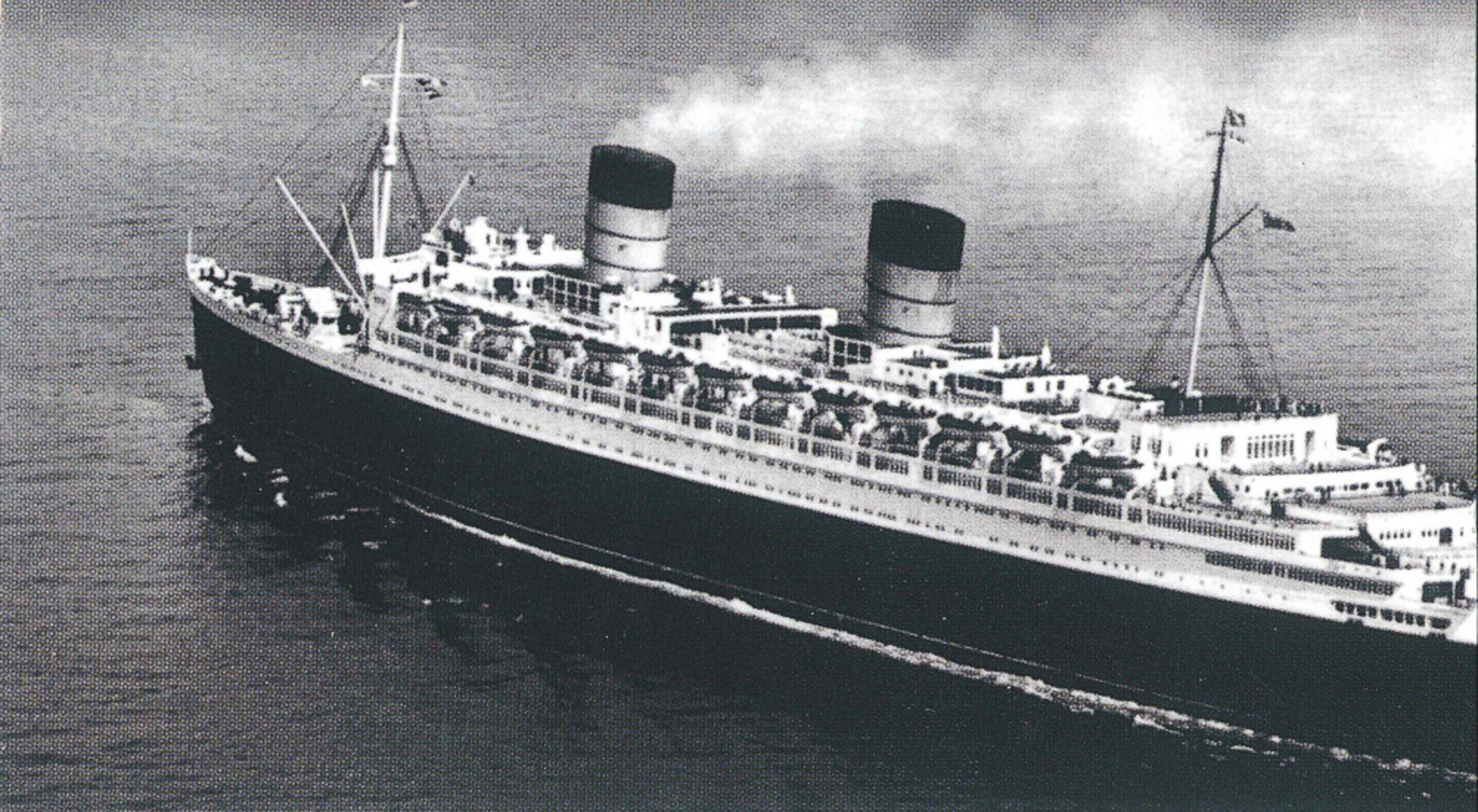




**AMERICAN RHAPSODY ★ A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE GERSHWIN**

**VIENNA ART ORCHESTRA**





What do the following artists all have in common: Ella Fitzgerald, Art Tatum, Bill Evans, Chick Corea, Charles Mingus, Glenn Miller, Sun Ra, Count Basie, Miles Davis, Clifford Brown, Charlie Parker, Joe Lovano, Eric Dolphy, Janis Joplin, Louis Armstrong, Sting, Frank Sinatra, Antonio Carlos Jobim and Billie Holiday? They all loved and played the music of George Gershwin — the extraordinary American composer, who would have turned 100 this year.

Gershwin was idolized during his lifetime the way some pop stars are today. In his brief creative period (his early death at the age of 39 and boundless creativity recall Mozart and Schubert), he wrote close to 1,000 songs, the opera *Porgy and Bess* and numerous classical works. He was also a brilliant pianist, and could perhaps be viewed as this century's first crossover musician because of the refined way in which he melded Afro-American elements with European concert music.

On piano, Gershwin leaned toward classical interpretations, as you can hear in his own performances on piano rolls. As a composer, he thought more like a jazz musician, and wrote large quantities of forward-looking material that will continue to challenge jazz musicians for the next 100 years.

Dazzling melodies, a complex web of polyrhythms, and sophisticated harmonies all flow together in the form of a classical concerto. In Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, as in the first movement of the *Concerto in F*, the composer anticipates many major developments that jazz would struggle to discover in the decades to come. In studying these scores, I chose to see them more from the perspective of Gershwin the composer, rather than Gershwin the piano player, and tried to give

them interpretations that were closer to jazz. I wrote new arrangements for both compositions, bar-by-bar, with only a few exceptions. I kept the original relationships of soloists to orchestra, whereby soloists sometimes play in trio rather than alone. I orchestrated a few solo parts but, in general, tried to stay as close to the originals as possible and to translate the visionary character of the compositions for the present.

Both pieces were written for piano and orchestra but I thought it was not a good idea for the original piano part to be played by a jazz pianist. Instead, I gave this part to two instruments that are similar to the piano in that they also have strings and keys; namely, to the guitar and vibraphone/marimba. The two soloists, Wolfgang Muthspiel from Vienna and Franck Tortiller from Paris, respected the original scores while at the same time picked up on Gershwin's impulses and let them flow into their improvisations. Both of these musicians belong to the young generation who feel equally comfortable with jazz and classical music. They are therefore equipped to handle such difficult tasks — with bravura.

Just as Gershwin walked the thin line between American and European music, this production unites musicians from both continents, with Americans playing opposite soloists from Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy, Russia, Sweden and Romania. Naturally, songs must be featured in any Gershwin tribute. The songs in this collection have been carefully selected and I have tried to give them special orchestral colors to give the soloists a chance to really shine.

I would like to thank all of the musicians for their outstanding participation in



this demanding production, especially the young musicians from Vienna, who have helped advance Vienna as one of the major jazz centers of Europe. Finally, I would like to draw attention to two masterpieces that have magically transformed American classical music into jazz, in a captivating form: Gil Evans's arrangement of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* and Dave Grusin's arrangement of Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*. Both arrangers have set monumental standards in the difficult area of classical/jazz crossover. For such inspiration, the very least I can do is to express my sincere thanks.

— MATHIAS RÜEGG

(TRANSLATION BY KARIN KAMINKER)

★ ABOUT GEORGE GERSHWIN

George Gershwin (1898-1937) remains one of the great musical figures of the 20th century. It is a tribute to his musical genius that his works continue to be celebrated and performed 100 years after his birth and more than 60 years after his untimely death. His talents lay in his ability to absorb a wide variety of musical influences to create something completely original and new.

Born in New York City in 1898, Gershwin grew up in a unique city at a unique time. New York City, as other cities in the United States, was being rapidly transformed by the vast influx of immigrants from Europe, which had brought Gershwin's own family to Brooklyn from Russia. The immigrants provided manpower for the city's expanding industries, but their impact was even more pronounced in the lively cultural variety that they brought to their new country. This was perhaps most evident on Tin Pan Alley, where the 16-year-old Gershwin began work in 1914 as a "song plugger" for the Jerome K. Remick music publishing company. Gershwin's job included performing the songs incognito at local nickelodeons, beer halls and other establishments, in order to gauge public acceptance of the music being considered for promotion. The experience was invaluable: the young Gershwin both took the pulse of popular taste and performed before live audiences, helping lead him to his first critical success in 1919 with *Swanee*.

George Gershwin was exposed to blues, ragtime and the early jazz styles of the time in the premiere night spots and dance halls of Manhattan and Harlem. The experiences instilled in him an appreciation for black Americans and their culture, manifested later on in his "folk opera," *Porgy and Bess*.



★ ALL COMPOSITIONS BY GEORGE GERSHWIN

1. Rhapsody in Blue (1924) 16:18

**SOLOIST: WOLFGANG MUTHSPIEL, GUITAR** / **FLUTE: SASCHA OTTO** / **OBOE: VASILE MARIAN**  
**SAXOPHONES: HARRY SOKAL, FLORIAN BRAMBÖCK, GERALD PREINFALK, HERWIG GRADISCHNIG, CHRISTIAN MAURER**  
**TRUMPETS: THORSTEN BENKENSTEIN, MATTHIEU MICHEL, BUMI FIAN** / **TROMBONES: ROBERT BACHNER,**  
**CHRISTIAN MUTHSPIEL, CHARLY WAGNER** / **FRENCH HORNS: ARKADY SHILKLOPER, FRANZ PICKL** **TUBA: JOHN SASS**  
**VIBRAPHONE: FRIEDRICH PHILIPP** / **BASS: ROBERT RIEGLER** / **DRUMS: GREGOR HILBE** / **PERCUSSION: INGRID**  
**OBERKANINS** / **ARRANGED & CONDUCTED BY M. RÜEGG**

The Vienna Art Orchestra strikes up the band with verve and its customary panache. Mathias Rüegg's arrangement lends *Rhapsody in Blue* a new coat of colors — guitar, a sax section, vibraphone — and uplifts this American classic with a joyous swing. Wolfgang Muthspiel's guitar gives Gershwin's glorious piano part a fresh and ingenious sparkle. And almost every familiar passage turns up a surprise — an added instrument (or several), thoroughly contemporary phrasing from the horns, a new fermata, a rhythmic shift, even a bossa!

2. They Can't Take That Away From Me 2:43  
From the movie *Shall We Dance*, 1937; lyrics by Ira Gershwin  
Featuring **Dee Dee Bridgewater, vocal**

**SAXOPHONES: HARRY SOKAL, FLORIAN BRAMBÖCK, SASCHA OTTO, GERALD PREINFALK, HERWIG GRADISCHNIG,**  
**CHRISTIAN MAURER** / **GUITAR: MARTIN SIEWERT** / **BASS: ROBERT RIEGLER** / **DRUMS: MARIO GONZI**  
**ARRANGED & CONDUCTED BY M. RÜEGG**

A classic big band arrangement...a classic big band sound...without a big band. There are actually only six saxophones, bass, drums and the guitar playing the sound (and filling the function) of a Hammond organ. It swings...and she swings! Miss Bridgewater is both light-hearted and powerful, brilliantly covering two roles: as the singer of the band and the seventh horn. Her interplay with the sections gives a beautiful unity to the arrangement, her singing is agile, expressive and adventurous.





3. **But Not For Me** 3:37

From *Girl Crazy*, the 1930 Broadway musical; lyrics by Ira Gershwin

**SOLOIST: JOE LOVANO, TENOR SAXOPHONE** / **FLUTE: SASCHA OTTO** / **SAXOPHONES: HARRY SOKAL, FLORIAN BRAMBÖCK, HERWIG GRADISCHNIG, CHRISTIAN MAURER** / **TRUMPETS: THORSTEN BENKENSTEIN, MATTHIEU MICHEL, BUMI FIAN** / **TROMBONES: ROBERT BACHNER, CHRISTIAN MUTHSPIEL, CHARLY WAGNER** / **FRENCH HORN: ARKADY SHILKLOPER** / **BASS: ROBERT RIEGLER** / **DRUMS: GREGOR HILBE** / **PERCUSSION: INGRID OBERKANINS** / **ARRANGED & CONDUCTED BY M. RÜEGG**

In the seven-and-a-half bars of the introduction, many people will immediately recognize — and others will be introduced to — the unique sound of the Vienna Art Orchestra. In the twenty years of its existence, the VAO has become a real institution in Europe, and a source of inspiration for musicians in and outside the continent. And many great artists have supported this band with their encouragement, among them, Joe Lovano. His presence on this recording is not a coincidence; it's a real honor. Talking again about "sound," his sound is unmistakable, his exposure of the theme so lyrical that it sounds as if the lyrics were spoken; his phrasing is superb, the interpretation of the verse (here used as an interlude) a thrill.

A masterpiece of musical intelligence — it's Joe Lovano!

4. **The Babbit and the Bromide** 3:27

From *Funny Face*, the 1927 Broadway musical; lyrics by Ira Gershwin

**T.S. MONK, VOCAL** / **SAXOPHONE: FLORIAN BRAMBÖCK** / **TUBA: JOHN SASS** / **BANJO: FRANK SCHWINN** / **HAMMOND: ROLAND GUGGENBICHLER** / **VOCAL DRUMS: KARL SCHRUMPF** / **ARRANGED BY M. RÜEGG**

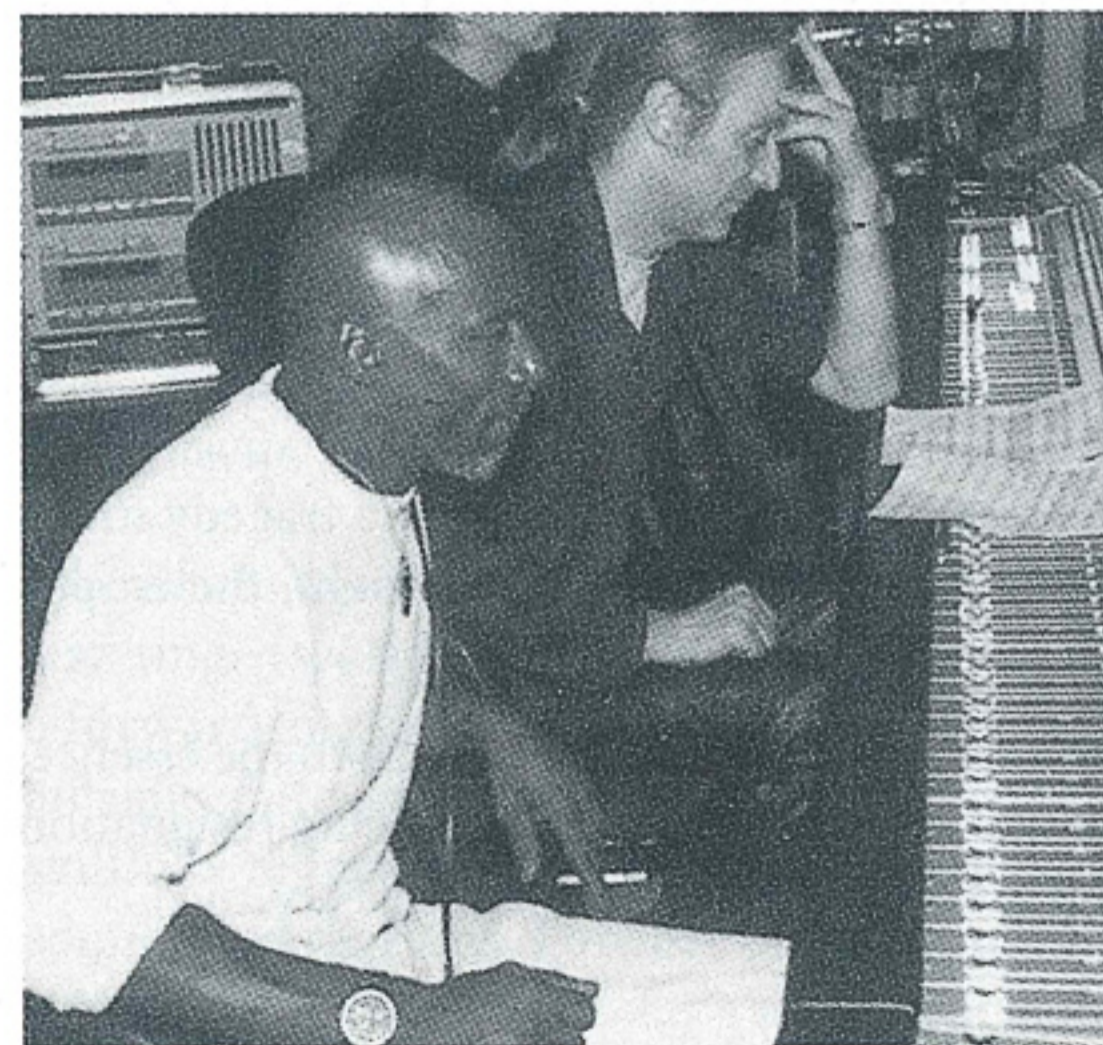
The Gershwin brothers had a great sense of humor, too. This rarely performed song is really funny...and it has a funny line-up! The drummer's part is performed by a vocalist, the vocal part is performed by a drummer. T.S. Monk's deep voice spells out the lyrics, walking the line between acting and rapping; his interpretation is fresh, dynamic and hilarious. A little note for vocal-drums fans: K. Schruppf recorded "live," using no effects, no over-dubs and a normal microphone.

5. **Soon** 4:17

From *Strike Up the Band*, the 1930 Broadway musical; lyrics by Ira Gershwin

**MONICA ZETTERLUND, VOCAL** / **SOLOIST: ART FARMER, TRUMPET** / **PIANO: ULI SCHERER** / **BASS: HEIRI KÄNZIG** / **DRUMS: GREGOR HILBE** / **VIOLINS: JOANNA LEWIS, WILLEM DE SWARDT, AMORA DE SWARDT, ANDREA BUCZ, ANNE HARVEY, MICHAEL SNYMAN, ALEKSEY IGUDESMAN, VERONICA KÖRMENDY, STEVEN MOHLER, THERESA SCHUTZ** / **VIOLAS: ANDREW JEZEK, JAMES HOOG, MARGIT SLOSSER** / **CELLOS: PHILIPP PREIMESBERGER, TRISTAN SCHULZE** / **ARRANGED & CONDUCTED BY M. RÜEGG**

It was more than 30 years ago that Monica Zetterlund and Art Farmer first met in New York, and theirs is a long story of friendship and artistic respect. There is beauty, kindness and deep understanding in the way these two wonderful musicians interpret this song. There is something strong, yet delicate and poetic. There's so much love and dedication to jazz music behind it. The string arrangement embraces the sound of the voice with a special and rare color, with a special and rare mood: tenderness....Key sentence of this song: "Two hearts as one will be blended"...





6. I Got Rhythm 4:24

From *Girl Crazy*, the 1930 Broadway musical; lyrics by Ira Gershwin

**SOLOIST: RAY ANDERSON, VOCAL, TROMBONE / GUITAR: ALEGRE CORRÊA / PIANO: PAUL URBANEK**  
**BASS: UWE URBANOWSKI / DRUMS: FERNANDO PAIVA / PERCUSSION: LUIS RIBEIRO, LAURINHO BANDEIRA**  
**ARRANGED BY M. RÜEGG**

With this tune, George Gershwin provided the jazz world with the most-played harmonic structure after the blues: the “rhythm changes.” With this arrangement, Mathias Rüegg, the Alegre Corrêa sextet and Ray Anderson give this song an incredible vitality: the rhythmical structure, starting with the verse in a half-time feel, develops and permutates, ending with an *a capella* stop-chorus. The blending of modern Brazilian music and jazz elements adds a special flavor. But most of all, enthusiasm and passion give the life to this song. Ray Anderson, one of the greatest trombone players of our times is an absolutely outstanding singer, too.... Just press “Play” and listen! “Who could ask for anything more?”

7. My Man’s Gone Now 4:37

From the opera *Porgy and Bess*, 1935; lyrics by Ira Gershwin and Du Bose Heyward

**ANNA LAUVERGNAC, VOCAL / ALTO FLUTES: PETRA HAITCHI, BARBARA GISLER-HAAS, ANGELA KIRCHNER,**  
**EDINA VAMY-MAY / BASS FLUTES: FERESHTEH RAHBARI, ANNEGRET BAUERLE / BASS: HEIRI KÄNZIG**  
**PERCUSSION: INGRID OBERKANINS / ARRANGED & CONDUCTED BY M. RÜEGG**

The subject of this song is unique in the jazz-standards repertoire. It’s a song about a tragedy much deeper than the end of a love affair: it’s a song about death. It evokes the astonishment, the emptiness, the extreme loneliness, the grief of a woman faced with the death of her man.

The sound of the toms is haunting, the rhythm recalling a funeral march. The flutes catch the essence, the mood is rarefied; all hope is gone, all dreams have faded away. It’s a lament balancing resignation and sorrow, a pain so deep that it can’t express itself until the end, when it flows out in a cry.

8. Someone to Watch Over Me 5:51

From *Oh, Kay!*, the 1926 Broadway musical; lyrics by Ira Gershwin

**SHIRLEY HORN, VOCAL, PIANO / BASS: AL KIBBON / DRUMS: STEVE WILLIAMS / ARRANGED BY SHIRLEY HORN**

Vienna, February 23. The tape of the Shirley Horn trio reaches the studio. The recording days are long ones ... it’s 1:30 in the morning, everybody is excited and exhausted too; it’s 1:30 in the morning and the tape starts running. There’s something unreal in the silence that surrounds the music. Not one movement, as if everybody even stopped breathing. Five minutes and fifty seconds of total stillness. As the echo of the last note fades away, the silence in the control room is so intense that it recalls the spell of an old fairy tale. Slowly, reality comes back again. Someone asks Mathias Rüegg how he will arrange the song; the answer: “It’s untouchable.” There’s a profound silence in the studio. It’s the 23rd of February, 1:30 in the morning, and once again Miss Shirley Horn has brought tears to the eyes of her listeners and warmth to their hearts.

9. Concerto in F (first movement) (1925) 13:20

**SOLOIST: FRANCK TORTILLER, VIBRAPHONE, MARIMBA / FLUTES: SASCHA OTTO, CATHERINE EMTAGE,**  
**SILVIE LACROIX / OBOE: VASILE MARIAN / SAXES: HARRY SOKAL, FLORIAN BRAMBÖCK, GERALD PREINFALK, HERWIG**  
**GRADISCHNIG, CHRISTIAN MAURER / TRUMPETS: THORSTEN BENKENSTEIN, MATTHIEU MICHEL,**  
**BUMI FIAN, WOLFGANG MANG / TROMBONES: ROBERT BACHNER, CHRISTIAN MUTHSPIEL, CHARLY WAGNER**  
**FRENCH HORNS: ARKADY SHILKLOPER, FRANZ PICKL / TUBA: JOHN SASS / BASS: ROBERT RIEGLER**  
**DRUMS: GREGOR HILBE / PERCUSSION: INGRID OBERKANINS / ARRANGED & CONDUCTED BY M. RÜEGG**

Like *Rhapsody in Blue*, the *Concerto in F* is a timeless piece that doesn’t show its age. It has the thrill of a jazz-tinged world and a crazy-quilt of music — European influenced, American and fresh in spirit, with a forward-moving drive that is all Gershwin. Franck Tortiller’s vibraphone translates the piano’s entrance into a more celestial realm, as do the brass and winds in the slow wistful passages. The VAO skillfully reflects the Concerto’s broad panorama — it’s stately brass statements, its complex rush of sounds and rhythms. Tortiller’s dancing mallets accelerate the percussive intensity, punctuated by pan-American rhythms and today’s accents, bringing this tribute to a brilliant close.



★ **EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: JOZUA KNOL**  
**PRODUCER: MATHIAS RÜEGG**  
**ASSISTANT PRODUCER: CLAUDIA KAPSAMER**

All orchestra parts were recorded February 20-25, 1998 at the Sing-Sang Studio, Vienna, on a Studer 24-Track Analog.

Strings were recorded on February 26 at the Hafner Studio, Vienna.

Shirley Horn was recorded on February 9, 1998, at Mad Hatter Studios, Los Angeles.

Anna Lauvergnac was recorded on February 26, 1998, at the Cosmix Studio, Vienna.

T.S. Monk and Art Farmer were recorded on March 3; Joe Lovano on March 4; and Ray Anderson on March 9, 1998, at Quad Studios in New York City.

Monica Zetterlund was recorded on March 7, 1998 at the EMI Studio, Stockholm.

Dee Dee Bridgewater was recorded on March 10, 1998, at Studio Acousti, Paris.

Mixed at Studio Powerplay, Zürich, March 1998.

Recording and mixing engineer: Jürg Peterhans

Recording assistants: Heinrich von Kalnein, Nadja Wallaskovits

Additional recording engineers: Roger Nichols, Tim Weston, Bernd Jungmeier,

Fredrik Anderson, Chris Habeck, Alain Cluziay

Mastered by Andy van Dette at MasterDisk Studio, New York City

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A Counterpoint Media Production in association with the Vienna Art Orchestra

Dee Dee Bridgewater appears courtesy of Verve Records

Shirley Horn appears courtesy of Verve Records

Monica Zetterlund appears courtesy of BMG/Ariola, Sweden

T.S. Monk appears courtesy of N2K

Joe Lovano appears courtesy of Blue Note Records

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## ★ MATHIAS RÜEGG AND THE VIENNA ART ORCHESTRA

The Vienna Art Orchestra, founded by the Swiss pianist, arranger and composer Mathias Rüegg, has been a steady force in the international jazz world since 1977, when it quickly grew from a small ensemble to a 16-piece orchestra. The group's many recordings, such as *From No Time to Ragtime* and *The Innocence of Clichés*, reveal the VAO's unusual orientation, aptly described by Swiss journalist Christian Rentsch: "Rüegg and his musicians have provided us with an affectionately disrespectful survey of the last 90 years of improvised music: from Scott Joplin and Jelly Roll Morton onwards past Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus and Eric Dolphy, and beyond to Ornette Coleman and Anthony Braxton." Rüegg and the VAO have continued along their voyage of discovery, urged on by an improvisational spirit and collective sense of exploration and excitement. Rüegg's fresh sounding arrangements and compositions have helped create the VAO's sound and style: throughout the group's development he wrote for whomever was at hand — including marimba, strings, tuba, melodia, in addition to standard jazz brass and woodwinds — which has resulted in striking combinations of instruments. Over the years, Rüegg and the VAO have also engaged in several music-theater pieces and multi-media productions, including *Der 8. Tag*, for choir, orchestra and dancers and Rüegg's musical adaptation of Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête*. Since the early 1990s the orchestra has incorporated the talents of a new generation of Viennese musicians, representing the vibrant diversity of style and character at work in Europe's contemporary jazz scene.