12 The Coverage of Gershwin in Music History Texts

HOWARD POLLACK

George Gershwin has long been a challenging figure to categorize and evaluate within mainstream music historiography. Few have gone as far as the Russian composer Alexander Glazunov, who, after attending a performance of *Rhapsody in Blue*, deemed him "half human and half animal."[1] But music historians and chroniclers have reacted variably to the composer's rather anomalous achievement and place in the history of Western music.

To explore and gauge such differing perspectives on Gershwin, in particular his more serious compositions, I have examined his coverage – or lack thereof – among a fairly broad range of mainly American texts on Western and in particular American and twentieth-century concert music. For the most part, I have excluded from this survey music appreciation texts (to the extent that these can be distinguished from general histories) as well as more specialized studies, such as surveys of opera, popular musical theater, popular song, and jazz, along with essayistic monographs more obviously subjective in nature, such as Paul Rosenfeld's *An Hour with American Music* (1929), Daniel Gregory Mason's *Tune In, America* (1931), Lazare Saminsky's *Living Music of the Americas* (1949), Vernon Duke's *Listen Here!* (1963), Nicholas E. Tawa's *Serenading the Reluctant Eagle* (1984), and Richard Crawford's *The American Musical Landscape* (1993). Nor was every edition of some popular texts consulted, as revealing as such a project might be. Indeed, this study, limited to sources in English, makes no claim for systematic comprehensiveness on any level, but more simply considers a large sampling of some of the more prominent music histories from Gershwin's time to our own.

Gershwin made an early entry into music textbooks with his 1929 appearance in the first edition of music critic John Tasker Howard's *Our American Music*, a book that enjoyed four editions and numerous printings, making it the predominant chronicle of American music in the first half of the twentieth century.[2] A composer of light music who also penned landmark biographies of Stephen Foster (1934) and Ethelbert Nevin (1935), Howard (1890–1964) held Gershwin's Broadway shows and *Rhapsody in Blue* – which he first heard at the famous February 5, 1924 run-through of the work that preceded its February 12 premiere – in the

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108528757.012 Published online by Cambridge University Press

highest regard. He thought, however, that the Concerto in F (1925) and *An American in Paris* (1928), two works also written early enough to be discussed in the book's first edition, came at a sacrifice of the composer's "natural charm."[3] The use of the *Rhapsody* as a benchmark by which to assess the composer's later compositions, already a fixture of journalistic criticism, would surface in subsequent history texts as well, although no consensus emerged, with some arguing for the superiority of *Rhapsody*, others favoring one or another later piece.

Initially, Howard discussed Gershwin in a section devoted to popular music and theater entitled, "Our Lighter Musical Moments," as opposed to his voluminous chapter on "Our Contemporary Composers." But by the time of the book's third edition in 1946, he thought that it behooved him to "change the emphasis on Gershwin's twofold output, and to present him in the gallery of serious composers."[4] Nonetheless, Howard remained committed to the idea of surveying Gershwin's "twofold output," that is, essentially, his concert pieces and his musical comedies, in tandem as he had done prior, arguing: "Gershwin's lighter works are so much the germ and source of his larger compositions, that they cannot be considered separately" – a sensible and helpful tactic, but one not necessarily taken in later histories.[5]

As its subtitle might indicate, Aaron Copland's *Our New Music: Leading Composers in Europe and America* (1941), which originated as a series of lectures, did not aim for anything like Howard's sort of comprehensiveness, but nevertheless deserves attention here because of the author's importance and authority. Like the monograph on contemporary music by composer-critic Marion Bauer (1882–1955) that preceded his own, Copland (1900–90) placed Gershwin alongside those composers associated with jazz – for many years a broad context that over time largely dwindled to a consideration of just three works from the mid-1920s: Milhaud's *The Creation of the World*, Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, and Copland's own Piano Concerto. Otherwise, Copland had little to say about Gershwin but that his works "made up in originality and individuality what they lacked in technical finish."[6] Copland's short shrift of Gershwin, expressed both here and elsewhere, for years attracted the attention of commentators, especially given the fact that from the beginnings of their careers, these two composers for various reasons – including their closeness of age, their Russian-Jewish backgrounds, and their relation to jazz – were often compared and contrasted. Accordingly, some ascribed Copland's offhand treatment of Gershwin in *Our New Music* to some sort of psychological or professional need to distance himself from his more popular colleague, although few of Copland's contemporaries, whether or not encumbered by any such rivalry, would have considered Gershwin a "leading

composer" either, especially during this time period. Copland appreciated Gershwin enough to perform Three Preludes (published 1927) on early lecture recitals, and to conduct some of the famous orchestral pieces in his later years, but his reservations about the composer seem genuine enough – revealingly the flip side of his similarly cool 1936 appraisal of Samuel Barber as someone who "writes in a somewhat outmoded fashion, making up in technical finish what he lacks in musical substance" (an opinion later revised in light of Barber's mature work).[7] Indeed, among American composers, *Our New Music* singled out for detailed consideration only Charles Ives, Roger Sessions, Walter Piston, Roy Harris, Virgil Thomson, Marc Blitzstein, and the author himself. If Copland sidelined Gershwin, the latter found himself in good company.

First published in 1955, and revised in 1966 and 1987, Gilbert Chase's *America's Music, From the Pilgrims to the Present*, a notable successor to John Tasker Howard's *Our American Music*, took issue (in its first and second editions) with the latter's discussion of Gershwin, arguing that the Concerto in F constituted "a better work of art than the *Rhapsody in Blue*."[8] An expert on Latin American as well as American music, Chase (1906–92) gave ample space to Gershwin, including *Porgy and Bess*, although with no acknowledgment of that opera's checkered textual history, one marked by dramatic cuts and rewrites – a problematic lapse common to discussions of the piece. Calling Gershwin "a composer of the people and for the people," at least in the book's first edition,[9] Chase also underestimated Gershwin's connections with both jazz and serious music as opposed to popular music, an oversight encountered in many other accounts as well, and one attributed in part to a narrowing sense of what constituted jazz. Chase's significantly revised second edition (1966) lavished rare praise on the "brilliant" *Variations on "I Got Rhythm"* for piano and orchestra (1934), and eliminated the erroneous claim that Arnold Schoenberg had orchestrated Gershwin's Three Preludes, a blunder that in the interim had made its way into William Austin's text discussed below.[10] The similarly overhauled and expanded third edition (1987) showed the influence of Charles Schwartz's 1973 Gershwin biography,[11] especially in its emphasis on the composer's Jewish background and his connection with Yiddish theater, to the point that Chase now grouped Gershwin with Copland and Leonard Bernstein as one of several prominent Jewish-American composers, whereas he previously had not so much as mentioned Gershwin's Jewish background. This third edition also made welcome reference to the highly neglected *George Gershwin's Song-Book* (1932), and observed, again thanks to evolving scholarship on the composer, Gershwin's relation to some of the stride

and jazzy popular pianists of the day, such as Luckey Roberts and Zez Confrey.[12]

As already seen in the publications by Bauer and Copland, Gershwin naturally commanded less attention in more general music histories than those devoted to American music, at least during this earlier era. *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music* (1968) by the Hungarian-American cellist and writer Otto Deri (1911–69), for instance, gave Gershwin no more than a passing glance.[13] In due time, however, Gershwin gained increasing prominence even among such general surveys, as suggested by the many editions of musicologist Donald Jay Grout's ubiquitous *History of Western Music*, initially published in 1960. In the book's debut edition, Grout (1902–87) devoted a short paragraph to Gershwin, but couched so subjunctively – the composer "hoped to bridge the gulf between popular music and the concert hall audience," his *Rhapsody in Blue* consisting of "an attempt to combine the language of jazz and Lisztian Romanticism" – as to suggest merely quixotic aspirations on Gershwin's part.[14] This discussion remained in place after Claude Palisca (1921–2001) began to co-author the text in the late 1980s.[15] But with the appointment of J. Peter Burkholder (b. 1954) as the book's third author in the late 1990s, coverage of Gershwin expanded, reflecting not only the growing presence of popular music in academia but also Burkholder's background as an American music specialist. By the time of the volume's ninth edition (2014), Gershwin received two full pages of text, one for his popular theater works (with the book's ancillary anthologies including the music for "I Got Rhythm" and a recording of that number by Ethel Merman), and another page, placed elsewhere, for his concert works and *Porgy and Bess*, with the composer credited for having created "a distinctively American modernist style."[16]

Meanwhile, a few histories from the 1960s – *Introduction to Contemporary Music* (1961) by the Latvian-born Queens College professor Joseph Machlis (1906–98), *Music in a New Found Land: Themes and Developments in the History of American Music* (1964) by the British composer-critic Wilfrid Mellers (1914–2008), and *Music in the 20th Century, from Debussy through Stravinsky* (1966) by Cornell musicologist William W. Austin (1920–2000) – demonstrated Gershwin's growing stock among music historians, even though the authors differed somewhat in their conclusions. Surprisingly unusual in its recognition of Ira Gershwin, George's principal collaborator on his musical comedies and songs, Machlis deemed the composer "one of the most gifted musicians this country has produced," and showed even greater esteem in the book's 1979 second edition, which privileged Gershwin, along with Ives, Varèse, Ruggles, Copland, and Sessions, as one of only a few Americans with a chapter of his own. However, this same second edition made the grievous

mistake of maintaining the false though widely circulated claim (found in other histories as well) that Duke Ellington thought *Porgy and Bess* diminished by its alleged "lampblack Negroism" (whereas that phrase had originated with Ellington's white interlocutor, Edward Murrow).[17]

Typical of European response in taking the composer more seriously than many comparably sophisticated American commentators, Wilfrid Mellers went even further than Machlis, deeming Gershwin "certainly among the three or four finest composers ever produced by America," the adjective "finest" in some distinction to the more familiar American description of the composer as "gifted." Although lavish in his praise of Gershwin's popular theater songs, which showed him "an adult and unexpectedly deep composer," Mellers focused primarily on *Porgy and Bess*, taking the opera's use of African American lore somewhat for granted, and, by sensing the composer's identification with Porgy, honing in rather on the work's autobiographical resonance. Mellers also proved unique in comparing the opera not only to the work of Menotti, Blitzstein, and Bernstein, but also to that of Mozart, Donizetti, and Verdi, concluding: "There are greater twentieth-century operas: but not one which offers more of the qualities that opera used to have in its heyday, and must have again if it is to survive."[18]

William Austin, although more circumspect than either Machlis or Mellers, likewise acknowledged Gershwin's importance by devoting two paragraphs to the composer in a book astonishingly encyclopedic in breadth. Moreover, Austin brought unprecedented attention to the composer's development, writing: "In later works Gershwin's Lisztian exuberance was restrained by a growing respectful awareness of Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Berg, a growing appreciation of Beethoven, and an effort to emulate these masters with the help of Joseph Schillinger's methods" (even if, as mentioned, Chase misled him with regard to Schoenberg's alleged orchestration of the Three Preludes, whose date of composition Austin also got wrong). Austin's wide-ranging knowledge and concerns allowed him not only to make the common references to Copland and Liszt, but in the course of the text, to draw connections with, in addition to Beethoven, Berg, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg as seen above, Debussy, Delius, Puccini, Ravel, Anton Rubinstein, Irving Berlin, John Alden Carpenter, Vernon Duke, Jerome Kern, William Grant Still, several leading jazz musicians, and by implication, Kurt Weill, Isaak Dunayevsky, and many others, stating: "A synthesis of popular and prestigious elements was achieved without any theory of 'gestic music' or 'realism' by the American George Gershwin."[19] At the same time, Austin's carefully calibrated rankings prompted distinctions not always to Gershwin's advantage. He claimed that Prokofiev "was not rightly to be classified with that of

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108528757.012 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Glazunov or Khachaturian, much less with Lehár or Gershwin"; that Gershwin did not, like Copland, share those "international standards" exemplified by Walter Piston, Roger Sessions, and Elliott Carter; and that Poulenc's *Les Biches* "could never provide comfort or thrills to the naive audience of Gershwin, nor could it command the respect of all admirers of Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*." Austin imagined nonetheless that the "usefulness and influence [of Gershwin's music] might well outlast the later hit shows of Frederick Loewe."[20]

Two other texts from the 1960s, part of a classroom-friendly series published by Prentice-Hall – *Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction* (1967) by composer Eric Salzman (1933–2017), and *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction* (1969) by musicologist H. Wiley Hitchcock (1923–2007) – added little to the conversation. In referring to *Porgy and Bess* as "in spite of its ambitions, a masterpiece of musical comedy," Salzman perpetuated a misnomer encountered endlessly in studies especially of the Broadway musical, and one the author corrected in his 1988 third edition of the text by calling the work "actually a full-scale grand opera."[21] Hitchcock's cavalier treatment of Gershwin, which differed markedly from the roughly contemporary assessments by Machlis, Mellers, and Austin discussed above, represented a low point with regard to the academic reception of Gershwin, beginning with the fact that the author, in odd disregard to both genre and chronology, situated the composer, including his concert music and *Porgy and Bess*, in the "Popular Music and Musical Comedy" section of a chapter entitled, "The 1920s." Nor did Hitchcock show much enthusiasm for Gershwin's work itself, relying on fellow historian Richard Crawford to say something mildly approving about *Porgy and Bess* – a discussion hardly modified in the text's three successive editions.[22]

Although the eminent composer-critic Virgil Thomson (1896–1989) achieved some notoriety for his condescending review of *Porgy and Bess* at the time of its premiere (when the work represented a rival to his own opera, *Four Saints in Three Acts*),[23] he showed greater forbearance in his overview of *American Music Since 1910* (1970), which regarded the "sweet-singing" *Porgy and Bess* as a milestone in the history of American music, and which summarized Gershwin as possessing "[l]ively rhythm, graceful harmony, and a fine melodic gift."[24] Another composer, Edith Borroff (b. 1925), in her sprawling *Music in Europe and the United States* (1971), took respectful note of Gershwin as well, while painting, like many others, an exaggeratedly bleak picture with regard to Gershwin's reception among his contemporaries.[25]

Even prior to its landmark 1976 revivals, the growing prestige of *Porgy and Bess*, as evidenced in Mellers, Borroff, and others, could be discerned in the chapter contributions of music librarian Wayne Shirley (b. 1936) in

Music in the Modern Age (1973) and conductor-composer Richard Franko Goldman (1910–80) in the *New Oxford History of Music* (1974), although the latter also included a sizeable excerpt from *Rhapsody in Blue*. Shirley, meanwhile, demonstrated the influence of both Stravinsky's "*Petrushka* chord" and Southern black folk music on *Porgy and Bess* by way of two musical examples, thereby neatly illustrating the incorporation of modernist and vernacular styles in the composer's work. *Porgy and Bess* also emerged as a prominent focus in *American Music: A Panorama* (1979) by composer Daniel Kingman (1924–2003), although the book's 1990 second edition, aware of shifts in the cultural climate, acknowledged some recent "rejection" of the work as "racially exploitative and demeaning."[26]

Gershwin made at least a cursory appearance as well in some monographs from the 1980s (all written by an emerging generation of "baby boomers") that, no doubt stimulated by current trends, addressed questions of American musical "identity," including *A History of Musical Americanism* (1980) by musicologist Barbara A. Zuck (b. 1946), and three books by historians: *Musical Nationalism: American Composers' Search for Identity* (1983) by Alan Howard Levy (b. 1951); *Yankee Blues: Musical Culture and American Identity* (1985) by MacDonald Smith Moore (b. 1945); and *An American Music: The Search for an American Musical Identity* (1986) by Barbara L. Tischler (b. 1949).[27] Surprisingly, Gershwin figured only peripherally in these studies, which largely viewed American musical identity in terms of such composers as Copland and Roy Harris, thereby maintaining Gershwin's long-established segregation from other serious composers, although Moore took the novel approach of placing Gershwin in the context of the Jewish Swiss American composer Ernst Bloch, and Tischler offered a corrective by noting similarities in the critical reception of Gershwin and Copland.[28] Such publications as these found precedent in, among other titles, *Composer and Nation: The Folk Heritage in Music* (1960) by the Marxist arts critic Sidney Finkelstein (1909–74), who applauded Gershwin's concert works and musicals, if not the "patronizing" and "melodramatic" *Porgy and Bess*.[29]

In 1983, musicologist Charles Hamm (1925–2011) brought forth a large history, *Music in the New World*, notable for its emphasis on vernacular American musics, the author's principal field of scholarship. Hamm duly presented Gershwin – in the tradition of Isaac Goldberg's seminal 1931 biography – as a sort of folk hero, an untrained and unequipped composer incapable of growth, who succeeded nevertheless in achieving "what no 'serious' American composer of the 1920s was able to achieve – a sense of being truly American in character."[30] Such an assessment, easily challenged by the facts, managed both to obscure Gershwin's real skills and capacity for development and to minimize the

accomplishments of such contemporaries as Thomson, Harris, and Copland. None of this prevented Hamm from declaring *Porgy and Bess* "the greatest nationalistic opera of the century, not only of America but of the world."[31]

Two music appreciation texts from 1990 – *America's Musical Landscape* (now in its seventh 2013 edition) by Jean Ferris (b. 1936) and *The Musical Art: An Introduction to Western Music* by R. Larry Todd (b. 1952) – revealed not only Gershwin's solidifying academic reputation, but in particular, the increasing centrality of *Porgy and Bess* as compared to *Rhapsody in Blue*. Ferris aptly selected the opera's love duet, "Bess, You Is My Woman Now," as an accompanying listening example.[32] And Todd, although he somewhat misleadingly represented the composer's achievement by discussing his serious work under the subheading, "Other Developments in Jazz and Popular Music" and included a misstatement about an alleged consultation with Ravel in Paris, recognized *Porgy and Bess* as Gershwin's "masterpiece."[33]

In contrast, two notable books from the same time period with more of a focus on style analysis, as evidenced by their titles – *Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure* (1986) by Bryan R. Simms (b. 1944), and *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (1991) by Robert P. Morgan (b. 1934) – had nominal use for Gershwin. Simms's one sentence on Gershwin appeared in a section, "Interactions with Rock," in which the author contended that Gershwin's "attempts to synthesize the realms of popular and serious composition" anticipated the likes of Peter Nero and Emerson, Lake, and Palmer.[34] Morgan, who spotlighted Copland, Sessions, Cowell, Partch, and Varèse among American composers of Gershwin's generation, similarly took only parenthetical notice of the composer; apparently unaware of such works as *Lullaby* (1919) and *Blue Monday Blues* (1922), this scant mention tapped the familiar but erroneous notion that "before the *Rhapsody* Gershwin had been exclusively a composer of popular songs."[35]

Five texts from the later 1990s – *Modern Times: From World War I to the Present* (1993), edited by the same Robert Morgan; *Soundings: Music in the Twentieth Century* (1995) by musicologist Glenn Watkins (b. 1927); *The History of American Classical Music: MacDowell Through Minimalism* (1995) by composer-pianist John Warthen Struble (b. 1952); *American Music in the Twentieth Century* (1997) by composer and music critic Kyle Gann (b. 1955); and the *Cambridge History of American Music* (1998), edited by British composer and musicologist David Nicholls – offered a variety of perspectives.[36] Carol Oja (b. 1953), in her chapter on American music for the Morgan book, for example, knowingly alluded to Gershwin's impact on the new-music community and his association

with African American artists and intellectuals. Glenn Watkins's interest centered rather on Gershwin's influence on especially European composers of distinction, to the point of discussing him in a chapter entitled, "The New Simplicities: Germany." Even so, Watkins seems to have underestimated Gershwin's importance to George Antheil and John Alden Carpenter (perhaps because, with respect to the latter, he cited *Skyscrapers* as dating from 1921 as opposed to 1924).[37] John Struble favored Gershwin with unusually expansive coverage, devoting single chapters only to him and Ives; but his appraisal proved highly mixed, stressing formal deficiencies and somewhat slighting the composer's seriousness as a student of music even as he expressed admiration for Gershwin's "holistic" welding of melody, harmony, and orchestration, and his capacity for growth, as exemplified by the *Second Rhapsody* (1931).[38] Kyle Gann, whose preoccupation with America's more avant-garde traditions pushed Gershwin somewhat to the side, also seems to have underappreciated the composer's early formal training, although he recognized connections with both Alban Berg and the Schillinger method with regard to *Porgy and Bess*. (Like many others, Gann mistakenly ascribed the famous anecdotal exchange between Gershwin and Stravinsky – with the latter saying, after hearing about the former's earnings, "perhaps it is I who ought to study under you!" – to Gershwin and Ravel.[39])

The *Cambridge History of American Music* dramatically bifurcated Gershwin's achievement by discussing his popular theater work in the chapter "Popular Song and Popular Music on Stage and Film" by British musicologist Stephen Banfield (b. 1951), and his more serious compositions in "Tonal Traditions in Art Music from 1920 to 1960" by American musicologist Larry Starr (b. 1946).[40] The latter essay, mostly devoted to Gershwin and Copland, constituted a fresh approach to Gershwin in a number of ways: it underlined the composer's evolution as he matured, highlighted the limits of *Porgy and Bess* criticism based on abridged texts, and shed new light on Gershwin's formal finesse, including the observation that "beginning with the *Rhapsody*, Gershwin wrote instrumentally conceived, often asymmetrical themes with complex harmonic implications – frequently involving blue notes – for his concert works, and spun his distinctive forms out of their unusual potential."[41]

Such reassessment continued with musicologist Richard Crawford's generous consideration of Gershwin in his *America's Musical Life: A History* (2001), a successor to those copious texts by John Tasker Howard, Gilbert Chase, and Charles Hamm. Crawford (b. 1935) noted Gershwin's abilities as a pianist, and offered sensitive analyses of both "The Man I Love" and *Rhapsody in Blue*, even if he appeared to underrate the organic tightness of the latter as had been recently detailed by Steven

Gilbert (1943–99) in his landmark treatise, *The Music of Gershwin* (1995), as well as by composer David Schiff (b. 1945) in *Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue* (1997).[42] Crawford's discussion of *Porgy and Bess*, imprecisely included in a chapter entitled "The Golden Age of the American Musical," further seemed problematic in its willingness to raise challenges to the work's operatic pedigree and "authenticity" without countervailing facts and opinions, including any discussion of Gershwin's travels south to research Southern black music.[43]

In their somewhat revisionist discussions of Gershwin, both cultural historian Joseph Horowitz (b. 1948) in *Classical Music in America: A History of its Rise and Fall* (2005) and musicologist Richard Taruskin (b. 1945) in *Music in the Early Twentieth Century* (2005) showed a heightened interest in the comparative reception histories of Gershwin and Copland.[44] Such discourse drew on the writings of musicologist Carol Oja, including *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (2000), which stated, "Copland was elevated at Gershwin's expense," although the author herself considered such matters only in the context of Copland, with her report on Gershwin centering rather on an analysis of the Concerto in F.[45] For Horowitz, who declared Gershwin, along with Ives, one of his "heroes," preferences for Copland over Gershwin signaled the country's immature subservience to "the 'white' Eurocentricity of American classical music and the masterpiece obsession of its culture of performance," but his broad claim that "American classical music closed ranks against Gershwin" conflicted not only with the historical record, but also with observations made elsewhere in the book.[46]

Music in the Early Twentieth Century, the penultimate text in Richard Taruskin's epic five-volume *Oxford History of Western Music*, devoted more space to Gershwin than any other American composer aside from Ives and Copland, further evidence of Gershwin's growing stature. Taruskin committed a few faux pas in his treatment of Gershwin, including failing to recognize that the composer pursued a formal musical education in his teens even while working as a popular song plugger and pianist; again confusing Ravel with Stravinsky in the aforementioned anecdote (a misstep only partially emended in the history's abbreviated college edition prepared with Christopher H. Gibbs); and crediting the libretto of *Porgy and Bess* to Ira Gershwin (who only wrote a few of the lyrics) rather than DuBose and Dorothy Heyward (the latter name, incidentally, commonly and unfairly omitted in discussions of the opera, both in textbooks and elsewhere).[47] Moreover, heading his discussion of Copland "Transgression" and Gershwin "Redemption," Taruskin took to extremes stock notions regarding the early reception of these two contemporaries as antithetical.[48]

In his popular survey of "twentieth-century classical composition," *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (2007), the longtime *New Yorker* music critic Alex Ross (b. 1968), representing a still younger generation, offered a refreshingly appreciative account of Gershwin, even opening his book with some thoughts on the relation between *Porgy and Bess* and Berg's *Wozzeck*, a topic considered in greater detail later in the book.[49] Ross proved not only deft in circumventing some of misconceived lore surrounding Gershwin, but also particularly eloquent in his depiction of the music, whether describing the "graceful merry-go-round of major, minor, dominant-seventh, and diminished-seventh chords" in "'S Wonderful," or "the tunes [that] undergo kaleidoscopic development and are stacked up in wickedly dissonant polytonal combinations" in *An American in Paris*.[50]

Admittedly, Gershwin remained a marginal figure in texts that continued to privilege high modernist art, such as *A Concise History of Western Music* (2006) by music critic and writer Paul Griffiths (b. 1947), and *Music in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* (2013) by musicologist Joseph Auner (b. 1959).[51] But despite such continued disengagement, especially among music theorists, academic texts increasingly came to regard Gershwin as one of the most important American composers of the twentieth century. Thanks to a new era of Gershwin scholarship ushered in by Edward Jablonski's 1987 biography and the aforementioned monograph by Steven Gilbert, as well as by *The Gershwin Style: New Looks at the Music of George Gershwin* (1999), edited by musicologist Wayne Schneider, with its important contributions by, among others, Wayne Shirley and Larry Starr, historians also proved more accurate in their reportage.[52]

Some false claims and dubious views naggingly persisted, nonetheless. Moreover, certain aspects of Gershwin's life and work still warranted greater attention, including his involvement with modernist musics, friendship with black musicians and artists, activities as a painter and art collector, contribution to the development of the Broadway musical, and musical growth as seen in his underrepresented work from the 1930s. But given the current flourishing of Gershwin studies – including new biographies by William Hyland (2003), the current author (2006), and Walter Rimler (2009); specialized monographs by Larry Starr (2010), Ellen Noonan (2012), Joseph Horowitz (2013), and Ryan Raul Bañagale (2014); various scholarly articles, including those by Ray Allen (2004), Christopher Reynolds (2007), Andrew Davis with the current author (2007), Susan Neimoyer (2011), Naomi André (2012) and Gwynne Kuhner Brown (2012); and the recent initiation of critical editions of the composer's work (under the auspices of the University of Michigan and the

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108528757.012 Published online by Cambridge University Press

supervision of editor-in-chief Mark Clague)[53] – there seems little reason to doubt that future texts will provide students of music history with ever more nuanced and judicious accounts of the composer and his work.

Notes

1. Howard Pollack, *George Gershwin: His Life and Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 123.
2. John Tasker Howard, *Our American Music: Three Hundred Years of It* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1st edn, 1929; 2nd edn, 1939; 3rd edn, 1946; 3rd edn with supplementary chapters by James Lyons, 1954; 4th edn with supplementary chapters by James Lyons, 1965).
3. Howard, *Our American Music* (1929), 449–50.
4. Howard, *Our American Music* (1946), 447.
5. Ibid., 446.
6. Marion Bauer, *Twentieth Century Music: How It Developed, How to Listen to It* (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1933); Aaron Copland, *Our New Music: Leading Composers in Europe and America* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1941), 99; *The New Music 1900–1960*, revised and enlarged edn (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), 70.
7. Aaron Copland, *Copland on Music* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1960), 162.
8. Gilbert Chase, *America's Music, From the Pilgrims to the Present* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1st edn, 1955; 2nd edn, 1966; 3rd edn, 1987), 492 (1955), 494 (1966).
9. Chase, *America's Music* (1955), 493.
10. Ibid., 493; William W. Austin, *Music in the 20th Century, from Debussy through Stravinsky* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966), 385.
11. Charles Schwartz, *Gershwin: His Life and Music* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973).
12. Chase, *America's Music* (1987), 473, 475, 477.
13. Otto Deri, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968).
14. Donald Jay Grout, *A History of Western Music* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1960), 623.
15. Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 4th edn (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988).
16. J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 9th edn (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014), 861–62, 897–98.
17. Joseph Machlis, *Introduction to Contemporary Music* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1st edn, 1961; 2nd edn, 1979), 562 (1961), 383 (1979); Pollack, *George Gershwin*, 166–67.
18. Wilfrid Mellers, *Music in a New Found Land: Themes and Developments in the History of American Music* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1964), xiii–iv, 392–413.
19. Austin, *Music in the 20th Century*, 6, 62, 89, 384–85, 471, 502–03, 518.
20. Ibid., 503.
21. Eric Salzman, *Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1st edn, 1967; 2nd edn, 1974; 3rd edn, 1988; 4th edn, 2002), 103 (1967), 95 (1988).
22. H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1st edn, 1969; 2nd edn, 1974; 3rd edn, 1988; 4th edn, 2000), 206 (1969).
23. Virgil Thomson, "George Gershwin," *Modern Music* 13 (November–December 1935), 13–19.
24. Virgil Thomson, *American Music Since 1910* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970, 1971), 84, 146.
25. Edith Borroff, *Music in Europe and the United States: A History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall; 1st edn, 1971; 2nd edn, New York: Ardsley House, 1990).
26. W.D. Shirley, "North America," in F.W. Sternfeld (ed.), *Music in the Modern Age* (New York: Praeger, 1973), 363–406; Richard Franko Goldman, "Music in the United States," in Martin Cooper (ed.), *New Oxford History of Music*, vol. 10, *The Modern Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 569–634; Daniel Kingman, *American Music: A Panorama* (New York: Schirmer, 1st edn, 1979; 2nd edn, 1990; concise edn, 1998; 2nd concise edn, 2003), 474 (1990).
27. Barbara A. Zuck, *A History of Musical Americanism* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1978, 1980); Alan Howard Levy, *Musical Nationalism: American Composers' Search for Identity* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983); MacDonald Smith Moore, *Yankee Blues: Musical*

Culture and American Identity (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Barbara L. Tischler, *An American Music: The Search for an American Musical Identity* (New York: Oxford, 1986).

28. Moore, *Yankee Blues*, 164; Tischler, *An American Music*, 103.
29. Sidney Finkelstein, *Composer and Nation: The Folk Heritage in Music* (New York: International Publishers, 1st edn, 1960; 2nd edn, 1989), 316 (1960).
30. Charles Hamm, *Music in the New World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983), 424; Isaac Goldberg, *George Gershwin: A Study in American Music* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1931).
31. Hamm, *Music in the New World*, 450.
32. Jean Ferris, *America's Musical Landscape* (Madison, WI: WCB Brown & Benchmark, 1990).
33. R. Larry Todd, *The Musical Art: An Introduction to Western Music* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1990), 475–76.
34. Bryan R. Simms, *Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure* (New York: Schirmer, 1st edn, 1986; 2nd edn, 1996), 435 (1986), 420 (1996).
35. Robert P. Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 285.
36. Robert P. Morgan, ed., *Modern Times: From World War I to the Present* (New York: Macmillan, 1993); Glenn Watkins, *Soundings: Music in the Twentieth Century* (Belmont, CA: Schirmer/Thomson Learning, 1995); John Warthen Struble, *The History of American Classical Music: MacDowell through Minimalism* (New York: Facts on File, 1995); Kyle Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Schirmer, 1997); David Nicholls, ed., *The Cambridge History of American Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
37. Watkins, *Soundings*, 305 (that the author thought "I Got Rhythm" and "Who Could Ask for Anything More?" were two separate songs suggested some unfamiliarity with Gershwin's more popular work).
38. Struble, *The History of American Classical Music*, 108–10, 115–18.
39. Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century*, 67–68; Pollack, *George Gershwin*, 121.
40. Stephen Banfield, "Popular Song and Popular Music on Stage and Film" (309–44), and Larry Starr, "Tonal Traditions in Art Music from 1920 to 1960" (471–95) in Nicholls, ed., *The Cambridge History of American Music*.
41. Starr, "Tonal Traditions in Art Music from 1920 to 1960," 474–75.
42. Steven E. Gilbert, *The Music of Gershwin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); David Schiff, *Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
43. Richard Crawford, *America's Musical Life: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 677.
44. Joseph Horowitz, *Classical Music in America: A History of Its Rise and Fall* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005); Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, 2010).
45. Carol Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 356.
46. Horowitz, *Classical Music in America*, xvi, 470, 472.
47. Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*, 623, 628; Richard Taruskin and Christopher H. Gibbs, *The Oxford History of Western Music: College Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 931.
48. Schiff, *Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue*, 91–92; Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999), 519.
49. Alex Ross, *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), xi–xii, 148–49.
50. Ibid., 144, 147.
51. Paul Griffiths, *A Concise History of Western Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Joseph Auner, *Music in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* (New York: Norton, 2013).
52. Edward Jablonski, *George Gershwin: A Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 1987); Gilbert, *The Music of Gershwin*; Wayne Schneider, ed., *The Gershwin Style: New Looks at the Music of George Gershwin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
53. William G. Hyland, *George Gershwin: A New Biography* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); Pollack, *George Gershwin*; Walter Rimler, *George Gershwin: An Intimate Portrait* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Larry Starr, *George Gershwin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); Ellen Noonan, *The Strange Career of* Porgy and Bess: *Race, Culture, and America's Most*

Famous Opera (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Joseph Horowitz, *"On My Way": The Untold Story of Rouben Mamoulian, George Gershwin, and* Porgy and Bess (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013); Ryan Raul Bañagale, *Arranging Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue and the Creation of an American Icon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Ray Allen, "An American Folk Opera? Triangulating Folkness, Blackness, and Americaness in Gershwin and Heyward's *Porgy and Bess*," *Journal of American Folklore* 118 (Summer 2004), 243–61; Christopher Reynolds, "*Porgy and Bess*: An American *Wozzeck*," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 1 (February 2007), 1–28; Andrew Davis and Howard Pollack, "Rotational Form in the Opening Scene of *Porgy and Bess*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60/2 (2007), 373–414; Susan Neimoyer, "George Gershwin and Edward Kilenyi, Sr.: A Reevaluation of Gershwin's Early Musical Education," *Musical Quarterly* 94 (Spring–Summer 2011), 9–62; articles by Naomi André and Gwynne Kuhner Brown, in Naomi André, Karen M. Bryan, and Eric Saylor (eds.), *Blackness in Opera* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 11–32, 164–86.