

WORDS WITHOUT MUSIC

The Ira Gershwin Newsletter



No. 5, Fall 2010

MESSRS SHUBERT
PRESENT

LIFE BEGINS AT 8:40

A MUSICAL REVUE
WITH
BERT LAHR
RAY BOLGER
LUELLA GEAR &
FRANCES WILLIAMS
LYRICS BY
IRA GERSHWIN
& E. Y. HARBURG
MUSIC BY
HAROLD ARLEN

SHOEIN' THE MARE
FUN TO BE FOOLED
YOU'RE A BUILDER UPPER
WHAT CAN YOU SAY IN A LOVE SONG
LET'S TAKE A WALK AROUND THE BLOCK

Paul McCartney
wins Gershwin Prize

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The Ira Gershwin Newsletter

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Letter from Michael Strunsky

It's been an eventful 2010 and this fifth issue of *Words Without Music* is filled with Gershwin news from many fronts. Among the stories:

- ◆ Music legend Paul McCartney was named the third recipient of the Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song, and concerts honoring him were held in Washington, D.C., at both the White House and the Library. I had the pleasure of writing up my impressions of the White House evening for our newsletter.
- ◆ A significant occasion of a different kind at the Library of Congress was the first performance in more than seven decades of the Harold Arlen/Yip Harburg/Ira Gershwin score for the 1934 revue *Life Begins at 8:40*. A recording made shortly afterwards is now available on a PS Classics CD.
- ◆ We also report on the reopening of the Library's Gershwin Room. Original *Life Begins at 8:40* lyric sheets from the Gershwin Collection were on display in the foyer of the concert hall on the day of the revue's performance.
- ◆ We were saddened by the death in June of Adrienne Matzenauer, the last known surviving member of the original cast of *Life Begins at 8:40*, and are grateful to her close friend Miles Kreuger, president of the The Institute of the American Musical, for his comprehensive account of her career.
- ◆ Brian Wilson, another musical legend of the 1960s, has released a "collaborative" recording with George and Ira: *Brian Wilson Reimagines Gershwin*. This pairing of very different sensibilities is bound to inspire passionate responses and we are eager to hear the opinion of Gershwin fans about this unique album.
- ◆ Michael Feinstein is busy as always: his *American Songbook* series will air on PBS in October, and the Feinstein Foundation for the Preservation of the Great American Songbook has announced that it will inaugurate its Indiana home on January 29, 2011. Be sure to read Michael's article about Ira's impact on him and on these projects.

On a personal note, I recently received a wonderful honor when I was appointed to the Library of Congress James Madison Council. My fellow council members and I act as advisors to the Librarian of Congress on matters pertaining to the future of the Library.

Most of you have probably read the letter I sent to our mailing list in July regarding the closing of the San Francisco archives. During the nearly 20 years I have managed the Ira Gershwin estate, the archives have been an integral part of our organization and have been the source of an untold amount of information for Gershwin recordings, performances, and books. In early 2011, the archival collection will be transferred to Washington, D.C., where it will become part of the Gershwin Collection in the Library of Congress Music Division. The business side of the estate will continue to operate out of San Francisco.

WHAT IRA TAUGHT ME

Celebrated for his interpretations of the Great American Songbook, Michael Feinstein is also a tireless musical sleuth and preservationist, salvaging priceless material from the past – including show orchestrations, music manuscripts, and recordings. His three-part American Songbook series, a personal journey featuring live performances, musical rescue missions, film clips, and his own insights into popular music and culture in 20th century America, will air on PBS on October 6, 13, and 20, 2010. The programs revisit the 1950s and '60s as personified by Frank Sinatra, Nat “King” Cole, and Rosemary Clooney, examine the role of popular music during World War II, and recall the musical legacy of the Jazz Age.

As Michael relates in the following piece, Ira Gershwin had an enormous influence on him, which inspired not only the PBS series, but also the establishment of the Michael Feinstein Foundation for the Preservation of the Great American Songbook.

One of the remarkable things about life is that we never know where we will be led or what might happen around the corner. Things can change so quickly and immutably, then suddenly we are living experiences that were undreamt of a moment earlier. Little did I know how thoroughly the path of my life would be altered the day I met Ira, in July of 1977. June Levant (devoted widow of Oscar) will always be of blessed memory, for it was she who believed in me and encouraged me during my fallow piano bar phase, and generously introduced me to Leonore and Ira Gershwin. Without her imprimatur I never would have had the required pedigree necessary to get through the door of the Gershwin Plantation (so named, I believe, by Harold Arlen).

With open arms, Lee hired me initially to catalogue their collection of unique phonograph records, but in the process, as I worked in close proximity to Ira, he began to wonder about this 20-year-old kid who seemed to know something about his songs as well as their history. In fact, since discovering *Rhapsody in Blue* in my early teens, my life had become consumed with a passion for all things Gershwin – and I learned every Gershwin song I could lay my hands on as well, and researched George and Ira’s lives as best I could in the Luddite, pre-Internet age. The cementing of my relationship with Ira came the day I whistled the verse to “Beginner’s Luck” and he expressed shock that someone as young as I could know such an obscure opus. He then started quizzing me about the depth of my knowledge and shook his head in disbelief that anyone of my generation would have such an interest in his accomplishments. When I started talking about some other bit of arcane Gershwini-ana, he stared at me for a moment and then, with an expression of mock suspicion, said, “How many more like you are there?” After



PHOTO: DAVE DAVIDSON, HUDSON WEST PRODUCTIONS

that he not only treated me as a musical equal, but also opened the floodgates and shared many episodes of his life with one amazing story following another. At the same time he unknowingly but methodically taught me about his work and approach to lyrics and songwriting, with each session becoming a virtual master class. Ira was a born teacher.

As we grew closer Ira confided more of his private feelings about his life and, while he was content in some ways, he also looked hard at his mistakes and regrets. His reticence in life impeded him in ways that he later rued, but he never knew how to be different. His humor carried him through many travails, and his faithfulness to friends and colleagues gained him comfort in his later years as those he had earlier helped and nourished returned the favor with visits and communications. He was adored and appreciated, and on his good days basked in such appreciation.

His legacy lives on through me, and because he shared what I couldn’t have learned elsewhere, instilled in me the importance of sharing personal knowledge, life experience, and the art of caring with others, especially those who are younger. It is because of Ira that I have such a keen sense of preservation of the musical past and the burning desire to pass it on. He is the reason I created the Michael Feinstein Foundation for the Preservation of the Great American Songbook, with our historical website and master classes, and our plans for educational programs, an archive, and eventual research center, which will be located in Carmel, Indiana, just outside Indianapolis. The upcoming PBS series *Michael Feinstein’s American Songbook* is really just a love letter to Ira.

It all started with Lee and Ira caring about a somewhat lost kid from Columbus, Ohio, and giving him a gift that changed his life forever. For that I can only say, “Thank you Lee and Ira. I love you, wherever you are.”

– Michael Feinstein

PAUL McCARTNEY RECEIVES GERSHWIN PRIZE

Paul McCartney, whose many accolades include a knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II and an honorary doctorate of music from Yale University, added another distinction to his resumé earlier this year. On June 2, Sir Paul became the third recipient of the Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song. The medal was presented to him by President Barack Obama at a celebratory concert in the East Room of the White House with headliners from across the musical spectrum playing covers of McCartney songs. The previous evening a recital saluting McCartney's achievements as a classical composer was held in the Library of Congress. PBS aired the White House concert on July 28; the 90-minute broadcast also included an excerpt from the Library of Congress program.

AT THE COOLIDGE AUDITORIUM

A capacity crowd filled the 488-seat Coolidge Auditorium in the Library of Congress on June 1 for a program of selections from *Working Classical*, a 1999 EMI recording of orchestral and string quartet arrangements of songs and other pieces by Paul McCartney. The audience included Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and other members of the House of Representatives, the two previous winners of the Gershwin Prize – Paul Simon and Stevie Wonder – and the performers scheduled to appear in the White House concert the following evening.

The evening featured the Loma Mar Quartet (Krista Bennion Feeny and Anca Nicolau, violins; Joanna Hood, viola; and Myron Lutzke, cello), which had participated on *Working Classical*. After introductory remarks by Librarian of Congress James H. Billington and Speaker of the House Pelosi (“Tonight we are welcoming musical royalty,” she said), the quartet played the nine song adaptations from the album, among them “Warm and Beautiful,” “My Love,” and “The Lovely Linda.” (Nearly all of the songs had an association with McCartney’s late wife, Linda, and had been arranged as string quartet pieces for memorial services for her in England and the United States.) Using the George Gershwin piano, which had been moved across the corridor from its home in the Library’s Gershwin Room for the occasion (see article on the reopening of the Gershwin



OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY SAMANTHA APPLETON

Room on page 9), internationally acclaimed Chinese pianist Lang Lang sailed effortlessly through McCartney’s virtuosic “A Leaf.”

Coming onstage to conclude the program, the affable, ever youthful-looking McCartney talked about the “mystery” of being a musician. “Some of the songs you write, you don’t know where they come from,” he said. “It’s a very mysterious, magical process... And the song we’re going to do now as we finish this evening is a song that came to me in a dream. That’s pretty magic – just wake up one morning

with this tune in your head. And then over 3,000 people go and record it... It goes like this.” Accompanied by the Loma Mar Quartet, he then proceeded to play “Yesterday.” At the end of the intimate, nostalgic performance (incorporated as the final sequence of the White House concert on PBS), the audience rose to its feet and wouldn’t let McCartney leave the stage. After thinking for a moment, he loosened his tie and brought the evening to a close with “Blackbird.”

At the post-concert dinner (vegetarian out of respect for the honoree) on the balcony surrounding the Library’s Great Hall, Stevie Wonder toasted his fellow Gershwin Prize winner “as a friend and someone I truly love” and, probably echoing the sentiments of everyone in attendance, wished him “happiness forever.”

– Abigail Kimball



OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY PETE SOUZA

McCartney and Wonder duet on “Ebony and Ivory” at the White House

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

Being in the White House is an experience unto itself. Don’t tell me you can’t feel the presence of the ghosts of those who have been there before you; from Politics, the Arts, Science...the best and the brightest have occupied the space you are occupying right now. I have been fortunate to have been there three times; twice for the Gershwin Prize and once when my son was a White House Intern for two years under President Clinton. But the feeling is renewed each time.

Photos with President and Michelle Obama and Sir Paul come first. I look around the room and see David Axelrod, Elvis Costello, Stevie Wonder, the Jonas Brothers, Herbie Hancock, Jerry Seinfeld, Rahm Emanuel, Faith Hill and others, each in a little group politely and quietly waiting a turn with the Pres and Sir Paul. It’s the classic reminder that we all put our pants on one leg at a time.

The East Room, the venue of the Gershwin Prize show, is packed with TV and audio equipment. Two flying boom cameras are waiting to conk guests standing unexpectedly in the way. When the President enters, there is electricity in the room. He speaks briefly about the difficulties the country is facing at the moment, especially the Gulf of Mexico oil leak. He seems to give the audience confidence that, although it is a major problem never encountered at such depths before, the gusher will be turned off soon. He reiterates his love of Gershwin songs and his amazement at Sir Paul’s catalog.

The show starts, and except for a little blip when a roadie forgets to put Stevie Wonder’s harmonica in the right place, continues flawlessly for eighty-five minutes of unforgettable, great entertainment. It is on the PBS website at <http://video.pbs.org/program/1073769600/>. Don’t miss it.

– *Michael Strunsky*

SONG LIST FROM WHITE HOUSE BROADCAST (in order of performance on PBS)

- “Got to Get You Into My Life” – Paul McCartney
- “We Can Work It Out” – Stevie Wonder
- “Drive My Car” – Jonas Brothers
- “Mother Nature’s Son” – Jack White
- “The Long and Winding Road” – Faith Hill
- “Blackbird” – Herbie Hancock and Corinne Bailey Rae
- “Penny Lane” – Elvis Costello
- “For No One” – Emmylou Harris
- “Celebration” – Lang Lang
- “Band on the Run” – Dave Grohl
- “Ebony and Ivory”
– Stevie Wonder and Paul McCartney
- “Michelle” – Paul McCartney
- “Eleanor Rigby” – Paul McCartney
- “Let It Be” – Paul McCartney
- “Hey Jude” – Paul McCartney and entire ensemble
- “Yesterday” – Paul McCartney and
the Loma Mar Quartet

“A UNIVERSALLY ADMIRER MUSICIAN”

Summing up Sir Paul’s prize-worthy career in a program note for the Coolidge Auditorium tribute, Librarian of Congress James H. Billington called McCartney “a transformative figure in the genre of popular music and, indeed, in the entire soundscape of our time. From his early years with the Beatles, to his work as a solo artist and with Wings, to his award-winning classical works, to his current *Up and Coming* tour, Paul McCartney has never stopped generating original, imaginative music.” The Library’s collection, Dr. Billington noted, contains “virtually every piece of [McCartney’s] music, printed and recorded”; bestowing the award “celebrate[s] the Library’s unique role in preserving all forms of music for future generations.”



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PHOTOS / SOLOMON HALE SELASSIE

Hats on for “*Quartet Erotica*”: (L to R) Graham Rowat, Philip Chaffin, Christopher Fitzgerald, and Brad Oscar

COMING BACK TO *LIFE*

Since it took my brother, among other activities, some twenty months (eleven to compose, nine to orchestrate) to complete *Porgy and Bess*, my job as collaborator on the lyrics wasn't a continuous one. I was able to keep busy in that period on two other pieces: *Life Begins at 8:40* and *Ziegfeld Follies of 1936*.”

— Ira Gershwin

Life Begins at 8:40 was a 1934 Broadway revue with lyrics by E. Y. (Yip) Harburg and Ira Gershwin (longtime friends ever since attending both Townsend Harris High School and City College in New York together) and music by Harold Arlen. It starred Ray Bolger, Bert Lahr, Frances Williams, and Luella Gear, garnered enthusiastic notices from the critics (“the best tunes and lyrics of any show of the past five years,” wrote Eugene Burr in *The Billboard*), and ran for a solid 237 performances. But after a post-Broadway tour, the revue and its score — with the exception of three hit songs, “You’re a Builder-Upper,” “Fun To Be Fooled,” and “Let’s Take a Walk Around the Block” — disappeared for more than seven decades. On March 22, 2010, the long-neglected score came back to life in a concert presentation at the Library of Congress’s Coolidge Auditorium. The culmination of a restoration project under the auspices of the Library’s Music Division, the performance proved to be a revelation. Arlen’s infectious, graceful melodies for operetta-like ballads, upbeat rhythm numbers, and humorous specialty songs and Harburg and Gershwin’s witty, often topical lyrics still resonated more than 75 years after they were first heard.

The evening’s stellar cast of musical theater performers, under the baton of Aaron Gandy, featured Broadway headliners Faith Prince, Rebecca Luker, and Brad Oscar, 2010 Tony nominees Kate Baldwin (*Finian’s Rainbow*), Christopher Fitzgerald (*Finian’s Rainbow*) and Montego Glover (*Memphis*), and Philip Chaffin, Graham Rowat, and Jessica Stone, supported by an

11-member ensemble and a 22-piece orchestra. Accommodating such large forces on the Coolidge’s small stage was clearly a challenge even for a concert presentation. Director David Glenn Armstrong managed to turn what might have been a liability into an unexpectedly effective theatrical device by having the principals make their entrances through the sliding doors at the rear of the stage and down the aisle between the orchestra players.

The revue’s title was Ira’s suggestion. As he and his collaborators were leaving a luncheon, not having come up with a title, he spotted a copy of Walter Boughton Pitkin’s nonfiction best-seller *Life Begins at Forty* on a table. “I turned to the others,” Ira later wrote, “and said, ‘How about ‘Life Begins at Eight-Forty?’” His clever play on 8:40, the usual Broadway starting time of the era, stuck.

Culture, politics, sex, love, even the theater — nothing escaped the gently barbed observations of Ira, an experienced satirist with *Strike Up the Band*, *Of Thee I Sing*, and *Let ‘Em Eat Cake* to his credit, and Yip, the activist lyric writer of “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” (Since all the lyrics in the revue are attributed jointly to Ira and Yip, it is impossible to know which of them was responsible for a particular lyric.)

In keeping with its title, the revue opens with “Life Begins (at Exactly 8:40 or Thereabouts),” a cheeky number poking fun at the very people who bring theater to life each night (“Art is art, you mustn’t forget; / Actors are a privileged set. / They’ve been sleeping all day; / Theatre folk are funny that way. / But they wake at eight-forty because / Actors love to get your applause.”)

Like all revues of its time, *Life Begins* consisted of sketches as well as musical numbers. Several writers had provided the sketches. (In what must have been an abundance of riches, a sketch by none other than George S. Kaufman was dropped after the out-of-town opening night in Boston.) The Washington

performance included just one sketch – “C’est la Vie,” Ira and Yip’s takeoff on Noël Coward, ménages à trois, and unexpected denouements to love affairs. The dialogue and accompanying song were delivered with impeccable comic timing and French accents by Christopher Fitzgerald, Brad Oscar, and Faith Prince.

The evening’s many highlights included Montego Glover’s vibrant account of “Shoein’ the Mare,” Kate Baldwin’s airborne “Spring Fever,” and a charming rendition of “Let’s Take a Walk Around the Block” by Graham Rowat and Jessica Stone. The lilting ballad “It Was Long Ago” was beautifully sung by Rebecca Luker, who never broke stride even as she reflected that “Once upon a time ... [People] believed that love / Was a sacred flame / And they married first—Then the baby came.” In the “Quartet Erotica,” De Maupassant, Boccaccio, Balzac, and Rabelais, deliciously portrayed by Chaffin, Fitzgerald, Oscar, and Rowat, bemoan



Broadway headliner Faith Prince in rehearsal. Library of Congress Photos / Abby Brack.

that “The dirt we used to dish up, / Sad to say, / Wouldn’t shock a bishop / Of today; / A volume like *Ulysses* / Makes us look like four big sissies.”

In the finale, “Life Begins at City Hall,” Ira and Yip have fun with some political icons of the 1930s, among them New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia (“Delancey Street has flowers / The Bow’ry has no bums; / With chromium-plated showers, / He has beautified the slums.”) and Eleanor Roosevelt (“At seven o’clock this morning in Poughkeepsie, / I spoke at the opening of a bridle path; / Had breakfast in Savannah; / Then flew to Indiana / To dedicate a ladies’ Turkish bath.”).

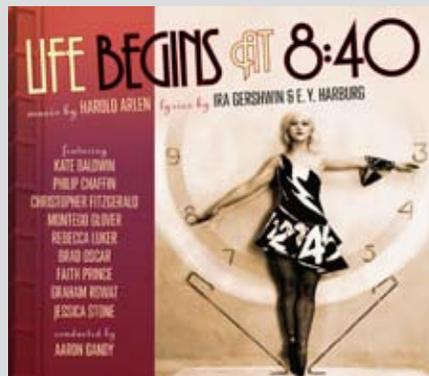
The restoration of *Life Begins at 8:40* was spearheaded by Elizabeth Auman of the Library of Congress’s Music Division with underwriting from the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Trusts and was supervised by Larry Moore.

“A JOYOUS DISC”

A week after the March 22 concert performance at the Library of Congress, the principals reconvened at New York City’s Avatar Studios to lay down the tracks for the PS Classics world première recording of *Life Begins at 8:40*. Conductor Aaron Gandy, under the guidance of producer Tommy Krasker and executive producer Betty Auman, led the singers and a New York-based orchestra through the many musical and lyrical styles of this Arlen/Harburg/Gershwin revue.

In his Playbill review of the album, critic Steven Suskin wrote that *Life Begins at 8:40* would have been “the musical of the season if it had opened in 2009-2010. Or 2008, 2007, 2006, and several more.” J. Peter Bergman, in a review of the CD at www.edgeboston.com, called it “a joyous disc” and expressed amazement that “with so many talents at work ... the show isn’t still running someplace.”

Life Begins at 8:40 was the subject of a lengthy restoration process initiated by Robert Kimball, artistic adviser to the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Trusts, and Mark Trent Goldberg, the late Executive Director of the Trusts. (Mark was the



dedicatee of the Library of Congress concert.) After Mark’s death in 2005, Aaron Gandy and orchestrator Larry Moore stepped in to resurrect this important work of the American Musical Theatre.

Enough material was uncovered at the Gershwin Trusts Archives, the Shubert Archive, and the Library of Congress to piece together and recreate what Tommy Krasker has

described as “Arlen’s most ebullient score.”

Two songs heard at the Library of Congress were not included on the recording: the ballad “I Knew Him When,” sung at the concert by Montego Glover, Kate Baldwin, and Philip Chaffin, and the cynical love lament “A Weekend Cruise,” performed by Kate Baldwin, Graham Rowat, and Brad Oscar. The former had been dropped from the original production during rehearsals, the latter after the New York opening.

The recording was made possible with assistance from the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Trust for the Benefit of the Library of Congress. Further details and audio excerpts can be found at www.psclassics.com.

SOME WORDS ABOUT ADRIENNE MATZENAUER

By Miles Kreuger

Adrienne Matzenauer, believed to be the last surviving principal of *Life Begins at 8:40*, died at ninety-six on June 10, 2010, at her home in Santa Monica, California. She was born in Boston on January 20, 1914, to a distinguished musical family: her mother was the world-famous contralto Margarete Matzenauer, who sang at the Metropolitan Opera from 1911 until 1930; and her father was tenor Edoardo Ferrari-Fontana, whose 1914 debut at the Met caused a sensation.

Forsaking the world of opera, Adrienne at twenty was about to make her Broadway debut as a chorus singer in *Life Begins at 8:40* when good fortune intervened. The show premiered to excellent reviews for its pre-Broadway try-out at Boston's Shubert Theatre on Monday, August 6, 1934. Following the Wednesday matinee, the principal singer, Frances Williams, in the words of *The New York Times* "collapsed...suffering from the after-effects of an appendicitis operation," and Adrienne "was rocketed to a leading role." She took over the song "Shoein' the Mare," while her proud mother looked on.

Williams' other songs were given to Virginia Loomis (of the popular Loomis Sisters), who sadly died at eighteen later that month. When Williams returned and reclaimed her songs, Adrienne was able to continue as a vocal farrier and stopped the show when it finally reached Broadway's Winter Garden on August 27.

While the revue had a lengthy Depression run of 237 performances, Adrienne's next Broadway venture was a study in contrast. Her husband Michael Myerberg produced



Adrienne Matzenauer and Ray Bolger: In 1934 during the tryout of *Life Begins at 8:40* (Above / From the Collection of *The Institute of the American Musical*); "Fifty years after appearing in a show together" (Below / Photo by Allan Studley, Hollywood, Calif., from the Collection of *The Institute of the American Musical*)

and (using the pseudonym Charles March) wrote *Symphony*, a drama that opened at the Cort on April 26, 1935, and closed the next day after three performances.

Adrienne fared no better in Hollywood, where she was to make her film debut in M-G-M's *Camille*. The *Los Angeles Times* reported (and Adrienne concurred): "half an hour before her debut with Greta Garbo, the daughter of an opera star was stricken seriously ill...In make-up and costume she reported on the sound stage and complained of feeling ill and Jean Acker, widow of Rudolf Valentino, stepped into her place." The Internet Movie Database erroneously credits Adrienne (and ignores Acker), but, sad to say, Adrienne never appeared in *Camille* or any other movie. Although she had a thriving career singing on radio and at the most fashionable clubs on both coasts, she never made any commercial phonograph records.

Back in New York, Adrienne was Mary Martin's understudy in *Lute Song*, produced by Myerberg on February 6, 1946, at the Plymouth. Using the abbreviated name "Adrienne," she was featured in Leonard

Sillman's short-lived *If the Shoe Fits* at the New Century on December 5, 1946. In 1948, Adrienne hosted her own pioneering variety television show *Champagne and Orchids* on the DuMont network. In later years, she sang on cruise ships, worked as a nurse, and, after retiring to California, occasionally wrote for the *Los Angeles Times* as Adrienne Fontana. She sparkled and charmed her wide circle of friends until the end and will be greatly missed.

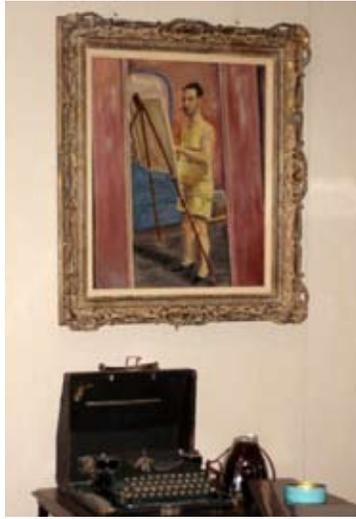
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GERSHWIN ROOM REOPENS

Closed since 2005 because of construction of an underground passage between the Library of Congress and the new U.S. Capitol Visitors Center, the Library's Gershwin Room has reopened. It welcomes visitors with an extensive selection of memorabilia from the George and Ira Gershwin Collection, as well as a new audio/visual kiosk, which includes an 18-minute loop of clips from Gershwin musicals and *Porgy and Bess*.

Both the Gershwin Collection and Gershwin Room are under the aegis of the Library's Music Division. The Collection dates back to 1939, when Ira donated a musical sketch from *Porgy and Bess* to the Library; it has grown exponentially over the years and will expand significantly next year when the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Trusts transfers the Ira Gershwin Archives to the Library (see Letter from Michael Strunsky, the trustee, on page 2). First opened on March 17, 1998 as part of the Library's celebration of the George and Ira Gershwin centennials, the Gershwin Room houses, among a wealth of items documenting the brothers' work, an original George Gershwin-owned piano and metronome, Ira Gershwin's typewriter, typing table and pen, and two of George and Ira's self-portraits: a serious George in a checkered sweater; a humorous Ira clothed in yellow underwear he hand-dyed himself.

The room is located opposite the entrance to the Coolidge Auditorium in the Library's Jefferson Building. Surrounded by



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL OWEN

the ambient audio of Artis Wodehouse's recreations of George Gershwin's piano rolls and William Bolcom playing Gershwin's *Second Prelude*, visitors are immediately drawn into the brothers' world.

Recent additions to the Gershwin Collection now on display include George Gershwin's 1937 portrait of fellow composer Jerome Kern, which Gershwin gave to his friend Harold Arlen. (The painting was donated to the Library by Rita Arlen, Harold's sister-in-law.) Another item, referred to as George Gershwin's "little black book," was presented to the Library in 2009 by Michael Strunsky. This tiny notebook, from 1933 or 1934, contains the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of 113 (mostly) women, including writer Lillian Hellman and composer Ann Ronell as well as numerous stage and screen actresses of the period, some of whom had roles in Gershwin shows.

In one corner of the room is a visitors' guest book, which is filled with enthusiastic comments about the Gershwins and the room: "Awesome to see some original Gershwin music," "Unexpected find while looking for the water fountain – totally wonderful," "Excellent place to pay tribute to such a talented and inspirational pair," "George & Ira – Nice Work."

The staff of the Library's Music Division, and particularly Gershwin Collection curator Ray White, have done an outstanding job creating a serene setting for the contemplation of the lives and works of George and Ira Gershwin.

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Deiran Manning, winner of the ASCAP Foundation Ira Gershwin Scholarship, given annually to a junior-year orchestra member at La Guardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts in New York City. The presentation was made at the Foundation's annual awards ceremony in December 2009. A multi-talented pianist, flutist, vocalist, and composer, Deiran now attends the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, where he plans to pursue a double major

in piano performance and ancient history. Deiran's grandfather, Martin Manning, won a Grammy for his arrangement of Tony Bennett's "I Left My Heart in San Francisco."

San Francisco's **Broadway by the Bay**, whose recent production of the Gershwins' *Crazy for You* won three awards from the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle: Atilio Tribuzi for Best Musical Director, Robin Tribuzi for Best Choreography, and Michael Ramsaur for Best Lighting Design.



PHOTO BY CLAY PATRICK MCBRIDE. COURTESY WALT DISNEY RECORDS.

UNMISTAKABLY GERSHWIN - AND WILSON

Brian Wilson has described his new album as “the most spiritual project I’ve ever worked on.” In a seemingly unlikely venture, *Brian Wilson Reimagines Gershwin*, the legendary founder of the Beach Boys has delved into the musical past and melded his signature harmonies and arrangements with a number of familiar songs from the Gershwin catalog. The album also offers two brand-new “collaborations,” which came about when the George and Ira Gershwin estates and their publisher, Warner/Chappell Music, made more than 100 piano demos of unfinished or unreleased Gershwin songs and melodies available to Wilson after learning that he was contemplating a Gershwin recording.

Wilson’s efforts as a co-writer pay off with “The Like in I Love You,” based on “Will You Remember Me?” a 1924 number cut from *Lady, Be Good!*, and “Nothing But Love,” adapted from “Say My Say,” an unfinished 1929 Gershwin song. Taking a musical germ from each original melody, Wilson and his collaborator Scott Bennett have fashioned new tunes and lyrics that will only add to the luster of this remarkable album.

The well-known slow theme of George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* opens and closes the recording, but Wilson’s famous layered vocal techniques add a novel twist. In a USA Today article, Wilson, a fan of George Gershwin’s music since he first heard the *Rhapsody in Blue* at age 4 or 5, said, “Every note I sang here, I sang in Gershwin’s shadow.” He also explained that he wanted to make the songs “sound like

Gershwin and Wilson combined.” From his bossa nova version of “S Wonderful” to his harmony-filled versions of other George and Ira standards such as “Someone to Watch Over Me,” “I Got Rhythm,” and “They Can’t Take That Away from Me,” he achieves his goal superbly; the songs are unmistakably Gershwin, the interpretations unmistakably Brian Wilson.

Disney/Pearl Records released the CD and a special vinyl edition of *Brian Wilson Reimagines Gershwin* in August; a bonus track of “Let’s Call the Whole Thing Off” is available for download on iTunes. Major promotion of the recording includes significant concert appearances and television performances.

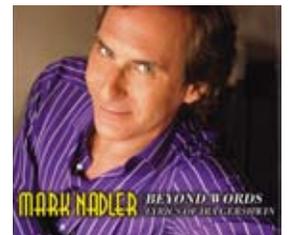
Further information can be found at Wilson’s website, www.brianwilson.com.

MORE MARK AND IRA

A new CD, *Beyond Words: Lyrics of Ira Gershwin*, is Mark Nadler’s latest exploration of Ira Gershwin’s work. Nadler’s take on Ira has come in many forms over the years: from his duet recordings and cabaret appearances with vocalist K. T. Sullivan to his uproarious one-man show spoofing the Russian composers listed in Ira’s lyric to “Tchaikowsky (and Other Russians)” to his newest one-man show ... *His Lovely Wife, Ira*, which was the inspiration for *Beyond Words*. (Nadler recently won the Best Solo Performance award from the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle for ... *His Lovely Wife*.) In all instances, Nadler’s musicianship, orchestral piano style, and telling way with a lyric distinguish his performances.

Beyond Words features many rarely-heard songs: “I’ll Supply the Title (You’ll Supply the Tune),” one of the few lyrics Ira wrote in the years immediately after his brother’s death, “It Happens Ev’ry Time” from the 1953 film musical *Give a Girl a Break*, and “Dissertation on the State of Bliss,” originally sung by Bing Crosby in the 1954 film drama *The Country Girl*. The album’s standards include “Embraceable You,” “Someone to Watch Over Me,” and “Love Is Here to Stay.” The CD is available at www.marknadler.com.

A “wonderfully buoyant tribute,” said New York Times critic Stephen Holden in his review of *Gershwin...Here to Stay*, K.T. Sullivan and Mark Nadler’s cabaret show (with special guest pianist Jon Weber), which ran for five weeks earlier this year in the Oak Room at New York’s Algonquin Hotel.



ANOTHER OPENING NIGHT FOR A STAR IS BORN

Hollywood's Grauman's Chinese Theatre hadn't seen anything like it in years: the April 22, 2010, opening night of the Turner Classic Movies Film Festival. And what could be more appropriate to launch a four-day celebration of classic Hollywood style than a gala showing – in a new, digitally restored version – of *A Star Is Born*, the 1954 Warner Bros. musical starring Judy Garland and James Mason and featuring the songs of Harold Arlen and Ira Gershwin?

A capacity audience of movie buffs, with a sprinkling of vintage movie stars, walked the red carpet on Hollywood Boulevard under the glare of spotlights and the click and whirr of cameras. Among those in attendance were Tony Curtis, Eli Wallach, Eva Marie Saint, Tippi Hedren, Tab Hunter, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Ernest Borgnine, Martin Landau, and Jacqueline Bisset. Judy Garland's daughter Lorna Luft and Michael Feinstein, Ira's assistant during his last years, were on hand to lend their support to the event.



Long-time Turner Classic Movies host Robert Osborne introduced the film and applauded the heroic efforts of the late film historian Ronald Haver, whose dedication to finding every last scrap of audio and visual material from *A Star Is Born* led to the 1983 restoration of missing material. As Mr. Haver related in his 1988 book, *A Star Is Born: The Making of the 1954 Movie and Its 1983 Restoration*, within weeks of the film's debut on September 29, 1954, 27 minutes were cut at the behest of studio bosses Harry and Jack Warner, who deemed the original 181-minute running time too long for the movie to be shown often enough each day to make a profit. A truncated version was sent back to theaters nationwide, and was the one seen on television and in second-run movie houses for years; however, the creators' original vision was fondly remembered, and there was just enough time left in the early 1980s to recover what remained in vaults and film libraries around the world of the cut material. Still photos were used to fill in gaps where footage was missing.

The nearly three-hour festival screening (including intermission) was followed by an exclusive after-party hosted by Vanity Fair at The Kress nightclub, just down Hollywood Boulevard from the theater.

Warner Home Video released a deluxe Blu-ray DVD of *A Star Is Born* on June 22. The 2-disc set does not include any new footage, although rumors continue to persist that a complete copy of the uncut version of the film exists. Nonetheless, the package is still stunning: the digitally-restored film as well as four hours of extras, including deleted and alternate scenes, rare music from the recording sessions, and documentary footage of the gala 1954 premiere at the Pantages Theatre in Hollywood.

COVERING IRA

Prompted by the success of their 2007 volume on George Gershwin, authors Thomas Inglis and Janice Grower have compiled *Words by Ira Gershwin – Sheet Music: A Pictorial Price Guide* (Vena Books, \$39.95, 60 pages). A colorful collection of sheet music covers with accompanying narrative, it encompasses Ira's career from "The Real American Folk Song (Is a Rag)" – written in 1918 but not published until 1958 – to the 1992 Tony award-winning musical *Crazy for You*. This attractive book will be prized by sheet music collectors looking for pricing information, especially those also curious about the stories behind some of Ira's famous and not-so-famous songs.





IRA AND LEONORE GERSHWIN TRUSTS

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AROUND THE WORLD WITH *PORGY AND BESS*

A calendar of recent and upcoming productions

Opéra de Lyon, Lyon, France

2 performances – July 16-17, 2010
2 performances – September 9-10, 2010

**Edinburgh International Festival Society,
Edinburgh, Scotland**

3 performances – August 14, 16 & 17, 2010

**Fondazione Teatro del Maggio Musicale
Fiorentino, Firenze, Italy**

1 concert performance – September 21, 2010

Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Reykjavik, Iceland

1 concert performance – October 7, 2010

**New Orleans Opera Association,
New Orleans, Louisiana**

2 performances – October 15 & 17, 2010

Dayton Opera, Dayton, Ohio

3 performances – October 23, 29 & 31, 2010

Fondazione Teatro di San Carlo, Naples, Italy

2 concert performances – October 30-31, 2010

The Israeli Opera, Tel Aviv, Israel

14 performances – November 12-27, 2010

**University of Kentucky Opera Theatre,
Lexington, Kentucky**

6 performances – January 28-February 6, 2011

**Atlanta Opera, Cobb Energy Performing Arts
Centre, Atlanta, Georgia**

6 performances - February 26-March 6, 2011

Akron Symphony Orchestra, Akron, Ohio

1 concert performance – April 16, 2011

Court Theatre, Chicago, Illinois

6 weeks of performances – May 12-June 19, 2011

Ithaca College School of Music, Ithaca, New York

1 concert performance – May 13, 2011

**Nassau City Opera Company, Nassau,
The Bahamas**

4 performances – July 4, 6, 8 & 10, 2011