

# WORDS WITHOUT MUSIC

*The Ira Gershwin Newsletter*



No. 10, Fall 2016

## THAT'S THE TICKET!

THE GERSHWINS AND POLITICAL SATIRE



Inside:  
George S. Kaufman & Morrie Ryskind  
Take on Washington

# WORDS WITHOUT MUSIC

## The Ira Gershwin Newsletter

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## Contents

Letter from Michael Strunsky	2
Feature Story: Stars and Swipes	3
National Recording Registry	9
Gershwin Prize to Willie Nelson	11
Update: Gershwin Critical Edition	12
Update: Gershwin Website	13
In the News / On the Horizon	14
<i>An American in Paris</i> tour dates	Back cover

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Cover: William Gaxton and Lois Moran make their case for love in *Of Thee I Sing* (1931)

Dear readers,

Ira Gershwin's name is, quite rightly, inextricably tied to the wealth of timeless songs he wrote with his brother George. But Ira's career encompassed many successes with composers who didn't share his last name. Some of those songs, and the shows and films in which they were featured, are among his most famous and popular, while others remain ripe for rediscovery.


Three years before George and Ira collaborated on *Lady, Be Good!* Ira—under the pseudonym Arthur Francis, which he derived from the first names of his younger brother and sister—wrote his first successful Broadway show, *Two Little Girls in Blue*, with composers Vincent Youmans and Paul Lannin. (Its run in 1921 bested George's 1920 edition of the *George White Scandals* by one performance.)

Even during the years George and Ira struck Broadway gold or critical success with *Strike Up the Band*, *Girl Crazy*, *Of Thee I Sing*, *Porgy and Bess*, and more, Ira continued to work with other writers. Two lavish revues—*Life Begins at 8:40* (1934), written with composer Harold Arlen and lyricist Yip Harburg, and *Ziegfeld Follies of 1936*, written with composer Vernon Duke—had successful runs and featured memorable songs like “Fun to Be Fooled” and the classic “I Can't Get Started.”

Struggling with grief and the myriad of business details that followed George's death in 1937, Ira found it hard to begin to write again. But when he returned to work, with composer Kurt Weill and librettist Moss Hart, the result was his most successful Broadway show ever, the phantasmagorical *Lady in the Dark* (1941), a show that was so lucrative, it allowed Ira to pay off his entire mortgage!

Other stage and movie projects followed over the next 13 years. *Cover Girl* (Jerome Kern, 1944), *Where Do We Go from Here?* and *The Firebrand of Florence* (both with Kurt Weill, 1945), *Park Avenue* (Arthur Schwartz, 1946), *The Barkleys of Broadway* (Harry Warren, 1949), and *Give a Girl a Break* (Burton Lane, 1953) may not always have struck a chord with audiences, but they are filled to the brim with the wit, wordplay, and erudition that are Ira's hallmark.

My uncle's career effectively came to an end in 1954 with two movie scores written with Harold Arlen: *The Country Girl*, featuring an Academy Award-winning performance by Grace Kelly, and *A Star Is Born*, which included Judy Garland's iconic performance of Ira's third Oscar-nominated song, “The Man That Got Away.” Ira would spend the remainder of his life caring for the legacy of his brother George, only gradually coming to realize that his own work was equally deserving of recognition by posterity.

Audio excerpts of many of Ira Gershwin's songs with his brother, as well as Arlen, Weill, and the other composers he worked with, can be heard by visiting the Gershwin website at [www.gershwin.com](http://www.gershwin.com). Just look for the  icon and have a listen!

—Michael Strunsky





*"But what the hell! / You'll do as well!" Paul McCullough and Bobby Clark with the ladies of the chorus in the 1930 version of Strike Up the Band*

## STARS AND SWIPES

### The Poisoned, Patriotic, Political Pens and Piano of the Gershwins, Kaufman, and Ryskind

by Laurence Maslon

The current presidential election is so absurd, so hyperbolic, and so ridiculous that no one could possibly make this stuff up. However, if one were looking for a cohort of talented and witty musical comedy writers who *could* make this stuff up, you couldn't do any better than the Gershwin brothers, George S. Kaufman, and Morrie Ryskind. That team pulled off not one but three interrelated groundbreaking satirical musicals—*Strike Up the Band*, *Of Thee I Sing*, and *Let 'Em Eat Cake*—all produced within the astonishing span of seven years. Before they started, political satire on the American stage was a tame, toothless thing; after they were through, Broadway had

not only played host to a corpus of comic operettas worthy of Gilbert and Sullivan, but had also seen the musical theater form evolve and mature. Theatrically, the Gershwins & Co. created an American Revolution.

Politics on the American musical stage before the Gershwins fell into two categories: sheer patriotism and the minor jocularities of the revue sketch. The former was perfectly served by George M. Cohan and his jingoistic shows, songs, and sketches in the early part of the century. On the other hand, moments on the stage that skewered public policy in high places were few and far between; social manners of a local nature were more the



Ira Gershwin and George Gershwin (top) with George S. Kaufman (lower left) and Morrie Ryskind: Collaborators on three of the greatest satires in American musical theater history

topic of satire in early 1920s revues. The *Ziegfeld Follies of 1919* tackled the incipient inconveniences of Prohibition in sketch and song; the 1927 edition featured Eddie Cantor burlesquing Mayor Jimmy Walker in an Irving Berlin tune, “My New York.” With the exception of a sketch poking fun of Calvin Coolidge in the *Garrick Gaieties* of 1925, Washington seemed very far away and, of course, Manhattan was the center of the known universe.

In 1926, the Manhattan climate was one of self-satisfied ease and conspicuous consumption. What summed it up better than the election of James J. Walker as mayor of New York City, a renowned playboy whose charm far exceeded his political talent—and a songwriter no less! (He had a hit with “Will You Love Me in December as You Do in May?” in 1905.) This was the cultural backdrop when producer Edgar Selwyn had the notion to unite the Gershwins—since 1924 the reigning musical team on Broadway—with the recent champion of Broadway comedy, George S. Kaufman, to create a new musical. Kaufman was the

most successful comic playwright of his day, having teamed up with Marc Connelly on several hit spoofs about American business. He had just finished his collaboration with Irving Berlin on *The Cocoanuts*, which was the Marx Brothers’ first Broadway success written by skilled professionals. Working with the Marx quartet was an exhausting proposition for Kaufman, and the exercise made him less than enthusiastic about taking on a new musical. Still, Selwyn prevailed and the prospect of working with the Gershwins was a welcome one

Kaufman, left to his own devices, came up with an extraordinarily original script for the day, *Strike Up the Band*. A broad satire of American greed, self-serving public relations, business chicanery and war, it took swipes at industry, the government, and the military, with the road to madness led by Horace J. Fletcher, a megalomaniacal businessman who owns America’s most successful cheese factory. (No kidding—his middle initial is “J,” the same as another businessman who just happens to be one of the current presidential candidates.) When Switzerland gets its dander up after Fletcher imposes a tariff on imported cheese (no fan of trade agreements, he), the roused European nation threatens war. Fletcher then offers to underwrite the war with Switzerland in exchange for 25 percent of the profits and his name gloriously branded on all war paraphernalia; he apostrophizes his unconventional *chutzpah* in “A Typical Self-Made American,” while the army admits in the title number:

We’re in a bigger, better war,  
For your patriotic pastime.  
We don’t know what we’re fighting for—  
But we didn’t know the last time!

The Gershwins matched Kaufman’s verve with a score that, although it reflects the patchwork character of the story, shows a team working its way through a new challenge, with Ira borrowing liberally from his idol, W. S. Gilbert. More provocatively, the show seems to have been written as a Marx Brothers production without the Marx Brothers. As a character, Fletcher seems tailored for Groucho; there are also supporting parts for a mute comedian and even a stuffy dowager who’s Fletcher’s romantic foil. (No surprise since Kaufman wrote *Strike Up the Band* in between assignments for the Marx Brothers, *The Cocoanuts* and *Animal Crackers*.)

None of this anarchic innovation seems to have impressed out-of-town audiences; first in Long Branch, New Jersey, in August of 1927, then in Philadelphia. Alas, as pugnacious and imaginative as the story seems, the plot was—as perhaps befits



# STRIKE UP THE BAND / OF THEE I SING / LET 'EM EAT CAKE

## A Look at the Full Recordings

### STRIKE UP THE BAND

In 1990, the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Trusts, in partnership with the Library of Congress, inaugurated a series of restored versions of the Broadway shows of George and Ira Gershwin. After the successful release of *Girl Crazy*, the 1927 and 1930 editions of *Strike Up the Band* were restored by Tommy Krasker and recorded with a cast that featured Broadway stars Rebecca Luker, Jason Graae, Juliet Lambert, and Don Chastain.

The Trusts' own Roxbury Recordings, in conjunction with Elektra Nonesuch, released the full 1927 show, plus selected songs from the 1930 production, in 1991. Available on compact disc and at Apple's iTunes store.

Tommy Krasker released the full recording of the 1930 production on his own PS Classics label in 2011. It also is available on compact disc and at iTunes.

### OF THEE I SING

A cast recording of the short-lived 1952 Broadway revival (72 performances at the Ziegfeld Theater), which starred Jack Carson as Wintergreen, Betty Oakes as Mary, and Paul Hartman as Throttlebottom, was released by Capitol Records and is currently available on




Advertisement for the 1972 television production

compact disc from Broadway Angel and on iTunes.

*Of Thee I Sing* was seen on television on October 24, 1972, in a 90-minute CBS broadcast that capitalized on the popularity of *All in the Family* star Carroll O'Connor (Wintergreen) and the *Mary Tyler Moore Show*'s Cloris Leachman (Mary). Columbia released the soundtrack just in time for that year's presidential election. DRG Records reissued it on compact disc in 2002.

Fifteen years later, a restored version of the satire was performed in concert by Michael Tilson Thomas and the Orchestra of St. Luke's at New York City's Brooklyn Academy of Music. Stars Larry Kert (Wintergreen), Maureen McGovern (Mary), and Jack Gilford (Throttlebottom) can be heard on the CBS Masterworks recording which followed shortly thereafter. It can now be heard on compact disc and on iTunes.

### LET 'EM EAT CAKE

The only full recording of the sequel to *Of Thee I Sing* was also captured on audio tape by CBS Masterworks in 1987. Tilson Thomas conducted, with Kert, McGovern, and Gilford joined by David Garrison as the union agitator Kruger. Available on compact disc and on iTunes. 

a musical about Swiss cheese—full of holes. After two weeks of dismal box office, the show folded, bringing a quick and unimagined end to what Selwyn billed as “the ultimate collaboration of the generation.” Kaufman put it more succinctly: “Satire is what closes on Saturday night.”

When Selwyn tried to revive the show three years later, Kaufman had no new ideas and was busy on a number of other projects, including his first collaboration with Moss Hart. He graciously suggested the young writer Morrie Ryskind (who had previously collaborated with Kaufman and the Marx Brothers and—not coincidentally—had written the Calvin Coolidge

sketch in 1925) to give the book a fresh approach. While the Gershwins revised the score, Ryskind softened the satire by swapping out cheese for chocolate, reconceiving the piece for the anodyne comedy team of Clark and McCullough, and wrapping the whole thing in a dream sequence. “What I had to do,” Ryskind said years later, “was rewrite *War and Peace* for the Three Stooges.” The revised *Strike Up the Band* became the first musical to open in the 1930s and the hit that had eluded Selwyn on the first go-round.

Kaufman was quite pleased that the show had finally made good (he accepted a credit as author of the original idea). As

the story goes, Kaufman accompanied Ryskind to the second night and, in the back of the house, turned to his colleague and said, “Next time, let’s do one for ourselves.” They set their ambitions higher, moving from the shadows of presidential power straight into the thick of it. Their new show, provisionally titled *Tweedledee*, was to be about a running battle between two indistinguishable political parties over a new national anthem. They approached the Gershwins, who were suitably intrigued but were contracted to go to Hollywood in late 1930 to write the songs for the film *Delicious*. Kaufman and Ryskind agreed to write a scenario that the brothers could take with them to the West Coast.

The librettists soon realized that their plot had only a limited amount of gas in its tank. Sooner or later—as Ryskind pointed out to the unsentimental Kaufman’s chagrin, no doubt—some boy-and-girl stuff had to make an appearance in their political satire. In fact, it was to be central to their farce. The anthem idea was jettisoned completely and a new story and new title emerged: *Of Thee I Sing*, about a presidential candidate and his rocky and romantic road to the White House. John P. Wintergreen (played by the popular leading man William Gaxton), a political figure so vacuous he can only run on the “love” platform, jilts the curvaceous winner of a beauty contest concocted to gain media attention and marries the much more sensible Mary Turner (the musical comedy debut of Hollywood actress Lois Moran). Wintergreen is barely inaugurated before the clouds of impeachment swirl around his administration, whipped up by the jilted contest winner and a voracious media.

Kaufman and Ryskind were abetted in their new venture—although they might have wished otherwise—by the Depression. By late 1930, the nation’s spirits were such that they could be buoyed by sheer escapism or roused to bitter laughter by

incisive sarcasm, and the new show provided both. Franklin D. Roosevelt was still eleven months away from being elected and the playing field was littered with incompetent politicians. The book writers took for their models Warren G. Harding, who

was elected, it was said, only because “he looked presidential,” and Mayor Jimmy Walker, whose song-and-dance bonhomie was co-opted for Wintergreen. (Could it be coincidental they shared the same initials?)

The book writers also added a character that would epitomize the irrelevance of career politicians: the thoroughly befuddled Alexander P. Throttlebottom (crafted for the endearing comedian Victor Moore), who becomes vice president on the ticket by stumbling into a smoke-filled hotel room. Throttlebottom anticipates, by almost a year, the indelible comment by John Nance Garner, FDR’s veep, that the vice presidency wasn’t “worth a bucket of warm piss.” In the musical, Throttlebottom requires a basic tutorial from Wintergreen on the mantle of the presidency. Wintergreen advises him that you only make a speech when you want the stock market to go down. “What do you do when you want the stock market to go up?” asks Throttlebottom.” “Boy, wouldn’t I like to know!” responds Wintergreen.

*Of Thee I Sing* was also a show nearly completely conceived in the service of narrative, more than a decade before *Oklahoma!* One of its most remarkable qualities is how the landscape of national grass roots politics is supplanted by Lower East Side electioneering in Ira Gershwin’s lyrics. In his panegyric to Wintergreen, he writes: “He’s the man the people choose / Loves the

Irish and the Jews!” References to blintzes, *alter kackers*, and the Cohns abound in the score. The Gershwins fully Americanized the achievements of Gilbert and Sullivan, creating a Delancey Street equivalent of G & S’s Titipu where the immigrant experience of New York City was exponentially transposed to a national level.







*"Down with all majorities; / Likewise all minorities! / Down with you and you and you!": The ill-fated Philip Loeb (center) leads his fellow agitators in this moment from Let 'Em Eat Cake*

When the show opened on the day after Christmas 1931 (after what appears to have been an effortless Boston tryout), it was a triumph. *Of Thee I Sing* was the perfect tonic to Depression-era woes. It ran for 441 performances, the longest for any original Gershwin show; was acclaimed by the critics for being the first intelligent musical comedy; was the first musical to be published (by Knopf) in book form; and in 1932 was the first musical to win the Pulitzer Prize. Infamously, the prize was awarded only to Ira, Kaufman, and Ryskind. George Gershwin was left out, because the prize was considered to be a

"literary" honor—an oversight partially redressed by an honorary Pulitzer Prize to the composer in 1998.

The success of *Of Thee I Sing* brought new prominence to all four men, and Kaufman and Ryskind thought to make the most of their clout and create another work together. This time, they concocted that *rara avis*, a musical sequel. Early in 1933, they thought up another chapter in the lives of the Wintergreens and the nation, called *Let 'Em Eat Cake*. In this story, the Wintergreens are voted out of office by another ineffectual candidate, the long-awaited Tweedledee (in a sequence that included a





*"You mustn't chase around when you're the Prexy. / It's not my fault if women think I'm sexy." Blanche Ring and Bobby Clark ponder their future in "If I Became the President," from Strike Up the Band (1930)*

contrapuntal dueling anthem originally envisioned by George Gershwin for *Of Thee I Sing*). Lacking legal recourse to their woes, the Wintergreens clothe themselves in blue shirts (sewn by Mary), overthrow the government, and depose Tweedledee. Wintergreen installs himself as the dictator of the proletariat and, worse, seems to enjoy his new-found authoritarianism enormously. Complications, as they say, ensue.

Although the subject matter was considerably more incendiary, the basic form of the musical sequel was doggedly similar to *Of Thee I Sing*. One piquant addition to the show was a professional anarchist (who gave speeches in Union Square) named Kruger. In one of Ira's more ironically enduring—sadly—lyrics, Kruger sounds off: "That's the torch we're going to get the flame from! / If you don't like it, why don't you go back where you came from?" The entropic nature of anarchy itself

was revealed in a second-act scene where Kruger, now a chief prosecutor in a show trial, admits that his job is simply to force out whoever happens to be in office. "The only thing that'll ever get me is if I'm in office myself," he reasonably concludes. (One poignant footnote: Kruger was originally played by Philip Loeb, a left-leaning actor who eventually committed suicide in 1955, after being blacklisted.)

The Gershwins seized upon this complex, if unpleasant, scenario and wrote some of their most exciting work, including the skillful contrapuntal love song, "Mine," the only song of the show to gain popularity. But, perhaps not surprisingly, the show that contained these kernels of satire was not embraced by audiences when it opened on October 21, 1933—and closed 90 performances later. Violent labor strikes were breaking out all over the country, and it's unlikely that New York audiences wanted to be reminded of Hitler's brown shirts and Mussolini's black shirts as an antidote to chaos. In the end, however, *Let 'Em Eat Cake* remains a *succes d'estime*, which George S. Kaufman defined as "a success that runs out of steam."

What Kaufman & Co. produced with *Strike Up the Band*, *Of Thee I Sing*, and *Let 'Em Eat Cake*, collectively, was a refracted musical prism through which to view the shenanigans and contradictions of contemporary society. While much of Gilbert and Sullivan requires diligent annotation to unearth the subtleties of the Victorian world, the genius of the Gershwin/Kaufman/Ryskind shows is that they remain timely and timeless; the shows are both of their era and beyond it. The foibles of American democracy burlesqued in these shows embrace belligerent narcissism, preoccupations with sex and salesmanship, the overreach of executive privilege, the unpredictability of our judicial branch, the rapacious activism of both radicals and reactionaries, the pandering of electoral politics, the insatiable manipulation of a gullible public by the media, the irrelevancy of the vice presidency—situations and controversies which have hardly receded into the "happy days" of the 1930s.

I have no idea what this current election will hold, but I am absolutely certain that whatever comes to pass, Kaufman, Ryskind, and the Gershwins would have written a far more satisfying second-act curtain. 🦋

**Laurence Maslon** is an arts professor at NYU's Graduate Acting Program and the editor of Kaufman & Co.: Broadway Comedies for the Library of America. He also hosts Broadway to Main Street, a weekly radio series, available on iTunes podcasts.



## GEORGE AND IRA GERSHWIN & THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS'S NATIONAL RECORDING REGISTRY

*Cary O'Dell of the National Recording Registry in Washington, DC, offers a history of the Registry, how recordings are selected for inclusion, and the Gershwins' place on the list.*

Since announcing its first 50 titles in 2003, the Library of Congress's National Recording Registry has named 450 recorded sound items to its esteemed list. That's a significant chunk of aural product—but considering the billions of recorded sound items ever created (including everything professionally published or produced by so-called “amateurs”), that makes the National Registry's litany a very short and exclusive club indeed.

The Registry began as a recorded sound counterpart to the Library of Congress's already established National Film Registry (inception, 1989) when the U.S. Congress determined that it was not just the nation's moving image legacy that was in danger of being lost, destroyed or forgotten.

To address the problem, an act of Congress—the recently-renewed National Recording Preservation Act of 2000—established the Registry as well as an advisory body of experts, the National Recording Preservation Board (NRPB).

In the first years of the Registry, 50 titles were selected annually for induction. Since 2006, 25 new titles or works have been named to the list each year.

The pool from which these 25 annual inductees are selected is as vast as the world's sound landscape. The Registry is open to recordings from any genre, any era, any land of origin, or performed in any language. The only caveats are that a recording must be at least 10 years old and extant (i.e., at least one true copy should exist somewhere) and that a recording has to have had an impact on America either historically, culturally or esthetically. (Or, better yet, all three!)



SHAWN MILLER (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

*Home of the Library of Congress' National Recording Registry at the Packard Campus of the National Audio-Visual Conservation Center in Culpeper, Virginia*



Judy Garland sings the classic “The Man That Got Away” in this deleted take from *A Star Is Born* (1954)

That broad scope is reflected in the Registry’s current content: works on the NRR date from the mid-1800’s to 1999 and include music (opera, classical, country, even novelty); radio shows; recorded speeches; comedy recordings, and even a bird call and a train whistle.

Since its inception, the annual list has been based, largely, upon the recommendations of the Library’s National Recording Preservation Board.

Created by the 2000 Act, the Board is comprised of 44 members (22 members and an equal number of “alternates”), the majority of whom are selected by the Librarian of Congress following nomination by various recorded-sound-oriented groups, agencies and institutions specified in the authorizing legislation.

As with the Registry itself, a certain diversity rules. Member organizations include the American Federation of Musicians, ASCAP, the Country Music Hall of Fame, the Songwriters Hall of Fame, the Recording Academy and others. There are 17 organizations represented, in addition to five “At-Large” slots.

The Board meets annually in Washington with Library of Congress staff to determine each year’s recommended list and, additionally, to advise the Library on recording preservation policy. After discussion and anonymous, post-meeting voting, the totals are passed on to the Librarian of Congress who, ultimately, makes the final 25 selections. For the majority of the Registry’s history, that was Dr. James Billington, who retired from


the position in 2015; Carla Hayden recently succeeded him.

Numerous factors enter into the eventual selections, not the least of which are the thoughts and opinions of the public: the NRR has been open to public nominations since the day it began. The public can suggest recordings by email at [recregistry@loc.gov](mailto:recregistry@loc.gov). Often as well, grassroots campaigns start on Facebook or other social media sites, which work to “mobilize the troops” in support of a particular work. This past year, the selection of the beloved radio show *Vic and Sade* resulted chiefly through an organized internet campaign.

So, what happens after a recording is selected for the Recording Registry? Ideally, the master materials used to make this recording are collected for safekeeping at the world’s largest library—i.e., the Library of Congress. Failing this, the legislation specifies that at least one copy of each chosen recording be added to the Library’s collection.

With only 450 recordings on the list so far, the instance of a person with more than one work on the Registry is a rare thing. But, then again, some talents are just so dominant, so important, to American creativity that they merit multiple recordings. For example, Cole Porter is on the Registry for both his own rendition of “You’re the Top” (1934) and for his “Songbook” as sung by the great Ella Fitzgerald in 1956. Irving Berlin is there three times, thanks to “God Bless America” by Kate Smith (1938), “White Christmas” by Bing Crosby (1942), and his own appearance at the “Carousel of American Music” concert in 1940.

But who made it the most? You guessed it—the Gershwins. One or the other or both of them are represented by Al Jolson’s recording of “Swanee” (1920), *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924), Fred and Adele Astaire’s spirited take on “Fascinating Rhythm” (1926), and the original cast recording of *Porgy and Bess* from 1940. Among a number of other Gershwin songs on *Judy at Carnegie Hall* (1961) are Garland’s renditions of “The Man That Got Away,” “Who Cares,” and “How Long Has This Been Going On.” Frank Sinatra’s *Songs for Young Lovers* (1954) includes “Someone to Watch Over Me” and “A Foggy Day,” while “Summertime” and “I Got Rhythm” were recorded during the “Carousel of American Music” concert noted above.

And there’s no sign that the Gershwins are finished. Their work is still being discussed and suggested at just about every NRPB meeting ... and in nominations from the public. It seems quite possible that the National Recording Registry will keep hearing about them for a long time to come. 



## THE RED-HEADED STRANGER GETS THE GERSHWIN PRIZE

On November 18, 2015, music legend Willie Nelson became the seventh honoree of the Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song. The award “celebrates the work of an artist whose career reflects lifetime achievement in promoting song as a vehicle of musical expression and cultural understanding.”

A star-studded concert was held at DAR Constitution Hall in Washington, DC to celebrate Nelson’s life and career. The guest of honor was fêted by musicians from all genres, in performances of songs from his extensive catalogue of recordings, which dates back more than 60 years to when he made a demonstration disc of “The Storm Has Just Begun,” a song he had written—by the age of 12—in his hometown of Abbott, Texas.

Willie Nelson’s classic songs and albums have spanned the decades. In the 1960s, his words and music were hits for Faron Young (“Hello Walls”), Billy Walker (“Funny How Time Slips Away”), and Patsy Cline (“Crazy”). The 1970s saw Nelson’s star rise as a performer in his own right, with the outlaw country classic *Red-Headed Stranger*. He soon became a superstar, with the likes of “Mammas Don’t Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys” (a 1978 duet with Waylon Jennings), recordings with the country supergroup The Highwaymen, and the smash hits “On the Road Again” (1980) and “To All the Girls I’ve Loved Before,” a 1984 duet with Julio Iglesias. The lyrics for the last song were written by the late Hal David, the co-recipient of the 2012 Gershwin Prize.

Although Willie Nelson will forever be associated with the world of country music, he has always expressed his admiration for the Great American Songbook. During the November concert, entertainer Michael Feinstein noted that Nelson’s 1987 album, *Stardust*, spent ten years on the record charts and helped to revive interest in the Gershwins and their fellow songsmiths.

Coincidentally, Nelson released a new record of standards in February 2016 devoted solely to songs from the Gershwin catalogue. *Summertime: Willie Nelson Sings Gershwin* (Legacy Recordings) was acclaimed as a worthy successor to *Stardust* and debuted at #1 on *Billboard* magazine’s jazz album charts. The honoree and Cyndi Lauper performed their duet of “Let’s Call the Whole Thing Off” during the concert.

PBS broadcast the show on January 15, 2016, and it can be seen at its website: <http://www.pbs.org/gershwin-prize/shows/gershwin-prize-willie-nelson>. (See page 15 to read about the 2016 recipient, Motown legend Smokey Robinson.) 🐾



*The songs and performers (in order of broadcast)*

- “Stay All Night (Stay a Little Longer)”  
—Neil Young and Promise of the Real
- “Funny How Time Slips Away”—Leon Bridges
- “Crazy”—Raúl Malo
- “Remember Me”—Paul Simon and Edie Brickell
- “Poncho and Lefty”—Rosanne Cash
- “Georgia on My Mind”—Jamey Johnson
- “Angel Flying Too Close to the Ground”  
—Alison Krauss
- “Seven Spanish Angels”  
—Alison Krauss and Jamey Johnson
- “I Never Cared for You”—Ana Gabriel
- “Whiskey River”  
—Neil Young and Promise of the Real
- “Man with the Blues”  
—Paul Simon and Buckwheat Zydeco
- “Let’s Call the Whole Thing Off”  
—Willie Nelson and Cyndi Lauper
- “Night Life”—Willie Nelson
- “Living in the Promiseland”  
—Willie Nelson and his sons, Micah and Lukas
- “On the Road Again”—everyone

## THE GERSHWIN CRITICAL EDITION

*Jessica Getman, the Managing Editor of the George and Ira Gershwin Critical Edition at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance, and graduate assistant Kristen Clough provide background on the project and news on the status of editions currently in progress.*

In our offices at the University of Michigan's historic Burton Memorial Tower, our editors and editorial assistants are in full swing. We have over a dozen Gershwin scores and documents under way, but five are in active production in our office: *Porgy and Bess*, *Concerto in F*, *An American in Paris*, the jazz band version of *Rhapsody in Blue*, and Ira Gershwin's 1928 travel journal. With Editor-in-Chief Dr. Mark Clague and Managing Editor Dr. Jessica Getman at the helm, the team is collaborating to bring these dynamic and complex editions to you soon.

The first step in the critical edition process belongs to our volume editors, dedicated scholars who are experts about the pieces they are editing and in their correlating source materials. Volume editors carefully compare their sources—often drafts and manuscripts in George or Ira Gershwin's own hands, orchestrations crafted by other collaborators (e.g., Ferde Grofé or Frank Campbell-Watson), fair copies and parts made by copyists, and early recordings—to create their own authoritative edition of the work. As part of this process, they carefully note every decision they make, recording them in the volume's critical report while explaining and justifying their choices.

Sometimes the changes they make to the conventionally accepted versions of their pieces are significant. Many have already heard about Mark Clague's discovery regarding the original taxi horn pitches in *An American in Paris*, but our volume editors have also located an extra 40 measures for the *Rhapsody in Blue* piano solo, and have addressed major inconsistencies between George Gershwin's original orchestral score for *Porgy and Bess* and its long-standing piano-vocal score. But a wide variety of small

corrections also need to be made, such as the standardization of articulations and lyrics, and the volume editor must painstakingly note each of these emendations.

Once the volume editor has finalized the edited score, several rounds of editing and proofing occur in conjunction with our office. A team of over a dozen editorial assistants, along with Dr. Getman, carefully compare the editor's score, the critical report, and the work's principal sources. It's a meticulous undertaking, but reading through the Gershwins' original manuscripts is riveting. During this editing process, we also work with our orchestral partners to give at least one test performance for each piece, putting the new material into the hands of musicians who can suggest corrections in real time.

Mark Clague is editing *An American in Paris* with the goal of peeling back the layers of time and re-orchestration to present the piece as George Gershwin originally intended. For the first time, Gershwin's revisions of the score are revealed, confirmed by his 1929 recording of the work with conductor Nathaniel Shilkret. This volume re-identifies the original pitches of the taxi horns used in the piece and makes available its original woodwind assignments, including eight different saxophones doubled by three players. *An American in Paris* (1928/29) will be published in the spring of 2017 by European American Music.

An annotated edition of Ira Gershwin's 1928 travel journal (*The Gershwins Abroad*), is being produced by Michael Owen for

concurrent publication with the *American in Paris* volume. The lyricist's take on the Gershwins' celebrity as his brother was composing his famous tone poem is combined with his unique perspectives on life as they visit London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest.

*Rhapsody in Blue* (1924; jazz band) (ed. Ryan Bañagale) will also be published in the spring of 2017 by European American Music. Using Ferde Grofé's holograph



February 1929: George Gershwin (left) poses with members of the Cincinnati Orchestra and the original taxi horns used in *An American in Paris*




## UPDATES

score, as well as the 1924 and 1925 recordings of the piece with George Gershwin playing the piano solo, Bañagale analyzes changes that have been made to the jazz band version of the piece over the decades, returning to the piece around 40 measures of piano solo that have been lost from the score over decades of re-orchestration.

Test performances of *An American in Paris* and *Concerto in F* (1925) (ed. Timothy Freeze) were given at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, by the University Symphony Orchestra, on September 23, 2016.

A test performance of *Porgy and Bess* (1935) (ed. Wayne Shirley) will be given in February 2018 by the University of Michigan


School of Music, Theatre & Dance, and the University Musical Society. This will be a concert performance of the entire opera, and it will be accompanied by a full-day scholarly symposium on the piece.

Other volumes in production include: *Cuban Overture* (1932) (ed. Loras Schissel); *Catfish Row Suite* (1936) (ed. Wayne Shirley); *Second Rhapsody* (1931) (ed. James Wierzbicki); *A Damsel in Distress* (1937) (ed. Nathan Platte); *Lullaby* (1919) (ed. Susan Neimoyer); *Tell Me More* (1925) (ed. Bradley Martin); *Delicious* (1931) (ed. Daniel Goldmark); *Shall We Dance* (1937) (ed. Todd Decker); and further arrangements of *Rhapsody in Blue* (ed. Ryan Bañagale). 

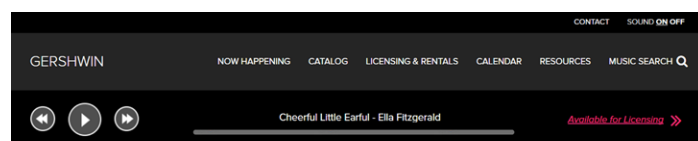
## NEWS ON THE GERSHWIN WEBSITE

A number of changes and additions have recently been made to [www.gershwin.com](http://www.gershwin.com), the official George and Ira Gershwin website. We hope that the new information and resources about the lives and work of the Gershwins will provide visitors to the website with ways to broaden their knowledge and to find out more about where to enjoy live performances of Gershwin shows and concert works.

The Calendar section is now searchable by the name of the specific Gershwin work (i.e., *Rhapsody in Blue*, *Porgy and Bess*, *Crazy for You*), and by the city, state, province, and/or country where the performance is taking place. Just type your text into the search box in the upper right hand corner of the Calendar page.

Our webmaster is at work adding audio clips to every song and/or concert work in the Gershwin oeuvre. A clip is available for listening when you see  next to a title. When the song or concert work appears in the media player, you'll now also be able to see the name of the performer. (The new player screen is illustrated, above right.)


The most recent addition to the website is the debut of a blog, which is intended to highlight moments in Gershwin history, neglected areas of the brothers' extensive catalog, or other subjects that don't easily fit into existing sections of the site. For example, the June 16, 2016 posting discussed the production of *Porgy and Bess* at the Spoleto Festival USA, and included links to a glowing *New York Times* review, related museum exhibitions,



### Search Results

Search result for "cheerful"

Search 


TITLE	CO-WRITERS	SHOWS/FILMS	YEAR	LICENSING
Cheerful Little Earful 	Harry Warren & Billy Rose		1930	<a href="#">Available for Licensing</a>

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and a new book on the relationship between *Porgy and Bess* and the city of Charleston, South Carolina. Each blog entry is categorized and tagged, making it possible for readers to narrow their search to specific types of posts (i.e., Gershwin Shows or Ira Gershwin).

In addition, the Winter/Spring 2015 issue of *Words Without Music*, which featured the Broadway musical *An American in Paris* on the cover, is now available for download. Just go the Resources drop-down menu and click on Newsletter.

We welcome comments about the website. Please contact Michael Owen at the email address listed on the inside cover of this issue. 

## AN AMERICAN IN PARIS THE MUSICAL BEGINS A NEW PHASE

After 623 regular and 29 preview performances, the Gershwin musical *An American in Paris* closed its successful run at New York's Palace Theatre on October 9, 2016. Winner of four 2015 Tony awards, as well as a number of additional prestigious theater honors, the show was rapturously received by sell-out crowds from Paris—where it debuted in 2014—to Broadway.

Now audiences around the United States and in London will have their opportunity to see the show the Associated Press hailed as “an elegant, exuberant and sublime new musical.”


The U.S. tour cast is headed by Garen Scribner and Sara Esty as the star-crossed lovers Jerry and Lise. (The two actors played the roles in the show's final months on Broadway.) Joining them are Etai Benson and Emily Ferrante (both from the Broadway cast of *Wicked*) as Adam and Milo, and Nick Spangler (*The Book of Mormon* and *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella*) as Henri.

The tour began on October 14, 2016 at Proctor's Theatre in Schenectady, New York, and travels from coast to coast well into 2017. (Tour dates and cities are listed on this issue's back cover and at [www.gershwin.com](http://www.gershwin.com).) For additional information on the American production and ticket availability for the tour, visit [www.anamericaninparisbroadway.com](http://www.anamericaninparisbroadway.com).




*Romance in dance: Garen Scribner and Sara Esty lead the cast in the touring production of An American in Paris*

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Congratulations to *An American in Paris* director and choreographer Christopher Wheeldon, who was awarded the prestigious OBE from Queen Elizabeth II in the New Years' Honours List in January 2016. We are happy to announce that he will be reunited with the original lead actors of the show, Robert Fairchild and Leanne Cope, for the London production, which opens at the Dominion Theatre in the West End on March 4, 2017. For details, check [www.dominiontheatre.com/theatre/american-paris](http://www.dominiontheatre.com/theatre/american-paris). 

## IRA GERSHWIN SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED

Ethan Brown, a talented cellist, was the recipient of the 2015 ASCAP Foundation Ira Gershwin Scholarship presented last December. The scholarship is awarded annually to a member of the orchestra at New York City's Fiorello LaGuardia High School of Art & Music and Performing Arts; it honors Ira Gershwin, who was a graduate of New York City's public schools. Ethan started playing the cello at age 5; since then he has won various music competitions, taken master classes with noted cellists, and was principal cellist of LaGuardia's symphony orchestra and the prestigious New York Youth Symphony. He also finds time for conducting, photography, hiking, and travel. He is currently in his freshman year at Northwestern University where he is majoring in cello performance. 

## SMOKEY ROBINSON TO RECEIVE GERSHWIN PRIZE

Smokey Robinson, the legendary singer, songwriter, and producer who has helped to shape the sound of popular music, was recently named as the next recipient of the prestigious Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song.

For decades, Robinson's vast songbook has provided hit after hit. The 1960 smash “Shop Around” by his own group, The Miracles, was Motown's first number one single, and was followed by successes for Marvin Gaye (“Ain't That Peculiar”), Mary Wells (“My Guy”), and The Temptations (“My Girl”). He has also been cited as a major influence on the Beatles, who successfully covered Robinson's “You've Really Got a Hold on Me” in 1963.

In a press release announcing the award, Robinson's “rich melodies” were described as “works of art—enduring, meaningful and powerful. And he is a master at crafting lyrics that





*Smokey Robinson: A beloved part of our musical heritage*

speak to the heart and soul, expressing ordinary themes in an extraordinary way.”

An all-star concert to celebrate the honoree is scheduled for November 16, 2017 in Washington, DC. 🦋

## PORGY AND BESS COMES TO LA SCALA & GLIMMERGLASS

*Porgy and Bess* first appeared at La Scala in 1954, in the historic production that toured the world. The Gershwin’s folk opera returns to Milan on November 13, in a semi-staged production conducted by the New York Philharmonic’s Alan Gilbert. Morris Robinson (Porgy), Kristin Lewis (Bess), Lester Lynch (Crown), and Chauncey Packer (Sportin’ Life) lead the impressive cast in performances that run through November 23. For further details, go to <http://www.teatroallascala.org/en/season/2015-2016/opera/porgy-and-bess.html>.

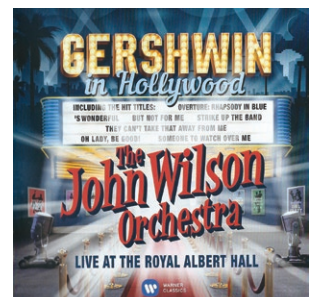


Beginning on July 7, 2017, visitors to the Glimmerglass Festival in bucolic Cooperstown, New York (left), will have the opportunity to see Francesca Zambello’s production of the opera in the

917-seat Alice Busch Opera Theater. Musa Ngqungwana (Porgy), Talise Trevigne (Bess), Norman Garrett (Crown), and Frederick Ballentine (Sportin’ Life) will be under the baton of John DeMain, veteran of more than 350 performances of the opera. Costumes will be designed by Paul Tazewell, who recently won the Tony Award for his work on the hit musical *Hamilton*. For more information, check <https://glimmerglass.org>. 🦋

## JOHN WILSON AND GERSHWIN FEATURED AT 2016 PROMS CONCERT AND ON DISC

The popular British conductor, arranger, and musicologist John Wilson recently turned his focus to the George and Ira Gershwin songbook. Following successful recordings of music by Cole Porter and Rodgers and Hammerstein, he recently released a collection of Gershwin songs performed in Hollywood movies.



*Gershwin in Hollywood* (Warner Classics) features arrangements of many standards like “They Can’t Take That Away from Me,” “Strike Up the Band,” “The Man I Love,” and “Someone to Watch Over Me.” Not the versions we’ve become accustomed to, but sparkling restorations of original arrangements by musical masters Conrad Salinger, Herbert Spencer, Lennie Hayton, and Ray Heindorf from *The Barkleys of Broadway*, *The Helen Morgan Story*, the 1940 Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney *Strike Up the Band*, and the lavish 1968 musical *Star!* about the luminous Broadway musical comedy actress Gertrude Lawrence. Among the lesser known songs are “Let’s Kiss and Make Up” and “Aren’t You Kind of Glad We Did?”

Wilson’s exploration continued on August 13, when he conducted an evening of Gershwin at London’s Royal Albert Hall as part of the 2016 BBC Proms. Along with numbers from *Gershwin in Hollywood*, Wilson treated the sold-out audience to top-notch examples of Ira Gershwin’s work with composers Harry Warren (“You’d Be Hard to Replace”), Harold Arlen (“The Man That Got Away”), Jerome Kern (“Long Ago and Far Away”), and Burton Lane (“In Our United State”).

“The evening,” wrote Ivan Hewett in the *(London) Telegraph*, “dazzled on every level.” 🦋



## IRA AND LEONORE GERSHWIN TRUSTS

101 Natoma Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105-3703

### AN AMERICAN IN PARIS U.S. TOUR DATES

#### 2016

Schenectady, NY  
October 14-21

Boston, MA  
October 25-November 6

Buffalo, NY  
November 8-13

Hartford, CT  
November 15-20

Philadelphia, PA  
November 22-27

Greenville, SC  
November 29-December 4

West Palm Beach, FL  
December 6-11

Orlando, FL  
December 13-18

Tampa, FL  
December 20-25

Miami, FL  
December 27-January 1

#### 2017

Durham, NC  
January 3-8

Charlotte, NC  
January 10-15

St. Louis, MO  
January 17-29

Dallas, TX  
January 31-February 12

Fort Worth, TX  
February 14-19

Houston, TX  
February 21-March 5

Denver, CO  
March 8-19

Los Angeles, CA  
March 22-April 9

Las Vegas, NV  
April 11-16

Tempe, AZ  
April 18-23

Costa Mesa, CA  
April 25-May 7

Seattle, WA  
May 9-14

Portland, OR  
May 16-21

Pittsburgh, PA  
May 30-June 11

St. Paul, MN  
June 13-18

Cleveland, OH  
June 20-July 9

Des Moines, IA  
July 18-23

Atlanta, GA  
August 15-20

*Check the calendar at [www.gershwin.com](http://www.gershwin.com) for further details and any additional tour dates.*