

Looking for the Music

The music of George Gershwin stirred the hearts of the people of his day, and will continue to do so for generations to come.

Gershwin (1898 – 1937) was an American composer and pianist whose works spanned both popular and classical genres. Among his best-known works are the orchestral compositions *Rhapsody in Blue* and *An American in Paris*, as well as the opera *Porgy and Bess*.



Gershwin and a friend were walking along a crowded beach one day. It was at a resort near New York City. The sounds and shrieks of voices pierced their conversation. Clanking tunes ground out from a nearby merry-go-round, while sideshow barkers and hucksters shouted themselves hoarse.

From underground came the deep rumble of the subway. Beside them crashed the relentless roar of the sea.

Gershwin's ears were attentive to all the noises cascading around him. He remarked to his friend: "All of this could form such a beautiful pattern of sound. It could turn into a magnificent musical piece expressive of every human activity and feeling with pauses, counterpoints, blends and climaxes of sound that would be beautiful. But it is not that. It is all discordant, terrible and exhausting, as we hear it now. The pattern is always being shattered."

Gershwin's observations form a parable of our time. So many confusing sounds and noises, so much unrest, so much rapid change prevail.

They are all evident in our everyday lives – in traffic congestion, the din of crowded restaurants, the clamor of talk shows on television where participants try to talk over one another.

Even in the centers of Life Care and Century Park, the sounds of activities programs, housekeeping equipment, meal preparations, and the laughter of associates' interactions with residents all have necessary and appropriate places in the environment created.

Somewhere, in the midst of it, meaning comes out of it, and our job is to look for the music in the noise – the sounds that create an effect and the harmony that results.

– Beecher Hunter