

Arthur Fiedler, (born Dec. 17, 1894, Boston—died July 10, 1979, Brookline, Mass., U.S.), maestro of the Boston Pops Orchestra for 50 seasons and the best-selling classical conductor of all time; his recordings with the Pops sold some 50,000,000 discs. (The Pops Orchestra is the Boston Symphony minus its principal players.) Fiedler, whose principal aim was “to give audiences a good time,” led the Pops in performances of popular tunes, show music, and classics.

From 1911 to 1915 Fiedler studied violin, piano, and conducting at the Royal Academy of Music in Berlin before joining the Boston Symphony as a member of the second violin section. He played in the viola section from 1918 to 1930. He also was proficient on the celesta, piano, and organ. Fiedler organized the Arthur Fiedler Sinfonietta (1924), a chamber symphony, when he was refused the conductorship of the Pops. In 1929 he organized the Esplanade concerts, in which symphonic music was played outdoors in Boston for the first time. In 1930 he became conductor of the Pops.

As conductor of the Boston Pops Fiedler developed a varied and light-hearted repertoire that struck a responsive chord in the public. He excelled at adapting popular dance music and other songs to performance by a symphonic orchestra. Fiedler was viewed by many critics as a highly able technician and a superb showman rather than as a first-rate interpreter of classical music, however.

Earl Wild, American pianist, composer, and teacher (born Nov. 26, 1915, Pittsburgh, Pa.—died Jan. 23, 2010, Palm Springs, Calif.), built an impressive career as one of the most technically accomplished pianists of any era. He was best known for his mastery of 19th-century Romantic showpieces and for playing his own virtuoso interpretations of works by composers such as Bach, Mozart, and Tchaikovsky. Wild began studying piano at age 4, and by age 12 he was performing recitals. At age 15 he performed Franz Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1 with the visiting Minneapolis Symphony. After graduating (1937) from Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University), he worked (1937–44) in New York City as staff pianist for the NBC radio and television network. In 1939 Wild performed the first televised piano recital, and in 1997 he became the first pianist to perform live on the Internet. Wild came to national attention when he played (1942) George Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue with Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony in a radio broadcast. During World War II, Wild served (1942–44) as a musician in the U.S. Navy. As the ABC television network's staff pianist, conductor, and composer (1944–68), he wrote comic music for Sid Caesar (1954–57) and composed serious music for the network (Easter Oratorio and Revelations, both in 1962). From 1939 Wild recorded frequently; his discography includes more than 700 solo piano works, 35 concertos, and 26 recordings of chamber music. His Earl Wild: The Romantic Master won a Grammy Award in 1997; he performed his last public concert at age 92. In 1986 the Hungarian government awarded Wild the Liszt Medal.

GERSHWIN /

**CONCERTO IN F
CUBAN OVERTURE
"I GOT RHYTHM" Variations**



BOSTON POPS/FIEDLER EARL WILD, *Pianist*

Gershwin successfully combined the sweep and mood of the typical Russian concerto with the blues, jazz, and rag elements he brought from his successful pop music career. And why not? His family had recently immigrated from Russia when he was born in 1898. He had, of course, been immensely successful as a pop tune composer and as a Broadway show composer before he wrote this 1925 concerto. It was, specifically, the success of his *Rhapsody in Blue* which led Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony Society to commission this concerto. Gershwin resolved to orchestrate it himself (Grofé had done both the jazz band and the symphonic arrangements of the rhapsody.) Even if he had to delve into textbooks to learn orchestration and even to discover what the form of a concerto might be, he created an entirely successful work. Although some critics thought the concerto was derivative of Debussy and other composers, it is in fact a remarkably original and personally characteristic work for being any composer's first unassisted piece.

Gershwin was not ready for formal innovation; the three-movement form of the concerto is in fact textbook. The introduction is fresh, breezy, and contemporary, based on the rhythm of the very popular dance *Charleston* by James P. Johnson. A bassoon introduces the sprightly first theme, while the piano itself has the warm-hearted contrasting theme. Throughout the movement -- and the concerto as a whole -- the themes have jazz-like syncopations and make liberal use of the "blues scale."

The second movement is remarkable for its muted trumpet theme, a nocturnal, wistful tune with the potential to haunt the memory. It is contrasted with an upbeat, strolling theme on piano. The form of the movement is reminiscent of the slow movement of Dvorak's *New World Symphony*, and possesses the same kind of passionate outburst shortly before its conclusion.

A virtual fanfare for timpani, cymbals, and bass drum launches the highly energetic finale in rondo form. Like many of the fast themes of the whole concerto, its main subject makes good use of aggressively repeated notes. There is a lyrical theme which manages not to slow things down, initially. Gershwin recollects the second theme of the first movement and yet another melodic idea for muted trumpet with strings. Gershwin ends this high-energy romp with a brief coda.

George Gershwin was inspired to produce the colorful Cuban Overture by a vacation in Havana. A nonstop whirl of dancing and revelry drew the composer's attention to the particular rhythmic and instrumental characteristics of the rumba. In addition to the Overture's more traditional orchestral forces, Gershwin calls for maracas, bongos, claves, and a guiro, directing in the score that they "be placed right in front of the conductor's desk." The Overture is a brilliant orchestral showpiece. Gershwin himself provided commentary for the work:

"In my composition I have endeavored to combine the Cuban rhythms with my own thematic material. The result is a symphonic overture which embodies the essence of the Cuban dance. It has three parts: the first part (*Moderato e Molto Ritmato*) is preceded by a (*forte*) introduction featuring some of the thematic material. Then comes a three-part contrapuntal episode leading to a second theme. The first part finishes with a recurrence of the first theme combined with fragments of the second. A solo clarinet cadenza leads to a middle part, which is in a plaintive mood. It is a gradually developing canon in a polytonal manner. This part concludes with a climax based on an ostinato of the theme in the canon, after which a sudden change in tempo brings us back to the rumba dance rhythms. The finale is a development of the preceding material in a *stretto*-like manner. This leads us back once again to the main theme. The work concludes with a coda that features the Cuban percussion instruments."

The Overture received its first performance as part of an all-Gershwin concert by the New York Philharmonic, conducted by Albert Coates at Lewisohn Stadium, on August 16, 1932. Editions of the Overture for both piano duet and piano duo have also been published and recorded.

"Variations on 'I Got Rhythm'" is a set of variations for orchestra and piano solo composed by George Gershwin in 1933-34. The piece is dedicated "To my brother Ira".

Gershwin composed the new piece for his forthcoming concert tour with the Leo Reisman Orchestra, as an alternative to his *Rhapsody in Blue* and *Concerto in F*. He took the melody of his hit song "I Got Rhythm" from the musical *Girl Crazy* as the base of the piece. Most of the piece was composed during a three-week vacation in Palm Beach, and it was completed on January 6, 1934 after he returned to New York. It received its première in Boston at the Symphony on January 14, 1934 by the orchestra, conducted by Charles Previn.

The piece starts off with the repetitions of four rising innocent clarinets notes on pentatonic scale, which opens the melody of the original song. The orchestra joins in after a brief piano answer to the clarinet. The piano and the orchestra state the main themes of the song which then is followed by a series of variations in the styles of waltz, atonal/serialist, oriental, jazz, a variation where the treble and bass sections are inverted, and then a grand restatement and finale.

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**CONCERTO IN F
CUBAN OVERTURE
"I GOT RHYTHM" Variations**

BOSTON POPS/FIEDLER

**EARL
WILD, *Pianist***

Concerto In F For Piano And Orchestra

1 Allegro 11:57

2 Adagio: Andante Con Moto Poco Accelerando 10:10

3 Allegro Agitato 6:11

4 I Got Rhythm Variations For Piano And Orchestra 7:55

5 Cuban Overture 9:12

Total Time: 45:25

Recorded by RCA Records 1962

Engineer – Anthony Salvatore Producer – Peter Dellheim



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