



**For Immediate Release**

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**Austin Symphony Orchestra Makes History with Groundbreaking “Rhapsody in Blue” Performances Featuring George Gershwin’s Own Digitally Recreated Piano Performance**

**AUSTIN, Texas** — The Austin Symphony Orchestra made musical history on May 15 and 16, 2026, with two nearly sold-out performances unlike anything audiences had ever experienced before: a live orchestral performance of George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* performed in synchronization with Gershwin’s own historic piano performance, recreated through a Steinway & Sons Spirio player piano system.

Under the direction of Music Director and Conductor Peter Bay, the orchestra joined a digitally restored and reimagined performance based on Gershwin’s 1925 piano roll recording, marking what is believed to be the first time an orchestra has ever performed live alongside George Gershwin’s own reconstructed performance through the Steinway Spirio system.

The ambitious project brought together historical preservation, cutting-edge technology, and live symphonic performance in a deeply moving tribute to one of America’s greatest composers.

To recreate Gershwin’s original interpretation with unprecedented accuracy, Steinway engineers and historians digitized Gershwin’s 1925 piano roll while also extracting performance dynamics from a historic 78 RPM recording. By combining the timing information from the piano roll with the expressive nuances captured from the recording, Steinway was able to create a fully realized digital performance suitable for the Spirio system.

The technical challenge extended beyond the piano itself. A custom click track synchronized to Gershwin's recreated performance allowed Maestro Bay and the orchestra to remain precisely aligned with the legendary pianist-composer throughout the performance. One patron remarked, "Being able to recreate Gershwin's keystrokes so accurately was absolutely amazing, and the symphony's ability to keep pace was incredible." Another audience member added, "It was wonderful to be part of such an extraordinary technical achievement."

"This was not simply a performance," said Bay. "It was a conversation across a century."

Because the event represented an unprecedented musical undertaking, Bay humorously asked the audience for prayers from the stage before the performance began, prompting a wave of laughter and anticipation from concertgoers.

What followed left audiences visibly stunned. Patrons responded with multiple standing ovations across both evenings, celebrating not only the orchestra's performance but also the extraordinary technological and artistic achievement they had witnessed.

The concerts also featured a richly American program including Morton Gould's *American Ballads* selections, Charles Ives' *Symphony No. 1*, and Aaron Copland's Four Dance Episodes from *Rodeo*. High-definition visual presentations provided by Westwater Arts accompanied portions of the evening, further enhancing the immersive concert experience.

The performances underscored the Austin Symphony Orchestra's continued commitment to innovation, artistic excellence, and expanding the boundaries of the live concert experience.

For more information about the Austin Symphony Orchestra and upcoming performances, visit [Austin Symphony Orchestra](#).

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