

**D E B U S S Y ' S   S L I P P E R S**

- An Adventure with Georgie Gershwin -

Original Screenplay by  
Steve Exeter & Mike Lukey

©2000 Permanent Cherry Limited

020 8133 3805

07557 303908

[editor@online-inquirer.com](mailto:editor@online-inquirer.com)

DEBUSSY'S SLIPPERS

CREDITS

B/W

Music: *Strike Up The Band*. A corpse (of George Gershwin, as we discover later) is on a mortuary slab. Closing in on his ear until it fills the screen, we see miniature showgirl dancers appear from his ear hole, dancing Busby Berkeley-style along the seemingly giant ridges. They beckon us inside the ear hole, and we follow into the darkness.

Inside, giant cogs and hexagonal "cells" are being taken down and packed away by boiler-suited workmen, working in a choreographed manner as they dismantle Gershwin's brain.

As the music concludes we travel through the dark ear tunnel again and out [reverse zoom] onto a pink ear, we are now in COLOUR.

CUT TO

1. EXT. DR. WALTER DANDY'S YACHT SUNSET SIX MONTHS EARLIER  
Close up on another ear. As we pull away we see Dr. Dandy, an elegant man in his early forties, he reclines up on deck, eyes closed. A Beethoven *String Quartet* plays on the Doctor's phonogram. Mrs Dandy is below, making Sangria.

The boat rocks, something ominous is approaching. Dandy's eyes open as a naval frigate pulls alongside. Sailors couple the vessels - another bellows through a loud hailer.

SAILOR

The United States Navy is now boarding your vessel. Do not manoeuvre your vessel in any way and disengage your engines. The United States Navy apologises for this routine..

The 1<sup>st</sup> Officer boards the yacht, silencing the sailor.

1<sup>ST</sup> OFFICER

Dr Dandy, I apologise for this intrusion.

DANDY

Well, I trust you have a very good reason.

1<sup>ST</sup> OFFICER

US Government orders, sir; we must ask you to accompany us back to the mainland.

MRS DANDY

But we're on vacation..

2<sup>nd</sup> OFFICER

Ma'am, these are direct orders from Washington.

DANDY

I am not in the employ of the Government. Your ship must have a medical officer on board.

1<sup>st</sup> OFFICER

We have written orders to enlist your expertise in a matter of national importance..

2<sup>nd</sup> OFFICER

You have been personally selected for the task. Your reputation precedes you, sir.

1<sup>st</sup> Officer glares at his subordinate for the interruption.

DANDY

Surely, some mistake has been made here?

1<sup>st</sup> OFFICER

I very much doubt that, sir. As the country's leading neurologist, you are to perform brain surgery at 21:00hrs at the *Cedars of Lebanon* hospital..

MRS DANDY

If the President's sick, dear, you don't really have an option. You have to go.

DANDY

It's a matter of duty, I suppose..

1<sup>st</sup> OFFICER

Actually, it's not the President, sir. It's George Gershwin.

DANDY

[incredulous] Gershwin? ! !

2<sup>nd</sup> OFFICER

Yes sir, we're as shocked as you are.

## 2. INT. NAVAL FRIGATE

An energetic young sailor is fixing Dandy's bunk bed.

SAILOR

Tragic 'bout George Gershwin, eh Doc? He's a favourite with the boys down here, we were pretty knocked out, you know? We play all his records: *Fascinating Rhythm... I Got Rhythm...* you know?

DANDY

I know.

SAILOR

My girl in Boston, she wrote me a letter putting in words from *The Man I Love* it sorta became *our song*, you know? Do you think he'll pull through?

DANDY

I really couldn't say.

SAILOR

You must be pretty famous yourself?

DANDY

Well, mine is a specialist field.

SAILOR

We were going to get this other guy, down the Gulf of Mexico, but you were just off Chesapeake Bay so that was great for me 'cause I wanted to go ashore tonight.

DANDY

I'm so glad I haven't disrupted anybody's social arrangements.

3. EXT. HOSPITAL NEW YORK NIGHT

A police car pulls up, sirens wailing, Dr Dandy is rushed out of the car and into building.

4. INT. HOSPITAL

Dandy is ushered past three of Gershwin's visitors: Ira Gershwin, his brother, Wally Roberts, a show producer, and the glamorous actress Kitty Carlisle, all in anxious conference.

5. INT. OPERATING THEATRE

Surgeons part as Dandy approaches, one shakes his hand. A military escort observers from a corner. Gershwin is on the operating table.

SURGEON

I think we're too late, we're losing him.

DANDY

Have you attempted any kind of surgery?

SURGEON

Why, no. We were instructed to wait for you... I thought it unwise, given the sensitivity...

DANDY

[scrubbing up] What on earth are you talking about? You have a dying patient on your hands, doctor; I think you should forget this damn celebrity aspect. Has everyone lost all sense of priority?

SURGEON

Should we proceed with the anaesthetic?

DANDY

You mean to tell me that no preparation has been done?

SURGEON

[to nurse] General anaesthetic, immediately.

NURSE

Doctor, I think you should see this - there's some eye movement.

DANDY

Let me see. [lifts an eyelid] Mr Gershwin, can you hear me?

Gershwin moves his lips in a murmur, Dandy moves closer to hear. What is whispered is intelligible yet perplexing.

GEORGE

[faintly] True. Left.

He sinks back eyes closed.

NURSE

I've lost his pulse, Doctor. I think he may have gone.

SURGEON

Dr Dandy?

DANDY

He's dead.

6. INT. HOSPITAL

Ira, Wally and Kitty are having an argument in the foyer; they seem oblivious to their location.

IRA

Watch what you're saying, sister...

KITTY

Ahh, blow it out your ass!

WALLY

HEY-EY! Both of you shut up. George might not get outta this..

IRA

Don't say that, don't even think that, Wally.

KITTY

It's true, and you know it, that's why you're feeling so guilty. You know he never wanted to go to Hollywood..

IRA

Is she starting again? What is this with Hollywood? Hollywood was good for George and me..

KITTY

[in tears] Good for your bank balance maybe!

IRA

How would you know anyway? Were you there? We had some good times. Maybe that's what's getting you, that you weren't enough to stop him going.

WALLY

Ira..

IRA

Face it Kitty, you couldn't keep him.

KITTY

You never read the letters he wrote me..

Dandy notices them bickering, as he leaves with his military escort, the camera follows him.

ESCORT

Sir, I'm sure I don't have to remind you, at this point, everything you have seen or heard is strictly classified.

DANDY

Believe me I won't divulge one moment of this fiasco. Now, if its not too much trouble, perhaps the US Navy would find me a hotel for the night.

ESCORT

Don't worry sir, that's already been taken care of.

7. INT. HOTEL BAR NIGHT

Dandy orders a scotch. A pianist plays *Love is Here to Stay*.

DANDY

That's a Gershwin tune, isn't it?

PIANIST

Yes sir, what a tragedy...

DANDY

Why was he so popular? I can't say that I'm too familiar with his songs.

PIANIST

Oh, he was a fine musician. He knew how to write a melody. He had a great sense of rhythm, for a white man.

Ira Gershwin enters, looking drawn and tired, and walks over to the piano.

IRA

Excuse me, Dr Dandy? I'm Ira Gershwin, George's brother. I apologise for not getting a chance to talk to you earlier. I'd like to show my gratitude by inviting you to my family's home.

DANDY

Well, I'm taken aback by your kind offer.

IRA

It's the least I could do. This can't have been a pleasant trip for you. I've got a cab waiting outside.

8. INT. CAB NIGHT

The taxi drives through Broadway.

IRA

Broadway. This is where my brother and I had our first break, and our happiest times.

DANDY

So, you're not from Hollywood originally?

IRA

Hell no, we only moved out there last year. We still have a family home here in New York.

9. INT. GERSHWIN FAMILY HOME NIGHT

Looks a little un-lived in. Filled with photographs of the brothers and other mementoes of their achievements.

IRA

Dr Dandy, this is my wife, Leonore.

LEONORE

Good evening, Doctor. Ira, you had a call from California. I left a message by the phone.

IRA

I'd better deal with that now. Would you mind fixing the Doctor a drink? [exits]

LEONORE

Sure, what'll it be?

DANDY

Scotch, please, if that's not too much trouble. I know it's late.

LEONORE

No trouble at all. [fixes drink] Ira's found this hard to accept. I've been concerned how he would react when the inevitable happened.

Cut to Ira, out of the room, hearing this and silently breaking down.

DANDY

Inevitable?

LEONORE

Sure. If you knew George, you'd have come to the same conclusion. The way he lived, I really don't believe that he ever thought about the long term. He never stopped.

DANDY

And Ira always worked with him?

Cut to Ira trying to regain his composure.

LEONORE

Ira took responsibility for George in a way, and that was a tremendous strain on him. We were the only stability George had.

DANDY

So, he didn't marry?

LEONORE

[laughs] God no, not George. He wasn't what you'd describe as, the marrying kind.

10. INT. MANHATTAN NIGHTCLUB 1927 FLASHBACK

Ira's talking business on the phone, with him are Wally Roberts and Fred Astaire. George leaps up on stage to play an improvisation on *Pick Yourself Up*. After a finishing flourish he leaps off stage back to the table.

GEORGE

Did you like that Freddie? Do you think it's better than the way Kern does it?

FRED

Sure, George. Jerome's an old timer!

GEORGE

Well, I can fire those out, Fred. But I wouldn't want to insult you. You're a class act.

WALLY

Hey, whaddya doing?! Nobody talks to Astaire like that!

GEORGE

Freddie knows how to take me. I'm an artist, he's an artist - we're artists. We express ourselves openly.

WALLY

I ain't seen much art coming out of you lately.

GEORGE

When I come back from Paris, that's when you'll get your art.

WALLY

Uh-uh, no-no-no.

GEORGE

I need my cup refilled, Wally. Paris will refill my cup.

WALLY

Don't get precious, George. I don't want you waltzing back from Paris with *Rhapsody in Cordon Bleu*. Look... it's a good idea, but let's do it after the show's safe and bringing in the dough. Art for Art's Sake, Money for God's Sake!

George stares him out; Ira comes off the phone and joins them. A waitress brings some drinks over, George indicates for her to sit with them, and she shares his drink.

WALLY

You gotta talk to your brother, Ira. You guys are two weeks late with the songs. I keep making excuses for you, but this show opens next month come hell or high-water...

IRA

There's no problem here, Wally. Trust me.

WALLY

I'll trust you to get your brother off this Paris idea of his.

IRA

Is that what he said? Did he say that to you? [turns to George, who's massaging the waitress's bare feet]. Hey, is this true?

GEORGE

What?

IRA

Paris again? I suggested Paris three years ago, straight after *Rhapsody In Blue*, and you thought you knew it all.

GEORGE

[shrugs] I wasn't ready. I'm ready now. [to girl] is that good, have I got it?

IRA

Hey, are you intent on screwing this thing up?

WALLY

[without even looking, puffing on a cigar] I know what he's intent on screwing.

IRA

OK, George, can I have a private word with you? Seriously, now.

George whispers to the waitress, she puts her shoes on, gives him a knowing smile, and leaves. George and Ira walk past the bar where the figure of Harry Kellis sits alone.

IRA

Listen, I gotta side with Wally on this one. We're running late. This is our job, George - you wanna live like we do you gotta play the game.

GEORGE

I'm playing the game. Look, I'm dry Ira, this doesn't stimulate me any more. I've got letters back from the Paris Conservatory. They've lined me up with their best composer, Maurice Ravel - a living legend.

IRA

Is that what you wanna do? Learn how to write waltzes? Listen George, Art for Art's Sake...

GEORGE

...shut up for Chrissake! Is that why we do this, so we can buy bigger houses?

IRA

So, when you've grown a beard and you're some fancy classical composer, what am I gonna do? Write your biography?

GEORGE

What are you talking about? You could write that play you keep threatening to write. Have some pride, are you gonna let that philistine dictate to us? We're just as valuable as Freddie to these guys; we're the Goddamn Gershwins - we've got the songs!

IRA

[nodding] You're right.

GEORGE

Now go over there and tell Roberts, no Paris trip, no Gershwin musical.

Ira struts back, full of bravado. George makes fleeting eye contact with Harry Kellis. From George's POV Ira talks and Wally nods several times.

WALLY

Okay, so do you want me to bend over now, so you can really shaft me up the ass?! I could let you go to Paris, and sue you both for breach of contract. [picking up phone] What's Jerome Kern's number?

George walks over.

GEORGE

So gentlemen, I take it that's all sorted out. When do we pick up the tickets?

IRA

There's been a little misunderstanding here, one little factor I hadn't considered - the Jerome Kern factor... you know, it's like the Irving Berlin factor, or the Cole Porter factor...

GEORGE

Kern? You wanna tell Fred that? We have a contract here. Freddie and I go way back. He'd walk from this show if it weren't for me. Let me tell him, I'll tell him we've been fired. Hey, Freddie...

WALLY

OK GEORGE! Enough! Alright, Paris it is, but the show deadline doesn't change and if I'm paying for it, I'm coming too.

GEORGE

Wally, I don't think Paris is really gonna be your scene.

WALLY

Don't worry about me. I'm coming to keep an eye on you and make sure you come back.

GEORGE

Well, I guess that's that.

11. INT. A ROOM NIGHT

George is having an energetic coupling with the waitress we saw earlier, against the wall. Over their grunts we hear Leonore talking to Dr Dandy.

LEONORE

[VO] ...and that's what he was like. Like a child always getting what he wanted - and everyone indulged him.

12. INT. GERSHWIN FAMILY HOME 1937

Cut to Lenore and Dr Dandy.

LEONORE

Ira, of course, being the eldest, never had the luxury of being so impetuous, so brattish.

13. INT. PLANE 1927

George, Ira and Wally embark the plane.

IRA

I'm going near the wing, come on Wally, move.

WALLY

I wanna watch the take off. We're both near the wing. Calm down, Ira.

GEORGE

Izzy, if we crash we're gonna die, all together. Your position on this plane is irrelevant.

IRA

Shut up, will you shut up? Roll me a cigarette.

GEORGE

Another one?

IRA

If you don't want me to have a spasm, roll me a cigarette.

WALLY

Sit down and pray.

IRA

Can we have a proper conversation here? You two are so morbid. Can we talk about something else?

GEORGE

Can't you just shut up?

IRA

Did you pack enough suits?

GEORGE

What kind of question is that? You're my older brother not my mother.

IRA

So, which suits did you bring?

GEORGE

I gotta new one.

IRA

Oh yeah, where from?

GEORGE

I saw my tailor yesterday.

IRA

Oh so you've got a tailor now. Since when did you have a tailor?

GEORGE

You know, from the store, he's been out with us a couple of times.

IRA

What store? What's his name?

GEORGE

Harry, Harry Kellis from Saks 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, you know...

IRA

Him?! He's a crazy person, incidentally, I think he's got a crush on you.

GEORGE

Come on, he's a little odd, maybe...

14. INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT 1927 FLASHBACK

Harry Kellis is an émigré from Berlin; he's a tall and well-dressed man in his early thirties. Kellis clearly does have a crush on Gershwin, which George finds amusing and flattering - therefore he tolerates Kellis' attention.

KELLIS

You just walked straight past me, like I didn't exist.

GEORGE

I was talking business, it wasn't supposed to be a social visit. What were you doing there anyway? Following me?

KELLIS

Don't flatter yourself... When are you going anyway? I have something I want you to take with you.

GEORGE

Tomorrow, first thing. What is it?

KELLIS

My new invention, I want you to get it patented in Europe. They're more open to my ideas there. [reveals strange device]

GEORGE

So what does this do, Harry?

KELLIS

It frees Man from the libido's tyranny.

GEORGE

Oh yeah... How's that?

KELLIS

It is the perfect hygienic alternative to sullyng yourself with a woman.

GEORGE

I think the rest is pretty self-evident Harry. What's this lead for?

KELLIS

The generator. It can last for many hours. The lead charges the battery.

GEORGE

I see. Am I going to have problems in customs with this?

15. INT. PLANE 1927

IRA

The man is a pervert, number one. Number two, he's anti-social. Number three, he's an anti-social, party-pooing, little pervert. That's three strikes, George, he's out!

GEORGE

Is this a new lyric you're working on - Jeezus!

IRA

I wouldn't mind but that new suit of yours has probably got some sort of electrical device in it - I bet he's tracking you as we speak!

16. INT. PLANE NIGHT

Ira's sleeping head rests on Wally's shoulder. George is reading the score of Ravel's *Le Tombeau De Couperin*, as the plane cruises above the clouds, he imagines the notes resting on top.

17. EXT. SMALL AIRFIELD PARIS DAY

The party crosses the tarmac, carrying their luggage.

WALLY

So, this is gay Paris. Eh, George?

IRA

Oh come on Wally, as if this is the centre of town, for Christ sake.

18. INT. AIRPORT BUILDING DAY

George attempts to use cents in the pay phone. A tall, aristocratic woman waits behind, amused by their antics.

MADAME Du VOLLÉ

Can I help you at all?

GEORGE

How does a fella get cab around here?

MADAM Du VOLLÉ

Where is it you want to go?

GEORGE

I'm not sure if you'll know of it, I'm staying at Maurice Ravel's Chateau.

MADAM Du VOLLÉ

Monsieur Ravel is a neighbour of mine. After I've called my mother I'd be happy to give you gentleman a lift.

19. EXT. MADAME Du VOLLÉ'S MOTOR DAY

George is sitting up front, Wally and Ira in the back.

GEORGE

Is there a train station where you could drop my brother and my friend?

MADAM Du VOLLÉ

Yes, of course. Are they not staying with Monsieur Ravel?

IRA

What? You mean we're not?

WALLY

What's going on?

GEORGE

Look guys, Ravel only knows I'm coming. I don't know if he can put you up. Besides you're going to be bored stiff listening to music theory. You should go and see the sights of Paris.

IRA

You're ashamed of me aren't you? You don't think I can cut the intellectual discussion.

GEORGE

[sighing] Look, I'll see you in Paris. Have yourselves some fun.

20. INT. MAURICE RAVEL'S DRAWING ROOM DAY 1927

Maurice Ravel is a petite middle-aged Frenchman with a shock of silver hair. He is sat at the piano composing. His personal assistant, Aimée Klimeq, an attractive woman in her late twenties, enters with a selection of ties.

AIMÉE

Which ones shall I pack for Berlin?

RAVEL

[clearly irritated] Aimée, you choose, don't bother me with that trifle now. [Aimée goes to leave] No Aimée, wait a minute, listen to this. [playing a passage] Do you hear that? Listen! [plays the same passage again] Do you hear something wrong?

AIMÉE

No.

RAVEL

Listen! Click-click-click! Do you hear that? I can't play with that racket!

AIMÉE

What are you talking about?

RAVEL

My nails! I cannot bear long nails - they grow faster since you started filing them instead of cutting them properly. Fetch me the scissors.

AIMÉE

You threw them away - they were too blunt, and you asked me for my file!

RAVEL

Well there must be a spare pair.

AIMÉE

There is, I'll get them. [leaving]

RAVEL

And don't forget to pack my blue tie for the concert. [begins playing again]

Aimée re-enters the room with the scissors, and the day's post. Ravel stops playing.

AIMÉE

You have a letter.

RAVEL

Open it, I can read it as you cut my nails.

AIMÉE

I'm not hired as a manicurist, Maurice.

RAVEL

I can't possibly read and cut my nails at the same time.

Ravel extends his right hand and holds the letter open in his left.

RAVEL

[reading] It's from the Conservatoire, they really take liberties with me, you know? They want me to give up a whole day to entertain George Gershwin, its like blackmail.

AIMÉE

They commission new works and promote them. So, they expect something in return. Anyway, you could always say no.

RAVEL

They want me to teach him. He's due to arrive on May 21<sup>st</sup> and, oh what a shame, we'll be in Berlin.

AIMÉE

Maurice, [cutting his nails] May 21<sup>st</sup> is today. We're not going to Berlin until tomorrow.

RAVEL

Today! [Ravel jerks his hand away and the scissors nick him] Ow, be careful! Oh no, not today, it's impossible! Absolutely not! In any case, I couldn't teach Gershwin a thing. Rudimentary chromatic theory would overtax him. Maybe he wants to learn how to extend a piece of music longer than three minutes!

AIMÉE

I can't see how it would hurt you to meet him. What else have you got to do today?

RAVEL

Of course I have things to do today, much better things... I was going to ride into town to buy legumes, it's market day.

AIMÉE

Marianne goes every week. She went this morning.

RAVEL

Marianne's eye for freshness is not what it should be. If I want something done properly I have to do it myself. Besides, I like being around real people, not Broadway stars who think they can buy art and buy talent!

AIMÉE

You've never met him, and you've never been to the market before, in my lifetime anyway. Real people, honestly!

Ravel struggles with a cumbersome bicycle, it obviously doesn't get much use.

RAVEL

YES REAL PEOPLE! Real people who smell like reality, and the earth, and work! Not Cocoa Cola, big cigars or petroleum!

21. EXT. COURTYARD DAY

Ravel rides badly, nearly colliding with Du Vollé's car, ferrying Gershwin. He brakes suddenly, and slides onto the cross bar, trapping his Gallic knackers.

RAVEL

Ah, Mr Gershwin, yes... we were not expecting you quite so soon. I hope you had a good trip. Follow me...

GEORGE

I'm very grateful to your neighbour, Madame Du Vollé, for giving me a lift.

RAVEL

Ah, yes, well... That was very kind Madame.

DU VOLLÉ

Not at all, Maurice. It's good to see you out and about. I didn't realise you are a cycling enthusiast.

RAVEL

I was just going to market, but it can wait. [to Gershwin] Let me show you the estate, good day to you Madame.

George shakes Du Vollé's hand and plants a kiss on both her cheeks as Ravel looks on awkwardly.

GEORGE

Thanks a million.

RAVEL

This way...

22. INT. CHATEAU HALLWAY DAY

RAVEL

This must be a change from New York City, Mr Gershwin?

GEORGE

Yeah, it's nice to get away from it all. Good for the brain, you know. This view must be a constant source of inspiration.

RAVEL

Music comes from within, Mr Gershwin. I am as inspired in the metropolis as I am in the wilderness. Maurice Ravel is Maurice Ravel wherever he is.

GEORGE

I don't doubt that for a minute. At home, I have too many distractions from hard work.

RAVEL

So, you came alone? I expected a coterie for such a distinguished figure.

GEORGE

Just my brother Ira, and an associate. They're on a site-seeing tour of the city - not really men of music, you know?

RAVEL

But, I thought your brother wrote the songs with you?

GEORGE

The words. But I'm through with that - knocking out melodies for other guys to orchestrate.

RAVEL

What about your Rhapsody? Didn't you orchestrate that?

GEORGE

Well, that was me mostly - although, I had to get a bit of help with it.

RAVEL

I see. We all have to start somewhere, George. Songs are a perfectly respectable art form.

GEORGE

Agreed. But, I'm ready for stage two. When was the last time you wrote a song? 1915, *Cinq Hebraique Melodies*.

RAVEL

Well, Mr Gershwin, I see you've done your homework. Shall we?

23. INT. CHATEAU KITCHEN DAY

Aimée Klimeq is doing paper work as Marianne potters about.

RAVEL

Aimée, I'd like you to meet Mr Gershwin from America. This is my personal assistant Mademoiselle Klimeq, an invaluable second pair of hands.

GEORGE

[shakes her hand, unsure whether to kiss it] Enchanté. A fine pair of hands they are too, if you don't mind my saying so.

AIMÉE

Mr Gershwin.

RAVEL

Aimée, would you see to Mr Gershwin's things?

GEORGE

[awkwardly] Oh no, I couldn't possibly..

AIMÉE

It's no trouble at all. Marianne?

Marianne returns to take George's hat and coat.

AIMÉE

[aside to Ravel] Of course, Maurice, you're right. You should go to the market yourself, you always return with the freshest produce.

RAVEL

Mmm... I'm sure you will have something delicious arranged for dinner tonight, Aimée, our guest will be hungry.

24. INT. RAVEL'S DRAWING ROOM DAY

George is sat at the piano playing the opening of *Piano Concerto in F*.

RAVEL

I've often wondered what Tchaikovsky's blue period would have sounded like..

GEORGE

Ah, you got me there. You know, I'm the most proud of this passage. If it's any excuse - I'm Russian by extraction.

RAVEL

I wasn't being derogatory, George. You betray your heritage very well. I was only ribbing you.

GEORGE

So, what's with you and Spain?

RAVEL

Touché. You really have done your research, haven't you? Yes, I am an outcast by blood as well. My mother's Basque blood has coloured my music. Yet, I cannot deny I am any less French than you are American. I have Debussy as a musical forefather and you have Joplin?

GEORGE

The bottom line, I guess, is whether it stands up, whatever the influences. It doesn't stand up, does it?

RAVEL

It is a perfectly fine passage, George. How does it develop from there?

GEORGE

That's what the critics rip me apart for. There's no grand scheme with George Gershwin; one passage comes to an end, and then through some device another passage starts independently.

RAVEL

Yes, but that's you, that's your style. *Rhapsody In Blue* has brought you fame and respect. It travels well...

GEORGE

I don't want to be forever excusing my inadequacies by calling them Rhapsodies: a bag of unconnected melodies. I'm tied to the piano, not like you, you have an ear for instruments and the way they can be used to make music whole.

RAVEL

We were talking about musical form, and now you bring in instrumentation...

GEORGE

But they're linked, aren't they? Take the bridging sections, the long notes, in your *String Quartet*, first movement...

RAVEL

...composed at the piano.

A ghostly string quartet appears in the drawing room. Gershwin attempts to conduct them through the opening passage of Ravel's *String Quartet in F*.

GEORGE

OK, [extract plays] but you use strings like threads to hold the piece together and move it on. I end up welding bits and pieces, whereas you weave them into each other. It's a whole piece, you can't divorce the form from the content. I *weld*, you *weave*.

Aimée enters with tea on a tray, unacknowledged. There are two real cups and four ghostly ones. Whilst the composers drink, the quartet have a confused discussion about which teas are sugared, in French.

RAVEL

Yes... but you mentioned earlier the rejection of your Piano Concerto, do you realise I had to enter this piece for the *Prix de Rome* time after time and.. nothing! There was uproar when I was denied, uproar! Real people's uproar... L'Affaire Ravel they called it.

GEORGE

Pleasing, isn't it?

RAVEL

Of course, but I get uproar when I fail. You get uproar when you succeed. Stop a minute [quartet down tools] are you ready for an unpopular success?

GEORGE

What do you mean?

RAVEL

An unpopular, artistic triumph.

GEORGE

[shrugs] Yeah. Yeah? What do you mean?

RAVEL

I mean having to face both critical hostility and an indifferent public, just to hear your own voice. And then there's the money, how much do you make a year from your shows and the Rhapsody?

GEORGE

Oh, I don't know. Ira's the accountant. I guess \$100,000 a year.

RAVEL

Then maybe I should be taking lessons from you!

25. INT. DINING ROOM EVENING

The composers continue their discussion over dinner.

RAVEL

I'm not sure you should be putting all your eggs in one basket, I mean with Jazz. I've yet to be convinced that it can sustain a composer's interest. Do you see yourself doing that for your whole career?

GEORGE

Not exactly. But it's folk music, Maurice, it's the music of the people.

RAVEL

Mmm... but I doubt if it has the richness, or depth of colour of a more established folk music.

GEORGE

C'mon Maurice, ancient *Negro Spirituals* are no different to your Greek or Hebrew folk music?

RAVEL

My earlier works, though steeped in the distant past, were *Chanson* in the French tradition. Look, Jazz maybe the fashion of the day, but I'd like to see you develop as an artist.

GEORGE

OK. I take your point. So, teach me. Let's cut the fine words and get down to the nitty-gritty.

RAVEL

First, let's refill our glasses...

26. EXT. CHATEAU GROUNDS NIGHT

Ravel leads the way across the gravel, George follows.

RAVEL

*Les Six*? Don't talk to me about that pack of degenerates, they're like calves suckling at my creative udders... I know where we can get some good wine.

GEORGE

That's who I imagined the Paris school would send me to, but I think they were too busy.

RAVEL

Busy in the hive, producing insipid, sugary, dross for their Queen Cocteau! Jean Cocteau indulges *Les Six's* worst excesses! Et voila, here's the wine. Henri! Madame Lafarge! C'est tard, et nous n'avons pas des vin! Pardon, Henri!

Henri comes to window surprised to see his stuck-up famous neighbour with a guest.

27. INT. DRAWING ROOM EVENING

Gershwin pours red wine from a rustic bottle into glasses. The fire burns, lighting the room. Ravel is banging out Gershwin's *Stairway To Paradise*, as George hums.

GEORGE

Do you think we're being a bit too loud?

RAVEL

Ahh, I forget. Schhh... Let me show you something, stay here, I'll fetch it...

Ravel leaves the room we hear him singing *Stairway To Paradise* as he marches upstairs, he returns.

You see how I have the build of a weaver, eh, welder? Voila, this is why I'll always be a hundred times better than those butterflies in Paris. There is a thing called heritage, George, which some people don't care about. Let me show you my most treasured possession... They thought of me as an upstart; a young pretender to Claude Debussy's throne, saying he looked down on me. That wasn't true, although I was in awe of him... He *is* the music of France. The fact is that he trusted and respected me... And do you know how much... [unveiling the slippers] ...THAT much.

GEORGE

He trusted you with his slippers?

RAVEL

These are no ordinary slippers. They were his inspiration, now they are mine. He was never without them when he wrote his masterpieces. I'm not superstitious, nor do I believe in God, but I admit I've felt their power.

GEORGE

I can sense their strength from here.

RAVEL

Yes, in his last years, riddled with cancer, he relied on the slippers to help complete his final works. Housebound and weak, he wore them everyday. Who can say how much they prolonged his life?

GEORGE

So you wear them now?

RAVEL

At first, I only dared to put them on to finish difficult works, I didn't want to become dependent on them... more and more I turned to them earlier. Now, I can't even start a new piece without wearing them.

GEORGE

C'mon Maurice, that must be an exaggeration?

RAVEL

It sounds ridiculous I know, but please, do not underestimate them.

GEORGE

They sound more harmful than helpful.

RAVEL

If I sound deranged to you George, forgive me, it's the wine talking. Whatever their properties, they are the slippers of Debussy, which he bequeathed to me. [hushed tones] Justification enough to me, as a man of music, and a man of France...

28. INT. DRAWING ROOM MORNING

Ravel out cold on the chaise longue.

AIMÉE

Do I pack those? [the slippers]

RAVEL

[waking] Urggh? Pack what, what for?

AIMÉE

Oh my God, you amaze me! We have to catch the train to Berlin this afternoon...

RAVEL

Berlin! My God, yes pack them, of course. I can't be too careful. Don't forget to book another ticket for Gershwin.

AIMÉE

You want him to come with us? Only yesterday you were trying to wriggle out of meeting him?

RAVEL

Oh, Aimée, how could one make a judgement on a person without meeting them? You have to give people a chance, you know?

29. INT. KITCHEN MORNING

Marianne serves George a robust plate of fried eggs on toast. As she is moving away he catches her arm.

GEORGE

You know what they call these in America? *Sunny-side up*, the yolk, the sun?

Marianne is smiling, apologetically, her English is not good. Aimée and Ravel enter.

AIMÉE

Mr Gershwin, how is your breakfast?

GEORGE

Very nice, thank you. I was just telling Marianne, how we call the eggs *Sunny-side up* back in the States.

AIMÉE

We wanted you to feel at home.

Marianne brings another plate of eggs for Ravel.

GEORGE

Oh, you shouldn't have. So, what would you usually have for breakfast?

RAVEL

Not this.

AIMÉE

Mr Gershwin, I have booked your ticket for Berlin. I hope this doesn't inconvenience any prior arrangements.

GEORGE

Well, I did say I'd be back in the city today. I'll wire my brother at the hotel.

RAVEL

[pushing away his untouched plate] That's settled then, no time to lose, we must depart.

30. EXT. CAFÉ IN PARIS DAY

Ira and Wally are having breakfast

WALLY

[to waiter] Do you do a sandwich, with ham and eggs? Bread? Ira, I don't care what kinda gloss you put on this, I'm not having a good time.

IRA

Look, Wally, Paris is the European centre of the arts. This isn't a two-bit diner on 45<sup>th</sup> Street. You know, when in Rome..

WALLY

I don't know why I let your brother talk me into this. What's with him, anyhow?

IRA

This is just a phase he's going through, believe me. Just relax. It's worth the effort to get George rolling again.

WALLY

Well, I ain't gonna die of hunger in the process. Hey, garçon? It's really easy, listen I'll go real slow. You got cheese, yeah? And ham? And eggs... [hen imitation] You got that? In bread, you know bread?

WAITER

Croissant?

WALLY

Yeah, whatever.

WAITER

[realising] Mai, oui!

IRA

I bet George is already bored with all that classical crap. He probably can't wait to get back to New York and down to work!

WALLY

I hope you're right, Ira. Coz I ain't going home with George Van Gogh.

IRA

Van Gogh was a painter.

WALLY

Yeah, and a broke one.

The waiter returns with a hot croissant filled with ham, scrambled egg and melted cheese.

WAITER

C'est bien, Monsieur.

WALLY

*Jeezus, [taking a large bite] he's brought me a Croissandwich!*

31. INT. TRAIN TO BERLIN DAY

Train pulls into station. George, Ravel and Aimée, see the orchestra and manager, Herr Heinemann, who has in his charge the septuagenarian pianist Oskar Wandermitz, waiting on the platform.

RAVEL

George, do you see that man? That's Oskar Wandermitz, the World's finest pianist.

GEORGE

He looks like he's seen better days.

RAVEL

Oh, absolutely. But don't let his age deceive you. He is a true master. It will be a great honour for me to hear this legend play my work.

The orchestra and its party board the train.

RAVEL

His finger-work is almost otherworldly! Herr Heinemann, welcome... Herr Wandermitz the pleasure is mine. May I introduce you to my guest, Mr George Gershwin.

OSKAR

Ahh, the boom-boom good time Charlie! Have you run out of girls in America?

GEORGE

I'm sure you've been reading the gossip columns, Herr Wandermitz...

OSKAR

Don't be embarrassed, you're a young good-looking musician, you're going to get your share of the ladies. I used to turn a few heads myself, you know, and my fingers never disappointed them!

Blushes and coughs from Heinemann and Ravel, Aimée looks impassive, refusing to get riled. The group gets seated in the carriage. A porter circulates with brandy.

RAVEL

[raising his glass] Well, now that we're all here. I'd like to propose a toast. To Herr Wandermitz and his interpretation of my *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales*.

The group cheer, half-heartedly.

RAVEL

[to Wandermitz] Have you had a chance to familiarise yourself with the score?

OSKAR

Oh yes I have it all, very French, I like the waltz - such emphasis, such a down stroke and propulsion... like your blues Gershwin, eh? The beat, the Negro beat, turning white women to savages... that's why you're tagging along, ja? To pick up the pussy? You dog, I don't blame you at all!

Gershwin lets out a laugh at the rudeness. Ravel is getting visibly annoyed.

GEORGE

I'm quite amazed you've heard of my music?

OSKAR

Of course, I've been everywhere Gershwin!

HEINEMANN

Herr Wandermitz has toured extensively in the United States...

OSKAR

Yes, that's why I know about the Negro music and the women, of course. I made sure I didn't just get my fingers on the ivories, you understand, I tickled the ebonies as well, Gershwin, you know...

RAVEL

Are you quite sure you have no questions for me? How did the piece play to you?

OSKAR

Ravel, stop worrying. [looking at Aimée] You were obviously inspired by your muse - it has a woman's curves written all through it. I could be driven to great heights [gesticulates with his forearm] by one so charming.

AIMÉE

To me these waltzes are evocations of great decay, a culture blind to it's own impending doom. But, if they succeed in stirring an erection in a man of your years, they must have some life force.

GEORGE

Oskar, why don't you play the first part on this old upright here?

Gershwin helps Wandermitz stagger over to the piano.

HEINEMANN

Herr Wandermitz has a big day ahead tomorrow, I think he should go to bed now.

OSKAR

Shut up, Heinemann, I love to play, I want to play for young Gershwin here!

RAVEL

Yes, do let me hear how you intend to play it.

Wandermitz plays impressively even when completely drunk.

OSKAR

Here's where you stick it up her! [knocks sheet music over]

Ravel curses trying to pick up his precious score.

HEINEMANN

I really must insist that Herr Wandermitz retire to his cabin now.

OSKAR

I'm not a child, Heinemann, you go to bed!

HEINEMANN

Well, really! [storms off]

RAVEL

I, too, think it is time to retire. I'm beginning to get one of my heads...

GEORGE

Don't worry. I'll see him to his bed.

Ravel leaves. George helps Oskar along the corridor.

32. INT. TRAIN CORRIDOR NIGHT

OSKAR

Gershwin, I'm ruined, I'm never going to have a woman again, how can I play if I can't feel real passion?

GEORGE

That's a tricky one, Oskar.

OSKAR

Don't you need stimulation before a performance? I need to have a buzz.

GEORGE

A buzz? Did you say *buzz*?

OSKAR

I need to be buzzed... I long to be buzzed...

GEORGE

Buzzed... I may be able to help you there. In fact, I may just have the very thing.

George opens the door to Oskar's cabin, helping him in.

GEORGE

You wait here, I'll go fetch it.

George bumps into a moaning Ravel.

RAVEL

I can't sleep. I especially requested a forward facing berth, this is hopeless, George could we possibly swap cabins?

GEORGE

No problem. Gimme a minute.

33. INT. OSKAR'S CABIN NIGHT

GEORGE

OK, here it is. The inventor assures me that this is better than the real thing. Anyway, err, enjoy!

34. INT. GEORGE'S CABIN NIGHT

George gets ready for bed.

GEORGE

[muttering] Better than the real thing, the hell he'd know...

Cut to Ravel, with hairnet, snoring, softly. Cut to Aimée Klimeq in bed, writing, a whirring noise startles her. She goes across to Ravel's cabin, unaware that Ravel and Gershwin have swapped.

AIMÉE

Maurice, Maurice, are you awake?

Entering, she's surprised to see Gershwin half undressed.

GEORGE

Oh Aimée, I'm sorry, Maurice and I swapped cabins because he couldn't sleep.

AIMÉE

I'm not surprised with that noise going on, what is it?

GEORGE

I don't know, it sounds like it's coming from next door.

AIMÉE

I'm worried about Maurice, he's a very light sleeper, he complains if he's woken early, so I got him some earplugs.

Cut back to Ravel clearly sleeping soundly without them.

GEORGE

Well, we just swapped rooms so the earplugs must be in here somewhere. Come in and look for them.

AIMÉE

Thank you, Mr Gershwin.

GEORGE

George, please call me George, will you have a drink with me, I can't sleep?

AIMÉE

Yes, thank you. I can't sleep on trains either, I was reading, until that noise disturbed me.

GEORGE

[fixing a scotch] Oh yeah, what were you reading?

AIMÉE

Well, actually, to tell you the truth I was writing.

GEORGE

I see. No need to be bashful about it, what do you write?

AIMÉE

I don't find it that easy to talk about,  
I'm not an artist like Maurice or like you.  
I don't really write for anyone other than  
myself.

GEORGE

What, like a diary?

AIMÉE

Well yes, I suppose, although I don't make  
daily entries, just important events.

GEORGE

Publish it - could be a best seller. Life  
with Maurice Ravel: A rollercoaster ride of  
emotion.

AIMÉE

...a trauma on every page. No I don't think  
it would have mass appeal, do you?

GEORGE

Well, I'd read it.

AIMÉE

You read my journal? I'm not sure that's  
such a good idea.

GEORGE

Why is that? If you knew me better you'd  
know I could be trusted.

AIMÉE

I trust you, I'm just not sure how you'd  
react to the most recent entries.

GEORGE

Oh, I get it, you don't think I'll like to  
read what an intelligent European woman  
makes of this brash New Yorker?

AIMÉE

On the contrary, Mr Gershwin, I think  
you're very talented.

GEORGE

George, please, well I'm flattered. I'm no  
Maurice Ravel, you know.

AIMÉE

No, you and Maurice are quite different.

GEORGE

And you know Maurice very well...

AIMÉE

But, George, I don't want you to get the wrong idea about our relationship

GEORGE

I wasn't implying anything... but you live together...

AIMÉE

Precisely.

GEORGE

So, don't people talk?

AIMÉE

They may do, let them. I'm not interested.

GEORGE

So, you're a young woman stuck out in the middle of nowhere... [whirring interrupts them]

OSKAR

[banging on the wall] Gershwin, your jerk-off machine doesn't verk!

AIMÉE

What was that?

GEORGE

I'm not sure, would you give me one minute.

AIMÉE

Of course.

35. INT. OSKAR'S CABIN NIGHT

OSKAR

I can't start it...

GEORGE

[brusquely] I'll fix it, you sit down.

Gershwin, impatiently, hooks the lead up to light fitting.

GEORGE

That should do it, pleasant dreams.

OSKAR

Sorry, to disturb you Gershwin.

36. INT. GEORGE'S CABIN NIGHT

AIMÉE

What did you do? The noise has got worse.

GEORGE

Oh, it's Wandermitz, he's on some sort of respiratory machine in there.. anyway did you find them?

AIMÉE

Find what?

GEORGE

Those earplugs for Maurice?

AIMÉE

Oh no, I haven't looked, they must be in these drawers.

Aimée looks in bottom drawer and we see Debussy's slippers, opens next draw up, the earplugs are clearly visible, she pretends not to see them. George refills the glasses.

AIMÉE

I don't think Maurice packed them.

GEORGE

Its been quite an evening. I don't think I'm ever gonna get to sleep.

AIMÉE

I'm sorry, I've disturbed you enough, I should really go back..

GEORGE

I'm enjoying myself. Besides you've gotta answer some questions about this diary of yours. Do you think I could sleep without knowing what you wrote about me?

AIMÉE

I shouldn't have told you, I'm sorry..

GEORGE

That doesn't change the fact that I know. Now come on, what was your first impression of George Gershwin?

AIMÉE

Stop it George, I'm blushing.

GEORGE

Blushing? Why? What'd I do?

AIMÉE

It was the way you shook my hand..

GEORGE

But, I thought I kissed your hand.

AIMÉE

You didn't...

GEORGE

How very rude of me... [kissing her hand]

AIMÉE

I would have remembered.

GEORGE

I hope I've made amends for my earlier lack of etiquette.

AIMÉE

You've made a good start...

Mouth action and hurried undressing ensues, leading to furious copulation to the rhythm of the train. Meanwhile, in Oskar's cabin, Kellis' invention is still connected to the lights and the pianist. As the couple climax, Oskar does too, as he orgasms he is electrocuted. Aimée sneaks out of George's cabin.

37. EXT. BERLIN STATION MORNING

Anxious officials and police quickly board the train. Porters are seen hurrying the luggage off the train. Police go cabin to cabin alerting everybody. Gershwin emerges bleary-eyed, meeting a confused but alert Ravel.

GEORGE

What the hell's going on? Are these guys policemen?

AIMÉE

Mr Gershwin, a terrible thing happened last night.

GEORGE

[Groucho Marx] Really, I didn't think I was that bad...

AIMÉE

Herr Wandermitz died in the night.

GEORGE

Faark... I'm sorry, really?

RAVEL

Yes George, a terrible tragedy and such terrible timing.

AIMÉE

Maurice!

RAVEL

You can't deny that it's true...

GEORGE

Well, he was an old man, he drunk a hell of a lot last night. Do the police have any idea what might have caused it?

Oskar's carried out on a stretcher, a smile frozen on his face. He's still attached to the charred remains of the device, the electric cable is resting on the blanket.

GEORGE

Looks like they've already got some leads.

38. EXT. TRAIN STATION DAY

Gershwin, Ravel and Aimée take a cab and proceed to the hotel.

RAVEL

This is a disaster, we're going to have to cancel the concert!

GEORGE

Surely you can play it yourself, nobody knows the piece better than you.

RAVEL

You're missing the point, George. People come to see a great artist's performance. I'm not Wanderwitz, he sells tickets, its him they've come see.

AIMÉE

They've come to hear you work too, don't be so self-defeating.

GEORGE

Yeah, come on, Maurice, you're Ravel, the composer will be playing his own work, surely that's a commodity in itself.

RAVEL

I'm no commodity, George... but you are!

GEORGE

Oh. Hold on, Maurice.

RAVEL

You could salvage the whole thing. George Gershwin premieres my new work. Can't you see it?

GEORGE

I can see it. I can't play it.

RAVEL

Now who's being defeatist, don't you want to be great? They'll forgive your mistakes, nobody has any expectations.

GEORGE

I do, I'm not going out on stage looking like an amateur asshole. I've got to know what I'm doing.

RAVEL

Then come with me, we've got all afternoon to master it. I've put my trust in you!

39. INT. HOTEL IN PARIS DAY

Ira and Wally return and walk through reception.

CLERK

Mr Gershwin, I have a message for you it came this morning.

IRA

That'll be from George, see Wally we're checking out of here, Pal. Hold on. *Change of plan meet in Berlin at the concert hall?*

WALLY

What the hell is Irving Berlin doing out here? Is he getting help as well?

IRA

No he isn't getting help!

WALLY

Then why are you talking about Berlin?

IRA

Because Berlin's a place in Europe!!

WALLY

Are you saying the klutz has scrambled on me?

IRA

Well, it would be appear to be the case.

WALLY

Well, I'm gonna go back, I'm gonna call Jerome Kern, and I'm gonna finish this show with no George Gershwin! Oh yeah, and then I'm gonna sue his ass and make sure he never works on Broadway again!

IRA

Let's not be hasty. Let's go get him and drag him back by his scrawny little neck...

WALLY

If you think I'm gonna go any deeper into Garlicsville with these cheese-heads, take a running jump. I'm making the first plane back to New York.

IRA

Ok, Ok, go get things sorted out back home, I'll fetch George and we'll meet you there.

WALLY

You think I'm a meat-head? Lose both Gershwins in one lousy weekend, yeah right!

IRA

Look it's just across the State border, it's like going from New Jersey to Boston. Come on... [walking off purposefully].

WALLY

Sorry, were you just trying to persuade me there? I hate Boston, it's full of goddamn tea-heads!

40. EXT. CONCERT HALL DUSK

Wide angle shot showing the Berlin skyline.

41. INT. CONCERT HALL FOYER EVENING

Herr Heinemann approaches Aimée as the orchestra tunes up.

HEINEMANN

Where is Monsieur Ravel?

AIMÉE

He's with Gershwin.

HEINEMANN

He should be on stage conducting *La Valse*.

AIMÉE

He's teaching Gershwin the piano pieces.

HEINEMANN

What? Can't that wait?!

AIMÉE

Well, he only has a few hours to learn them.

HEINEMANN

Oh no. Surely not?

42. INT. REHEARSAL ROOM NIGHT

Gershwin practising at piano, Ravel is pacing the floor.

RAVEL

Do you want to go to the toilet? Slow down George. Or go and then come back and play it in the tempo that I wrote it. Try it again from the top.

GEORGE

I'm playing it the best I can, Maurice.

RAVEL

You must be able to do better than that!

Heinemann enters the room.

HEINEMANN

Monsieur Ravel, ah, there you are! You're wanted on stage to conduct *La Valse* unless you wish some other celebrity to conduct for you? I hear Chaplin is in Berlin, perhaps he can also oblige at short notice, maybe we can have Laurel and Hardy taking turns on the timpani! [exits]

George unaware of Heinemann's rant has played it perfectly.

GEORGE

I think I got it that time!

43. INT. AUDITORIUM NIGHT

*La Valse* is playing, Ravel is conducting to a full house.

44. EXT. CONCERT HALL NIGHT

Camera pans from Concert Hall down a street to Ira and Wally leaving the train station, looking lost.

WALLY

OK. Now where?

IRA

Concert hall. Leave this to me. [hails a cab] Yeah, Concert Hall, please.

Cab driver looks blankly.

WALLY

Does he speak any English?

IRA

Of course, German is derived from English, they can all speak it. [to cabby] You know, music? Tonight?

Cabby nods and Ira and Wally hop in.

IRA

You see. No problem.

They drive off in the wrong direction.

45. INT. AUDITORIUM NIGHT

Ravel is on stage playing *Valse Nobles et Sentimentales*.

46. INT. BOX IN AUDITORIUM NIGHT

Gershwin and Aimée watch Ravel's performance.

AIMÉE

I apologise for Maurice's temper this afternoon.

GEORGE

Oh, I didn't want to play the piece in the first place. I came here to have instruction in composition, not piano lessons.

AIMÉE

Has Maurice agreed to that?

GEORGE

Composition lessons? Yes, yes he promised this afternoon.

AIMÉE

So, Mr Gershwin, have you learnt anything at all from this weekend?

GEORGE

I've learnt that I've got a lot to learn. About music... and people.

AIMÉE

People are far more complex than music, Mr Gershwin. You can't play people.

46. EXT. THEATRE NIGHT

Cab arrives in a seedy part of town. Ira gets out as Wally pays.

WALLY

You sure about this? It's a bit small and dingy. Still, what I should expect from a backwater, peasant country like this.

IRA

[to cabby] Err. Ist das de concerten theatre das musik?

CABBY

[dismissively] Ja. Ja. [drives off]

WALLY

Look at the state of this place?!

IRA

It's a European theatre, you know, they're not big on neon over here, or big signs... you know, understatement, it's what's inside that counts.

47. INT. THEATRE NIGHT

Ira and Wally walk down the stairs and take their seats, it's cramped and smoky. Threepenny Opera starts.

WALLY

[nudging Ira] Is this what this Ravell gets up to, there's only thirty people tops in here, what could George learn from this?

IRA

I don't think this is Ravel, it's probably some local guy, you know, a varied programme, haven't you been to a concert before? Shut up and listen!

*Mack the Knife* is being performed heavily made up, by a small jazz band.

WALLY

Is this some kind of queer theatre you've brought me to Ira? Because that would really top my weekend off!

IRA

George should be here, where is he?

WALLY

If he's here, I should be very worried about George.

IRA

You saying my brothers a fag, do you know how many women he has a week? He's here. Must be backstage somewhere.

WALLY

Backstage? You think there's a backstage to this place?!

48. INT. THEATRE BAR NIGHT

Interval drinks.

IRA

I don't know, Wally, maybe Ravel was on first and we missed it.

WALLY

Good. Does that mean we can leave now?

Kurt Weill is standing at the bar being fêted for his work by members of the audience.

IRA

Hold on, that guy looks like he'll know.  
I'll just go and ask him a few questions,  
you stay here.

WALLY

Don't leave me on my own too long.

Ira walks over to Kurt Weill.

IRA

Excuse me, mine Herr, do you know if the  
Maurice Ravel piece has been up yet?

WEILL

Ravel? No, I'm afraid you have the wrong  
place, Ravel is conducting at der  
Konzerthaus, which is in the city centre.

IRA

Whereabouts?

WEILL

Just a minute's walk from Anhalter Bahnhof..  
Sorry, the central train station.

IRA

I don't believe it! Thanks, pal.

Ira walks back to Wally at the bar.

IRA

We were there all along!

WALLY

Well, let's get back there, but first I  
gotta take a dump. Will you come with me,  
I don't want to go in there alone?

IRA

What are you nuts, do you want me to wipe  
your ass while I'm in there?

WALLY

If I'm not out in ten minutes, come and get  
me.

Walks over to Kurt again.

IRA

So, is this your show, what do you do?

WEILL

I'm Kurt Weill, I wrote the music.

IRA

Oh hello, I'm Ira Gershwin... of George and Ira Gershwin.

WEILL

No need to introduce yourself, Mr Gershwin, of course I know of your work. In fact, I was a little surprised to see you here.

IRA

Of course I'm here. My brother and I are visiting Berlin. I like to know what's going on culturally in Europe, you know, *en ce moment* as it were. [silence] You got some good tunes going on there.

WEILL

Thank you...

IRA

I'm not going to pretend to get what's going on onstage though, but I suppose you gotta be German to understand that!

WEILL

Well, it's based on an English play as a matter of fact.

IRA

Well, I can't understand them either. So, you write the music, who writes the words?

WEILL

Bertolt Brecht writes the words...

IRA

You know your tunes are pretty catchy. If you soup 'em up a little, maybe lose the banjo, they'd go down very well on Broadway. In a different show. In English.

WEILL

A compliment indeed from a Broadway maestro, though I'm not sure Bertolt would agree to cater for the American palette, but you could ask him shortly.

49. INT. TOILET CUBICAL NIGHT

A seated Wally, pants round ankles, sniffs the air, he smells Cuban cigar smoke.

WALLY

Hey, is that a Havana Montecristo you got going there, fella?

BRECHT

[in adjacent cubical] Ja...

WALLY

My God, I don't believe it, I've got one ready to go in my lapel right here. I might join ya.

BRECHT

Go ahead.

WALLY

You gotta light there, fella? [Brecht passes a lighter under the door] First man with any culture I've met out here, you're a gentleman.

50. INT. THEATRE BAR NIGHT

Ira is in mid flow.

IRA

Kurt, I don't think he'd be up to the job, it takes a certain kind of talent to put bums on seats, play the big venues. Gotta have a bit more sass, vavoom, get the audience cheering, not blowing their brains out! I could write a show with you, I'm looking to diversify, I'm not always going to be working with George.

WALLY

[exits the John with Brecht cigars puffing] Is he talking a loada horseshit to you, 'cause he talks a loada horseshit to me!

IRA

Yeah ok, well, we gotta go and pick up the good pupil from Ravel now.

WEILL

Your brother is having lessons from Maurice Ravel? What could Ravel possibly teach George Gershwin?

IRA

I'd like to know that myself, how to make the perfect soufflé maybe? Well... if you're ever in New York, look me up.

WEILL  
A pleasure meeting you.

IRA  
[nodding] Kurt.

WALLY  
Burt. [exits]

51. INT. BERLIN AIRPORT MORNING  
George, Ira, Wally, Aimée and Ravel say their goodbyes.

GEORGE  
Well, Maurice. Thanks again for  
everything.

RAVEL  
George, the pleasure has been mine.

IRA  
Well, we really should be going.

GEORGE  
Maurice, you must come by next time you  
feel like a healthy distraction. Aimée,  
goodbye and thank you for breakfast.

The brothers walk across the tarmac with Wally in tow.

IRA  
[above the noise of turbines] Well, did you  
screw her?

GEORGE  
What do you take me for, of course I did.

WALLY  
OK, you've got what you came for, now let's  
fly the fuck out of here!

53. INT. GERSHWIN FAMILY HOME 1937  
The night of George's death. Dr Dandy and Ira in  
discussion.

DANDY  
So, what did George Gershwin achieve by  
going to Paris?

IRA  
Search me. He was dissatisfied. He  
thought he hadn't really made it yet.

DANDY  
Because he didn't have the respect of the  
world?

IRA

I think that's it. I was always happy to be the toast of Broadway. I used to think I was just the man who put words to George's music. But when Lorenz Hart called me *The Jeweller*. I realised I had a reputation in my own right. And that was good enough for me.

54. INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT DAY

George opens his mail, luggage unpacked, the phone rings.

IRA

Ok George, I've just had Roberts on the phone reminding me of the other side of the Paris deal.

GEORGE

I've just put the phone down from him. Everything's fine, I'm working on it.

George hangs up and walks away. The phone rings again.

GEORGE

Are you trying to kill me?

KELLIS

That's a nice way to speak to me, I haven't even seen you for over a week.

GEORGE

Harry, sorry. I would have phoned you.

KELLIS

Oh really, when?

GEORGE

I've got a show to finish, the last thing I need is another person on my case.

KELLIS

So, I'm just another person now. I didn't know I had to make an appointment. Anyway, I can't talk now, I'm at work.

GEORGE

Hey come on, I didn't mean it like, perhaps I could meet you later.

KELLIS

At the bar then, I'll see you there.

George exhausted, kills time unpacking the case. He's surprised to find Debussy's Slippers, and suddenly realises he has accidentally got Ravel's luggage.

55. INT. CUBAN BAR EVENING

Kellis is sat next to a table of three Cuban men, Santos, Ramón and Rodriguez, who are engrossed in a rowdy, almost physical game of chess. Kellis occasionally watches over his shoulder. The barman brings him a drink.

BARMAN

Hey Kellis, that electric cocktail shaker you sold me, keeps sparking.

KELLIS

Are you using ionised water to clean it? I bet you're not using ionised water to clean it, like I specifically told you to.

BARMAN

Oh yeah sure, I ionise water all the time. I do it myself round the back in my laboratory...

Gershwin enters the bar and pulls up a chair next to Harry.

GEORGE

Sorry, I'm late.

KELLIS

You look exhausted. Have you got it with you?

GEORGE

Have I got what with me?

KELLIS

What I entrusted you with... my invention, what did they think of it?

GEORGE

Oh yeah, I had some pretty strong reactions to it. That thing was a death trap! I'm lucky not to be up on a murder charge.

KELLIS

Ridiculous, it is completely safe.

GEORGE

Well, one of Europe's finest classical pianists managed to orgasm to death on your precious little Snatch-matic! That's how goddamn safe it was.

KELLIS

That's not possible, it has a cut-out mechanism to prevent that from happening. He couldn't have been using it properly, did you show him correctly?

GEORGE

No, I didn't show him, what do you think I was doing, sitting in there watching him?! I hooked that lead up to the lights.

KELLIS

You did what? That's a massive transceiver, you imbecile, you're lucky it didn't explode. I should have known you wouldn't even try to make it a success...

GEORGE

I can't believe I'm hearing this, I only came here for a quiet drink and all you care about is yourself and your stupid inventions!

KELLIS

Fine talk from someone so self obsessed.

GEORGE

Harry, a man died! I'm not going to sit here arguing, I've got a lot of work on. I'll be in touch. [exits]

KELLIS

OK, run away, I won't forget this George!

Camp catcalls from the Cubans.

SANTOS

Eh Kellis? ! We never liked your big-shot boyfriend anyway.

RAMÓN

You wouldn't get that kind of shit from a pretty lil' fräulein, man. You know wha' I'm sayin'?

RODRIGUEZ

You wanna get back in the fuckin' game? It's your move, man. Try and concentrate...

Harry doesn't react.

56. INT. RAVEL'S CHATEAU DAY

Ravel is looking for Debussy's Slippers.

RAVEL

Aimée are you sure you packed them? Have you looked everywhere? Aimée?

Aimée is behind the door. Looking pensive.

57. INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT NIGHT

George is at the piano, Debussy's slippers are on top, he plays the intro to *An American In Paris*.

58. EXT. APARTMENT ON STREET LEVEL NIGHT

Kitty Carlisle buzzes Gershwin's doorbell once.

59. INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT NIGHT

George stops for a second, and then continues to play. The buzzer sounds again for one long buzz, George plays on trying to ignore it.

GEORGE

Lay off, won't ya?

He carries on playing. The buzzer sounds again in three short bursts, George playfully incorporates them into *An American In Paris*, Kitty's buzzes become the car-horn motif in the opening bars. Unable to ignore it any longer, George dances over to the intercom.

GEORGE

*What!!!?*

KITTY

George, it's me.

GEORGE

Who's me?

KITTY

Kitty.

GEORGE

I'm busy - busy with the show - you know that. I'll see you tomorrow.

KITTY

It's about the show.

George glances at the clock. It's just gone eleven.

GEORGE

An hour. I'm giving you an hour.

George lets her in. Returns to the piano and replaces the *American In Paris* score with the show score.

KITTY

So, you really are working up here? How was your trip?

GEORGE

Yeah, good. Kitty, this can't be one of our evenings.

KITTY

OK, I just want to run through a few songs,  
that is if you've finished them...

Gershwin plays around the intro of *Someone to Watch Over Me*  
from *Oh Kay!* and then goes into the verse.

GEORGE

OK, then...

Kitty wanders over to the piano and sings, over George's  
shoulder, from the score. As she sings her lips get closer  
to George's ear, her hair touches his cheek.

GEORGE

Kitty? Kitty, we've only got an hour,  
remember?

KITTY

Absolutely. Sixty minutes, right?

They kiss. George undoes Kitty's skirt, the camera follows  
as it falls to the floor and then cuts.

60. INT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

George and Kitty are sprawled in bed after sex.

GEORGE

After that I feel a bit of a heel asking  
you to leave. But a deal's a deal, right?

KITTY

That's what I like about you George, you're  
such an incurable romantic.

GEORGE

[noticing it's almost midnight] So, you've  
got a minute to go - what's your third and  
final wish?

KITTY

[getting dressed] I wish you'd learn to  
appreciate what you've got.

GEORGE

I've got a rehearsal in the morning and an  
unfinished score! See you tomorrow...

61. INT. REHEARSAL ROOM MORNING

George strides in early with the finished score under his  
arm. Ira and Wally drink coffee as the orchestra set up.

GEORGE

Gentleman; Wally.

WALLY

Oh good, maestro, what you got for us?

GEORGE

Oh, just my side of the deal, twenty hit numbers and an overture. [passes score]

IRA

See, what did I tell you. Don't ever underestimate a Gershwin. Gimme a look at that.

WALLY

Ok, pass that around, I wanna hear a run through in an hour. Everyone else take a break. Joey, [a runner] go get my croissandwich!

JOEY

Yes, Mr Roberts.

IRA

OK, George. You got Roberts fooled but what is this? Is it the *Treasure Girl* stuff revamped?

GEORGE

Hey, I've been working flat out since we got back. You should know, you've been on my case every minute.

IRA

Get outta here, we've been back a week. Even if you worked through the night, that's...

GEORGE

That's exactly what I have been doing.

IRA

Well, we can knock out a new show every week at this rate. That is, if giving me a loada bull.

62. EXT. FRENCH MARKET DAY

Ravel wanders through the market buying one vegetable from the various traders. He hums the Bolero theme.

63. INT. CHATEAU KITCHEN

Aimée is checking the post. Ravel enters the room with his supplies and puts the bag on the table.

AIMÉE

Ah, Maurice, there's a letter from America for you, and one from the Conservatoire.

RAVEL

Aimée, I have had the most exhilarating ride into town. I must start work immediately.

AIMÉE

[looking through his purchases] What have you done? What can Marianne do with a single carrot? Whatever possessed you to only buy one of everything? !

RAVEL

Variety is the spice of life, is it not?

AIMÉE

I don't know why you don't let Marianne go. You never used to make these market trips - you hate crowds - you're just trying to make a point.

RAVEL

The point, my dear Aimée, is that maybe I have been too distant from my people lately. I enjoyed hearing the rhythm of their speech, the smell of them, I am inspired. Read me the letter...

AIMÉE

You're quite capable of reading it yourself.

RAVEL

I can't read English, you know that.

AIMÉE

You speak it fluently, I'm sure you can read it. I don't know why I indulge you.

RAVEL

I'm a man of sound. I speak the international language of music. Written language is such an anomaly, especially English, such a cumbersome ugly-looking language in print, it hurts my eyes. Read me the letter, Aimée.

AIMÉE

Very well. It's from George Gershwin. He requests formal lessons in composition. You are the perfect tutor for him and he asks you to name your price.

RAVEL

Americans! Aimée will you reply on my behalf. I am now too busy, besides I would probably only cause him to write bad Ravel and lose his great gift of melody and spontaneity... oh, and don't forget to mention the luggage.

AIMÉE

Are you sure you want me to put that in the same letter?

RAVEL

Absolutely, ask him if he has gained any items of luggage by accident. Now, let me hear what those fools at the Conservatoire have to say.

64. INT. PARIS CONSERVATOIRE DAY

Ravel is sat awkwardly opposite the Principal, a senior Professor and some other official.

PRINCIPAL

Well, Maurice, thank you for entertaining George Gershwin at such short notice. How did you find the experience?

RAVEL

Not a complete waste of my time. The man is very charming. I warmed to him.

PRINCIPAL

Glad to hear it. It is a duty to share our wealth of experience with the New World.

RAVEL

Of course, it was a mutually beneficial exercise.

1<sup>st</sup> PROFESSOR

We have your cheque here.

RAVEL

Merci...

2<sup>nd</sup> PROFESSOR

New works, Ravel, when shall we hear them?

PRINCIPAL

We like to make plans for the coming season.

RAVEL

I have something in progress as we speak.

PRINCIPAL

Oh yes. Tell us a little about it.

RAVEL

Well, I could say that street traders will whistle the melody in the market. I could say that it will be danced at the ballet, as well as at the village fete. This would all be true. But I want the music to stand up for itself. It will be beyond fashion, and analysis. Criticism will not even graze it. It will reach out and touch the people.

Principal and Professors raise an eyebrow each in unison.

65. INT. CONSERVATORY CORRIDOR DAY

Darius Milhaud and Francis Poulenc prominent members of *Les Six* are studying the Conservatorie's canteen menu. Ravel tries to edge past unnoticed.

MILHAUD

Maurice Ravel, what a surprise? This is an unexpected sight if ever I saw one.

RAVEL

Milhaud. Yes, I still have to work for a living.

MILHAUD

In between forging transatlantic friendships, I hear?

RAVEL

Oh, George Gershwin, yes, very good, Milhaud.

MILHAUD

I trust you carried off your role of senior French Cultural Attaché very well...

RAVEL

He had little time to spare, so we avoided the more popular tourist distractions, La Tour Eiffel, *Les Six* and so on... Anyway, good day.

MILHAUD

You avoided any discussion of current music then, very wise, Maurice. Jazz is hardly your forte.

RAVEL

What current music are you referring to, Your *Soiree de Musique Negro*?

MILHAUD

Yes, my *Creation du Monde*, Stravinsky's  
*Ebony Concerto*..

RAVEL

With respect to your efforts, I'll learn  
more about jazz talking to George Gershwin  
than hearing the *Musique Negro* of the Loire  
valley or the Russian Steppes, delightful  
though I'm sure it was. Au revoir,  
Milhaud.

MILHAUD

[following Ravel] So, you brought Gershwin  
over to talk you through developments in  
modern music; if I'd known I would have  
offered my services at a competitive rate!

RAVEL

Gershwin came to me to learn..

MILHAUD

How to write in an 18<sup>th</sup> century, Viennese  
style?

RAVEL

Not at all.

MILHAUD

How to transpose *I've Got Rhythm* for the  
harpsichord?

RAVEL

No, he just wanted..

MILHAUD

To borrow your curly white wig!

RAVEL

[crushing the cheque in his hand] Please  
Milhaud, you should try to disguise the  
disdain you have for your heritage.

MILHAUD

Not everyone can embody their heritage as  
well as you do, Maurice. The rest of us  
are forced to live in *this* century. Anyway  
we must be off, come Poulenc..

Before Ravel can respond, they walk off laughing.

66. EXT. RAVEL'S CHATEAU DAY

Ravel walks up the drive, cursing. Aimée greets him at the  
door with a double-cheek kiss.

AIMÉE

What's wrong?

RAVEL

I wonder if this [crumpled cheque] is worth the humiliation of having to answer to those tweed-buffoons!

AIMÉE

I'll have trouble cashing that.

RAVEL

I was accosted by Milhaud and his dilettante cronies. Just watching his bullfrog neck wobble is enough to induce my rage, but the stuffed shirts love him! After my new piece is finished, I'll have no need for them - I'll go over their bald heads and touch the people!

67. EXT. SPANISH VISTAS DAY

Bolero music: various shots of Spanish coast, fishermen, farmland, churches. Intercut with zooming close up of Ravel at piano, with nothing to follow the first theme.

68. INT. RAVEL'S DRAWING ROOM DAY

RAVEL

Where are the slippers? ! How am I expected to work if I'm not comfortable? I can't work in outdoor shoes...

AIMÉE

[brings carpet slippers] Here you go.

RAVEL

Not those! They were never comfortable...

AIMÉE

They were comfortable when you bought them.

RAVEL

They don't fit, they restrict my feet.

AIMÉE

They must do, they're not even a year old.

RAVEL

My feet have grown, I've done a lot of exercise recently, they've spread out...

AIMÉE

You're impossible! [exits]

RAVEL

[whines] Gershwin has the slippers... the comfortable ones... the ones I need on my feet! [throws the other pair]

AIMÉE

I cater for your every whim and I don't expect to bare the full brunt of your creative frustration. So what, if Gershwin has the slippers. Why are you so obsessed with them?

RAVEL

I was entrusted with them, nobody else... ME, and my God, they've served me right...

AIMÉE

You're just using those damn slippers as an excuse!

RAVEL

I need those slippers... or do I? I don't care if it's the same phrase repeated fifteen times, it's a good phrase. Greater than anything Gershwin's written with or without the slippers!

AIMÉE

We don't even know he has them yet...

RAVEL

He has them alright, why hasn't he responded to my letter?

AIMÉE

Because you refuse to help him?

RAVEL

So, he's stolen my slippers to advance his own musical ability!

AIMÉE

I've never heard anything so absurd in all my life.

RAVEL

Well, I'll show them, [plays] they won't forget this tune in a hurry, not after I ram it home to them! The *Bolero*!

69. INT. CONCERT HALL PARIS EVENING

Ending flourish of *Bolero's* premiere. Silence is broken after a half second. A woman cheers from Ravel's box. The camera sweeps across the auditorium, the audience is divided, we hear different reactions; grumbling then booing. *Les Six*, in their box, are laughing.

70. INT. RAVEL'S BOX EVENING

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm quivering! That was so explosive! So erotic!

Ravel shrugs and forces a weak smile, turns to Aimée and points out jeering old lady in an opposite box.

RAVEL

She's got the message!

AIMÉE

If that's the response you wanted, I don't understand why you went through with this.

71. INT. DU VOLLÉ'S BOX EVENING

MADAM DU VOLLÉ

Mother! Be quiet, please! He is our neighbour!

MADAM DU VOLLÉ'S MOTHER

That was appalling and he needs to know it!

72. INT. RAVEL'S BOX EVENING

*Les Six* burst in.

RAVEL

Ahh, *Les Pricks*, I bet you're loving this, aren't you? This will be the source of many a Conservatoire joke I'm sure.

MILHAUD

Au contraire, Ravel! You should be very proud! Have some champagne. Honeger!

HONEGER

[pouring] The way you divided the audience! Masterful!

Ravel plays along, lapping up the double-edged praise.

AUBRIK

Such a picture postcard melody, so lame. Yet you bludgeon it into them, until they can't reject this... this shit, and they have to embrace it!

HONEGER

...and wallow in it. Maurice Antoinette - "Let them eat shit!"

MILHAUD

You dark horse, Maurice! We have to extend our congratulations!

RAVEL

This is music for our time. Sometimes, you have to show it up for what it is. [holds out his glass]

73. INT. NIGHTCLUB NEW YORK EVENING

The after-show party for the new Gershwin musical *Oh Kay!*

WALLY

It's always a no-expense-spared production with the Gershwins, for *Oh Kay* I had to splash out on a research grant for George, which involved a trip to Europe! "I need my artistic cup refilled, Wally" says George. Well, he certainly made sure his artistic wine glass was refilled many times. And when I saw the Paris broads I twigged exactly what research he had in mind.

The crowd let out a big laugh, Kitty raises an eyebrow.

GEORGE

There's gonna be a few more of those trips, I don't think he realises that.

IRA

Yeah, it did you good. Say, are you all set for tomorrow? You packed yet? Have you got everything in boxes, like I said?

Kitty is beckoning George over.

GEORGE

[attention on Kitty] Errr... no. But...

IRA

Don't worry. Leonore and me will come over and help you in the morning. You need to get some sleep, brother, you've been overdoing it.

GEORGE

Well, I think you're right. I feel like getting my head down. See you later.

George leaves and Kitty follows him.

74. INT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

Kitty's face is in close up, George is above and behind in the background. They are, almost dispassionately, copulating "on-all-fours".

KITTY

I don't see why we have to sneak around like that, I hate all that...

GEORGE

I'm not supposed to be overdoing it.

KITTY

Why? Were you overdoing it in France?

GEORGE

Kitty, come on. Ira thinks I should rest.

KITTY

What, is he your doctor now, as well as your mother? [no response] I'm sorry. I didn't mean that.

GEORGE

It doesn't matter.

75. INT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM MORNING

Kitty is asleep on George's chest, he's awake. The buzzer startles him, he rolls Kitty off, gets up and presses the button.

IRA

*Up an' at 'em, George!*

GEORGE

Ahh, yeah, come on up...

George rushes back to close the bedroom door. In the kitchen/diner he grabs a yoghurt from the new frigidare. Ira enters with two burly removal men.

IRA

Did'ya sleep well? There's nothing like a good night's sleep. You gotta have seven hours, make sure you get seven hours... I gotta get off before Leonore, or I'm just stuck there listening to a wounded buffalo all night. Don't worry she couldn't come...

GEORGE

I don't even know where to start.

IRA

That's why we're here.

Kitty emerges from the bedroom completely naked and walks over to fridge. Ira and the workmen all gawp at her.

IRA

[staring] OK, maybe not seven hours...

GEORGE

Do you fellas mind waiting outside?

The removal men remain transfixed by the sight of Kitty nude.

IRA

Hey! C'mon, move it out... outside!

Kitty returns eating a yoghurt.

IRA

[red-faced] Wow! The great Kitty Carlisle. You know, you look every bit as good in the flesh!

Kitty smiles.

76. INT. GEORGE'S NEW APARTMENT DAY

George paces about. Leonore and Ira talk privately.

LEONORE

Would you look at the size of this room? This is twice the size of our front room, what does George need with a room this size? There's only one of him, after all.

IRA

I left the final decision to you, dear.

LEONORE

Are you sure we signed for the right property?

GEORGE

Have you two got any candles? I need candles for this room.

IRA

Whaddya need with candles? You'll ruin your eyes with candles...

GEORGE

I want candles.

IRA

I can get you candles. Just don't read by them, or write by them... Would you go across the road and see if we have some spares, dear?

LEONORE

Sure, whatever your brother wants... [exits]

IRA

[unpacking, sees *Porgy*] You read this yet?

GEORGE

Yeah, it's great.

IRA

So what we gonna do about it?

GEORGE

We'll do it, soon. Just need to get my house in order.

IRA

There's nothing like a change of location to stimulate the old brain cells, eh?

GEORGE

We've moved from Riverside Drive to East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street. How I'm gonna adjust to the change in climate, the strange customs?

IRA

Don't knock it. I'm just across the street now, whenever we wanna work we've only gotta stroll over... [rummages] What's that stench? Something's bad in here. [finds slippers] My God, do you wear these?! I don't remember packing these...

GEORGE

No, I packed that box.

IRA

And what's this? [*An American In Paris* score] What're you hiding from me?

GEORGE

It's just a thing I'm working on...

IRA

Well, hum it to me. How does it go?

GEORGE

It's not finished yet...

IRA

So? Give me the general idea, and I'll start thinking about it.

GEORGE

No, it's not a lyrical thing, it's a piece - you know?

IRA

Oh... I see.

GEORGE

What?

IRA  
Did you show this to Ravel?

GEORGE  
No.

IRA  
And I suppose they're his slippers?

GEORGE  
No, they ain't his.

IRA  
Yeah? What are you trying to pull here?

GEORGE  
They ain't his. They're Claude Debussy's.

IRA  
Wow, you really got around didn't you?

77. INT. GEORGE'S NEW APARTMENT 1928 EVENING  
George is working on *An American In Paris*. The phone rings.

GEORGE  
Hello. France? Oh yeah? Okay... Maurice!  
My God! How ya doing? That's good.

RAVEL  
George, er, did you receive my letter?

GEORGE  
Yeah, I read it... I think you're too hard on  
yourself, Maurice, I could do a lot worse  
than learning bad Ravel...

RAVEL  
Well, you could do much better. Anyway,  
I'm just double-checking. Are you quite  
sure there was no luggage mix up? You know  
those oafs at the station...

GEORGE  
Yeah, I did look but as far as I could see  
everything was present and correct.

RAVEL  
No extra items?

GEORGE  
Not that I could see.

RAVEL  
Oh, really?

GEORGE  
Anything particular you'd lost?

RAVEL  
Oh, just a few items I can't find since...  
well, since our trip to Berlin.

GEORGE  
Oh yeah? You lost some scores?

RAVEL  
No, little things, personal items.

GEORGE  
What, your earplugs? [cringes instantly]

RAVEL  
What do you mean? No, not ear plugs...

GEORGE  
Little things...

RAVEL  
Anyway, thank you George, for looking. I  
won't trouble you any further. I hope your  
show went well.

GEORGE  
Oh yeah, it was a great success. But I'm  
working on something else, something  
directly inspired by our meeting. Not a  
show tune, or a piano piece; an  
orchestration, rather like a tone poem.

RAVEL  
Oh, I'm glad you've managed to take  
something away with you from Europe.

GEORGE  
Yeah, it's proven to be very valuable.

RAVEL  
I'm so pleased I have been of assistance.

GEORGE  
Well, I hope you find your luggage. [hangs  
up and paces the room] If Ravel won't teach  
me, I guess I'll have to learn a thing or  
two from old Debussy himself.

78. INT. WALTER DAMROSCH'S HOTEL MORNING  
George has breakfast with Walter Damrosch, New York Symphony  
conductor and modern music enthusiast.

DAMROSCH

I'm intrigued already. I've been hoping for this from you for years.

GEORGE

I value your faith in me, Walter, I think you'll be vindicated with this one.

DAMROSCH

Well, when can I hear it? You must come up, I've written you several times.

GEORGE

Very soon, but I don't want you have to tidy up my sketches again.

DAMROSCH

Then come up and work on it. Spend a weekend, a week, or whatever you need. A lot of pretty young things are clamouring around me saying *when is Mr Gershwin coming to stay?* I promise you.

GEORGE

It sounds perfect. But I've gotta schedule like you wouldn't believe. I've gotta speak to *Time* magazine this afternoon.

DAMROSCH

You have so much to offer, George, *so much*. Give me the chance to herald your work. Walter Damrosch is not just a conductor, use me, I'm a channel.

79. INT. RAVEL'S DRAWING ROOM DAY

Aimée enters with papers and magazines, one of which is *Time*.

AIMÉE

I don't think you're going to like this..

RAVEL

What? [seeing Gershwin on the cover] Oh my God! He's running for President! This should prove amusing..

Ravel begins to read the interview.

GEORGE

[VO] This new piece, really a rhapsodic ballet, is the most modern music I've attempted. The opening part is developed in typical French style, in the manner of Debussy and *Les Six*, though the themes are all original.

RAVEL

How dare he mention Debussy and *Les Six*, in the same sentence?! Look at him sat there, legs apart, King of the Jungle...

Ravel notices in the photo of George, a shadowy pair of slippers on top of the piano. His magnifying glass confirms them to be Debussy's!

80. INT. SAKS 5<sup>th</sup> AVENUE DAY

Kellis keeps trying George's telephone number but it just rings and rings.

81. EXT. GEORGE'S OLD APARTMENT DAY

Kellis rings the doorbell to George's apartment, there is no answer. He places a coiled explosive into the lock. He walks backwards round the corner of the building, unravelling the wire as he goes. Meanwhile, a female resident has noticed the clogged keyhole and follows the wire round the corner, catching up the stealthy Kellis.

RESIDENT

Excuse me. What exactly are you doing?

KELLIS

[stalling] Pardon?

RESIDENT

I need to get into my apartment.

KELLIS

Well, I'm sorry, but I am carrying-out very important security checks. Which, I may add, are for your benefit.

RESIDENT

Is this going to take long? Can't you let me in and then continue?

KELLIS

One second...

He feigns a "reading" on his mini-detonator.

KELLIS

Hmmm. Satisfactory. Ok, I'll let you in, may I see your key?

82. INT. APARTMENT BLOCK GROUND FLOOR DAY

The resident waits for the lift. Harry's eager for her to go.

RESIDENT

Are you going to check all the doors in the building?

KELLIS

Eventually, yes.

RESIDENT

You don't look like a workman.

KELLIS

Well I'd hope not, I am more of a consultant.

RESIDENT

Really? That must be fascinating work...

To his relief the lift arrives.

RESIDENT

Well, I'll probably see you around.

KELLIS

Goodbye.

Cut to Kellis outside George's door. The phone is ringing inside. An explosion in the lock breaks him in. Only the phone remains. Kellis paces the bare floor muttering, oblivious to the persistent ring. Eventually he answers.

KELLIS

Hello? What? [Ravel rants] Mr Gershwin is no longer here, if that's who this tirade is intended for... Sorry? [more ranting] Who is this?

83. INT. RAVEL'S DRAWING ROOM DAY

Ravel suddenly disturbs Aimée's writing.

RAVEL

Aimée, see to it that Marianne packs my bags!

AIMÉE

What are you talking about?

RAVEL

There is only so much provocation a man can take...

AIMÉE

Pardon?

RAVEL

In one Coup De Grace I shall retrieve the slippers, personally. Reverse the tide of cultural imperialism, showing Gershwin up for the charlatan that he is! And reinstate myself as the authentic voice of modern music!

AIMÉE

Stop it! You're going over the top.

RAVEL

Not exactly, my dear Aimée, I'm going to the United States of America!

84. EXT. GOLF COURSE FINAL TEE DAY

George is teeing off and Ira is caddying.

IRA

I gotta a letter from DuBose Heyward. You wanna hear the latest? Jolson's bidding for Porgy!

GEORGE

Really? He'll ruin it! What's with Heyward? He wanted to do it with us? Why's he talking to Jolson?

IRA

He's hard-up, cash-poor, Jolson's put his money up front, can you blame him?

GEORGE

No, but Jolson as a black-upped Porgy! Can you imagine it? They'll all laugh, Heyward's name will be mud!

George and Ira are on the green.

IRA

We'll step in, promise an all black cast and Heyward will go with us. Are you ready?

GEORGE

Yeah, *An American In Paris* is next week, then the last radio show but then I'm free. Stop Jolson and we'll do it.

Ira holds the flag as George putts the ball.

IRA

Good. Heyward knows we're more sensitive to the subject matter, we gotta more sophisticated take on it, besides...  
[photographer leaps up] Who's he?

GEORGE

Smile. He's from the Associated Press Syndicate.

PHOTOGRAPHER

[to Ira] Hey fella, do you mind stepping aside?

IRA

Oh sure. There you go George, that should be enough room for your head now!

Camera flashes - b/w photo of George the Golfer!

85. INT. IRA'S APARTMENT EVENING

Ira, George and DuBose Heyward are in discussion about *Porgy*.

HEYWARD

So do tell me? Are there black opera singers? Does either of you know of any?

IRA

Todd Duncan; a perfect example. I mean he's not *black* black, he's a music professor at Howard University, but he's black and he sings, opera...

HEYWARD

We don't want someone too academic. I don't want this to be *real* opera.

IRA

You mean an *opera* opera? Don't worry, it's not going to be an *opera* opera. Is it George?

GEORGE

No, not at all. It doesn't have to be *opera* opera to be opera.

HEYWARD

Good. I'd hate for *Porgy* to lose its roots.

IRA

No, it's not going to be Verdi.

GEORGE

Of course not. Verdi's green, this will be black.

HEYWARD

I think we should audition this Todd Duncan straightaway.

IRA

I agree 100%

GEORGE

We need some tunes first!

86. INT. LOFT IN IRA'S APARTMENT EVENING

George is at the piano and Ira is beside him singing and playing the banjo. The brothers run through *I Got Plenty Of Nuttin'* - Ira bellowing in a bad Southern "Negro" accent. Todd Duncan and his wife are watching incredulously.

IRA

You hear that, Todd? That song is going to make you a star!

Leonore's head appears at the loft entrance.

TODD

[to his wife] This stinks...

LEONORE

Ira, there's a Mr Kellis on the phone?

IRA

Kellis? No, I don't know a Kellis?

GEORGE

Oh, I'll get it...

IRA

Not *Kellis* Kellis? He's calling here?!

87. INTERIOR IRA'S APARTMENT HALLWAY NIGHT

George picks up the telephone receiver.

GEORGE

What is this? Do you realise you're phoning my brother's home? What do you want, Harry?

KELLIS

[from Cuban bar] What am I expected to do? You move without giving me a contact number. At least your brother is listed.

GEORGE

So? So, maybe I don't want to be contacted. I'm busy. I ain't got time for this shit. I can't see you.

KELLIS

Will you make time for Ravel, when he comes over?

GEORGE

What? What are you talking about?

KELLIS

When he comes over and wants his clothes back!

GEORGE

Wait a minute. Where are you? OK.

88. INT. CUBAN BAR NIGHT

Harry and George sit in a darkened corner of the bar, drinking. Cuban chess stalwarts are in the background.

GEORGE

So, what did he say exactly?

KELLIS

He was livid. I managed to glean that he was coming over here, so you had better have a good excuse.

GEORGE

Shit, this could be very bad. This is about music, Harry. I need them, you gotta help me...

KELLIS

Now you know what it feels like to need.

GEORGE

I know I sound crazy...

KELLIS

Yes you do. What is the problem, George?

GEORGE

Ravel wants his slippers back and I've gotta hang onto them. We gotta find a way round this?

KELLIS

Oh we have? How am I involved in this? What am I to you?!

GEORGE

You're a friend.

KELLIS

Well, perhaps this episode will finally teach you who your real friends are.

GEORGE

Harry, I'm sorry. Give me a chance, come on, help me outta this?

KELLIS

Well, I suppose I could talk to some people, you know I know some people.

GEORGE

Of course, you gotta get your people involved.

KELLIS

What's so special about this pair of slippers...

GEORGE

They aren't just *any* slippers. Ravel promised to teach me - he went back on his word! They were Debussy's Slippers and I know this sounds crazy but when I wear them I feel inspired, I'm about to start my most serious work so far, Harry, I *need* them!

KELLIS

In that case I must measure them, weigh them, and feel them... where are they?

89. INT. PARIS CONSERVATOIRE DAY

The Principal and the professors are in conference.

PRINCIPAL

So, we offer him a teaching post.

2<sup>nd</sup> PROFESSOR

Yes, permanent... and abroad.

1<sup>st</sup> PROFESSOR

We don't want an embarrassment like that dreadful Bolero happening again.

PRINCIPAL

But we've promised him slots in the autumn schedule. Heaven knows what he'll subject us to?

2<sup>nd</sup> PROFESSOR

Offer him an administrative post - bury him under paper!

PRINCIPAL

[knock on door] OK. Leave this to me.

Ravel enters.

RAVEL

Good morning, Gentlemen. You wanted an update on my plans for the autumn. Well, I have a proposition to put to you...

PRINCIPAL

Ah, yes - Ravel...

RAVEL

I have addressed the jazz idiom from a fresh perspective; a truly French perspective, in the context of a Piano Concerto.

PRINCIPAL

I see. But Maurice...

RAVEL

It is modern and classical, intricate and expansive.

1<sup>st</sup> PROFESSOR

It's the schedule...

RAVEL

It's time for French music to visit the World and seek out new audiences.

2<sup>nd</sup> PROFESSOR

[tentatively] Yes?

RAVEL

To make this possible a French composer needs to travel to America.

PRINCIPAL

[interested] Yes...

RAVEL

To act as a cultural ambassador...

PRINCIPAL

Yes...

RAVEL

And I put my new work and myself forward for this important mission.

PRINCIPAL, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> PROFESSORS

Yye-ess! !

PRINCIPAL

Excellent idea, Maurice, we shall make arrangements immediately, no time to lose.

RAVEL

So you're all in agreement? Well, in that case, contact Walter Damrosch at the New York Symphony Orchestra and see that he meets me at the airport.

1<sup>st</sup> PROFESSOR

Damrosch? The conductor?

RAVEL

He commissions modern works of this nature. He's worked with Gershwin, I believe.

PRINCIPAL

Perfect. When can you go?

90. EXT. VISUAL SEQUENCE CUBAN OVERTURE DAY

Kellis with the Cubans; Ramón sketches the slippers and writes an address on the back. Cut to Kellis looking for the door to the slipper faker's workshop in a run down neighbourhood. Cross-fade to Ravel on plane putting in earplugs. Cross-fade to Kellis showing the detail of the slippers to the faker. Cross-fade to Ravel stepping off the plane in New York. Damrosch meets him and they shake hands.

91. INT. CAR DUSK

Ravel and Damrosch are chauffeured from the airport.

DAMROSCH

I thought we'd get an early dinner, before going to the broadcast.

RAVEL

Very well.

DAMROSCH

I think you'll be surprised how George's writing has developed with this piece.

RAVEL

*An American In Paris.*

DAMROSCH

Yes, that's the centrepiece of the evening. I'll be intrigued to learn what you make of his impression of France. He's conducting it himself.

RAVEL

Conducting? From the piano?

DAMROSCH

I'm not going to give the game away. You know, I have big hopes for Radio as a medium, the opportunity to educate people, bring something wonderful into their lives, that they wouldn't normally get to hear...

92. INT. NBC RADIO STUDIO EVENING

OLD SALESMAN

Well, well, well, Charlie. How'd you make out today?

YOUNG SALESMAN

Oh, pretty good, I guess, but I don't think I'm cut out for this travelling business, Mr Jones.

OLD SALESMAN

Oh, you don't, eh? Why, what's wrong?

YOUNG SALESMAN

Well, with all this jumping from town to town, riding on trains and buses, I just can't watch my diet and as a result I feel pretty rotten most of the time...

OLD SALESMAN

Emm... That's not so good.

YOUNG SALESMAN

Yes, you see my trouble has always been constipation and I'm anxious about it because I've never been able to find a laxative that agrees with me.

RAVEL

What on earth is this? Are they selling something?

IRA

Oh you know these radio people, they've gotta have their two minutes.

OLD SALESMAN

You take a tip from an old timer and find out about *Feenamint!*

YOUNG SALESMAN

Er? *Feenamint?*

OLD SALESMAN

Yes sir, *Feenamint*. That's a chewing gum laxative and the flavour is great!

RAVEL

Was the author of this playlet using *Feenamint* to cure his writer's block?

IRA

Very good, I like it.

*Wintergreen For President* excerpt.

RUDY VALLÉE

Now, George, here's a query all composers encounter three times a day. When you work with your brother, Ira, which comes first the words or the music?

IRA

[to Ravel] The contract!

GEORGE

Usually the music. I hit on a new tune, play it for Ira, he gets an idea for the lyrics, then we work it out together.

RUDY VALLÉE

How did you get started in music, George?

GEORGE

Well, I left high school to take a job as a song plugger at Remicks for \$15 a week.

RUDY VALLÉE

But... how much money do you earn now, George?

GEORGE

About half as much as you do, Rudy, how much is that?

RUDY VALLÉE

One third as much as I told you this afternoon. One more question. Which of your show tunes do you prefer yourself?

GEORGE

This one, Rudy!

The band strikes up for *I Got Rhythm* - George playing piano.

RAVEL

Oh my God... Is this absolutely necessary?

IRA

Of course, it sells sheet music.

RUDY VALLÉE

An evening of Gershwin music continues with the composer himself taking the rostrum for his new work, *An American In Paris*. George Gershwin's poem, if you will, of one homesick American's night on the tiles in Paris, France.

George conducts the opening bar of *An American In Paris*.

93. INT. BAR BACKSTAGE NIGHT

Chattering glitterati. Ira and Leonore, Damrosch and Ravel.

DAMROSCH

Easily his most mature work, wouldn't you agree?

RAVEL

From what I've heard, yes.

IRA

Oh, were you counting the number of tunes he borrowed from you?

RAVEL

Not at all, I could never write any of that.

DAMROSCH

Here's the maestro now. Bravo George!

GEORGE

Thank you, Walter. Maurice, I'm glad you made it over here. Before you say anything, I want to return something that will make your trip worthwhile. [hands the fake slippers over]

RAVEL

Well... I can hear you've put them to good use. For me, the challenge has been working without them. I've risen to it, I hope you will too...

DAMROSCH

I propose a toast. To *An American In Paris*, and... a Parisian in America!

94. INT. NBC RADIO THE RAINBOW ROOM NIGHT  
The group is now seated, champagne is in abundance.

GEORGE

Anyway, enough about me, Walter. What did you think about how I conducted?

DAMROSCH

I couldn't have done a better job, George.

RAVEL

Good to see you finally got off the piano: a brave move.

GEORGE

Walter tells me you're writing a piano concerto; in true Gershwin-style as well!

RAVEL

George, you don't own the rights to jazz, just yet.

DAMROSCH

Seeing as you've brought it up, George, I've had an absolutely 24-carat idea. A musical tête-à-tête. Your *Piano Concerto in F*, back to back with Maurice's new *Piano Concerto*...

GEORGE

Well, yeah, I've got the easy part, I wrote mine five years ago.

RAVEL

And I've virtually concluded mine. Let's do it!

IRA

[butting in] That sounds fine and dandy, George, but don't forget *Porgy*.

RAVEL

What is *Porgy*?

IRA

He doesn't know what *Porgy* is? *Porgy*, my fine French friend will be a milestone in American Opera.

RAVEL

I wasn't aware there was such a thing?

IRA

Exactly. Not yet. That's where George and I enter the history books: Again.

RAVEL

Tell me more, this sounds most amusing.

GEORGE

*Porgy* is a great American novel.

LEONORE

[lighting a cigarette] One of the few you've read.

IRA

*Porgy* the Opera, will be a heroic testament to the dispossessed of America. It will be a completely black Opera; all black cast and music to match.

RAVEL

So this is a Broadway Blues review?

GEORGE

No, full scale Opera... Three Acts...

RAVEL

You do realise, an Opera composer must orchestrate every single note himself?

GEORGE

Every single note. I'm ready for the challenge. Slippers off! Sans Slippers!

95. INT. NBC RADIO STUDIO MORNING

The full black cast of *Porgy & Bess* is assembled and milling about the stage in chaos. Todd Duncan is centre of the stage, looking bemused. We snatch bits of conversation, the cast is not entirely happy with the all white production team.

MALE DANCER

It may be all black on stage - but it's white everywhere else!

CONDUCTOR

[shouting] Where's Sportin' Life?

IRA

Yeah. Where's Bubbles? [to George] You see he's late again!

GEORGE

Have you seen the slippers? I need them to start these re-writes.

IRA

Forget the slippers, George; Bubbles hasn't shown up again, everyone's losing patience.

CONDUCTOR

I can't work like this. Let's replace him, get rid of him!

GEORGE

You can't fire my Bubbles! He's the whole spirit of the thing. He's the black Fred Astaire... [still looking for the slippers].

IRA

Yeah, he can't sing and he forgets his lines!

HEYWARD

I have a terrible sense of foreboding about all this.

GEORGE

There they are! [finding the slippers underneath the conductor's rostrum].

Suddenly John W Bubbles enters centre stage out of breath in a ridiculously unsuitable vaudeville costume.

BUBBLES

I got the zip stuck - sorry!

GEORGE

[to Ira] See, the power of the slippers! He's here!

96. EXT. DAMROSCH'S HOUSE DUSK  
A single light is on downstairs.

97. INT. DAMROSCH'S HOUSE NIGHT  
Damrosch sits beside Ravel at the piano.

DAMROSCH  
Maurice, this is a major, major, work; a very important premier. And with the double-bill idea...

RAVEL  
Gershwin's name attracts large crowds. I just hoped I'm not overshadowed.

DAMROSCH  
The good will out, Maurice. Your concerto will be very well received. We need to maximise the potential of this event, so I've notified the press; they follow George's every movement, to our benefit. So, tomorrow, we have a press call in New York. Goodnight.

Damrosch exits. Ravel plays quietly. He decides to try the slippers on. The toes curve acutely to the left. Furious, he curses Gershwin.

98. INT. NEW YORK HOTEL LOBBY PRESS CALL MORNING  
Photographers snap Gershwin and Ravel flanking Damrosch.

RAVEL  
[through clenched teeth] Gershwin? What size feet do you have?

GEORGE  
Why?

RAVEL  
They're ruined, you've bent them!

DAMROSCH  
Gentleman, I don't think this is the time for bickering.

GEORGE  
What's ruined?

RAVEL  
Your oaf's feet have stretched them beyond repair... I didn't know you literally had two left feet!

GEORGE  
Two left feet?

99. INT. SAKS 5<sup>th</sup> AVENUE DAY

Harry Kellis is measuring up an old gent. Gershwin suddenly storms onto the shop floor brandishing the true right foot, plus the forgery, on the ends of his hands.

GEORGE

What the hell is this? You wanna tell me what this is?!

KELLIS

George, err... Do you want to calm down. I have a customer.

GEORGE

I don't give a damn. You wanna take a look at that? That's a fuck-up. That's two right feet, that's what that is, you little shit!

KELLIS

I'm at work, George, we could discuss this in more appropriate surroundings.

GEORGE

I'm gonna *surround* your flattened nose with bruises. Are you screwing me?

KELLIS

This is the thanks I get for helping you?

GEORGE

You got the two pairs muddled, you idiot! We've both got one real one and one fake - So, I haven't got the slippers - he hasn't got the slippers. Is that your weird, fucked-up sense of balance?!

KELLIS

Perhaps, you don't deserve them. Have you considered that?

GEORGE

You're doing this to spite me, aren't you?! I told you I'm working on something important, you just want to see me fail!

KELLIS

[poking him in the chest] Selfish to the end - reap what you sow, George..

Gershwin punches Kellis, knocking him off his feet.

GEORGE

You come near me or my family again, I'll double your inside leg measurement!

100. EXT. TENNIS COURT CLOUDY DAY

George and Ira play tennis. George double-faults.

IRA

Hold on. Let me get a chair!

GEORGE

Screw you.

George dollies his next shot over the net. Ira smashes it.

IRA

Do you wanna start playing?

GEORGE

We had everything right, that was our best shot.

IRA

Ahh, for God's sake, I thought we agreed to just bury it. It's done.

GEORGE

Oh great, my best work, disappears without trace.

IRA

We could get bitter; we lost ten grand a piece on that, Heyward's bankrupt. In ten years time it'll be hailed as *the* great American Opera, you *know* that. Fuck the critics, and the money - we could make that money back on one picture in Hollywood..

GEORGE

It's not about the money. I don't wanna to go to Hollywood.

IRA

Give me one good reason why not? Fred's out there... Ginger... even Wally! Come on, Hollywood is Broadway plus sun!

GEORGE

If I'd had both slippers we'd be toasting its success now. You wouldn't understand. I can't believe I trusted him.

IRA

Am I hearing this right? Ever since you came back with those Ali Baba slippers you've been acting very strange, George. Your head's been turned by your French goo-roo. You don't just work anymore, oh no, you're practising magic now. Too right, I don't understand!

GEORGE

Well, I think that brings this match to a close. Game, set and match, Ira Gershwin.

IRA

No, no, I'm the loser, George. I'm the one who's been in the shadows, and been happy to be there. Everyone knows you're the maestro, the Gershwin of Gershwins. And I know it too, so I live with that. But, George, I don't like your high-handed precious attitude lately.

GEORGE

Ira, you sound like Wally.

IRA

You have no conception of me as artist, do you? None at all, it's all you. I know I'm no William Wordsworth, but you treat me like some greeting card poet - I think I'm a notch or two above that. To hell with it, maybe I'm not. I'm sorry.

101. INT. GERSHWIN FAMILY HOME 1937 NIGHT

Ira in tears as he and Dr Dandy have drinks the night of George's death.

IRA

I'm sorry. I was just trying to shake some sense into him. I thought we'd always be talking the same language, but we'd started to diverge now. I was probably afraid of George going his own way and leaving me behind.

DANDY

You seem to have always acted in your brother's best interests - I doubt if you're being fair on yourself now.

IRA

I don't know. I just wanted to get him away from those crazy Europeans. So I went out to Los Angeles anyway, making plans and deals.

DANDY

By crazy Europeans, I presume you mean Ravel and Kellis from what you've said, their behaviour does, indeed, sound manic.

102. INT. NEW YORK HOTEL LOBBY MORNING ONE YEAR EARLIER  
Ravel leaves his key at reception. A shadowy figure is sat behind a newspaper, watching him. Ravel is caught by the arm, he turns to be confronted by Harry Kellis.

KELLIS

Monsieur Ravel?

RAVEL

Oui?

KELLIS

[shows slippers sketch] I'm sure what I have to say will be of great interest, would you come with me please?

RAVEL

Not without some explanation.

KELLIS

You will get one. First, I must make sure we are not observed. Please?

103. INT. CUBAN BAR MORNING

Ravel takes a seat. The Cuban regulars are already drinking.

KELLIS

[to barman] Two glasses of water.

BARMAN

Regular or ionised?

KELLIS

Regular, of course.

RAVEL

Do you mind telling me now who you are, why I am here and why you have a pencil drawing of my slippers in your wallet?

KELLIS

I apologise for the secrecy. I am an International Police Investigator working undercover. You are a key witness to the suspicious death of a renowned pianist.

RAVEL

Wanderwitz?

KELLIS

Your slippers may seem incidental at the moment, yet they may play a key part in the entrapment of the culprit.

RAVEL

Are you suggesting that Wandermitz was murdered?

KELLIS

Precisely.

RAVEL

Well, why didn't the German police investigate that possibility at the time?

KELLIS

It was a matter of international diplomacy involving a prominent American visitor.

RAVEL

Gershwin, surely not? What motive would he have for killing Wandermitz?

KELLIS

I'm not a Psychologist, Monsieur Ravel. A murderer's motives are often beyond the realm of reason. But we have noted a manic form of professional jealousy. Wandermitz is only the latest piece in this puzzle.

RAVEL

There were others?

KELLIS

I cannot elaborate, but you yourself may have been in the gravest danger.

RAVEL

I never realised he was that dangerous. He did steal my slippers, but he has returned them to me...

KELLIS

Forgeries. I'm sorry to have to tell you that.

RAVEL

Bastard! I should have suspected as much.

KELLIS

Yes, his only mistake in an otherwise faultless series of crimes...

Santos, is collecting drinks from the bar.

SANTOS

Eh Kellis, it didn't take you long to get over him, eh? This one, he a bit long in the tooth man, but I bet he long in other places, you know wha I'm sayin'!

Ramón laughs. Rodríguez tuts. Kellis is momentarily thrown.

KELLIS

Don't worry. These men are working with me, they are also undercover.

RAVEL

So you plan to use the slippers to capture Gershwin?

KELLIS

Indirectly. When will you see him again?

RAVEL

You're aware of the concert? We'll be rehearsing for the next two days.

KELLIS

Playing the piano, yes I knew about that, then we will need access to your instruments... Fingerprints, Ravel.

RAVEL

Don't you have them already on file?

KELLIS

Not a perfect set of all ten digits. I'm thinking, Gershwin must press a unique combination of keys on the piano?

RAVEL

Yes, possibly several, I'd need to check.

KELLIS

Good, I'm relying on you as my inside man. I suggest we meet at a specific time tomorrow.

RAVEL

Of course, Inspector, let's synchronise watches!

104. INT. AUDITORIUM DAY

Concert dress rehearsal. Situated around the stage, are marble busts of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky. Ravel is on stage muttering irritably to the lead violinist.

RAVEL

I will not play on this piano.

DAMROSCH

Why on earth not?

RAVEL

It's completely out of tune... the action is potentially damaging to my tendons.

GEORGE

It played fine to me.

RAVEL

It's out of tune and I won't play on it.

DAMROSCH

Well then, I'll send for the tuner.

RAVEL

Your tuners are evidently incompetent. I have my own for such eventualities.

DAMROSCH

You have your own tuners?

RAVEL

Certainly. I cannot take any chances. I will fetch them at once. [exits]

GEORGE

I swear, Walter, this man takes his own food tasters out to restaurants.

DAMROSCH

This is highly irregular. Everyone can take fifteen minutes.

Ravel re-enters with a team of boiler-suited workmen, clearly the Cubans and Kellis in disguise. They modify the piano.

105. INT. AUDITORIUM CONCERT NIGHT

Inside the piano, Kellis has wired up and ominous looking black box. The strings vibrate as Ravel plays the first bars of his *Piano Concerto in G*, whilst Damrosch conducts. We see the composer's busts showing animated approval, all except Tchaikovsky. Kellis waits anxiously as the audience applaud and Ravel takes his bow.

Cut to Gershwin's *Piano Concerto in F*, Tchaikovsky loves it, Bach and Mozart exchange wincing and Beethoven has clenched his teeth. Inside, the hammers are just missing Kellis' rigged strings. At the climax George depresses the wired-up notes and receives a violent electric shock. Falling in slow motion, banging his head on the bust of Beethoven, who seems to head-butt him deliberately. Damrosch rushes off the podium to assist George.

DAMROSCH

George! George, can you hear me? Get an ambulance!

Ravel makes eye contact with the fleeing Kellis. He senses something is wrong. This strange German has taken advantage of his need for revenge. Guilt-ridden he returns to the stage to help attend to George.

RAVEL

Is he ok? Oh my God, is it serious?

DAMROSCH

I think he might be concussed. An ambulance should be on its way.

GEORGE

[coming to] Rubber's burning... put out the rubber...

106. INT. GERSHWIN FAMILY HOME 1937 NIGHT

Ira and Dr Dandy over drinks the night of George's death.

IRA

One performance out of a hundred I miss and this has to happen... I flew straight back to him, obviously.

DANDY

Was he in hospital for long?

IRA

Long enough, a couple of weeks.

DANDY

And what of Ravel, the man was clearly, insane?

IRA

He went back to Paris, tail between his legs, without his precious slippers.

107. EXT. SMALL AIRFIELD PARIS DAY

Aimée has been driven by Madam Du Vollé to pick up Ravel. The aircraft ladders are being placed against the plane and the door opens.

AIMÉE

I hope you don't think we're using you as a taxi service.

MADAM DU VOLLÉ

Not at all, although Maurice should really invest in a car for you, Aimée. There's no excuse.

AIMÉE

I wish he would, but you know Maurice, once he has an aversion to something...

They watch as everybody leaves the plane apart from Maurice. A stewardess walks across the tarmac to the waiting car.

STEWARDESS

Are you waiting for Monsieur Ravel?

AIMÉE

Yes, is there anything wrong?

STEWARDESS

Monsieur Ravel was taken ill during the flight, he may have had a stroke. A doctor is already on the way, perhaps you want to wait on the plane.

AIMÉE

Yes of course, one moment. Madam Du Vollé, there's no need for you to wait.

MADAM DU VOLLÉ

I can if you want me to. It sounds serious.

AIMÉE

I've been expecting something like this, please go, I'll will let you know more as soon as I do.

108. INT. CALL BOX DAY

Close up of Kitty Carlisle's face on telephone.

KITTY

Where is he, Ira? I must see him. I've been going out of my mind with worry.

IRA

There's nothing to worry about. He's in perfectly good hands.

KITTY

Can I visit him? Can't you just give me the name of the hospital...

IRA

Kitty, I'm not sure that's such a good idea. He's asked not to be disturbed.

KITTY

Don't do this Ira, please.

IRA

He's gotta be well enough to fly, see.  
He's told you all about Hollywood?

KITTY

Hollywood? What are you talking about?

IRA

We're already signed up to work on one  
picture. I'm sure he'll write you.

KITTY

Ira, no! I've gotta speak to him..

IRA

Well, you just take care of yourself, and  
my brother will phone you. [click]

KITTY

[sobbing] Ira?

109. INT. HOSPITAL NEW YORK DAY

George is in bed, a tearful Harry Kellis is visiting him.

GEORGE

Go away.

KELLIS

[sobbing] I can't. I want to help you..

GEORGE

You could help by closing the door behind  
you on the way out.

KELLIS

Stop it, George, I feel terrible. I just  
want you to get well.

GEORGE

I'm well, Harry. I just need lot's of  
rest.

KELLIS

[stroking George's head] You don't need  
rest, you need stimulation. I've been  
working on something. It was supposed to  
be a birthday present. It will help to  
strengthen your scalp and promote new hair  
growth. And alleviate your headaches, let  
me put it on for you..

GEORGE

Harry... No, Harry... Help!

Ira enters the room.

IRA

Heh! Don't touch him! You crazy pervert [pushing him, literally kicking Kellis out the room]. Get outta here! If I see you near my brother again I'll ring your neck!

KELLIS

[backing away] You know where to find me George! I'll be there for you, when you've finished with this ape! [backing away down the corridor]

GEORGE

Don't let him near me, Izzy. Tell the nurses. If you'd got here a minute later I would have been *Scalpmatic*'d

IRA

Don't worry, George. He's gone, and we're going too.

GEORGE

I can't go anywhere. Where you taking me?

IRA

I've been looking for places, in LA.

GEORGE

LA? No, not Hollywood, Ira please...

IRA

You need rest and people that care about you. I want you to come and live with me and Leonore, we've found a place. It's practically on the beach, but it's a stone's throw from Hollywood, and that's our future.

GEORGE

Hollywood. [resigned] Tell me it's not a one way ticket...

IRA

'Course not. We can come back anytime - just think of your sun-tan.

GEORGE

Hollywood... Hollywood... [fades]

110. INT. BEACH HOUSE PARTY HOLLYWOOD DAY

A deeply tanned and drunk George playing the piano in shorts. Ira is passing around cocktails. Ginger Rogers and Paulette Goddard sit down either side of George and Paulette touches his knee. Ginger leaves in a huff.

PAULETTE

Do you think I've upset Ginger?

GEORGE

I think that might have been me...

PAULETTE

You do realise Charles is in Paris this weekend?

GEORGE

Oh really... nice city...

PAULETTE

Yes, they want to give him some award. The French are the only people who think he's funny these days...

GEORGE

Well, I think he's a funny little man... Can you smell burning rubber?

George passes out onto the piano; a crashing discord.

111. INT. BEACH HOUSE EVENING

Leonore is joined by Ira, who's been putting George to bed.

LEONORE

Will you believe me now? The same thing happened last week.

IRA

He's just tired, he came out here to relax and he's relaxed too much.

LEONORE

That's not relaxing. He's ill. I can't... I won't have him here, he needs help, Ira, he needs to be somewhere else...

IRA

He drinks a little too much, I grant you...

LEONORE

He can't even hold his fork at the dinner table. It's an embarrassment.

IRA

What are you saying? You don't want my brother living here?

LEONORE

I just think he needs professional help.

IRA

If that's how you feel I'll fly him home to New York. He never wanted to come here anyway.

LEONORE

New York? What about your work? Can't we get someone to see him here in LA?

IRA

When George is ready to work, we'll work. First thing is to get him well again. I know he'll be happier in New York.

112. INT. BEACH HOUSE BEDROOM

George very still, eyes closed, in bed.  
Cross fade to George on New York hospital operating table.  
Cross fade to George dead on mortuary slab, (as in SCENE 1).  
Camera circulates round cadaver slowly rising.

113. INT. GERSHWIN FAMILY HOME 1937

The night of George's death. Dr Dandy and Ira in discussion.

IRA

[tears welling up] I was supposed to be the pianist not George. Pappa bought that damn piano for me. [breaking down] You should have let me be the genius, George! But no, you were always in such a hurry to succeed, to prove yourself, [despairing] well, genius got you killed, George!

Ira holds his head in his hands and sobs; Dr Dandy places a steady hand on his shoulder.

114. INT. HOSPITAL PARIS DAY

Maurice Ravel is recovering from his stroke, Aimée is visiting him.

AIMÉE

Maurice, the doctor says you may be able to come home next week.

RAVEL

I can't stand being cooped up in this place. I need to work, Aimée...

AIMÉE

There's no rush; we must make sure you've fully recovered first.

RAVEL

Yes, yes, of course, but I have so much work to do, my concerto was a huge success. I must write another one straight away,

only this time with the slippers, [getting worked up] which reminds me...

AIMÉE

Maurice, no! I won't stand for this nonsense any longer, you're going to kill yourself over these stupid slippers. I want you to promise me you'll never mention them again.

RAVEL

But Aimée, I *need* them...

AIMÉE

You don't need them, haven't you proved that enough already. You have to make a choice between them and me; I can't bear you like this. If you insist on blaming them for every last thing then I can no longer work for you.

RAVEL

No, Aimée please, don't go, don't leave me alone. I promise I won't mention them again. Oh God, this is a lifeless place. Did you remember my newspaper?

AIMÉE

Of course. Why won't you read the French papers, they have them here?

RAVEL

You know, Aimée, this comes as a shock to a lot of French people, but France is not the only country in the world. Please read the headlines to me?

AIMÉE

Oh very well, [reading] Walt Disney has made a full-length colour cartoon film, *Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs*.

RAVEL

Typical Americans, taking all the human element out of cinema - I suppose you don't have to pay Mickey Mouse an actor's fee - this is the future, mark my words...

AIMÉE

Ford Motor Company workers are on strike...

RAVEL

They should get Disney to run their factory, put Donald Duck and his chums on the production line, that would stop any insurrections.

AIMÉE

US Congress debate civil war in Spain.

RAVEL

Debating! They'll be nothing left. It breaks my heart, Aimée, to watch my Mother's people slaughter each other.

AIMÉE

Do you want me to continue? Because I don't want to interrupt your editorial commentary.

RAVEL

Ahh Aimée, being stuck in a hospital bed without company, you forget how to converse with people; there is no need to be so sensitive. [Aimée looks stunned] Aimée? What is that you're reading? *GEORGE GERSHWIN DEAD at 39*. No! I can't believe it?!

AIMÉE

[holding back tears] He was so young, and seemed so healthy and alive...

RAVEL

[reading] It says that his last words may have been heard by the neural specialist who operated on him, perhaps he made a confession?

AIMÉE

I don't think he was a Catholic.

RAVEL

The slippers, Aimée, in his dying moment he may have felt guilty... I must speak to that doctor!

AIMÉE

Maurice, you've just promised to forget about the slippers, they will be the death of you!

RAVEL

Aimée, I must see this Dr Dandy, he's a specialist, perhaps he will be able to treat me, you know I'm not a well man.

AIMÉE

But you're about to be discharged from Hospital.

RAVEL

I need to see the best doctor possible.

AIMÉE

Whatever you say, Maurice. Perhaps a brain expert is exactly what you need.

115. EXT. FRONT DOOR RAVEL'S CHATEAU. DAY.  
Dr Dandy rings the bell, Aimée opens the door.

DANDY

Maurice Ravel's residence?

AIMÉE

Dr Dandy, please come in, I'm Aimée Klimeq.

DANDY

I recognise your voice from the telephone. I was very surprised you called me. There are many specialists in Paris that could treat Monsieur Ravel.

AIMÉE

I'm sure of that Doctor, but Maurice insisted on seeing you.

116. INT. RAVEL'S CHATEAU MORNING  
Dr Dandy is sat opposite Ravel. On the table are small, carved wooden objects. Dandy covers them with a cloth, removes one and then uncovers them.

RAVEL

Must we play these futile games, Doctor?

DANDY

I'm trying to ascertain specific areas of deterioration in you memory. We've found this test to be a reliable indicator. So, what is *not* there?

RAVEL

The slippers, Dandy, the slippers are not there. They're not here.

DANDY

Please try and take this seriously.

RAVEL

Oh, very well, the ring.

DANDY

There never was a ring.

RAVEL

Well there should have been. Don't worry about my memory, Dandy. It's your memory that I'm interested in.

DANDY

Monsieur Ravel, I am not the one with suspected acute amnesia.

RAVEL

Well, if we establish you as having a fully functional memory, we can use you as a control. You're a man of science, surely that appeals to you?

DANDY

Go ahead. Test my memory.

RAVEL

You were the head surgeon operating on Gershwin when he died, were you not?

DANDY

Nominally, yes. I arrived quite late.

RAVEL

Was he still conscious at that point?

DANDY

He was comatose. Although he did regain consciousness right at the end.

RAVEL

Did he speak to you?

DANDY

I believe he did, yes.

RAVEL

And what did he say?

DANDY

Is this my memory test?

RAVEL

Yes. Now what did he say?

DANDY

Oh, I don't know, it was nothing particularly lucid.

RAVEL

So? ! What was it? You *must* remember!

DANDY

It was incoherent. A couple of words...

RAVEL

The words, Dandy!

DANDY

I can't remember... *Left*, I think. *True Left*? Yes, that was it - *True Left*.

RAVEL

*True Left*?! What am I supposed to do with that? There must be more, what aren't you telling me?

DANDY

No. That was all. The man was dying...

RAVEL

*True Left*? - the left one's true?! - they're both left feet!! He gives me two left feet and tells me the left one's genuine?! Is this your idea of a joke Dandy?

DANDY

I told you what he said - I can't tell you what it means.

RAVEL

You're useless! You've failed, Dandy! Get out! Aimeé! Marianne, hat and coat!

117. INT. RAVEL'S CHATEAU HALL DAY

AIMEÉ

I can't apologise enough...

DANDY

There's no need. I would say this, though: Monsieur Ravel's condition is not something within my capacity to treat. I believe he has not fully recovered from his stroke and this has been complicated by aphasia. He needs constant medical supervision.

AIMEÉ

What are the chances of a recovery?

DANDY

Recovery? This is a progressively debilitating condition. You must understand that he's never going to come out of this.

AIMEÉ

Then I think it's best if he remains here with me.

118. INT. RAVEL'S CHATEAU DRAWING ROOM

Ravel is lying on a chaise longue. He is dreaming deeply.

DREAM SEQUENCE

119. INT. "REPUTATION HEAVEN" - YEAR UNKNOWN

A large, formal, white decor reception. Ravel walks up to the female clerk at the desk.

RAVEL

Excuse me, I am Maurice Ravel.

CLERK

Mister Ravel, may I take you through security starting with your home key?

RAVEL

Chamber or Orchestral?

CLERK

Orchestral.

RAVEL

G - major.

CLERK

OK. And your mother's maiden name?

RAVEL

Delouart.

CLERK

And finally, the first and last letter of your most regrettable yet most popular work?

RAVEL

Oh, er, yes. B and O.

CLERK

Thank you, Mister Ravel and welcome to Reputation Heaven. Your year of death is 1937 and you will be residing in the conservative/modernist suite. Here's your pass.

Ravel takes the plastic card and swipes it into the door. It plays the first few notes of Bolero and then opens. A DJ is playing popular classical "hits" by the pool.

DJ

Hey now, lookee here, Maurice Ravel has joined us, let's make sure we give him a big ol' Reputation Heaven welcome!

Ravel acknowledges with a shy hand signal and walks into the melee. The bar is populated by all the big names of Western Art music, young and old. In the pool Lenny Bernstein plays water polo with Mozart, Strauss and Schoenberg.

As Ravel walks by, a misplaced smash sends the wet ball flying into his hands.

BERNSTEIN

Over here, Maurice!

RAVEL

[returns ball] Be more careful.

BERNSTEIN

Thanks. Hey George? !

Whip pans to Gershwin, relaxing on a sunbed with a cigar.

BERNSTEIN

Get in here and help me out - New York Yankees versus the Viennese Vanguard!

GEORGE

Sure... Hold the fort Lenny.

RAVEL

Gershwin? !

GEORGE

Oh, hi Maurice.

RAVEL

What are you doing here?

GEORGE

Same as you, I guess.

RAVEL

What kind of a place is this that lets a charlatan like you in?

GEORGE

I didn't have a choice - I'm in. There's no point in being angry with me now.

RAVEL

Oh, so you expect me to forget that you leeches off me, you stole from me..

GEORGE

Wait a minute, I leeches off you?

RAVEL

You know what I'm talking about, thief!

The other composers gather around, smelling a fight.

GEORGE

The slippers again? I thought I cleared that up - didn't you get the message?

RAVEL

Message? Ha! You mean *True Left*? What use was that, you balding idiot - you given me both left slippers - did you think somehow you were helping!?!

GEORGE

C'mon Maurice, I was on my way out - what do you expect?

RAVEL

I wouldn't expect a decent human being to steal them in the first place. You had no right, they belonged to me, to France, to a fine and noble tradition...

DEBUSSY

Phooooo - eé!

The crowd parts and awed whispers of "Debussy!" are heard. In saunters a "chipper" Claude Debussy.

DEBUSSY

Ravel, tête-toi. You can be such an arse. The legacy of France! Mon Dieú! Those ridiculous slippers that you hold in such high regard, were an unwanted gift from my wife's mother, I hated the tawdry things on sight.

RAVEL

So, why did you give them to me?

DEBUSSY

I didn't like you. Snapping at my heels. I spun you a yarn about lineage and inheritance and you swallowed it.

The crowd laughs, Gershwin joins in.

DEBUSSY

[to Gershwin] You're no better, you also fell for that instant heritage bullshit!

GEORGE

True, I guess you got me!

RAVEL

I can't believe it. I admired you. You set a standard for me to live up to. I always thought I had your blessing.

DEBUSSY

Well you didn't. I was petty, and even if you had my blessing, so what... listen...

Singing to the tune of his own Clair De Lune.

DEBUSSY

[to Ravel]  
*Don't be sore that  
some hated you  
you can be sure they  
underrated you  
when they look back I'm sure that they'll  
all agree not for note, that, you were  
better than me*

[to Gershwin]  
*Don't be ashamed that  
you sold some songs  
the world loves dancing  
and sing-a-longs  
you maybe flash and lacking emotional depth  
but that didn't stop you...*

RAVEL

*...resorting to slipper theft!*

GEORGE

Hey!

DEBUSSY

[speaks-sings over instrumental verse]  
*We all steal Maurice  
we all plunder  
we're all as guilty and as blameless as  
each other  
what does it matter here  
as long as we've all been heard?  
even John Cage there  
and he hasn't said a word!*

CHORUS

DEBUSSY

*It doesn't matter if you're Impressionist,  
Expressionist!*

STRAVINSKY

*Neo-classicist*

JOHN ADAMS

*Postmodernist, minimalist or cubist!*

GEORGE

*Exhibitionist!*

RAVEL

*Sheer perfectionist!*

TCHAIKOVSKY  
*Sad pathetic, Late-Romanticist!*

WAGNER  
*Dangerously populist, square-headed,  
proto-fascist, or [camera pans to Bach]  
Fugue-ist?*

DEBUSSY  
*Even Brahms and Liszt - you've got the gist  
of it... We made some noise, and we're the  
best at it! ! !*

Ensemble tap-dancing with replica slippers on their feet. A few composers in the pool are synchronised-swimming around a huge inflatable replica slipper. Gershwin and Ravel take a Fred & Ginger style two-step together, whirling round before falling back into the troupe.

120. INT. RAVEL'S CHATEAU DRAWING ROOM

Ravel stirs suddenly and wakes from his vivid dream, Aimée now sitting by him, mopping his brow.

RAVEL  
[faintly] Aimée, I'm glad you're there.  
Gershwin... it wasn't his fault... I want you  
to write to him, Aimée. I want to teach  
him..

AIMÉE  
Maurice, you do know this, I told you,  
George Gershwin died six months ago.

RAVEL  
Dead? No, no, he can't be... it's not his  
fault, I must teach him..

121. INT. JAZZ CLUB NEW YORK EVENING 1940

Three years after George's death, Ira and Dandy have become firm friends, they're sat drinking with Kurt Weill.

IRA  
Walter Dandy, may I introduce you to Kurt  
Weill, we're going to be working together.

DANDY  
Pleasure, I think I've heard Ira play some  
of your music. I didn't know *Mack The  
Knife* was yours?

WEILL  
Ira is one of my biggest fans. We're  
writing a show together, one that puts bums  
on seats, eh Ira?

IRA

That's right. *One Touch Of Venus* - I have great hopes for it on Broadway.

WEILL

Excuse me one moment, gentleman, I feel the call of nature. [he leaves table]

IRA

It seems odd, I never thought I'd write like this with anyone other than George. And, ironically it was George's insistence on going to Paris that introduced me to Kurt.

DANDY

Well Ira, I'm sure it's going to be a huge success. Not that I know much about music, but I know a hell of a lot more than I did.

IRA

I'm glad I'm back on Broadway, no disrespect to Georgie, but I'm no concert hall genius.

Pan across to stage where an unearthly lit George Gershwin, on piano playing the introduction to *They All Laughed* - he takes the first line.

GEORGE

*They all laughed at Christopher Columbus  
when he said the world was round  
They all laughed when Edison recorded sound*

Kurt Weill returns to the table.

WEILL

*They all laughed at Wilber and his brother  
when they said that man could fly*

DANDY

*They told Marconi wireless was a phoney,  
it's the same old cry*

GEORGE

*They laughed at me wanting you, said I was  
reaching for the moon*

IRA

*But Oh, you came through, now they'll have  
to change their tune*

GEORGE

*They all said we never could be happy they  
laughed at us, and how*

IRA

*But Ho Ho Ho, whose got the last laugh now?*

George takes a final dazzling piano solo; Ira leads a rapturous round of applause from his table as the credits roll.

T H E   E N D

©2000 Permanent Cherry Limited