

Senior Citizens Music Appreciation Program

Date: May 19, 2025

Time: 10:30-noon

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Music Inspired by the End of World War II

I. Announcements

- A. Our final session for this spring will occur on June 23, with topic being “Verdi Rarities.”
- B. Dates and topics for September through December 2025 will be prepared and announced in late July. As promised at our last session, I’m distributing a survey today asking you to list topics and themes you are interested in exploring in upcoming sessions in 2025 and 2026.

II. The End of WW II

- A. While World War II actually commenced with the invasion of China by Japanese forces in 1931, people in the USA typically date World War II from the beginning of hostilities in Europe in September 1939 to the surrender of Japan in August 1945.
- B. Musical compositions are often inspired by external events, and those heard today are no exception. At times, compositions are developed in response to commissions—an example being Bela Bartok’s Concerto for Orchestra, commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra from Bartok during his final years, when he was a refugee in the USA.
- C. Other works don’t emerge as the outgrowth of commissions, but rather from the artistic desires of composers themselves, who many times respond to external forces—in this case, warfare, or specifically, the end of war.
- D. Four composers are represented today:
 - 1. Igor Stravinsky: Symphony in Three Movements
(1946, commissioned by the New York Philharmonic)

2. Aaron Copland: Symphony No. 3 (Premiered in 1946, commissioned by the Boston Symphony and Serge Koussevitsky)
3. Dmitri Shostakovich: Symphony No. 9 (Premiered in 1945)
4. Karl Amadeus Hartmann: Symphonischen Hymnen (Composed 1942/43, premiered in 1975)

III. Mixture of Styles

A. Igor Stravinsky had adjusted his compositional style frequently since his early years, when the three great ballet scores he wrote for the Ballets Russe—Firebird, the Rite of Spring and Petrouchka—had garnered him international fame. Stravinsky had emigrated to the USA in 1939 as war clouds hung over Europe, and he claimed his Symphony in Three Movements was a direct response to wartime events—Japanese scorched earth tactics in China, German troops goosestepping and the increasing hope that the Allies would prevail. The work also contains ideas Stravinsky planned to use in work he had abandoned or never completed, including a piano concerto and a film score for the Song of Bernadotte. Stravinsky was the conductor at the world premiere with the New York Philharmonic in 1946.

B. Aaron Copland was the most famous American composer of his era, and an active participant in supporting the Allied war effort. His Fanfare for the Common Man, commissioned by conductor Eugene Goossens and the Cincinnati Symphony, was premiered in 1942 and Copland incorporated the fanfare into the final movement of his Third Symphony. As the annotator for the Los Angeles Philharmonic states, “In the Third Symphony, he brought it all together into a sort of abstract Americana, an evocation of time and place without recourse to folk material, in the characteristic open Copland sound that powerfully mingles confidence and yearning.” It was premiered by Koussevitsky and the Boston Symphony in 1946, with Koussevitsky stating it was “the greatest American symphony—it goes from the heart to the heart.”

C. Dmitri Shostakovich had survived the terrors of Stalin’s purges in the 1930s and by the time of the German invasion of the Soviet

Union in June 1941, he was considered the U. S. S. R.'s leading composer. During World War II, he had composed two large-scale symphonies, No. 7 (Leningrad) and No. 8. Initially, Shostakovich had the intention of writing another large-scale work to celebrate the Soviet Union's victory over the Axis powers, but during 1945 his emphasis shifted to an entirely different focus. Rather than a "triumphant" piece celebrating national pride and victory, the 9th Symphony is a tightly constructed work that is light and transparent, with some moments almost seeming comical. It was premiered in Leningrad by Yevgeny Mravinsky and the Leningrad Philharmonic in November 1945. The 9th was not what the "authorities" were expecting, and when Shostakovich was denounced along with Prokofiev and some other Soviet composers in 1948, the work was banned from performances in the USSR, only being restored for performances in 1955 after Stalin's death.

D. Karl Amadeus Hartmann was one of the most talented of Germany's contemporary composers during the first half of the twentieth century. He was an unflinching opponent of Nazism, and rather than seek exile outside of the country, he withdrew from public performances all of his works and unlike many other German musicians, his actions were based on conscience. As author Guy Rickards states, Hartmann's refusal to support Nazism was a position "he maintained more consistently than any other artist." The *Symphonische Hymnen* is a piece comprised of three sections, originally composed in 1942-43 but not premiered until 1975, 12 years after Hartmann's death. Hartmann never heard the work in public and it was only prepared for performance after Andrew D McCredie found the composition among Hartmann's unpublished papers. Today's recording is of the world premiere from 1975, with the Bavarian Radio Symphony conducted by Rafael Kubelik, a dear friend and advocate of Hartmann's music.

IV. Today's Recordings

-Stravinsky Conducts Stravinsky. Masters 888751262442	Sony Classical
-Aaron Copland, Symphony No. 3 and Quiet City Deutsche Grammophon 419 170-2	
-Dmitri Shostakovich, The 15 Symphonies 043-1-10	Aulos Classics AMC2-
-Hartmann, Symphonische Hymnen, Concerto Funebre, Concerto for Piano, Winds and String Quartet	Orfeo C 718071B

V. YouTube Films

Stravinsky: Michael Tilson Thomas and the New World Symphony
<https://youtu.be/e6e8uV12ybA?feature=shared>

Copland: Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic
https://youtu.be/pfqCo_vuMsI?feature=shared

Shostakovich: Leonard Bernstein with the Vienna Philharmonic
https://youtu.be/AfakIg9E_ao?feature=shared

Hartmann: Concerto Funebre, Arabella Steinbacher, violinist, Orpheus
 Chamber Orchestra
<https://youtu.be/GGdIStCiOEK?feature=shared>

VI. Internet Sources

- A. Stravinsky, Symphony in Three Movements:
<https://thelistenersclub.com/2021/01/04/stravinskys-symphony-in-three-movements-rhythmic-delirium/>
- B. Copland, Symphony No. 3:
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._3_\(Copland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._3_(Copland))
- C. Shostakovich, Symphony No. 9:
<https://www.laphil.com/musicdb/pieces/4062/symphony-no-9>
- D. Hartmann, Symphonische Hymnen: <https://www.hartmann-gesellschaft.de/en/>

VII. Next Session: June 23, 2025 “Verdi Rarities”

