

My all-time favourite piece of classical music is Rhapsody in Blue by George Gershwin. Other favourites come and go, depending on my mood or what I heard last, but this piece is always there.

I can't remember when I first came across this piece, but it was definitely when I was at secondary school (as I did my A 'Level dissertation on it!). I also ended up studying it further at University. Listening to it is a happy and enjoyable experience – the music is full of life and energy – and it definitely cheers me up!

I am a clarinet player, so I suppose the amazing first glissando would have grabbed my attention and I remember attempting to try and get my clarinet to sound like that – never managed it and it's really hard to do!! I also play the piano and as that is the main solo instrument, I also found it mesmerising. I do have a copy of the piano part – there are so many notes and my hands are nowhere near big enough to play certain parts (and I'm not a good enough player!) but I still get it out every now and then and have a go!

One of the main reasons I love this piece is that at the time it broke all of the rules. Before the 1920s, music in the concert halls was always serious, classical and traditional – Mozart, Beethoven and Bach. But the 'invention' of Jazz music was making an impact and George Gershwin loved it. He was a popular song writer in New York, but also composed amazing 'classical' pieces. When this piece was first played at a concert in 1924, the audience didn't know how to react – it used a classical symphony orchestra, but definitely didn't sound right. Thankfully, audiences loved it!

I also really like the story behind the piece – it is based on a train journey. If you listen carefully, you can hear the train clanking over the tracks and imagine busy commuters rushing around the stations. The reason – Gershwin only had five weeks to write the piece and he started it whilst on a train journey!

I hope you have a good go at listening to this piece, and even if you don't like it, you can appreciate why I love it and maybe you can grow in like it too! Why not listen to other pieces by George Gershwin too?