



Performance Studies

A LEVEL

Performance Studies: George Gershwin

Topic Exploration Pack

September 2015

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This activity offers an opportunity for English skills development.



George Gershwin – AS Performance Studies (G402)

Introduction

Within this unit:

- Students must study **four** songs
- Demonstrate broad trends in the output of that practitioner
- Comment generally on the relationship between the work studied and the practitioners output as a whole.

There will be a question based on five areas:

1. Structure and form:

- The manner in which the practitioner organises materials within this work and the various effects this produces
- With Gershwin, we can talk about the structure and form of the songs but also, the structure and form of the instrumental writing, the structure of the career/output of Gershwin, the structure of melodies etc.

2. Elements of the performing arts:

- The way that Gershwin uses these elements in order to produce his distinctive style and any links between the art forms
- This is a musical analysis of Gershwin's songs but can (and should) include elements from both drama and dance.

3. Performance techniques:

- Approaches that might be taken by performers undertaking a performance of the work, specific skills required to perform in works of this style
- This too is inclusive of the elements of performing arts but should be linked to the question in regards to what demands these put on the performer.

4. Stylistic influences:

- How Gershwin's work develops from the style of other practitioners, genres or cultures
- Again, you should look at a musical analysis of Gershwin but include links to other practitioners and how they have influenced the works and career of Gershwin.

5. Cultural, historical and social context:

- The extent to which the practitioner's place in history, culture and society has influenced his or her approach
- We must look at a musical analysis of Gershwin and then assess how this links to history and society at the time of the music composed – we can also link this to the periods of musical output.



G402 assesses two of the assessment objectives within performance studies:

- AO1 – Demonstrate knowledge and understanding
- AO3 – The ability to use clear and accurate English

The marks awarded for these within this unit are:

- AO1 – 24 marks
- AO3 – 6 marks

Within the assessment of AO1, candidates are asked:

- Show knowledge and understanding of the three art forms
- Show links between art forms
- Understand processes leading to performance in the art forms
- Understand performance repertoire, performance genres, performance theory and evaluation of how theory works in practice.

Within the assessment of AO3, candidates are asked:

- That text is legible and spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that meaning is clear
- To select and use a form and style of writing appropriate to the purpose and to complex subject matter
- To organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.

Key Terminology

There are five key elements of music listed in the specification:

Melody Rhythm Timbre Texture Harmony

Although these are the key elements, in the analysis of Gershwin, there are two 'extra' elements that can be added to this list:

Structure Lyrics



Lesson 1 – Context, Background and Introduction

Stage	Activity	Resources
Starter	<p>What do you know about Gershwin?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the students to write as much as they know about Gershwin • Feedback and make a mind map on the board about this information <p><i>NB. Do not give any information at this point.</i></p>	
Main 1	<p>What do you know about the 1898-1937?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open a class discussion about 1898-1937 • Discuss this and begin to build a picture about <i>Cultural, Historical and Social Context.</i> 	
Main 2	<p>Gershwin's Musical Output</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the dates to be studied • Discuss the songs to be studied and the wider works of Gershwin • Link information from <i>Main 1</i> to this and how society influenced Gershwin 	Resource 1
Main 3	<p>Musical Elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the different musical elements to be covered • Draw links to the question types for the examination. 	Resource 2 <i>N.B. you may wish to add other terms to this sheet</i>



Lesson 2 – Swanee

Stage	Activity	Resources
Starter	Musical Elements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write the musical elements, their definitions and then link any information from last session. 	
Main 1	Listening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students to listen to the complete song. 	<i>Recording of Swanee</i>
Main 2	Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher led analysis of song with examples Each time an element is covered, listen to the song and allow students to hear the analysis in the song context. 	<u>Resource 3</u>
Main 3	Fingerprints of Gershwin's Style <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give handout on Fingerprints of Gershwin's style Discuss how these begin to fit with musical analysis Ask students to complete worksheet <p><i>N.B. this could be a working document to fill in after each lesson or for homework.</i></p>	<u>Resource 4</u>



Lesson 3 – The Man I Love

Stage	Activity	Resources
Starter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write 5 things you can remember about Swanee. 	
Main 1	Comparison of Musical Works <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the students to use information from starter to compare with what might happen in another work by Gershwin. 	
Main 2	Listening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students to listen to the complete song. 	<i>Recording of The Man I Love</i>
Main 3	Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher led analysis of song with examples Each time an element is covered, listen to the song and allow students to hear the analysis in the song context. 	Resource 5
Plenary	Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students to write a short answer comparing the use of musical elements in Swanee and The Man I Love. 	



Lesson 4 – Summertime

Stage	Activity	Resources
Starter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write 5 things you can remember about Swanee and The Man I Love. 	
Main 1	Listening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students to listen to song complete. 	<i>Recording of Summertime</i>
Main 2	Comparison of The Man I Love and Summertime <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are these two songs different / similar? Discussion of background of Summertime. 	
Main 3	Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher led analysis of song with examples Each time an element is covered, listen to the song and allow students to hear the analysis in the song context. 	<u>Resource 6</u>
Plenary	Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write an answer comparing musical elements in Swanee, The Man I Love and Summertime. 	



Lesson 5 – They can't take that away from me

Stage	Activity	Resources
Starter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write 5 things you can remember about Swanee, The Man I Love and Summertime. 	
Main 1	<p>What do you think?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask students to write what they think will be the analysis of They Can't Take That Away from Me. 	
Main 2	<p>Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher led analysis of song with examples Each time an element is covered, listen to the song and allow students to hear the analysis in the song context. 	<u>Resource 7</u>
Plenary	<p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write an answer comparing musical elements in Swanee, The Man I Love, Summertime and They Can't Take That Away from Me. 	



Resource 1

Musical Output of George Gershwin

Year	Title	Description	Type of Work
1920 (to 1924)	George White's Scandals	Featuring, at one point, the 1922 one-act opera <i>Blue Monday</i>	Broadway Musical
1922	Blue Monday	One-act opera	Opera
1924	Rhapsody in Blue	For piano and orchestra	Orchestral
1924	Primrose		London Musical
1924	Lady, Be Good		Broadway Musical
1925	Piano Concerto in F	For piano and orchestra	Orchestral
1925	Tip-Toes		Broadway Musical
1925	Tell Me More!		Broadway Musical
1926	Three Preludes		Solo piano
1926	Oh, Kay!		Broadway Musical
1927	Strike Up the Band		Broadway Musical
1927	Funny Face		Broadway Musical
1928	An American in Paris	For orchestra	Orchestral
1928	Rosalie		Broadway Musical
1929	Show Girl		Broadway Musical
1930	Girl Crazy		Broadway Musical
1931	Dream Sequence / The Melting Pot	For chorus and orchestra	Orchestral

Year	Title	Description	Type of Work
1931	Second Rhapsody	For piano and orchestra (originally titled <i>Rhapsody in Rivets</i>)	Orchestral
1931	Of Thee I Sing		Broadway Musical
1931	Delicious	An early version of the <i>Second Rhapsody</i> and one other musical sequence was used in this film, the rest were rejected by the studio	Films for which Gershwin wrote the original score
1932	Cuban Overture	For orchestra (originally entitled <i>Rumba</i>)	Orchestral
1932	George Gershwin's Song-book	Solo piano arrangements of 18 songs	Solo piano
1933	Pardon My English		Broadway Musical
1933	Let 'Em Eat Cake		Broadway Musical
1934	March from Strike Up the Band	For Orchestra	Orchestral
1934	Variations on "I Got Rhythm"	For piano and orchestra	Orchestral
1935	Porgy and Bess	At the Colonial Theatre, Boston	Opera
1936	Catfish Row	For orchestra, a suite based on music from <i>Porgy and Bess</i>	Orchestral
1937	Shall We Dance	A movie score feature-length ballet	Orchestral
1937	Shall We Dance	Original orchestral score by Gershwin, no recordings available in modern stereo, some sections have never been recorded	Films for which Gershwin wrote the original score
1937	A Damsel in Distress		Films for which Gershwin wrote the original score
1938	The Goldwyn Follies	Posthumously released	Films for which Gershwin wrote the original score

Year	Title	Description	Type of Work
1947	The Shocking Miss Pilgrim	Uses songs previously unpublished	Films for which Gershwin wrote the original score
1983	My One and Only	And original 1983 musical using previously written Gershwin songs	Broadway Musical
1992	Crazy for You	A revised version of Girl Crazy, written and compiled without the participation of either George or Ira Gershwin	Broadway Musical
2015	An American in Paris	A new musical on Broadway	Broadway Musical

*Taken from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Gershwin

Resource 2

Musical Elements

Melody	<p>Conjunct</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stepwise movement <p>Disjunct</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving by leap <p>Repetitive</p> <p>Phrase length</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long (in bars) are the musical phrases / musical sentence? • Range <p>Distance between highest notes and lowest notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wide ○ Narrow
Rhythm	<p>Syncopation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Off-beat <p>Metre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many beats per bar?
Timbre	<i>Instruments & their uses</i>
Texture	<p>Monophonic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One musical line <p>Polyphonic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many musical lines <p>Homophonic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melody dominated homophony ○ Melody with accompaniment <p>Homorhythm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everything plays the same rhythm <p>Antiphony</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call and response / musical ping-pong
Harmony	<p>Consonant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmony is functional / fits together well <p>Dissonant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmony is non-functional / sounds clash <p>Chords</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than one pitch sounded at a time
Structure	<p>Verse/Chorus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of verse and chorus sections <p>AABA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical pop song – each A contains verse & chorus <p>16-bar pop song / 16 bar blues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each section is 16 bars long
Lyrics	<i>Meanings of lyrics and use of spoken word / motif</i>



Resource 3

Swanee

Background		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written in 1919 performed by Al Jolson • Wrote whilst a song plugger in Tin Pan Alley • Lyrics by Irving Caesar 		
Element	Point	Example
Melody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32-bar melodies • AABA phrase structure • Use of arpeggio in the melody • Conjunct melodic line • Narrow tessitura 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F Ab & C (b1-4)
Rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syncopation in accompaniment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • b5
Timbre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of arpeggiando • Use of appoggiaturas • Spoken section • Word painting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • b1 • b17 • 'I'll be happy' • 'birds are singing'
Texture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melody dominated homophony • Piano R.H. doubles vocal melody 	
Harmony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fm • Chromaticism and blue notes utilised • F major chorus (more optimistic?) • Major / minor shift used in modulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening • D natural 'Somehow' (b13) • Chorus
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short introduction • Short song with longer chorus than verse • Use of a 'trio' section 	
Lyrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyrics of longing to return • Optimistic chorus • Reflective • Use of repetition • Personification of river 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I've been away from you...' • 'How I love you' • 'I'll be happy' • 'How I love you' • Capitalisation of 'You're'



Resource 4

Fingerprints of Gershwin's Style

Fingerprint	Example from Works Studied
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many of George Gershwin's songs reflect his early career as a song plugger in Tin Pan Alley, where songs were written to 32-bar melodies divided into four phrases of eight bars each – the overall pattern was normally AABA. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gershwin's music was composed before the lyrics therefore examples of word painting are due to the skill of the lyricist. The rhythm of the words always matches the rhythm of the music although a fair criticism is that the words sometimes make little sense. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The melodies of the songs make extensive use of pentatonic scales and are generally highly memorable, particularly the choruses. The verses are often omitted in performance. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gershwin's melodies often use blues notes to capture the style of African-American singers; his later melodies have greater chromatic complexity. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In performance many of the rhythms would be given a rubato treatment, especially in slower songs. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ira Gershwin's lyrics are witty, often with an internal rhyme scheme, and reflect the style of Gilbert and Sullivan. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Songs are normally written for piano and voice but there are a variety of different piano styles in different songs. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The songs normally have strong harmonic progressions. In the early songs these are often based around standard progressions but later songs have greater harmonic complexity. 	



Resource 5

The Man I Love

Background		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1924 • Taken from Lady, Be Good • Lyrics by Ira Gershwin • From first really successful show • Style shows move forward from Tin Pan Alley • Slow song • Yearning for love • Began as verse to another song but Ira suggested changing it to a chorus 		
Element	Point	Example
Melody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sequence used in melody • Melodic climax reached • Use of blue notes in melody • Narrow tessitura • Conjunct melodic line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Prince Charming is the theme' • Chorus
Rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhythm of lyrics reflected in rhythm of melody • Tempo change shows change in mood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe I shall meet him
Timbre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piano word painting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yearning and weariness of woman waiting for lover
Texture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melody dominated homophony • R.H. of piano doubles vocal line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verse 1
Harmony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verse 1 is in Eb • Verse 2 in Bb then returns to home key • Chromaticism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piano part
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short verse • 8 lines • Chorus of twice the length • AABA 	
Lyrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verse is reflective • Hope filled chorus • Some sense Ira Gershwin is forcing lyrics to fit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'The he for me'



Resource 6

Summertime

Background		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1935 • from <i>Porgy and Bess</i> • Influenced by the blues • Asked that only black singers sing <i>Porgy and Bess</i> • Aria • American Folk Opera 		
Element	Point	Example
Melody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue notes in melody (chromaticism?) • Use of pentatonicism • Narrow tessitura – showing lullaby • Mainly disjunct movement with some conjunct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E natural and E flat (b14) • Solo melody B-D-E-F#-A
Rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swung quavers • Slow tempo • Use of triplets • Dotted rhythms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • b12 • Piano ending to piece
Timbre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orchestra based on strings • Use of flute and oboe • Portamento used • Written for black singers 	
Texture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of counter melody • Melody dominated homophony 	
Harmony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chromatic harmony used • Added notes in chords • Bm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • b20-22 • 6ths in b8-11 & 7ths in b12
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strophic structure • 16 bar blues • A B A C 	
Lyrics	Written as lullaby	



Resource 7

They Can't Take That Away from Me

Background		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1937 • From the short film <i>Shall We Dance</i> • Lyrics by Ira Gershwin • Most mature approach to songwriting • Verse as well known as chorus (unusual?) 		
Element	Point	Example
Melody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of motif • Conjunct melodic line • Memorable • Narrow tessitura • Repeated pitches • Four bar melodic phrases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeated Eb note 'The way you...'
Rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syncopation • Chord change every beat at certain points in song 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'The way you'
Timbre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piano and voice 	
Texture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melody dominated homophony • R.H. of piano doubles vocal line 	
Harmony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eb major • Opening of verse highly chromatic • G minor • Sophisticated harmony with ascending embellished chords and altered chords (creates challenges for performer) • Use of Neapolitan chord of V7 • Use of diminished chord 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'We may never...' • A section • B section
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verses shorter than chorus • AABA 	
Lyrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yearning, emotional quality • Poetic touches • Lyrics repeated (motif?) give strong structure • Mood change in chorus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'The song is ended, but as the songwriter wrote, The melody lingers on' • 'The way you...'





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