

GRAMOPHONE  
Teddington, UK  
July 2007

## Gershwin

Cuban Overture. Piano Concerto<sup>a</sup>. Rhapsody in Blue<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Jon Nakamatsu *pf*

Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra / Jeff Tyzik

Harmonia Mundi © 1999 HMU80 7441 (61' • DDD)

**With a spring in his step, this stylish pianist joins the Gershwin greats**



It's a pity that this disc arrived after my "Collection" survey of the Concerto (6/07). It would have come as a top recommendation and not merely for the clear

affection and accuracy with which it is played but also for its near-ideal balance between piano and orchestra on a superbly engineered recording. The American winner of the 1997 Van Cliburn Competition plays with a spring in his step – and a stylish one at that – and is plainly enjoying himself, a quality which, if you are able to project it onto disc, is a particular advantage in this work. Among several passages that few rival recordings match, the oboe solo in the opening of the second movement has never sounded more plaintively (or plainly) Puccini-esque, though I question the substitution in the first movement of the slap stick for some apologetic taps on the cymbal, and the insertion of two bell notes at 11'26" and 11'29". The frequently fruity brass contributions and Tyzik's punchy direction bring an apt touch of Broadway to the whole performance.

*Rhapsody in Blue* is fine but less remarkable, taking its character from Grofé's overblown orchestral arrangement rather than the crisp, witty (preferable) jazz-band original with its leaner scoring. You can't, as usual, hear the substantial banjo part and at 10'03" (fig 25) Nakamatsu "does a Bernstein", ignoring the *allegretto* marking and putting a swing into the theme by dotting its first quavers. It's not what Gershwin wrote. The *Cuban Overture* rounds off proceedings in exuberant, bustling style. **Jeremy Nicholas**