Columbia Record No. 9665

GEORGE GERSHWIN

Concerto in F

for Piano and Orchestra

(THREE RECORDS)

Played by

PAUL WHITEMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA

(ROY BARGY AT THE PIANO)

Columbia

Concerto in F, for Piano and Orchestra . . . (*George Gershwin*)

12-inch Columbia Records

9665	CONCERTO in F (*G. Gershwin*) Part 1.—FIRST MOVEMENT—Allegro (First Part); Part 2.—FIRST MOVEMENT—Allegro (Second Part);
9666	Part 3.—FIRST MOVEMENT—Allegro (Conclusion); Part 4.—SECOND MOVEMENT—Andante con moto (First Part);
9667	Part 5.—SECOND MOVEMENT—Andante con moto (Conclusion); Part 6.—THIRD MOVEMENT—Allegro con brio

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GEORGE GERSHWIN is a prophet of the new order which unites the characteristic and temperamental musical idiom of modern America to the definite and recognised forms emerging from the evolutionary ideas of the masters that have preceded him. He is a product of Greater New York, having been born in Brooklyn about thirty years ago. His startling rise to fame has no accidental basis. Despite absence of all musical antecedents he took to music in his early childhood as the proverbial duck to water; he appropriated to his own use a piano bought by his parents mainly for the instruction of his elder brother Ira, and disclosed such ingenuity in improvisation that a teacher was procured for him—one whose intentions however were in advance of his ability, as the boy soon tired of him and consulted a real musician, the late Charles Hambitzer, of Brooklyn. Under Hambitzer Gershwin gained a genuine knowledge of the art. A little later lessons in harmony with Edward Kelenyi and Rubin Goldmark followed and the youngster, not yet seventeen, became connected with the professional department of the

song-publishing house of Remick. His apprenticeship here was the foundation of his popular success, as it was not long before he had a number of popular song " hits " to his credit, and it was only a step from this to the writing of entire musical shows. Of these there is a long and increasingly successful list, including *Lady Be Good* (featuring the celebrated *Fascinating Rhythm*), *Tell Me More*, *Tip Toes*, *Oh, Kay!* and *Funny Face*.

During all this time, however, Gershwin kept in view his real ambition—to produce something significant and more enduring in the combination of jazz rhythms with established musical forms. As a result we have the famous *Rhapsody in Blue*, played already the world over by many of the most important orchestral organisations, and the still more significant *Piano Concerto in F*, the present recording. Mr. Gershwin is destined to go far in this unique and fascinating field of endeavour.

The concerto was written upon commission from the Symphony Society of New York, in 1925, and received its first performance by the New York Symphony Orchestra in Carnegie Hall on December 3 that year. On this occasion Mr. Gershwin was the soloist, Mr. Walter Damrosch conducting.

The concerto was later arranged by Mr. Ferde Grofé for Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra and given public performance by them.

The Concerto in F is a worthy successor to the same composer's famous " Rhapsody in Blue " and was published in 1927. It is a logical development of the style of the most modern dance music and bears about the same relationship to a ballroom fox-trot as the waltz movements that Tschaikowsky has inserted so effectively into his Fifth Symphony and Serenade do to the ordinary waltz of his times. The work retains the classical form as far as it being in three movements and being prefaced by an orchestral introduction, but there the resemblance ceases, for harmony, piano technique and development, belong essentially to this present day world of rush and hurry, of aeroplanes and underground railways, and the rhythm of powerful machinery. The piano writing is peculiarly interesting and abounds in original effects. The treatment of the instrument is almost entirely percussive—in the manner of a glorified xylophone, one might say—which probably accounts for the absence of a slow movement. It is true that the time of the second movement is given as *Andante con moto*, but that only applies to the orchestra introduction; directly

the piano enters the time quickens and any sustained melodies are given to the orchestra In these records the modernism of the accompaniment has been increased by the orchestral part being arranged for a concert dance band instead of a symphony orchestra.

Roy Bargy, who plays the all-important piano part, is one of the mainstays of the Paul Whiteman organisation, and a pianist of most versatile attainment in the exposition of modern rhythms.

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THE COLUMBIA RECORDS

Part 1.—FIRST MOVEMENT—Allegro.

The first four bars announce at once the character of the work. Four timpani notes, a cymbal crash, and a side drum roll assisted by a shake on the bass saxophone, say definitely "This is the music of to-day." After a little, a rising and falling phrase on the saxophone foreshadows the first subject of the movement, which later is heard complete, working up to a climax that terminates in the percussion phrase of the opening. The solo instrument enters with a rapid *glissando* and gives out the second subject or main piano theme. This is in F minor, as far as it can be said to have a key, for the harmony is so chromatic throughout that at times the music seems to be in all keys—and is repeated with the addition of a countermelody in the orchestra. An orchestral *tutti* introduces a new theme and a typical Gershwin touch in the shape of a sequence of sevenths growing up to a strangely syncopated climax. An uncannily effective chromatic series of chords of the seventh in contrary motion brings in the main piano theme, this time in the orchestra, while the piano has what was before the orchestral countermelody. A brief piano cadenza ends this part.

Part 2.—FIRST MOVEMENT (Continued).

This part may be considered as equivalent to the usual development section though it consists very largely of new material The time quickens considerably and an orchestral *tutti* evidently derived from the first subject as heard in the introduction leads to a third theme on the solo instrument which is afterwards used a good deal. Fragments of the latest version of the first subject appear in the orchestra and a striking ascending chromatic scale in thirds for the piano will be noticed. Varied treatment of the

third subject continues, growing rather more flowing until a section headed *moderato cantabile* is reached. Here a beautiful flowing melody for saxophones and, later, strings, provides contrast. The piano's function here is mainly to accompany and ornament the orchestral melodies. After working up to a *fortissimo* the time again changes to *allegro molto* and a fresh section which can be considered as an accelerated treatment of the *moderato* theme opens with a remarkable piano passage in which the left hand repeats a figure consisting of four consecutive chromatic fifths; an utterly revolutionary passage that is, however, justified by its effectiveness. Piano and orchestra proceed in dialogue and duet fashion to the end of this part.

Part 3.—FIRST MOVEMENT (Concluded).

A brilliant *scherzando* variation of the *moderato* theme for piano, opens this part. The theme becomes more recognisable when the orchestra joins in. This section culminates in a *grandioso* presentation of the main piano theme (second subject) in which the full force of both piano and orchestra are utilised and the harmony is at times very modern. With a change of time to *allegro* further brilliant treatment of the *moderato* theme occurs, in the course of which a vivid section in which the solo instrument gives the melody in very rapid triplets, and the orchestra interposes vicious, biting, *sforzando* interjections, demands attention. This section is really the final *coda*, and the movement shortly comes to an end with another rapid triplet passage for the piano and some *ff* chords for full orchestra.

Part 4.—SECOND MOVEMENT—Andante con moto.

A solo trumpet, muted with felt crown, gives out a sustained melody (a feature of which is a drop of a thirteenth) over an accompaniment of gliding chromatic chords. The piano enters with a new theme in quicker time and marching rhythm, over an accompaniment of guitar-like chords. This develops into an effective duet between the piano, and violin and other solo instruments which continues to the end of this part. The writing here is delightfully delicate.

Part 5.—SECOND MOVEMENT (Concluded).

There is a cut of 27 bars between the end of the previous part and the beginning of this. A piano cadenza leads to a most expressive melody for orchestra, in the opening section of which celeste and vibraphone are very effectively used

in the accompaniment. This theme is worked out at some length and here will be found the only part of the work in which, for a brief period, the "singing" powers of the modern piano are made use of. At the end the gliding chords of the opening return on the solo instrument and the music dies away to a quiet close.

Part 6.—FINALE—Allegro con brio.

This movement might be called a witches' dance. It starts away with tremendous vitality, the principal feature of the main subject being the rapid reiteration of one note as a kind of pedal point. Orchestra and piano divide the honours between them. A second subject is announced by a solo trumpet but before this enters there has been a considerable cut. This second theme is combined later with the reiterated note theme and the two themes play hide and seek, as it were, between piano and orchestra in most telling fashion. Another short cut occurs after this section and then a version of the expressive melody from the previous movement (Part 5) appears in the orchestra, the piano meanwhile accompanying with passages founded on the reiterated note theme. An interesting combination of tone colours will be noticed where the celeste accompanies the solo instrument, just before the second subject returns on the brass. This latter theme now comes in semi-fugal guise. The previously heard themes are worked out at some length until, after a gong note, the *grandioso* passage from the first movement returns as the commencement of the final *coda*. After a short piano cadenza the reiterated note theme returns at an even more rapid pace than on its first appearance. In the last bars the percussion phrase of the opening is recalled, which, together with the introduction of the climax of the first movement (the *grandioso* section) gives cohesion and connection to the whole work.