

Senior Citizens Music Appreciation Program

Date: Sept. 15, 2025

Time: 10:30-noon

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American Music of the Roaring 1920s and the Desperate 1930s

I. Announcements

- A. Results from Spring 2025 Attendee Survey
- B. NJ Symphony Concert: Recommend concert of March 15, 2026 at State Theatre, New Brunswick (Bartok and Chopin)

II. The Post WW I Era: Roaring Twenties and Desperate Thirties

- A. 1919 signaled enormous changes in the world: the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the overthrow of Tsarist rule in Russia, the creation and restoration of new states in Europe (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia; Poland) and intensified efforts to end colonialism in Africa and Asia by local independence movements
- B. The US elected Warren Harding as president in 1920, a candidate who advocated a “return to normalcy”.
- C. American music in the 1920s and 1930s was transformed by a series of developments:

- 1. Influence of jazz, Afro-American music and Popular Songs
- 2. Ideas from Europe
- 3. Evolution of the mass media (recordings, radio, film)
- 4. Evocations of the American landscape and stories

- D. Seven composers are represented today:

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| 1. George Antheil | A Jazz Symphony (1927) |
| 2. George Gershwin | Overture to Oh, Kay! (1926) |
| | I Got Rhythm Variations (1934) |
| 3. Randall Thompson | Symphony No. 2 (1931) |
| 4. R. Nathaniel Dett | The Ordering of Moses (1937) (oratorio) |
| 5. Florence Price | Symphony No. 1 (1932) |

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| 6. Aaron Copland | Billy the Kid (1938) (ballet score) |
| 7. Virgil Thomson | The River (1937) (film score) |

III. Today's Recordings

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| Spirit of the American Range (Antheil) | Pentatone PTC 5186 481 |
| Thibaudet Plays Gershwin | Decca B0014091-02 |
| Bernstein Century: American Masters | Sony SMK 60594 |
| Gershwin Overtures | EMI D 170391 |
| The Ordering of Moses | Bridge 9462 |
| Florence Price, Symphonies 1 and 4 | Naxos 8.559827 |
| Bernstein: Copland | Sony SMK 47543 |
| Virgil Thomson: The Plow That Broke The Plains and The River | Naxos 8.559291 |

IV. YouTube Films

George Antheil: Ballet Mecanique

<https://youtu.be/rfciL-werS8?feature=shared>

George Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue, Leonard Bernstein, piano

<https://youtu.be/cH2PH0auTUU?feature=shared>

Randall Thompson: Testament of Freedom

<https://youtu.be/QlWzX4JS9Ug?feature=shared>

R. Nathaniel Dett: In the Bottoms, Piano Suite

<https://youtu.be/bkRAMbRk63M?feature=shared>

Florence Price: Concerto in One Movement

<https://youtu.be/8bHXltEbQLo?feature=shared>

Aaron Copland: Suite from The Red Pony (film)

<https://youtu.be/CB73ibJ4Al4?feature=shared>

Virgil Thomson: The Plow That Broke The Plains (suite)

https://youtu.be/t-Hg1e_DPmA?feature=shared

V. Internet Sources

- A. George Antheil: (Wikipedia article)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Antheil
- B. George Gershwin: <https://gershwin.com/george/>
- C. Randall Thompson: (Wikipedia article)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Randall_Thompson
- D. R. Nathaniel Dett:
<https://www.newworldrecords.org/products/r-nathaniel-dett-piano-works>
- E. Florence Price: <https://florenceprice.com>
- F. Aaron Copland: (PBS Website)
<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/aaron-copland-about-the-composer/475/>
- G. Virgil Thomson: <https://www.virgilthomson.org>

VI. Next Session: October 20, 2025, “It’s Greek to Me: Operas Inspired by Ancient Greece”