song “A Foggy Day” is based on a modified inversion of the chimes of “Big Ben”:
To the primary connections may be added the following secondary ones: The notes in Theme 1, $db-cb-e_b4-f$ (bar 3) are accompanied in the tenor by $ab-gg-bf$, although the alignment is not exact. This is transposed in the E major theme as $e_f^#-f_b-g^#$ and—still in the tenor and now with exact alignment—$b-a^#-b^#g^#$ (bars 304-10). Note in this regard that the alto’s quarter notes in bar 3, $c-c^r_b$, when transposed by the same interval as the other lines become $df^#-d^#-c^#$! (See Example 23.)

In addition, recall that the answer to $eb-db$ within the first theme itself, i.e., $eb-e-f$, was already modified to $G-Ab-Bb$ in bar 5. (Throughout the following discussion of motivic relationships please refer to Example 24 below.) That the $G-Ab-Bb$ suggests the first notes of the E major theme—but in Eb—is not just a coincidence. The E is the goal of the tritone unfolding, but eventually it will be “explained” as an embellishment of Eb as IVb7. Further connections of the E major theme to bars 5ff. will be developed in the discussion of bars 347-56 below. The connection of the two 3-note motives will be

"Big Ben" inverted

Of course, Gershwin had a marvelous ear. According to Schwartz, Gershwin could instantly reproduce on the piano almost anything he heard. Note, for example, the curious fact that the counterpoint beginning in the right hand in bar 19 of the second of the Three Preludes is implicit in the overtones of the accompaniment figure in the left hand. (I discovered this by playing the piece on a harpsichord with 8' and 4' ranks engaged.)
confirmed in the piano cadenza on C♯ (bars 383ff.), where c♯-d-e (or, almost e♭-d-d♭ reversed) becomes the recurrent motive; it is further confirmed by the literal reversal d♭-d♯-e♭ in the last quotation of Theme 2 in E♭ (see jazz band part, bars 491-92).

Furthermore, the piano interpolations at bars 327-31 recall the similar ones, at bars 124 and 126, in the C major statement of Theme 2. This “found” connection of e♭-d-c with d♯-d♯-c♯ also helps link the reversal of the former, c♯-d-e, with the reversal of the latter, already
mentioned.

Finally, the reversal of the motive is reflected in the background: Reading the d (♯ in B♭) as having been displaced by d♭ (♯3 and ♭♭ [c♯♭] in E), we can see that the latter tone is retained until bar 475 where it moves to d, and that it then moves to d♭ with the final statement of Theme 2 at bar 487.

Because of the multifarious relationships among the 3-note motives of the piece, a graphic presentation seems appropriate in summary (see Example 24).

The theme in E major is of course related rhythmically to the G major theme of the preceding section (bars 260ff.). (Because of this rhythmic connection it ought not to be played quite as slowly as it often is—the marking is only “Andantino moderato,” after all.) Example 25 shows the elaboration of the theme from the motivic middleground neighboring motion, g♯–f♯–g♯.

A comparison of this example with Example 15 shows an astonishing similarity between the E major theme and bars 2-29/2-138.

Note the clever rhythmic treatment of the motive d♯–d♭–c♯ (shown in Example 22) which causes it to reproduce itself at the level of 2-measure groups; for a brief discussion

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24 I find Schwartz’s pitch connections (Life, 330-31) less convincing because repeated notes are not the same as octave leaps. The downward octave leaps of ♯–♭ (bar 303, etc.) I think I hear as connected to the way Theme 1 transfers ♯–♭ –♭ –♯ (bars 2-3) down an octave (bar 4), and to other octave transfers—so characteristic of the piano—such as the b♭–a–g of the C major theme (bars 91ff.).
Example 24

suggestions

(piano solo)

transposed

recalls

(piano solo)

transposed

"reverses"

Suggestion

background, Ex. 2

cf.

cf. relationship of bars 3, 124 and 327
of its rhythmic relationships to earlier material, see below. In addition, mention should be made of the rather subtle reference to the motive at its original pitch in the second phrase, where on the surface it is transposed (bars 313-16). It is heard untransposed passing from the tenor to the bass, $d^\#$, third quarter of bar 312; $c^\#$, fourth quarter; $c^\#$, downbeat of bar 313. Example 26b shows the structural significance of this nice touch, underlining as it
Example 26

a. 

Ex. 25b

(b) measure groups (each chord represents 2 measures)

E: \begin{array}{c}
\text{I}^5 - 6 \\
(\text{I}^6)
\end{array} \rightarrow \begin{array}{c}
\Pi - (V^?)
\end{array}

(* see Ex. 30 and cf. bar 371)

does the connection between the literal 5-6 neighbor motion in the first phrase and the 5-6 motion (transformed into surface bass motion of a descending third, e to c\#) which serves a contrapuntal function—breaking up parallel fifths—between the first sixteen bars and the
A noteworthy discrepancy between the manuscript and the published version is the placement of the *ritard.* in bars 321-24. The manuscript has the *ritard.* only in bar 323, which is, I believe, superior musically: it reduces the sentimentality of the phrase somewhat, and increases the difference between two steps of an obvious sequence.

The phrase structure of the theme is also quite subtle: The first eight bars of the theme are expanded from four bars, as shown in Example 27a. The expansion of the f♯1 and the f♯1 into two measures each, and the insertion of the redundant g♯1 for two

![Example 27](image)

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25 A paradox of this piece is the avoidance of parallels in the background in contrast to their free use in the foreground. (See below for a possible significance of this.)

26 The expanded measures are usually played *poco stringendo,* and I have actually heard a performance by a youngster who intuitively—though mistakenly—"corrected" the passage by playing these measures *Doppio movimento.*
measures allow the middleground unfolding of the motive d#-d-c# in the inner voice. But the insertion of the g# serves another function in relation to the next phrase, which is, again, basically four measures (see Example 27b.)

Referring to the graph (Example 26), one can see an interesting conflict:

Melodically, the a1-b1-c#2 constitute a third progression. But this seems to contradict the exchange of voices governing the harmony of the second phrase:

\[
\begin{align*}
ge#_b & \times e\#_c \\
E & \times G#_d
\end{align*}
\]

In effect, the a1 (with b1 as a passing tone) forms an anticipation of the harmony that begins the third phrase, II6, in a similar way to the c2-d2-e\#2 of bars 5-6 in the first movement of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata, Op. 106 (see Example 28). One difference between the two instances is the tempo, which in the Beethoven is very fast and in the Gershwin very slow. (But, also note that Beethoven's third is from root to third, of the II chord, while Gershwin's is from third to fifth.) Given the need to make the four measures of a-b seem like an anticipation, the role of the redundant g# in the first phrase becomes clear. By rounding off the first phrase to eight measures, it gives the impression that the last two measures of the second phrase have been cut off by an elision with the beginning of the third phrase. The third phrase can then be heard as *anticipated* by the end
of the second phrase. (Note that the second phrase is actually less distorted rhythmically than the first!)

The third phrase prolongs the interrupted $\frac{3}{2}$ with II-V in the bass, but the $f^#$, though strongly implied, appears nowhere—except as the high point in the solo violin flourishes of the last four measures, by which time a motion to an inner voice (e-d$^\#$) has long since commenced. The strength of the implication is a result of the combination of the e$^b$ (spelled $f^b$, bars 315-16) and the motion to an inner voice just mentioned (see Example 29).

The fact that the original manuscript has a $c^b$ in the chord of bars 315f.—i.e., V$^7$ of II—confirms $c^b$ rather than $f^b$ as the correct spelling.
My reading of $II^6$ rather than $II^7$ is based on the 10ths I assume underlie the passage (see Example 30), and is supported by the solo piano in bar 371; it does not seriously affect the meaning of the passage in any case.

Example 30

Also, to my ear, the $F^\#$ in the bass, bar 317, does not seem to connect with that of bar 321. Perhaps the latter $F^\#$ is the "missing" 2—coming as it does from $G^\#$. (We will see that the structural descent of the entire piece is finally achieved only in the bass.) A final comment concerning Example 30: the bracket shows a transposed hidden reference to bar 3 ($f^2-e^2-d^2-d^2$). Note that the descent is in both cases from the fifth of the governing
The repetition of the E major theme shows another variation on antecedent-consequent phrase structure: In bars 345-46 the 3 simply refuses to move on to 2 over the V7 chord. This will be answered, in effect, at the end of the E major section, by an extraordinary prolongation of the motion 3-2, in which the descent from g#, after moving to f# at bar 379, continues to f# (c#) in bar 382—revealing the f# (in retrospect) to have been a passing tone in a motion to an inner voice. The c# is then prolonged throughout the C# cadenza (bars 382-424), with some teasing moves toward f#—but only as a neighbor—and only resolves to f# at bar 433! (See Examples 32 and 33, below.)

The beginning of the piano solo (bars 347ff.) is a passage of parallel 10ths which

27 Although it must remain a matter of speculation, it is worth pondering the fact that the theme with its interrupted descent, g#-f#, takes place three times—and what relationship this may have to the triplet figure of bar 2:

In any case, note that the interrupted descent of the theme as a whole replicates some features of its own foreground and middleground (cf. Examples 25b, 26, and 33), such as the 5-6 motion over E; the motion to an inner voice g#-c#; and the use of the chromatic passing tone f# to connect f# and g#. Since the middleground neighbor motion g#-f#-g# is almost certainly connected to bar 3 (see Example 22), the background connection shown in the example above is perhaps not so farfetched.
carries $g^\#$ up through an octave to its neighbor, $a^2$ (bar 353). The neighbor note moves over two passing tones to its upper third, $c^\#$ (note the dynamic climax on the $a$, and the lovely decrescendo up to $c^\#$), and then a restatement of the theme begins. That the passage in parallel 10ths thus represents a kind of free variation on the theme is shown in Example 31.

Example 31

The movement up from $a$ to $c^\#$ in four measures seems to compensate for the elision of the end of phrase 2 by phrase 3 in the theme. But it also serves to emphasize $c^\#$ (i.e., $d_{\flat}$, or $b^{3}$ in $B_{\flat}$), making the following connection with the opening of the piece: Just as the

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28The passage originally gave two measures to each step of the sequence; what is now done in two half-notes in bar 350 took three measures in the manuscript—$c^\#$ for two measures and $d$ for one (see pages 34-36 of the manuscript).
moment the c\# is reached, the motive d\#-c\#-c\# is abruptly transferred to the pitches of the other motive (g\#-f\#-g\#), thus: g\#-f\#-h\#. Moreover, the chord of bar 356 is identical to the chord of the second half of bar 2! The exchange of motives between d and a\#/g\# marks the tritone relationship between Theme 1 in B\# and the E major theme; the presence of the same embellishing chord—initially made distinctive by the cross-relation a\#/b—underlines the fact that the tritone motion in the bass represents the unfolding of a single harmonic entity. I will have more to say about this below. (The embellishing chord of bar 356 contains d\# and c\# as, by now, we would expect.)

Finally, with respect to bars 347-56, note the resemblance between bars 347-53 and bars 5-10: a motive of an ascending 3rd (half step, whole step) is twice transferred up a fourth, in both instances. That both passages are sequential does not necessarily detract from the significance of the resemblance. Note, for example, that they also both act as extensions—of themes the connections of which have been demonstrated in detail.

The poetic "calmato" of bars 373-74 is noteworthy in the interpretation of the theme for two reasons: First, it would not be nearly as effective without the metrical ambiguity inherent in the phrase structure (i.e., it occurs in bar 17 of the theme; or what would normally be the first, but is in fact the third measure of the third phrase); second, and more important, it relates to a shift in the underlying contrapuntal structure (see Example 32). Where the III (=I6) chord of bars 319-320 was clearly a passing chord within a prolonged
II, in the third repetition of the theme the II becomes a neighbor within an enlargement of the theme’s V of II. This harmony in turn becomes the basis of the cadenza.

Although it is omitted in the published score, in the manuscript Gershwin gave the title “Finale” to the music from the C# cadenza on (bar 383 to the end). This is, however, not a coda in the usual sense of a “tail” added onto a structure already complete in itself, nor does it imply some lack of structural connection between this section and what preceded it.29 There is, in any case, plenty of evidence for assuming “Finale” to refer not so much to

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29 Many composers, since Beethoven’s time at the latest, have been concerned with intermovement connections. The F major scherzo, acting as a “neighbor chord” of the A minor 6 chord that frames the second movement, and resolves to the dominant, E, at the beginning of the last movement of Beethoven’s Symphony no. 7, is a good example.

Another instance that, as far as I am aware, has never been noted in print, is the way the solo part in Beethoven’s Violin Concerto completes, in bars 310-14 of the third movement, a melody that was repeatedly left uncompleted in the second movement (bars 3-4, etc.).

While most of Gershwin’s orchestral works are cast in one movement forms, an
the letter as to the spirit of the music, which does seem to hurtle toward the conclusion: Not only the previously mentioned unfinished business of the motion from g\# to d\# (3 - 2 in E)—which will be reinterpreted in the course of its prolongation—but also such obvious factors as the motivic connection between the c\#-d-e of the cadenza and the g\#-a-b of the E major theme argue for continuity. The c\#-d-e in fact becomes g\#-a-b at the climax of the cadenza in bars 408-10. In addition, the four bars marked “Sognando” (dreamy) which follow the climax are a recollection of bar 3, d\#-(e\#)-e\#-f, in keeping with the multifarious connections between the beginning of the piece and the E major section, of which the cadenza is a continuation. The dyad e-f (which finds its ultimate source in the confrontation of B\# and E) is especially prominent in this section in the form of the cross-relation d\#-e\#. The move from e\# to e\# implied in the bass (see Example 33, below) is prefigured in the foreground during the E major theme, in the middle voice, e\#-e\#-e\#-e\#, bars 303, 315, 317; and, in the bass, (E)-F-E, bars (303), 323, 325.

It may be remarked in passing about the little tune that creeps into the cadenza at bars 399ff.: perhaps a clue to its meaning is that the premiere of the Rhapsody was on

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exception, the Concerto in F, provides an interesting example of Gershwin’s desire to connect separate movements. The structural tone of the piece as a whole is (I believe) 3 (a/a\#). This becomes 2 in the middle movement in D\#. What is sometimes obscured in performance because of a long break between movements is that the a\# at the end of the slow movements is led down over g at the beginning of the last movement, to f in bar 21, in order to reestablish F as the tonic and a\# as 2. This explains what otherwise seems rather peculiar, that the last movement starts in G minor. (This has also been noted in Gilbert.)
Lincoln's Birthday, 1924. Of course, it is also an indication of what the entire section is about: g♯-f♯. (Note also that its descent from c♯2 to g♯1, bars 405-8, vaguely recalls the E major theme, bars 317-25—compare Example 29.)

As mentioned above, the applied dominant to F♯ finally resolves only at bar 433. From this point to bar 475 there is a passage in parallel 10ths which transfers the interval F♯-a♯ up over minor thirds through two octaves—although downward transfers keep the texture from literally rising two octaves. The F♯ is a pivot chord. Arising as V of V in E (EM of IV), it is reinterpreted in E♭ (IV) as ♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♭♣
Example 33

Cadenza

(to 32 bar 465)

E: \( \text{I}^5 \) __________^\( \text{II}^5 \) (pivot chord) 

cf. Ex. 26

boundary play

\( \text{E}^b, \text{III} \)
least rationalized: First, the use of the passage expresses, on the surface, the “backtracking” of the underlying contrapuntal motion better than any newly composed music could have done. Second, on a deeper level, note how—given what precedes and follows it—the passage expresses different relationships than it did previously. Perhaps it is the very faceless modularity of the passage that, paradoxically, makes this possible.

The main difference due to context is that the passage functioned in bars 55-60 to prolong C in the bass, whereas now it prolongs F#. As to details, note how the addition of instrumental doubling stresses the relationship of f|jf to g in bars 463-65: Previously the g had been a retained tone throughout the passage up to this point; here it is an embellishment of the f|j (but its eventual goal in the background, as well). The break at bars 459-60 also tends to give the stress, previously on e in the upper voice, to b|f. (One could certainly speculate about that reversal!)

At bar 471, the passage is no longer a literal repetition since the chain of parallel 10ths has to be continued up to F#-a#, which is arrived at in bar 475. But the next six measures (bars 475-80) are unclear in detail: In the jazz band the parallel 10ths continue, although now descending in whole steps from F#-a# to D-f|j. The piano part is omitted in the manuscript (pages 49-50), but in the published version it seems to contradict the jazz band, showing the same parallel chords as bars 61-63, B♭9, A♭9, F♯9.

To my ears the piano part predominates since it clearly articulates the underlying
harmonic shift from $b\text{III}$ to $V^7$ of $E_b$ in bar 475. Admittedly, my understanding of the passage is conditioned by years of playing the solo piano version of the piece, which has no indication whatsoever of the jazz band part at this point (bars 471-74 being made to conform exactly to bar 60, and bars 475-80 to bars 61-63). Of course, that the solo piano version stresses the $Bb$ chord ($V^7$) here could be used as an argument for my interpretation. On the other hand, $F^b(G^b)$—as is shown in Example 34—governs the bass until the arrival
of E♭, the B♭ being the unfolded third of G♭ and functioning as an interpolated applied dominant. (The fuzziness of this passage is due in part to its whole-tone character. Far from being an attempt on Gershwin's part to be "modern," the use of whole-tone chords derives from a basic ambiguity in the background, which I will discuss below.)

In any case, the passage from bar 475 to bar 481 retraces, in effect, the harmony of the entire piece up to this point, i.e., from B♭ to E. Two features of the manuscript are noteworthy in this connection: The orchestra part of bar 480 is shown in Example 35 as it

Example 35
a. bar 480, published version
b. same bar, manuscript (page 51)

appears (a) in the published version and (b) in the manuscript. Obviously the B dominant 6 in the original is meant to emphasize the E of bar 481 as a goal. The other feature that tends to place emphasis on E at this point, and therefore on the linear connection of E to E♭ in the
bass is an "accelerando" which appears in the manuscript in bars 481-82. This is omitted from the published versions, and is actually contravened in many performances with a *ritard*.

Not only is a connection between the E major section and this point implied by the stress on E, but what is more important, the functional equivalence of the B♭ and E harmonies implies that the E major section is part of an unfolding of a tonic harmony that encompasses both B♭ and E (see Example 36). Recall that the exchange of motivic material at the tritone transposition relies on the shared tritone of the B♭ and E dominant seventh shords, d→b♭/g♯. In this sense the true tonic of the piece (although interpreted as B♭ major on the surface) is the whole-tone collection that contains B♭! The resulting ambiguity is a structural problem to be sure, but one of a very high order of sophistication.³⁰

³⁰I believe that the structure—in common with other early 20th-century pieces—is an uneasy amalgam in which two sets of harmonic criteria coexist. A whole-tone structure does not naturally unfold such that the Ⅱ in its *Urlinie* would be supported by V. But some composers seem to have been loath to discard tonal structures even when those structures...
The section in \( E_b \) starting in bar 487 requires no detailed commentary save to point out the summarizing \( d\#-g \) (see Example 2b) of the theme, bars 490-91, and to remind the reader of two points previously made: the summarizing \( d\#-c\#-b \) in bars 491-92 (jazz band part); and the fact that Theme 2 was first introduced, also in \( E_b \), in bars 11-14.

Example 37

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**"reversals"**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>from ( B_b ) to ( E(F_b) ):</th>
<th>from ( E ) to ( B_b ):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( e_b-d-c# ) (see Ex. 24)</td>
<td>( c#-d-e_b )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( e_b-d-c )</td>
<td>( c#-d-e )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( f-g-a# ) (see above)</td>
<td>( a#-g-f )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( b#-b# (c#) (see above &amp; Exs. 4, 14b, 15)</td>
<td>( b#-b# ) (see above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stress on ( E ) in bars 55-60 (see Ex. 9)</td>
<td>stress on ( E ) in bars 461-71 (see Ex. 33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foreground: ( e-f ) (bars 3, 48, 117-23)</td>
<td>foreground: ( f-e ) (bars 315-17 etc., innervoice, and 323-35, etc., bass)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>background: ( f-e ) (see Exx. 4, 9, 21)</td>
<td>background: ( e(f#)-f(e#) ) (see above)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 37 shows how the Finale achieves the reversal of several contrapuntal and motivic aspects of the first part of the piece: the \( c\#-d-e_b \) has already been noted; the \( b \) also returns to \( b\# \). The \( g\# (a_b) \), in finally moving to \( b\# \) in the superimposed inner-voice descent, conflicted with the harmonic materials they were using. See my article on *The Fourth of July*. 

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b\textsubscript{b} - a\textsubscript{b} - g - f, represents a reversal that commences at the tritone “divider”: Recall that the a\textsubscript{b}, although structurally connected to b\textsubscript{b}, was approached from below (from g). Since we may assume that in some sense the inner-voice g came from the f of the I chord, the continuation of a\textsubscript{b} by g and then f reverses this process. The final piano solo (bars 508-9) summarizes and confirms this progression (see Example 2).

Referring back to Example 34, note that the 5-6 motion of f-g over B\textsubscript{b} is the model for the 5-6 motions of the E major theme (see Examples 26 and 33), and also, on a larger scale, is the basis of the entire piece, in which the overall structure is the prolongation of I by an embellishing IV\textsubscript{b}\textsuperscript{7} chord produced by combining the 5-6 motion and a chromatic inflection of 3 to 3. Even though c\# / d\textsubscript{b} is sometimes alternatively treated as a lower neighbor or a chromatic passing tone, its primary identity as 3 is affirmed by its ultimate source, the d\textsubscript{b}\textsuperscript{2} in bar 3).

Once we reach the embellishing IV\textsubscript{b}\textsuperscript{7} the concluding structural melodic descent and harmonic closure is achieved quite perfunctorily. To end the piece Gershwin employs a strategy very similar to the one he used to get from E to E\textsubscript{b} to move from e\textsubscript{b} to d, but now in a much more condensed—and therefore more problematical way. (Again the pressure of limited time may perhaps be held accountable.) Example 38 shows that the E\textsubscript{b} prepares an F dominant 4\textsubscript{2} (bar 504) which leads back to the B\textsubscript{b} chord in root position, with the curious result that the e\textsubscript{b} must be reattained and let to a d, which gathers thereby the weight of a
melodic tone and can carry the structural descent. The upper voice proper remains stationary on f to the end.

Examples 39a and b compare the two passages: e-eb, bars 303-487 and eb-d, bars 487-507. In the first instance the 4 recalls what might be termed a “charged” sonority (the E) and mediates its resolution; in the second the 2 is what stores the “charge,” so that an otherwise unwarranted connection of two IV7s can be made. The similarity of the E and Eb sections also includes the motion of the structural upper-voice tone as it is displaced, respectively, d-d#-e and eb-d#-eb (see Example 40).

The ultimate source of this idiosyncratic use of counterpoint—of which Gershwin’s grasp was wholly intuitive, but nonetheless strong—may well be the sequential passage in
bars 5-10. Example 39c shows how the B♭ prepares the 7th above C in bar 7, which has its resolution in the A♭ of bar 16. Note that (aside from A♭ instead of A♯) this is a tritone transposition of the bass of Example 39a, E-F♯-E♭. Of course other connections between the E major theme and this initial passage have already been noted.

Example 39

Example 40

etc.
The merely implicit melodic descent (3-2-1) at the end is not unlike that of the initial statement of Theme 1 (bars 2-5), where the foreground emphasis is also all on f (twice the goal of descents from b♭). Likewise, the d (3) of bar 4 gains its only emphasis—by implication—from the d♭ of bar 3, of which it is the “correction.”

**Talent and Technique**

The abrupt and unconventional ending brings up the matter of Gershwin’s inexperience. The use of the $\frac{4}{2}$ seems to me to work (at least to the extent of preventing total disaster). But however much we are impressed by the improvisatory coup, we cannot shake a sense of its *ad hoc* awkwardness. This too is one’s impression of the piece as a whole. The structure would be masterly—if only it were successfully projected in the foreground.

We have seen that Gershwin’s seemingly loosely constructed *Rhapsody* shows what one expects (evidence of the melodic talent that is incontrovertibly his), but also, on careful analysis, shows the long-range structural connections and, to some extent, the integration of detail with large-scale organization typical of the works of great composers.

Such findings always contradict the commonsense idea that a composer builds up a piece from smaller bits—the very word *composer* implies it—and the *Rhapsody* in
particular seems "assembled" at least superficially. If the analysis is accurate, then perhaps the commonsense view of compositional talent needs revision. Naturally, it is possible that the analysis is mistaken; it is also possible that one should not use Schenkerian models for less than great music. As to the first possibility, it can be pointed out that the findings of the analysis in fact correspond to the general impression that most listeners have received: Gershwin was undoubtedly talented but his music seems somehow flawed. I have just shown in more detail both exactly where the flaws lie and whence the impression of talent comes.

It has always been difficult for me to believe that a composer can have talent for foreground detail alone (especially given, as in this case, so large a talent). There ought to be some evidence of talent on the middleground and background levels. I believe it is impossible to be merely a "great melodist." The talent, which is the ability to hear, is identical for melody and for large-scale composition. The latter is an extension of the former and can therefore be thwarted by lack of training.31

While not trying to promote Gershwin to the level of "great composer," I think he was a greatly talented composer whose music has suffered many bad performances because his lack of training engendered flaws in his works that made them difficult to perform convincingly. I hope to have shown that there is often more formal assurance than meets

the eye. If musicians were to become aware of such subtleties, their performances would improve—and Gershwin's standing as a composer would be easier to judge.

As to whether Schenkerian analysis can be successfully applied to works by lesser composers, the norm has been to beg the question (a tendency deriving from Schenker himself). I think it is fair to say he thought he had discovered a "philosopher's stone" that would make possible the separation of true masterpieces from the run-of-the-mill. Unfortunately (from our essentially positivist standpoint) there was a large subjective bias in his procedure: Composers he considered to be great turned out to write great music; those he did not turned out to be demonstrably incompetent. But subjectivity is part and parcel of the process—Schenker's "analysis" is a hermeneutic, as opposed to a logical procedure. If he was guilty of favoring the music he loved, this is at worst a sentimental error.

Despite the seemingly immortal myth to the contrary, Schenker most often placed the individual piece at the center of attention; for this reason it is consistent with his methods—and even his truest beliefs—to apply his principles to lesser compositions. Or at least some of them: there are pieces that are lesser because they are less individual than others, more stereotyped; but a piece can also be too individual to be totally successful. I think we have seen that the *Rhapsody* fits the latter description.

Another idea which may have been implied inadvertently in the course of the
analysis ought to be expressly delimited here: Gershwin was not an intellectual composer, nor was he, despite his friendly acquaintance with Alban Berg and Arnold Schoenberg, an avant-garde composer. But he was a contemporary composer: His music shows both an (undoubtedly intuitive) knowledge of and a concern with the development of tonal materials fully congruent with his time. Moreover, when he dealt with the problems that his contemporaries were facing, Gershwin was able, in spite of his lack of theoretical background, to find interesting solutions. For example, while it is true that a customary progression through the circle of fifths might have been the source of the opening in the *Rhapsody*, the structurally implicit treatment of a single harmony encompassing two dominant seventh chords a tritone apart as the tonic was far from customary (and never became so in tonal music).

Gershwin’s music is in any case intensely chromatic (much more so than the average American composer of his era). While not a radical like Ives, he was more adventurous harmonically than middle-of-the-road composers like Carpenter or Taylor. But his chromaticism is idiosyncratic as well; cross-relations are especially characteristic of his style. This distinctive sound seems in Gershwin’s case to derive in equal parts from Jazz and Jewish influences, sharing, as they do, the combination of pentatonicism and major-minor tonality. These, along with many other immigrant traditions in the New York of his time, were involved in an explosive cross-fertilization within the world of popular
music. But while Gershwin’s harmonic vocabulary later became (via motion pictures and recordings) the standard style of popular music (in the late ’30s, ’40s and ’50s), it must be recalled that in his time it was still quite “advanced”—for that milieu in particular.

Where did it come from? Though his vocabulary had at least some connection to post-Wagnerian chromaticism, I find rather doubtful that it was derived, as is sometimes assumed, from the French Impressionists in Gershwin’s case—certainly not at the stage in his career that he wrote the *Rhapsody*. Gershwin was a more than usually self-absorbed composer and presumably picked up his knowledge of chromaticism partly from the Chopin and Liszt he played as a young piano student, but especially from his own improvisatory experiments at the keyboard.

The main point of course is, we should pay less attention to the fact that he was no theorist—his analytical statements being remarkable only for their callowness—and more to the fact that he, like composers of earlier times, was a renowned improviser. Let us examine how improvisation made the *Rhapsody* possible.

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32See Schwartz, *Life*, 126-29 for an examination of the famous Stravinsky and Ravel stories. As mentioned above, Schwartz also disposes of other claimants to influence (pages 52-56).
**Gershwin's Technique: Improvisation**

The most unusual feature of the piece (as presented by the analysis) is its harmonic structure, involving the unfolding of the tritone from the B♭ major of the opening to the E major of the so-called “Blues” (bars 303ff.). Close analysis has revealed intriguing connections between the B♭ and E sections, leading us to consider whether the two keys represent, in some sense, a single harmonic entity comparable to a I-Ⅴ7 complex (where Ⅶ acts as V7 of IV; see Example 22).

While such things (as the unfolding of a tritone, for example) are not unheard of, it is difficult to credit Gershwin with so masterful a grasp of tonal relations, since Charles Schwartz has convincingly documented Gershwin’s lack of formal training (see note 31, above). It is difficult, that is, unless we assume a powerful *intuitive* grasp of them (in a word, talent). The means he used to tap his intuitive powers was improvisation, for music seemed to flow from his fingers; as he said: “Sometimes what comes out of that piano frightens me.”

But this method of composing has gained a bad reputation (“not serious”) in more

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33Quoted in Levant, 232. Given to Gershwinesque character, Sam Frankl, in the play *Merrily We Roll Along* by Kaufman and Hart (Act 2, Scene 3).
recent years, a period when composers have sought to control their music ever more consciously. As a result, improvisation has come to be seen as an alternative to composition—justified on such grounds as enhancing the freshness of music making, or allowing a kind of democracy to the process wherein the performers share more equally in shaping the music and the composer reaps the spiritual benefits of not having to impose one’s ego on others. But the nature of improvisation has much to teach us even about works not so purely improvisational, for example, what constitutes success in the dialectic between unity and invention in any large-scale work.

That composition and improvisation have been closely related in the past is common knowledge, of course. It is evident in several ways—to cite only the most obvious: the great lengths some composers go to (Beethoven, for example) to give their compositions an improvisatory quality.

It is, however, possible to make a more general assertion about the relationship between composition and improvisation: For the musical equivalent of the “willing suspension of disbelief” to take place, the musical discourse of a composition must seem to be improvised in real time, like the dialog of play. Though we know that the actors are not making up Shakespeare’s poetry, we need to believe they are, and can, if the actors allow

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34 There is an interesting criticism of improvisation as the basis of composition on other grounds in George Antheil’s Bad Boy of Music (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, 1945), 109-11.
us to do so. Musical performance thrives on a similar illusion.

But just as composition tends in this way towards an ideal of improvisation (though never attaining it), real improvisation can never satisfy the condition of composition.35 For one thing, with composition, the job of both performer and audience is to create an illusion of improvisation. This can be done quite reliably precisely because the composition exists apart from the realization, at least as a potential structure. With improvisation, there is a constant anxiety about the whole enterprise both for performer and audience: the structure might fail to exist. With improvisation, therefore, the potential for failure rather than the potential for discourse becomes the center of attention.

So, while a successful improvisation seems all the more wonderful for the improviser's having taken a risk and overcome the odds, composition provides a more dependable occasion for calling a group of people together. (In a society less minutely structured with respect to time than ours, the improvisatory occasion can be extended, and often is, until something happens that justifies having gathered an audience.)

In any case, the act of improvisation can have several stages: At first, a preliminary idle wandering in which the subconscious has its fullest play. The conscious mind may

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35 This assertion has been questioned by Carl Schachter, who cites great composers like Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven as improvisers (private communication). First, I think it is fair to assume that even such masters had better and worse days as improvisers. Second, I am attempting here to describe phenomenologically the differences between composition and improvisation: I do not doubt that any number of Mozart's improvisations were more successful as musical structures than any number of compositions by Salieri.
then decide to consider a certain idea as a "beginning": Often something a bit out of the ordinary or unexpected (like the # of bar 7 of the Eroica) will seize the imagination because it seems to need to be spun-out—"explained," if you like. This spinning out can take many forms, but one that seems characteristic of "improvisatory" pieces is to keep returning to the inspired idea in larger and larger scale so that what started out as, for example, a contrapuntal detail can eventually become the tonality of an extended section.36 Another method (which can be combined with the first) is to allow one idea as it develops to suggest other ideas. This guarantees a surface impression of continuous invention. It is possible that that is why Beethoven (and Brahms, who probably learned it from Beethoven) so favored this device—it helped a talented improviser give laboriously worked-out compositions the aura of improvisation.37

When an untrained composer, like Gershwin at age twenty-five, writes down an improvisation, it would seem that one motive might be to compensate with the excitement of the "real thing" for an inability to construct an artifice that can create the illusion. (Compare documentary filmmakers who trade on the idea of giving the viewer real life, 36See Salzer.

37Of course, Gershwin not only was a habitual improviser, but in this case was forced by circumstances to work especially quickly. Schwartz has carefully reconstructed the actual course of events from the legends that seem early on to have become attached to Gershwin (Life, 74-95).

The role of the press in Gershwin's career would make an interesting study.
when, in fact, few can resist making a film into a story—thus giving the audience what it probably really wants, rather than what it only thinks it wants.)

Again, this is not to say that the two acts of composition and improvisation are completely antithetical. A composition without "inspiration" can easily devolve into mere construction; inspiration in this context can be seen as the sort of thought that occurs to one during a playful, apparently aimless, receptive—in other words, improvisatory frame of mind. For its part, the improvisation without some constructive principle can easily become aimless in fact, and not just apparently so.

In the *Rhapsody in Blue* the improvisatory origin of the work is revealed in two ways. First, on or near the surface, details suggest their successors: one of the best instances is the gradual emergence of the C major theme at bar 91 from the material in the bars after 81 (see Example 11). The second way that the improvisatory origin shows—on a deeper level—is that the large-scale structure of the piece is also suggested by details on the surface: for example, the way the initial progression of the piece, I-I$_7$-IV$^7$, comes to govern the entire structure, as was shown above in Example 22 (see Example 41). It seems highly unlikely that Gershwin planned even the more superficial instances; how much more unlikely that he had any awareness of the deeper ones. (For what it is worth, I can attest to such unconscious relationships from my own experience as a composer, and we have
Schoenberg’s testimony to similar experiences.\textsuperscript{38}

A number of other instances from the piece may be cited of the ways in which the surface gives evidence of improvisatory origin: Besides the slow emergence of the triadic motive in bars 81ff., there are several rhythmic connections between the C major theme and preceding and succeeding material, all of which point to improvisation.

The rhythm $\text{\textsuperscript{\textbullet}}\text{\textsuperscript{\textbullet}}\text{\textsuperscript{\textbullet}}\text{\textsuperscript{\textbullet}}\text{\textsuperscript{\textbullet}}$ I think ultimately derives from the rhythm of the first theme $\text{\textsuperscript{\textbullet}}\text{\textsuperscript{\textbullet}}\text{\textsuperscript{\textbullet}}\text{\textsuperscript{\textbullet}}\text{\textsuperscript{\textbullet}}\text{\textsuperscript{\textbullet}}$ etc. by extension (the repeated note) and metric shift (the

\textsuperscript{38}Arnold Schoenberg, “Composition with Twelve Tones (I),” Example 3, in \textit{Style and Idea}.\textsuperscript{38}
upbeat becoming the downbeat). The repeated note later links up with Theme 2,

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{upbeat becoming downbeat)}
\end{array}
\]

(Another diminution, not present in the manuscript, also connects the C major theme with Theme 2; see, for example, bars 107ff. ) Finally, the rhythm of the C major theme recurs with the \( \text{d}^\#-\text{d}^\#-\text{c}^\# \) motive in the E major section, bars 305ff. (underscoring the motivic links to the first theme with rhythmic links as well).

Example 24 showed how several motives were related to each other by simple juxtaposition. The use of such motivic resemblances as “come to hand” in the course of a piece is an obvious hallmark of improvisation, allowing for the assertion of a relationship where none exists in any organic sense. (The idea that a composer rationally works out all relationships is clearly wrong in any case.) Again we see a dialectic between the results of conscious control and planning on the one hand and those of a process of discovery on the other. The distinction can be clarified by an analogy from the theory of evolution in biology, where a single life form can be transformed into several new species, or two species can come to resemble each other more closely (so called “convergent evolution”). This second process was also seen in the relationship of the G major theme to Theme 1, a case in which material arose (bass, bars 106-14) that was not itself directly related to Theme 1 but played the role of making it easier to hear the G major theme as related to Theme 1.
The background in improvisation tends to grow out of the foreground (a foreground feature being expanded to govern the background, as exemplified by the relationship of the first theme to bars 2-29, and of bars 2-29 to bars 2-138 and ultimately to the piece as a whole). The process can be reversed, however: A feature arising in the background can suggest features in the foreground, such as the way the pentatonic interpretation of Theme 1 in A (bars 72ff.) emerges from the registrally isolated pitches a² (bar 38), g² (bar 53), e² (bar 61), as was shown in Example 8 above; or, another instance, the way the use of Theme 2 is suggested at bars 181ff. by the inflection—necessitated by the motion of the bass from B♭ to E—of b♭³-♭♭⁴ in the background (see Examples 14 and 15 above). That the choice of foreground detail—which theme to use to project a given harmony—can be affected by the background structure does imply an awareness of the background. There is no reason that this awareness need be conscious, however, and no grounds for believing Gershwin capable of making use of any such awareness, had it been.

As has been suggested above, it is improvisatory “mistakes” that provide the impetus for this sort of composition in the first place. Imagine that Gershwin had played the recomposed version of the first theme in Example 42. It is clear that he would have had to keep on searching for something more problematical on which to base a large-scale piece. It is the fact that the melody “oversteps” the ³—that seemingly out of its own downward momentum—that establishes the motive ³-d-♭♭ as a central melodic factor, and
the dyad $E_b-d\flat/c\sharp$ as a central harmonic factor of the piece. It can even be argued that, by overstepping the third step of the $B_b$ major scale, the melody sets off the descending circle of fifths which ends up taking the music down a tritone to E ($B_b-E_b-A_b-D_b-G_b-C_b/B-E$). In this way issues that ultimately become background material seem to address themselves to the composer as foreground details that compel further treatment.

There is a somewhat similar example to the “out-of-control” circle of fifths of bars 2-29 of the *Rhapsody* in Chopin’s Mazurka, op. 56, no. 1 (see Example 43), where a descent from $\overline{6}$ to $\overline{3}$ in B major oversteps the goal, $d\sharp$, to land on $d^\flat$ because of a literal circle of fifths sequence. The resulting $G$ major harmony later becomes the tonality of a contrasting section of the piece.\(^{39}\)

Ancillary to the internal evidence garnered by analysis for the improvisatory origin of the piece is the evidence gained by examining the manuscript. As mentioned above, it

\(^{39}\)My thanks to Frank Samarotto for pointing this out.
seems to support the view that the *Rhapsody* was improvised: in its general lack of erasure, and in the tendency for blocks of the composition to emerge easily at first, but then evidently to lose steam (more abbreviation, sketchiness, an occasional question mark) as the block comes to an end.

Compositional structure seems to have meant repetition to Gershwin (to the extent he had any conception of it at all): constantly rehashing the same material with only the most elementary variation and no development to speak of. Thus, the weakest features of the structure are precisely those in which he seems to impose compositional control.

Of course, Gershwin wrote the piece in a matter of two to three weeks; he did not have the leisure to sketch or otherwise carefully construct his first large instrumental work. The legend, probably true, has it that he forgot his promise to Paul Whiteman until very shortly before the deadline. It is at least plausible that the reason he forgot was that he knew
he would be improvising anyway. Perhaps, unconsciously, he hoped to legitimize his compositional method by putting himself in a situation where it was the only possible way to proceed!

**Talent**

There is another issue that the analysis of the *Rhapsody in Blue* allows us to address (if only provisionally). Because of the curious contrast between Gershwin's well-established\textsuperscript{40} lack of training and the sophistication of the harmonic structure—not to mention such paradoxes as the surely unconscious avoidance of parallels in the background while they are being used freely in the foreground—the analysis provides us with an unusual means of access to the vexed issue of the relationship between talent and technique. Through a kind of "thought experiment," those elements, usually inextricable, can be separated, and their relationship examined. Perhaps surprisingly, the dialectical tendencies of Schenker's theories\textsuperscript{41} imply conclusions similar to those arrived at through

\textsuperscript{40}Schwartz, *Life*, 52-56

\textsuperscript{41}Schenker's dialectical tendencies, which he almost certainly picked up from the culturally pervasive Hegelianism of his milieu, might better be related to Vico's distinction between *datum* and *factum*, i.e., the *given* and the *made* (both thinkers place greater value on the latter). In a talk at the Schenker Symposium at Mannes College in March 1985, William A. Pastille suggested Goethe rather than Hegel as the source of Schenker's most...
such an experiment: that talent is for structure, and not necessarily just for surface detail.

Anyone offering a theory of tonal music must, willy-nilly, address the issue of what part of a composer’s ability is innate and what part learned—whether explicitly or not. In doing so, one must, nowadays at least, conform to the evidence developed in fields such as philosophy and psychology, where the issue is addressed from different perspectives. It is my contention that Heinrich Schenker’s theory of tonal music (though hardly a unified formal theory) still gives, if only by implication, the best description of the workings of the musical mind. The *Rhapsody in Blue* provides the possibility of “watching over the shoulder” of a talent both mature and relatively untrained. In contrast, the works of the child Mozart, even had he not been formally trained, would not be appropriate to such a “thought experiment” because he was a child.

The two concepts of talent and technique must be separated, however. I propose the following working definitions: *Talent* seems to involve a profound understanding of relationships between pitches, and between rhythms—and so on, to a greater or lesser extent, with the other materials of music. *Technique*, which can be developed, is the ability to project that understanding into structures of ever greater cohesiveness. Thus, even composers sometimes found deficient in their handling of larger structures (e.g., Schubert and Chopin) are acknowledged to be talents of the first rank.

basic esthetic ideas.
One need not follow Schenker into a claim that the tonal system—of which the
talented composer has a deeper than average perception—is derived from nature. And in
fact Schenker’s claim is not as extreme as is sometimes supposed: He posits a Hegelian
dialectic between nature and art as the ground of the synthesis which the tonal system
represents. In his view, the dialectic is reenacted in various relationships in every piece of
tonal music, among them: the relationship between tonic and dominant, and that between
tonality and diatony (loosely, melody).\textsuperscript{42}

Even if one takes the extreme opposite position, that tonal music is entirely without
a basis in nature, compositional talent—if the word means anything at all—must reside in a
seemingly \textit{instinctive} grasp of such a system, one which cannot be built up from
compositional experience. That is to say, the locus of musical talent must be the same as
that of the possibility of there being any such thing as music at all.

The Schenkerian position is thus not incongruent with the Viconian idea that we can
understand only what we can make. Music is based on nature, but at the same time, is a
purely human artifact. In other words, a composer does not have to understand nature so
much as music.

The word “instinctive” will bother many, seeming to beg the question of talent. But

\textsuperscript{42}\textit{Schenker, Free Composition}, Chapter 1 \textit{passim} and §§16 (page 14) and 4
(pages 11-12).
I do believe that the word "talent" names something. (Such a statement opens one up to the charge of reification, but that is not my tack: It will transpire below that "instinctive" need not be taken literally to mean "inherited," but only "automatic, and generally inaccessible to modification in the mature individual.")

I believe that the talent of the composer does not lie in a faculty that others do not possess, so much as in having (to put it crudely) "more" of that faculty—the way some people have longer toes than others. As far as I know, no amount of exercise or better nutrition can change the length of your toes; no amount of training can make you a talented composer.

Since the musicality of the composer is not different in kind from that of the "average music lover" (and this would clear up how average people can "get something out of" the music of great composers), it follows that any ultimate formal explanation of talent \textit{per se} must therefore be impossible. (The genetic aspect is presumably an imponderable as well, since it is unlikely that there is a specific gene either for bigger toes or musical talent, these characteristics probably being the result of random confluences of many genetic factors.)^{43}

From a close examination of the \textit{Rhapsody in Blue} we gather, moreover, that

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^{43}\textit{Schenker (Free Composition}, §30 [pages 18-19]) denies the ability to create to nongeniuses, but his argument can be read as allowing one who understands short-range progression to extend this understanding to the background by "the exertion of spiritual and psychical energy."
compositional talent is more unitary than, say, writing ability. Many people can write perfectly good sentences; far fewer can write good paragraphs—not to mention good chapters or books. But a composer’s inabilities are more likely to show up even in the foreground.44

Schenker’s theories imply that compositional talent is unitary because the pitch structure itself is unitary (deriving ultimately from a single pitch and its overtones). There is an aspect to this subtle point—so central to Schenker’s thought—that is often overlooked because attention is concentrated on the multiplicity of levels: Not only is the pitch structure unitary in its “horizontal” aspect of being the expression of a single tone in time (as is widely understood), it is also unitary in its “vertical” aspect: all the levels coexist in the foreground.45

In a manner of speaking, the “timeless” unity of the pitch in nature is expressed moment to moment by the vertical aspect of polyphony. In the synthesis that is music, the antitheses of timeless pitch and unfolding in time, or rhythm, are involved in a

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44 Perhaps a comparison of Richard Rodgers with Gershwin might be instructive—if probably somewhat unfair. When one plays through twenty songs by each, it is clear that, despite marvelous individual touches, Rodgers’ songs en masse have a “four-square” quality (pace Alec Wilder) and Gershwin’s do not. It is thus no accident, in my view, that Rodgers never wrote a satisfactory large-scale piece. To repeat, this is not really being fair to Rodgers, since he never had Gershwin’s pretensions to “greatness” either.

But for me Rodgers’ music represents the triumph of experience and craft over modest talent (that is, just the reverse of Gershwin’s qualities).

45 Schenker, Free Composition, §29 (page 18).
dialectic—and are renamed, “harmony and counterpoint.”

Linguistic models of tonal music fall down on just this point of vertical unity: There is no background apart from what is present (either literally or by strong implication) in the foreground of the music itself. In contrast, the Chomskyan background structure of a sentence often disappears in the process of transformation, except for “traces” left in the foreground. Thus, the background of a piece of music is not reconstructed from the foreground in Schenker’s approach, so much as laid bare.46

The subtlety of Schenker’s “metaphysical” distinction between nature and art—and its practicality—become more evident. For example, if we take as given that the natural state of a pitch and its overtones is simultaneous coexistence, making it a sort of real metaphor for timelessness; and further, that it is only art which introduces the unfolding in time of the pitch structure, thereby creating the synthesis, music, from the antithetical concepts of pitch and rhythm: Why, after all, should we expect such antithetical structures as pitch and rhythm to have the same organization?

Schenker’s “neglect of rhythm” begins to seem an unfair characterization of a rather profound idea: The structure of a piece of music is unitary by virtue of its origin in a single pitch; but therein also lies its potential to unfold on multiple levels—i.e., the fact that the fundamental structure is at once the sentence and the paragraph and the whole book. (To

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46See the Appendix for the philosophical bases of this argument.
put it another way, a piece of music is a sentence made up of other sentences which are in
turn made up of still other sentences, and so on.) If the success of this insight has led to
some of the misfortunes of rhythm theory—where attempts to find the same structures at
different levels have failed to convince—it is due to an incomplete understanding of
Schenker’s idea.47 The discontinuities between different levels of rhythm (i.e., the
measure, the phrase, the section) are actually more like those between literature’s sentence,
paragraph, and chapter.

To summarize, our examination of the *Rhapsody in Blue* has shown that the act of
improvisation allowed Gershwin to create a unified structure despite his almost total lack of
compositional training at the time. (It would be of interest to study his more consciously
crafted later pieces to see what effect, if any, greater control had on their success.) We have
seen how these results tend to confirm the *a priori* nature of compositional talent, and how
such findings are already implicit in Schenker’s theory of tonal music (when it is deeply
understood and not just being raided for analytical methodology): The unity of the pitch
structure means there is no such thing as foreground talent.

But it also means that the average music lover’s ability to apprehend the foreground

47Schenker is in part responsible for the confusion by his not distinguishing
carefully enough between the background or fundamental structure of *music* and the even
more fundamental structure of *pitch in nature*. Compare, in *Free Composition*, Chapter 1,
section 3 (pages 4-5) and Chapter 2, §§1-2 (pages 10-11).
is not different in kind from an ability to apprehend the background. If this is true, then the
current state of affairs in which the “genius” and the “common person” have nothing to say
to each other (wherever blame may lie) must end soon. Yet, neither the intensification of
craft nor the dissolution of content can guarantee communication. Rather, both composer
and listener must rely on their common heritage, the irreducible musicality of human
beings.
Appendix

In this appendix I will discuss some of the ideas of Jerry A. Fodor, a philosopher of cognitive science, whose thoughts about the workings of the mind I hope will be as helpful to the reader as they have been to me in thinking through these issues.

Among Fodor's books are: (1) *The Language of Thought*, in part a consideration of the possibility—which Fodor is willing to abandon, but clearly leans toward—that linguistic formalism does not necessarily entail reductive simplicity, that is, a relatively small number of basic computational elements of either vocabulary or syntax. He leans toward this possibility even though the entailment of reductive simplicity would make life easier for those involved in the formalization (pp. 154-56). Since tonal music clearly is a system in which a small number of relatively undifferentiated elements generate the complexity of the surface by repeated application of a small set of transformational rules, it would appear to operate in an entirely different way from natural language.

(2) *The Modularity of Mind*, pursues Fodor's contrareductionism by arguing for reflexive, modular, and stimulus-type-specific input systems (see pp. 38ff.). This means that, for example, sentence recognition and panther recognition—and presumably something like melody recognition—would be automatically “preprocessed” (reflexivity) before being made available to the more global higher cognitive processes; that in all
likelihood they would be preprocessed separately (modularity). Any reductive program of
genral cognition would thus reach its “bottom line” with relatively highly processed
elements; any further reduction would have to proceed along separate lines depending on
the species of input (stimulus-type-specificity). A unified and reductive cognitive theory is
thus ruled out.

In addition, Fodor thinks that it is the very modular nature of the input systems
which accounts for the success of reductive theories concerning them (vision, for
example), whereas the global character of higher cognitive processes in effect rules out any
reductive theory of thought whatsoever (see pp. 101ff.).

Fodor's discussion of the experimental evidence for and the ramifications of his
model is too involved to summarize here, and in any case makes fascinating reading. But,
what is most salient to music theory, it should be noted that the three-part scheme Fodor
postulates, which inserts the reflexive input modules between the transducers—eyes, ears,
etc.—and higher cognitive processes, creates a two-tier mental structure. On the one hand,
Chomsky's sentence analysis would take place in the input modules and only the
understanding of, say, the poem which the sentences make up would occupy the higher
cognitive processes. On the other hand, Schenker's analysis is more a global affair, like
understanding a poem.

This may explain what has been, to me at least, a rather obscure point in Free
Composition (§28, pp. 17-18)—why Schenker insists so strongly on the difference between the fundamental structure and the cadences of conventional harmony (indeed its "substantive opposition" to them). Perhaps he had an inkling of the distinction between modular preprocessing, which certainly must apply to conventional cadences, and the higher cognition that applies to the fundamental structure.

At any rate, the superficial resemblances between Chomsky's levels of structure and rules of transformation, and those of Schenker should be understood as artifacts of analysis. Perhaps it bears repeating that Schenker's superiority as a theorist of music has always resided in the fact that he grew more and more to think of music as music. The graphs are music—not words, not pictures, not anything else.

The model presented by Lerdahl and Jackendoff, insofar as it is language-based (not stimulus-type-specific), would probably be invalidated, though Fodor's theories agree with that model's bias toward inherent principles of musical cognition. Perhaps Lerdahl and Jackendoff give us a picture of how the automatic preprocessing of a putative musical module works. Schenker's theory, by contrast, is global, and therefore—just as some of its critics charge—not thoroughly reductive (Fodor's point is that a global theory cannot be thoroughly reductive, and vice versa).
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Source of cuts commonly made in performance of other versions.

2. Theoretical Issues


Shows that reductive (positivist) foundation for theory (in general) may not only be inadvisable, but actually impossible.


Last statement of Schenker’s ideas; the culmination (but not the ultimate codification it was intended to be) of his theoretical work. Must be read very critically.
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Good statement of view of Gershwin widely held among musicians.

Gilbert, Steven E. “Gershwin’s Art of Counterpoint,” Musical Quarterly LXX/4 (Fall 1984) 423-56.

A “modified” Schenkerian approach to the music.


The most definitive biography to date. Includes abridged version of his Gershwin bibliography (q.v.).

2. Theoretical Issues


(for tenor solo, chorus (SATB), and eight players)

**Music by Arthur Massey**

**By Norman MacAfee**

(translation of the Russian original)

Versions of the official Soviet condensations of Russian and Irish

translated into verse form

Cooper Union's Great Hall

League, at

Gay and Lesbian Scientists

Address to New York

John Paul Il's Mayday 1984

[Cross symbol]
for Luis Buñuel in heaven & hell
(N.M.)
ALL INSTRUMENTALISTS SING (women in lowest register possible)

in Gregorian chant style

piano

sing: in Gregorian chant style

Pope (tromm solo)

\[ \frac{2}{4} \quad \frac{3}{4} \quad 4 \quad 4 \quad 5 \quad 4 \quad 4 \]

\[ j = c. 120 \]

NB: Chorus may double instrumentalists—but only if necessary & very discreetly
Allargando (alla voce)
Pope: "Wa-bel-ses iello"

The score indicates:
- Flute
- Clarinet
- Cello
- Piano

Note: "pp sempre" and "poco" are written in the score. The notation also shows "or Waleas's pot-belly".
Pope

or Reagan's naturally orange
flute
clar.
perc.
celesta
piano
Pope
S
A
chorus
T
B
Vln.
cello

(p sempre)
{ pp sub.}

TAXI HORN (quasi a tempo)

molto
cell. molto

hair
or Kho - mei - ni's homo - pho - bia.
or rall.

molto

108
Gorbachev's Hamlet-family's knowing eyes

\( \text{\#} \) \( j = 104 \)
rallen. molto --- - al d = 54-63 (colla voce)

NB: Chorus is positioned around hall.
Pope is center stage

I am the hero of the minute past present

Rope is center stage
Thus all I say has the stench of compost decadence.

(p sempre)

Pope holds up staff (in left hand) and points to it (with right) like the product in a TV commercial.

Glances at it and then (with big smile) sings to audience.
CASH REGISTER

chorus gathers near stage dressed in white robes, à la "green pastures."

In 1984 the brave new world is an animal farm for Pekey's sake!

pp (like laughter)

gradually - a new bridge
Poco piú mosso (d=69)  

I have a re current dream of being taken captive by → (d=69) →

meno mosso (d<60)

Taking viola.
(colla voce) tratti A tempo (sub)

Pope Mimes Flight (to bar 95)
Pope sees refuge and goes to steps

L'istesso tempo \( (d=60) \)
S
A chorus
T
B
vln.
cello

My name is I - van

say to one than a -
Poco rallent.

We embrace and the world is whole.
We kiss and angels sing

like chant

the world will last longer than my
capacity to love my

(soft crescendo)
A tempo (d = 112)

The peasants spilling down into the fields

Part of it

Chorus

Outside, the peasants are spilling out of their
126

as the sun rises

S
A
T
B
Viola
cello

allargando — \( \text{d} = 96 \)
poco rallen.  (125)
Their bodies are

Poco tratten. (d = 69-72)
take alto

(speaking)

I shudder

A tempo (d = 88)

Suddenly cold
He is still a-sleep.

Pope

draw closer to Ivan's breast

150
I listen carefully to our hearts
Is he a gangster?
or savior or — both?

We go down to the river and
We go down to the river and
We go down to the river and

Piano

Tempo I° (subito) (L = 112)
Of course they tire/and lose strength and die.
and it is about the future. A tempo (M=112)

It is the only idea.

It is the only idea.
and thus it is—the first idea one must listen to

(190) allargando (colla voce)
a tempo (1-120) (a bit wildly!)

CHORUS MARCHES OFF, WAVING BANNERS, ETC.

CHEERS AD LIB.

The only the first i-dea the only i-dea. the
How are we to get there to your new paradise with the least bloodshed?
Oh druggets, drug friends,

I have these friends —
No text content available for natural representation.
Pope

CHORUS IS POSITIONED AROUND HALL (ON HIGH IF POSSIBLE)
I have just spoken of my recurring dream.

(heard by t. e. b. v. n. i.)
We copyrighted the first photograph of a toilet bowl in a bourgeois bathroom.

*3 solo

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sometimes my chilling / Mo-thr would like to give up the ghost sometimes more and more

colle voce
Pope

CHORUS IS NOW VISIBLE BUT STILL DISTANT FROM POPE.
FROM BAR 348 TO BAR 350 THEY BEGIN APPROACH SLOWLY.

Chorus

(345)

We believers will all have to live in it.
Can you imagine Bono Christian, Seals, and the Spirals back on the "Last Judgment,"

But perhaps we could begin there: an ex...
From bar 354 to 363 chorus slowly gathers around pope. We would not let the rich leave their...
FROM BAR 371 TO BAR 375 CHORUS'S CIRCLE CLOSES IN ON POPE (THOUGH HIS FACE REMAINS VISIBLE)
(sneak by High)

Noo, if I were sente, I'd re-be audabene a used car salesman in El Salvador. I will.

Pope is lifted onto shoulders of chorus members.

Take viola.
ALL ACTION FREEZES

Pope: house!

182
LIGHT GROWS BRIGHTER

BLACKOUT