



RHAPSODY

“FORM-LESS” FORMS



“FORMLESS” FORMS

- Pieces that have **no set structure**
- Consist of **one section**, or...
- Consist of a **series of seemingly “random” sections**
- **Imitate improvisations**, or the **feeling of improvisation**

Johann Sebastian BACH

(1685-1750)





1685-1750

o 1685- 1703: Youth

o 1703-17: **WEIMAR**

o 1717-1723: **CÖTHEN**

o 1723-1750: **LEIPZIG**

1703-17: WEIMAR

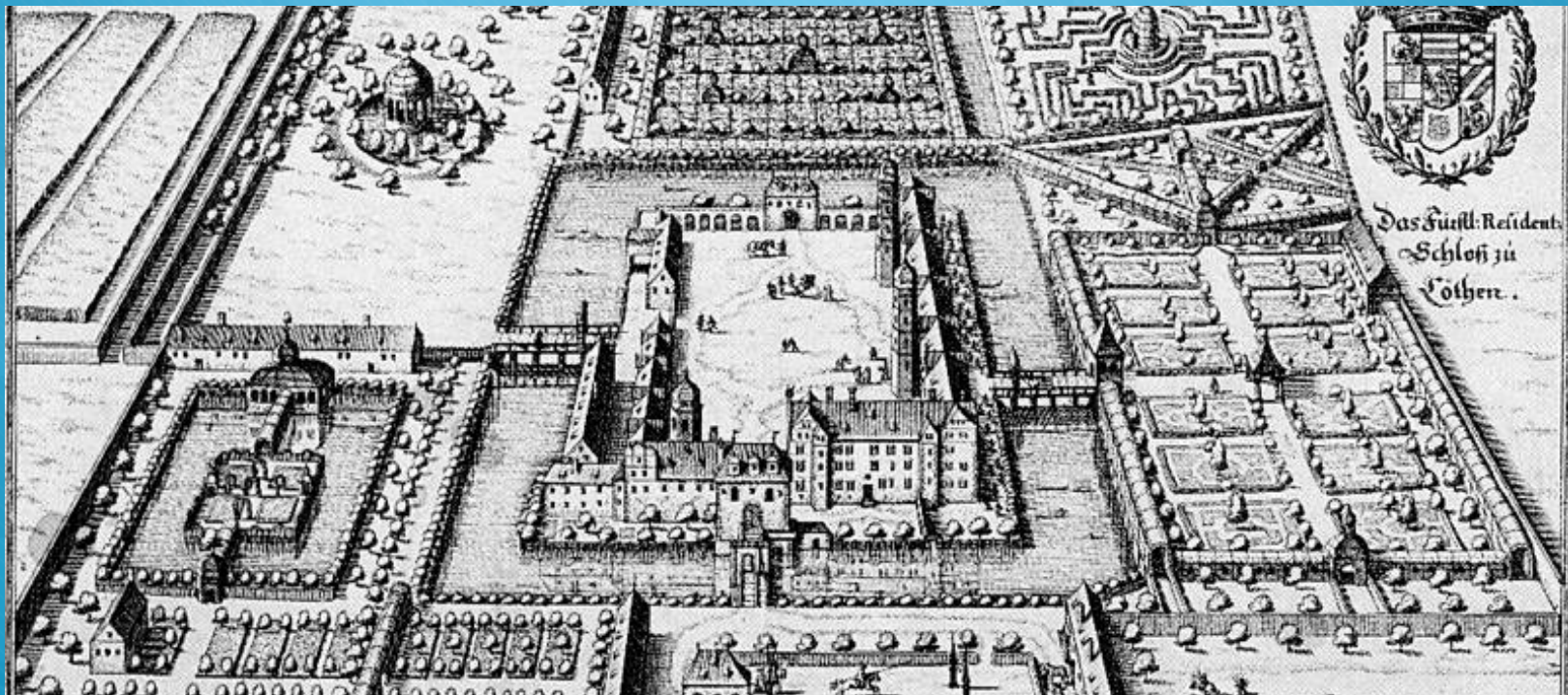




1703-17: **WEIMAR**

- In Weimar, Bach hired as organist
- Writes the bulk of **his organ music**, including the **TOCCATA and FUGUE in D minor**

1717-1723: CÖTHEN





1717-1723: CÖTHEN

- Hired by the Prince of Cöthen to write **chamber music**
- Writes the bulk of his chamber music here, including his
- **Cello Suites** (There are 6)



Baroque Music is...

- ◊ Hyper-Emotional
- ◊ Mimics Movement (especially Dancing)
- ◊ Dramatic Emotion



Gian Lorenzo Bernini
Pluto and Persephone



PRELUDE from Cello Suite No. 1

- **PRELUDE** = Introductory Piece
- Exploratory - “**Warming Up**” pieces
- **Improvised** in 17th and 18th Centuries
- **Written down** to imitate (or notate) improvised preludes



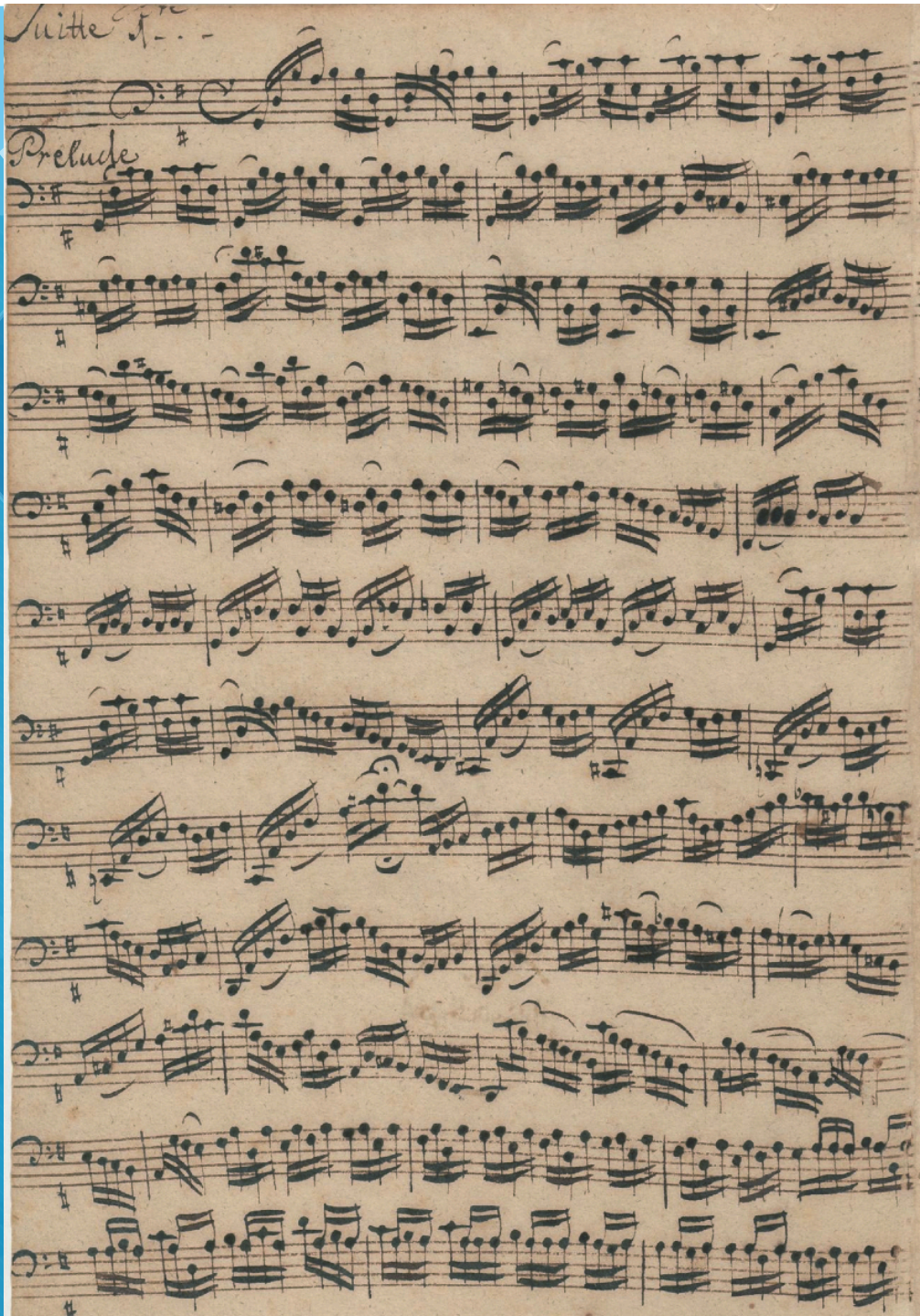
PRELUDE from Bach Cello Suite No. 1

- The Cello Suites are **sets of dances**
- Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Gigue
- Each set is introduced by a **PRELUDE**



PRELUDE from Bach Cello Suite No. 1

- o Many of Bach's preludes are a series of **CHORDS** explored in a **RHYTHMIC PATTERN**



First page of the Prelude to
Cello Suite No. 1
written out by Bach's wife
Anna Magdalena

She had **13 children** with
Johann Sebastian Bach

Mitte *f*...

Prelude

This image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for a piece titled "Prelude". The score is written on six staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The notation is dense, featuring a variety of note values including eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as rests. The second staff starts with a bass clef and continues the piece. The remaining four staves alternate between treble and bass clefs. The paper is aged and yellowed, and the handwriting is in dark ink. The word "Prelude" is written in a cursive hand at the beginning of the second staff. The first staff has the word "Mitte" and a dynamic marking "f" written above it.



Cellist Mischa Maisky



TOCCATA and FUGUE in D minor

- **TOCCATA** from the Italian word *Toccare* or “**To Touch**”
- **Freeform pieces** that show the range and **capabilities of the instrument**
- Usually paired with another piece



TOCCATA and FUGUE in D minor

- Rather than the CHORD PATTERNS of his preludes, Bach's toccatas are a **SERIES OF DRAMATIC GESTURES and MOODS**

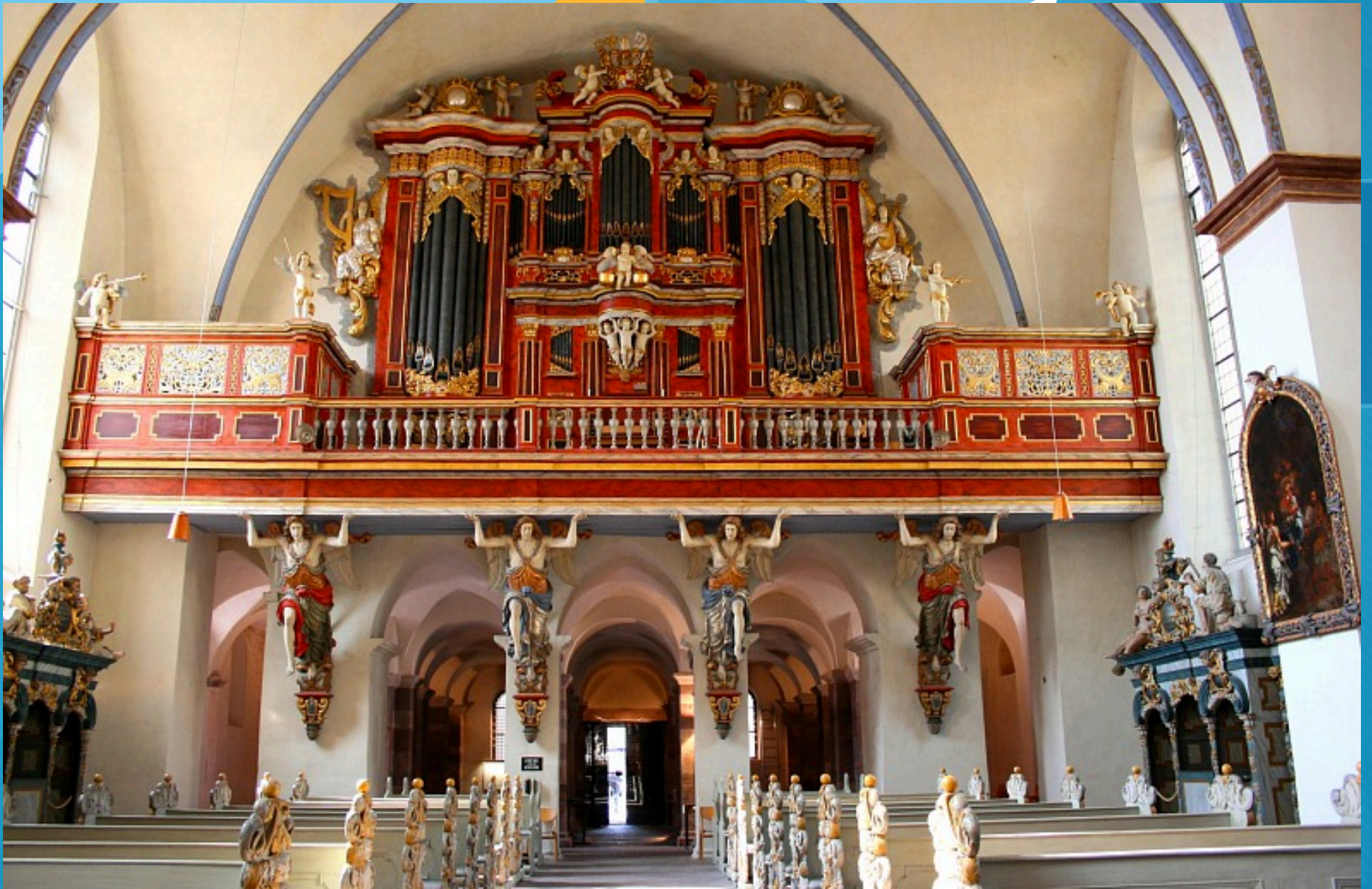


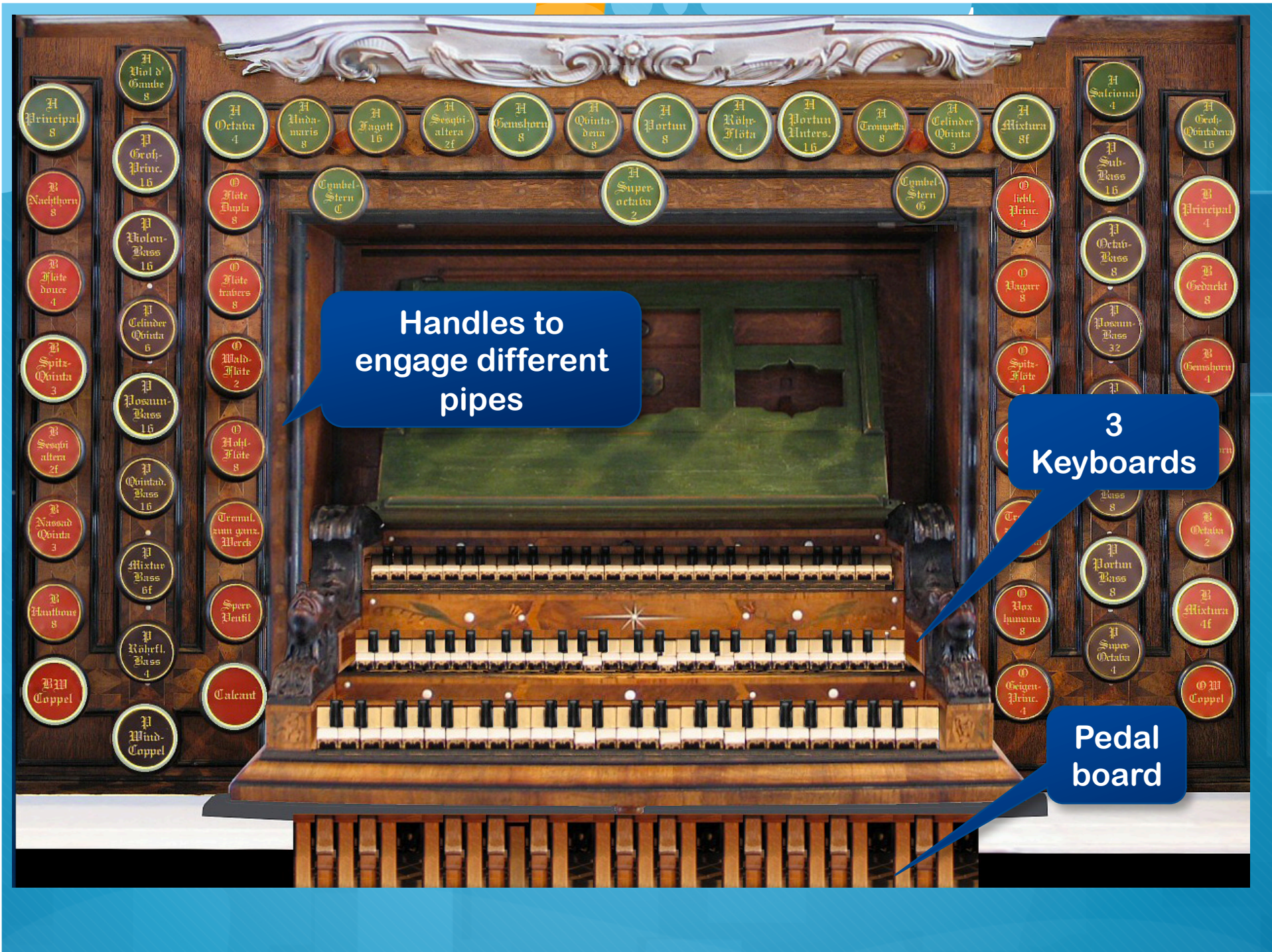
ORGAN

- **“King” of Instruments:** Expensive, Large
- **Difficult to play:** Multiple keyboards as well as pedal boards
- Bellows worked by hand







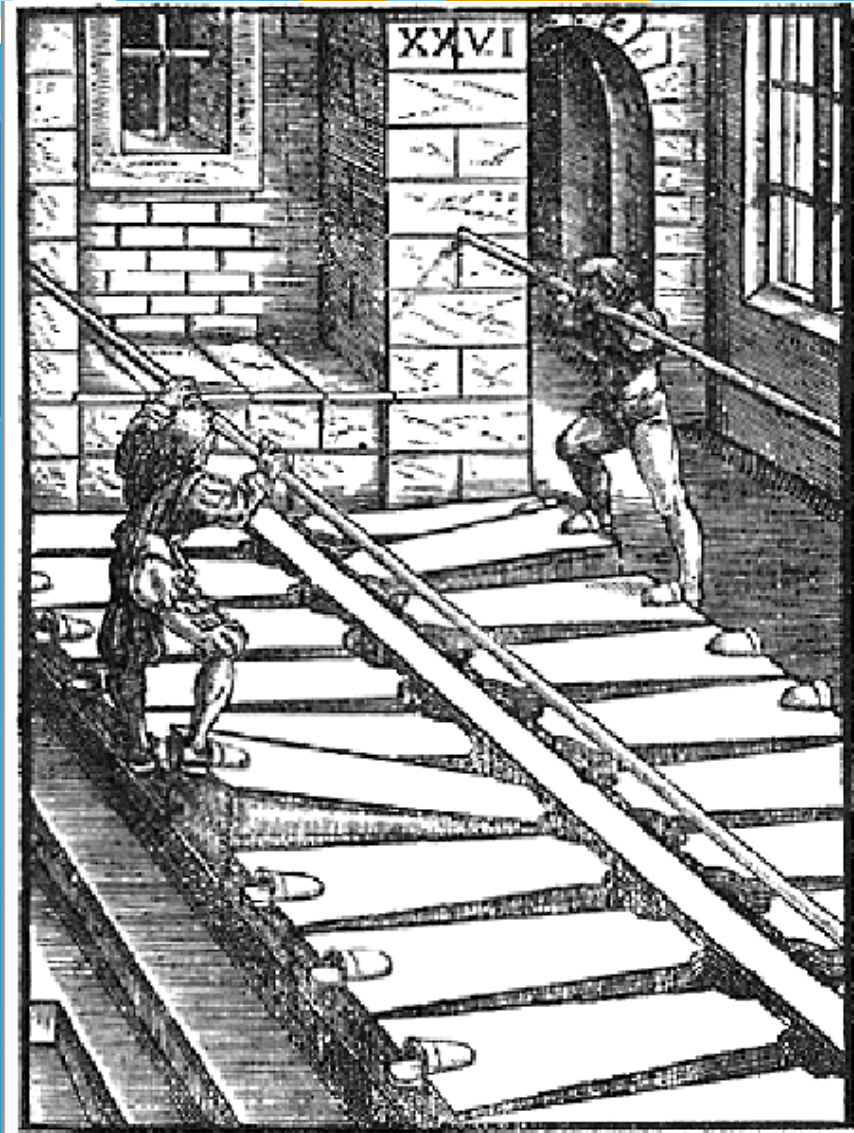


Handles to engage different pipes

3 Keyboards

Pedal board





Two men
pumping an
organ bellows

Adagio

[B. W. 15, 267]

passivo

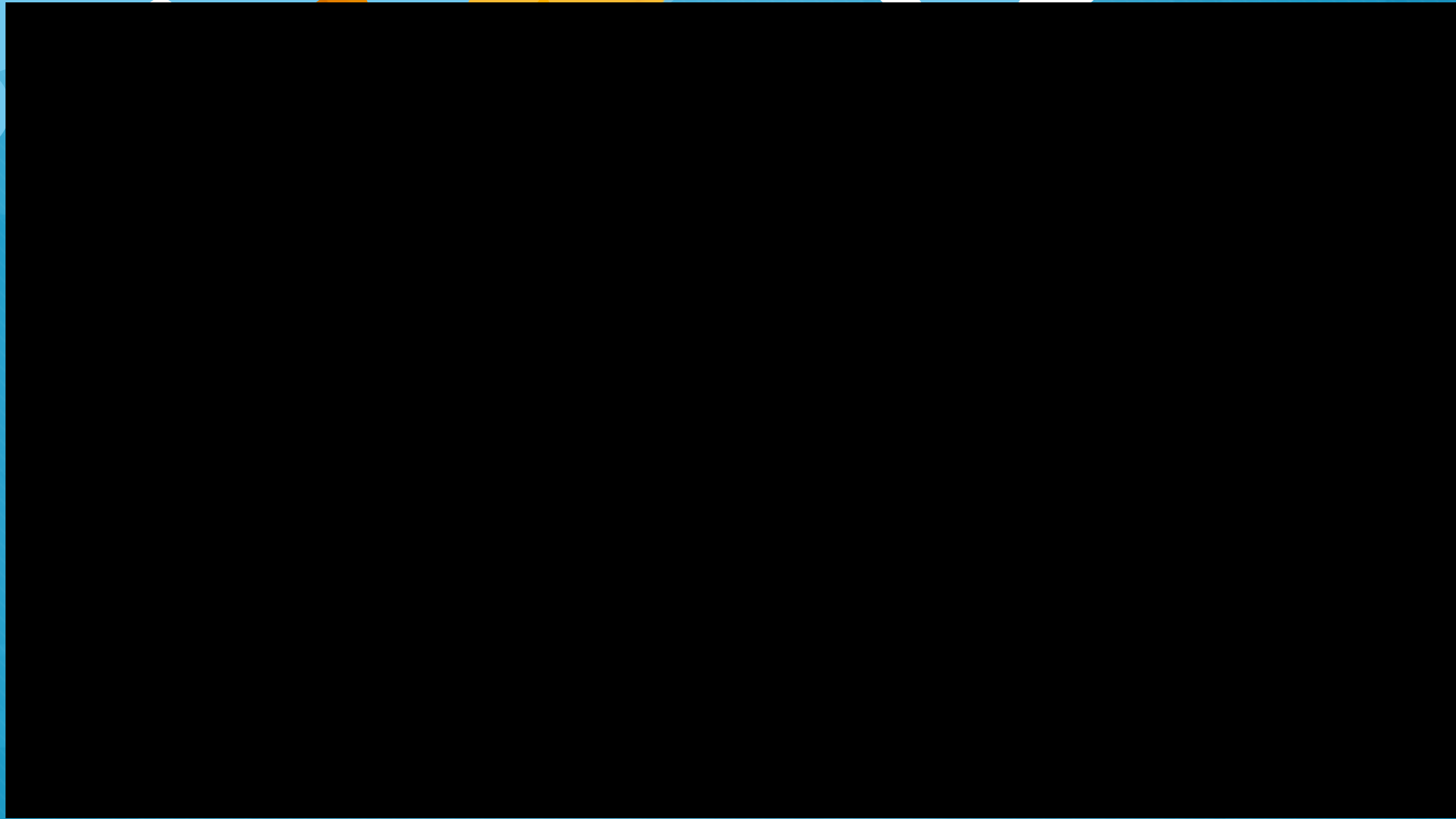
Adagio:

Allargando:

unifeno:

p.

p.



Organist Hans-Andre Stamm in the Stadtkirche, Waltershausen

George GERSHWIN





George GERSHWIN

1898-1937

- Born in Russian Jewish immigrant family in New York
- Begins musical career as a “song plugger” in Tin Pan Alley for \$15 a week
- Writes songs with brother Ira (lyricist), and publishes first song when 17

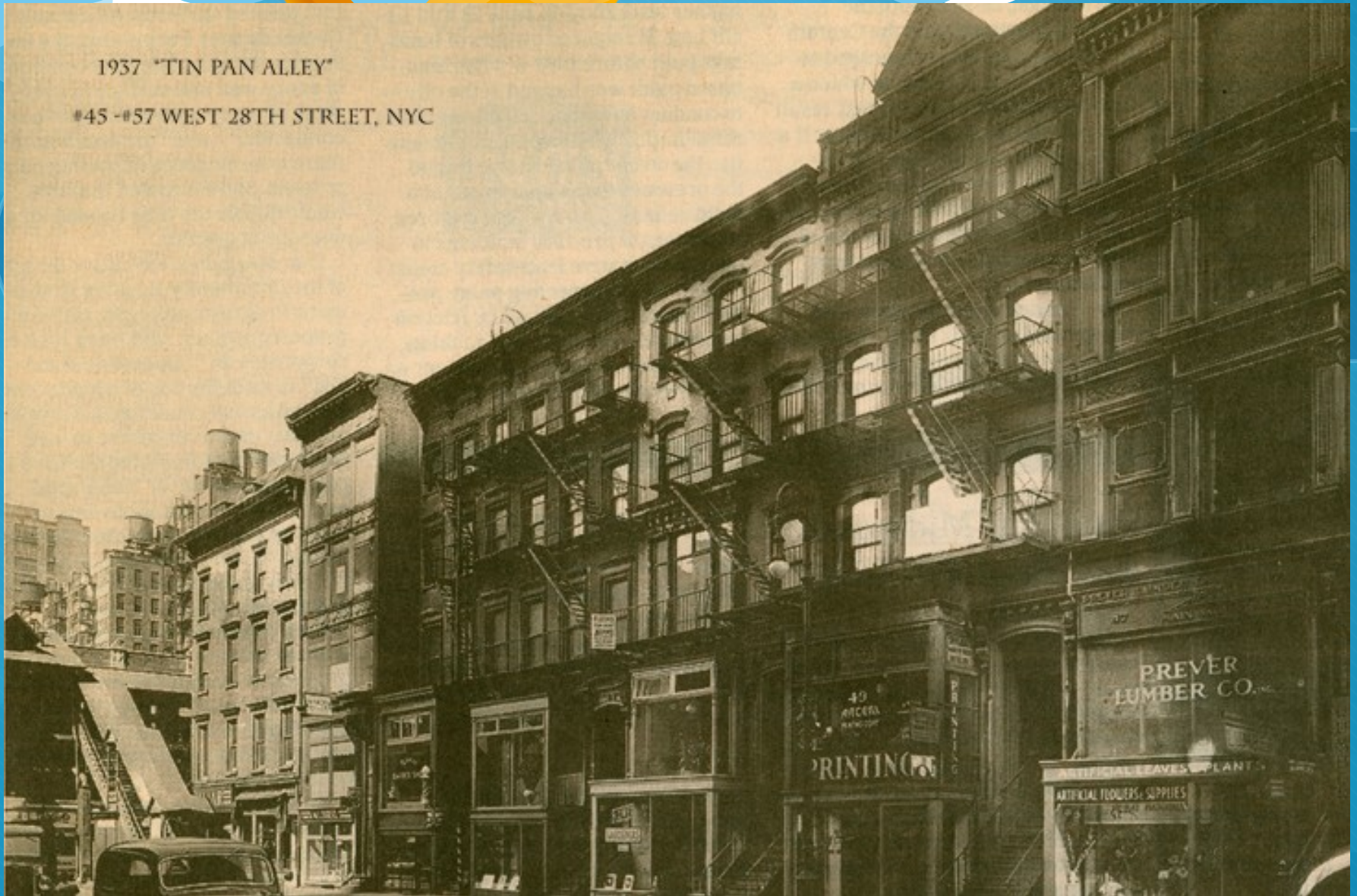


TIN PAN ALLEY

- West 28th Street between 5th and 6th Avenue in New York
- Home of many music publishers
- Begun around 1885, and reached its peak in 1930s

1937 "TIN PAN ALLEY"

#45 -#57 WEST 28TH STREET, NYC





George GERSHWIN

1898-1937

- First big hit “Swanee” for singer Al Jolson
- Writes a series of hit musicals: *Funny Face*, *Strike Up the Band*, *Girl Crazy*, *Of Thee I Sing*
- Composes his first “serious work,” *Rhapsody in Blue* in 1924



George GERSHWIN

1898-1937

- Moves to Paris and studies with Nadia Boulanger
- Writes opera *Porgy and Bess* in 1935. The work is a failure.
- Moves to Hollywood in 1936 to compose for films
- Dies from brain tumor



ART DECO

- Style of Art developed after WW I in France
- Characterized by bold colors, graphic design, geometric shapes
- Obsessed with imagery of technology, speed, and modernity



Golden Gate Bridge (1937)



Paramount Theater, Oakland (1931)



Chrysler Building (1930)



1939 Bugatti



RHAPSODY in BLUE

- Rhapsody derived from Greek word the performer (*Rhapsodos*) of epic poetry, such as the *Illiad* or the *Odyssey*
- *Rhapsoidein* = “to sew songs together”
- Refers to the **semi-improvisatory nature** of epic recitations



RHAPSODY in BLUE

- Rhapsody in music is a **one-movement piece** in a **series of episodes** and meant to be experienced as **semi-improvisatory**



RHAPSODY in BLUE

- Written in 1924 in 5 weeks
- Gershwin was asked for a piece by jazz band leader **Paul Whiteman** for a experimental jazz concert in **Aeolian Hall** (a bastion of classical music)
- Gershwin declines

RHAPSODY in BLUE

- His brother Ira read article in *New York Times* entitled “**What is American Music?**” announcing that George was working on a “**jazz concerto**”
- George contacts Whiteman, who tells him that another composer is attempting to preempt Whiteman’s idea for selling jazz as “**America’s Classical Music**”



RHAPSODY in BLUE

- o Gershwin agrees to write a piece for piano and orchestra
- o Gets the ideas for the piece on a **train ride** to Boston



“It was on the train, with its **steely rhythms**, its **rattle-ly bang**, that is so often so stimulating to a composer – I frequently **hear music in the very heart of the noise....**”

And there I suddenly heard, and even saw on paper – the complete construction of the Rhapsody, from beginning to end. No new themes came to me, but I worked on the thematic material already in my mind and tried to conceive the composition as a whole.

I heard it as a sort of **musical kaleidoscope** of America, of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our metropolitan madness. By the time I reached Boston I had a definite **plot of the piece**, as distinguished from its actual substance.”



RHAPSODY in BLUE

- Gershwin writes the piece out for **two pianos** (the second as the orchestra part), and the second piano is **orchestrated by Ferde Grofé** for Whiteman's orchestra in 8 days
- One section was left **unwritten**, and Gershwin **improvised it during the performance**



RHAPSODY in BLUE

- The Whiteman Aeolian Hall Performance **historic** for jazz and American music
- **Concert was long**—26 pieces—and *Rhapsody in Blue* was second to last (after Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* March No 1!)
- The *Rhapsody* was the **hit of the concert**



RHAPSODY in BLUE

- Gershwin's "plot of the piece" is in **3 sections**
- **Fast, Slow, Fast**—like a typical concerto—with the addition of a **slow introduction**
- Piece is **continuous with no breaks**

A stylized illustration of a bright yellow sun with rays, partially obscured by light blue and white clouds, set against a blue background.

RHAPSODY in BLUE

INTRODUCTION

FAST SECTION 1

SLOW SECTION

FAST SECTION 2

A decorative header featuring a bright yellow sun with rays and white clouds against a blue background. The sun is partially obscured by a dark blue horizontal band.

RHAPSODY in BLUE

SLOW INTRODUCTION

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 00:00 | Opening Clarinet Glissando: Theme 1 “Blues” Theme |
| 00:39 | Hint of Theme 2, “Pile Driver” Theme, in brass) |
| 00:53 | Blues Theme in solo muted trumpet |
| 01:03 | Blues Theme (Tutti) |
| 01:19 | Piano transition |
| 01:38 | <i>Piano Cadenza I</i> |
| 02:11 | Blues Theme (piano) with orchestral comments |
| 03:00 | Piano transition |
| 03:20 | <i>Piano Cadenza II</i> |

FAST SECTION 1

- 3:41 **Blues Theme** in whole orchestra (in tempo)
4:13 **Dance Theme** in brass with piano decorations
4:38 Transition (clarinet)
4:52 **Pile Driver Theme** tutti (with commentary by brass)
5:19 Transition (Blues Theme) solo clarinet, solo trumpet
5:40 **Train Theme** in tutti with saxophones, build up
6:39 *Piano Cadenza III*
- 6:57 **Pile Driver Theme** in solo piano
7:38 *Transition* in solo piano
7:53 **Pile Driver Theme** in solo piano
8:39 **Blues Theme** (solo piano) + orchestra
9:48 **Train Theme** in piano
10:00 **Train Theme** transition, *accelerando* version
11:29 *Transition*

A stylized illustration of a bright yellow sun with rays, partially obscured by white and light blue clouds, set against a blue background.

RHAPSODY in BLUE

SLOW SECTION

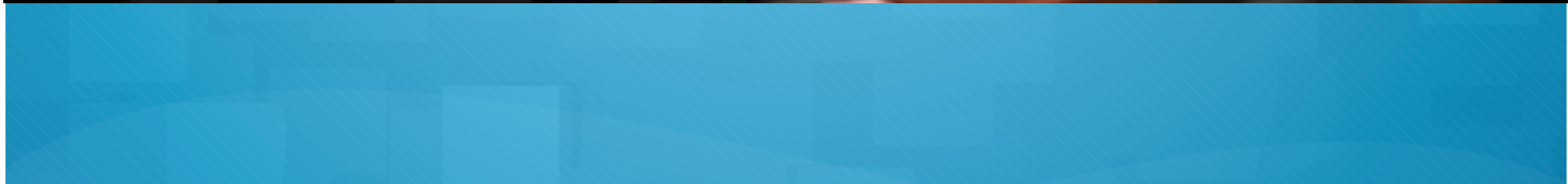
- | | |
|-------|---|
| 11:44 | Romantic Theme in tutti Orchestra |
| 13:29 | Transition; piano musing |
| 13:57 | Romantic Theme in solo piano version |
| 14:37 | Transition |

A stylized illustration of a bright yellow sun with a blue circle in the center, partially obscured by white and light blue clouds. The background is a gradient of blue with a subtle pattern of light blue squares.

RHAPSODY in BLUE

FAST SECTION 2

- 14:50 **“Jack Hammer” Theme** in solo piano
- 15:57 **Jack Hammer** theme in piano
+ Variant of **Romantic Theme** in orchestra
- 16:30 Final push (cadenza)
- 16:56 **Pile Driver Theme**
- 17:26 **Blues Theme** (orchestra)
- 17:38 **Coda**





TERMS to KNOW

- Prelude
- Suite
- Toccata, *toccare*
- “King of Instruments”
- Baroque
- Art Deco
- Rhapsodos
- Rhapsody
- Glissando
- Cadenza
- Tin Pan Alley
- Song Plugger



PIECES to KNOW

- J. S. Bach, Prelude to Cello Suite No. 1 in G major (Track 96, *The 99 Most Essential Classical Pieces*)
- J. S. Bach, Toccata in D minor (Track 11, *The 99 Most Essential Classical Pieces*)
- George Gershwin, *Rhapsody in Blue* (Track 86, *The 99 Most Essential Classical Pieces*)