



HARTFORD
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA®

OCTOBER 2019

Prelude



MASTERWORKS #1:

RHAPSODY IN BLUE

OCTOBER 11 – 13, 2019

With its uniquely “American” sound, jazz, a mixture of ingredients from diverse ethnicities and cultures, embodies the innovation, passion and creative freedom that has come to represent American values throughout its history.



Like the United States, its birthplace, jazz was created by blending different cultures to create something altogether new and distinctly “American.”

to music they might not have otherwise experienced. While the works of composers such as Stravinsky and Ravel reflect clear jazz influences, it was the trio of American composers, Leonard Bernstein, George Gershwin, and Aaron Copland, who emerged as the bridge between classical and popular music.

It is widely accepted that jazz first developed in New Orleans, a city known for its broad diversity, with people of many different ethnicities, cultures, and classes all living in the same area. The musical traditions embodied within these different identities led to the development of multiple genres of music (including ragtime, marches, and blues) which, in turn, gave birth to jazz. The sounds of African-American and European music blended together to give jazz its unique identity, and, as a result, jazz is distinctly identified as “American” music.

With new technology that accompanied the turn of the 20th century, the entire music world underwent an evolution. With the advent of recorded music, composers suddenly had the chance to reach beyond the well-known Romantic style of music of the time, and they began to experiment with different sounds that were more accessible. While many genres developed as a result, major progress was made in jazz.

With the ability to explore and be inspired by new sounds, 20th century composers viewed jazz as exotic and exciting. New audio equipment, such as phonographs and radios, provided composers with the tools to spread their own music, and these same tools provided composers with greater access

Leonard Bernstein readily confirmed the impact jazz made on his life and his music. As a youngster, Bernstein played jazz piano at parties and directed a rhythm band at Camp Onota in Massachusetts during the summer. He once said that “jazz is the ultimate common denominator of the American musical style.” His undergraduate thesis at Harvard University argued that jazz is the universal basis of American composition.



Leonard Bernstein

Bernstein’s composition, *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs*, was commissioned for jazz musician Woody Herman’s band and featured a clarinet solo and jazz ensemble. With his other works, such as *Symphony No. 2: The Age of Anxiety* and *Touches (Chorale, Eight Variations, and Coda)*, Bernstein was able to make a case for the influence jazz had on classical music.



George Gershwin

Gershwin admired the American feel and passion of jazz. Influenced by its sounds and rhythms, Gershwin wrote pieces for films, television shows, and Broadway

continued on next page...



musicals. His works not only boosted his popularity, but also connected him to a wider audience. George Gershwin's 1924 piece, *Rhapsody in Blue*, grabbed audiences by storm. An immediate hit throughout America and Europe, the enthusiastic reception was compelling proof that classical composers needed to pay more attention to jazz.

While Gershwin's work is cited as proof that jazz is "American," Gershwin himself resisted attempts to label his music. He did not want to be confined to one style of music. However, Gershwin believed that "jazz is a word which has been used for at least five or six different types of music." The broad definition of what constitutes jazz was formed, in part, by composers who, like Gershwin, did not want their music to be "pigeonholed."



Aaron Copland

Aaron Copland, the third American composer on our Masterworks program, also embraced jazz. The composer's experimental style incorporated jazz and folk music in his classical compositions. His pieces, such as *Music for the Theatre* and

Piano Concerto, illustrate his combinations of different styles. Like Gershwin, Copland's love of jazz came from his Brooklyn-based childhood. It was normal to hear jazz music in Copland's neighborhood, but it wasn't until he travelled to Europe to study that he realized that jazz could be used to influence other styles of music. Overall, Copland's works reflect his attempt to liberate American music from European influences.

The works of Leonard Bernstein, George Gershwin, and Aaron Copland helped blend jazz with classical music, paving the way for new composers who embraced multiple musical influences and world music. Just as the United States embodies a dynamic spirit created by a mixture of cultures, the combination of jazz and classical music brought new life to the music world. As George Gershwin famously remarked, "Life is a lot like jazz - it's better when you improvise!"

HSO's proud commitment to serve our community continues with a very special Naturalization ceremony on our Masterworks stage on Saturday, October 12, 2019 thanks to our Naturalization Sponsor, the law firm of Leete Kosto & Wizner, LLP. For the third consecutive year, the HSO invites you to help welcome our newest citizens in a very special program that begins 6:30 pm, in lieu of the pre-concert talk that evening. The selections on this Masterworks program are a perfect match for our annual Naturalization ceremony; the music is a metaphor for the rich diversity of our nation and our community.



Join us!

Please join the Hartford Symphony Orchestra for ***Rhapsody in Blue*, October 11 - 13, 2019** and delight in the music of three American composers who welcomed diversity into their music and helped shape the American sound on the world stage.



WONDERING HOW THE MUSIC WILL SOUND?

Try HSO'S Listening Guide, with links to the pieces you'll hear on our concert stage – and more!

Enjoy Leonard Bernstein conducting The London Symphony perform his own composition, *Candide Overture*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=422-yb8TXj8>

Leonard Bernstein plays *Rhapsody in Blue* with the New York Philharmonic:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cH2PH0auTUU>

Oscar Levant performs Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm" Variations:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5TZgGtgxAM>

Aaron Copland's Symphony No. 3 performed by the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yx61WvRxeOE>

Wanting more? Please sample these!

A rare conversation with Bernstein and Duke Ellington:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eb-2xSiuG2g>

Bernstein discussing the joys of being both teacher and student:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5m7Ky4VtNIU>

For fun, here's a clip from the cartoon, *Fantasy 2000*, featuring *Rhapsody in Blue*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ie-TS-BitnQ>

Copland's dynamic composition, *Music for the Theater*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5NpHadmLxo>

Bernstein's Symphony No. 2: *The Age of Anxiety*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-aU2Se1RHw>



THE HSO'S MASTERWORKS SERIES IS SPONSORED BY:

The Edward C. & Ann T.
ROBERTS
FOUNDATION

CLY-DEL
1939 - 2019
80 Years of Excellence

RICHARD P. GARMANY FUND
at
Hartford Foundation
FOR PUBLIC GIVING
Together for good!

**GREATER HARTFORD
ARTS COUNCIL**

Connecticut Department of Economic and
Community Development
Office of The Arts

FALCETTI PIANOS

Did you borrow this Prelude? Get your own free copy!

Whether you're a ticket buyer, donor, curious about the music, or know someone who is, just send an email to rsovrnsky@hartfordsymphony.org. We'll make sure you receive *Prelude* by email, in advance of each HSO Masterworks concert!

Casey's
Classics

Want the best recordings of the pieces you'll experience on the concert program? Coleman Casey, HSO's dear friend, Director Emeritus and beloved in-house audiophile, offers his recording recommendations of selections featured in our upcoming Masterworks Concert.

An all-American program immediately summons the name of America's foremost conductor, Leonard Bernstein. Bernstein's conducting of his own *Candide Overture* as well as Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (where he is also the piano soloist) and the Copland Third Symphony are all uniquely compelling performances that have withstood the test of the passing decades, all of course with his New York Philharmonic Orchestra (SONY).

Gershwin's catchy "I Got Rhythm" Variations are wonderfully performed by Orion Weiss as the soloist with JoAnn Falletta conducting the Buffalo Philharmonic, where she proves herself to be a worthy successor to Bernstein in this American idiom (NAXOS).



REFERENCES

- i. <https://americanhistory.si.edu/smithsonian-jazz/education/what-jazz>
- ii. Ibid
- iii. https://www.nps.gov/jazz/learn/historyculture/history_early.htm
- iv. <https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/periods-genres/modern/>
- v. Ibid
- vi. <https://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/feature/20th-century-music/>
- vii. Ibid
- viii. <https://leonardbernstein.com/about/composer/bernstein-and-jazz>
- ix. <https://www.wnyc.org/story/camp-onota/>
- x. <https://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/feature/20th-century-music/>
- xi. <https://leonardbernstein.com/about/composer/bernstein-and-jazz>
- xii. Ibid
- xiii. Ibid
- xiv. <https://www.npr.org/programs/specials/milestones/990210.motm.jazz.html>
- xv. <https://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/george-gershwin-328.php>
- xvi. <https://www.jazziz.com/the-genius-of-george-gershwin-retracing-his-legacy-in-six-songs/>
- xvii. Ibid
- xviii. <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/aaron-copland-about-the-composer/475/>
- xix. <https://www.npr.org/programs/specials/milestones/990210.motm.jazz.html>
- xx. <https://www.keyboardmag.com/artists/piano-giants-of-jazz-aaron-copland-on-jazz>
- xxi. <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/aaron-copland-about-the-composer/475/>
- xxii. <https://www.npr.org/programs/specials/milestones/990210.motm.jazz.html>