What makes music, music?

2016/17

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Jules Émile Frédéric Massenet
Born: May 12, 1842, Montaud, near Saint-Étienne, France
Died: August 13, 1912, Paris, France

Jules Massenet was born the son of an ironworker. At age 11, he entered the Paris Conservatory to study music, where he studied under noted opera composer Ambroise Thomas. In 1862, at 21 years old, Massenet won the Prix de Rome for his cantata David Rizzio. In 1867, his first opera was produced—thus began his career in composing operas and incidental music (music written to accompany a play). He wrote 24 operas, characterized by a graceful, French melodic style. Manon is considered to be his greatest work, with its use of melodic themes to personify each character. In addition to operas, music for plays, and oratorios, he also composed more than 200 songs, a piano concerto and several orchestral suites. The violin solo “Meditation” from his opera Thais, is widely considered the most beautiful piece of music Massenet composed. From 1878, Massenet taught composition at the Paris Conservatory and was highly influential.

Fun Facts
- He moved to Paris at the age of 6.
- He was a very hard worker and would wake at 4AM to begin composing in an armchair near his bed.
- He also composed and edited music while traveling.
- His music went out of style for many years, but many of his operas have been performed again starting in the 1970s.

Featured Work: "Navarraise" from Le Cid
Edvard Grieg

Born: June 15, 1843, Bergen, Norway
Died: September 4, 1907, Bergen, Norway

Edvard Grieg was born in Bergen, Norway in 1843. His father’s family immigrated to Norway from Scotland many years before Grieg was born. His mother belonged to a well-established Norwegian family. Grieg studied piano with his mother, Gesine Hagerup, starting at the age of six. After studying at the Leipzig Conservatory for five years as a teenager, he traveled to Copenhagen and became focused on northern folk tunes. In 1864, he became one of the founders of the Copenhagen concert society, Euterpe, which promoted performances of music written by Scandinavian composers (from Denmark, Norway and Sweden). He married Nina Hagerup in 1867, and she became an authority on interpreting his songs. His later works include incidental music, arrangements of Norwegian dances and songs, and many vocal works.

Fun Facts
- An encounter with the violin virtuoso Ole Bull resulted in the 15-year-old Grieg’s immediate transfer to the Leipzig Conservatory.
- Grieg was heavily influenced by Mendelssohn during his years at the Leipzig Conservatory.
- His music is noted for a refined lyrical sense.
- He used spirited rhythms with folk song associations.

Featured Work: “In the Hall of the Mountain King” from Peer Gynt

The speed of the music... how fast or how slow
Florence Beatrice Price (née Smith)

Born: April 9, 1887, Little Rock, Arkansas
Died: June 3, 1953, Chicago, Illinois

Florence Beatrice Smith was born on April 9, 1887, in Little Rock, Arkansas. Her mother was a music teacher, so Florence and her two siblings learned to play piano at a very young age. During her school years, she continued studying music and was already a published composer by the time she graduated high school. She then attended the New England Conservatory of Music, where she met and became friends with other African-American composers. Upon graduating in 1906, she taught music while continuing to compose. In 1910 (age 23) she moved to Atlanta, Georgia to head the music department at Clark University. There, she married lawyer Thomas J. Price; the couple moved back to Little Rock, where they eventually had two daughters. The family left Little Rock in 1927 after a fellow member of their community was killed (lynched) because of their race. They settled in Chicago, Illinois, where Florence finished a long composition she had worked on for years—Symphony in E minor. She composed more than 300 works over the course of her life, though many were lost after her death. As time went on, people began to give the work of African-American and female composers the attention it deserves. Recent recordings and releases of Price’s music have led to more interest in her life and contributions to music.

Fun Facts

- She performed in her first recital at only 4 years old!
- In the late 1920s, she composed radio ads and played the organ for silent film screenings to earn money.
- Her Symphony in E minor won the Wanamaker Prize in 1932 and was performed the next year by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the Century of Progress Fair. This was the first work composed by an African-American woman to be played by a major symphony, making Price a true trail-blazer!
Johann Strauss, Sr.  

Born: March 14, 1804, Leopoldstadt (now Vienna), Austria  
Died: September 25, 1849, Vienna, Austria  

Johann Strauss, Sr. was born as the son of an innkeeper. The inn was located near a harbor, where rafts and boats from different countries would arrive with their country’s unique music playing. These early experiences influenced Johann Sr.’s enthusiasm for popular dance music. He worked as a bookbinding apprentice as a child and soon started studying the violin. In the early 1820s, he began playing in a local orchestra and soon became the conductor of a second, smaller orchestra. He quickly formed his own orchestra and became one of the best-known and well-loved dance composers in Vienna. In 1825, Strauss married Maria Anna Streim in the parish church of Liechtenthal in Vienna, and they had three sons and two daughters. The marches he composed were written in three-quarter time with a short introduction, a two-part waltz and a short coda, or ending.

Fun Facts
- Strauss Sr. was famous for his waltzes, and along with Joseph Lanner, he set the foundations for his sons to carry on his musical traditions.
- He toured abroad many times and developed a reputation as a composer throughout much of Europe.
- He demanded that none of his sons pursue careers in music, despite their musical talent.
- His wife Anna encouraged his son, Johann Strauss, Jr. to pursue a career as a musician.

Featured Work: Radetzky March
Franz Joseph Haydn

Born: March 31, 1732, Rohrau, Austria
Died: May 31, 1809, Vienna, Austria

Haydn’s mother was a cook, and his father was the village mayor and an enthusiastic folk musician who taught himself how to play harp. Haydn and his father would frequently sing together with their neighbors. Haydn was a very good young musician, and his father sent him to study music with a distant relative in Hainburg when he was six years old. Haydn’s life in Hainburg was not easy; he was often hungry and could not afford new clothes. His musical abilities continued to flourish despite these conditions. In 1739, Haydn impressed the director of music at St. Stephen’s Cathedral in Vienna, who was visiting Hainburg seeking new choirboys for the cathedral. Haydn auditioned for the director and won a place in the choir. Haydn did not learn music theory and composition, but he did learn Latin, singing, violin and keyboard. As he grew older, his voice matured, and he was no longer able to sing soprano (high) choral parts, so Haydn began his career as an instrumental musician and composer. He wrote his first work, an opera called The Limping Devil, in 1753. After that, he became the director of music in a royal court.

Fun Facts
- Haydn did not have much money when he was young and could not afford fancy meals, so he did his best to sing well, hoping to be invited to sing for wealthy audiences where refreshments were provided to the performers.
- Haydn was a prankster. He was dismissed from St. Stephen’s in Vienna for cutting off someone’s ponytail!
- He is nicknamed “Papa Haydn,” because he is considered to be the father of classical music.
- Haydn and Mozart were friends. Mozart even dedicated a series of string quartets to him, known as “The Haydn Quartets.”
- Haydn was also friends with Beethoven.

Featured Work: Symphony No. 88, Mvt. IV Finale: Allegro con spirito

Form

How the sections of music are put together... the structure
Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 16, 1770, Bonn, Germany
Died: March 26, 1827, Vienna, Germany

Beethoven began his musical schooling when he was a small child. Both his father and grandfather were musicians at the Court of the Elector of Cologne, which was based in Beethoven’s hometown of Bonn. Although Beethoven’s father began his son’s musical education, the boy had surpassed his father’s abilities by the age of nine. By age 12, Beethoven had composed his first work of music. In his young adult life, he worked as a conductor and organist for the Court. Like many other composers, Beethoven traveled to Vienna, Austria, to find inspiration. There he played for such famous musicians as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Joseph Haydn, who later became his mentors. Beethoven was very restless, always jumping from one composition to another. In this chaos, his musical ideas frequently fused together, creating some of his most memorable works. As an adult, he began to lose his hearing. This loss was devastating, yet he continued to compose for nearly 25 more years until he died of pneumonia in 1827.

Fun Facts
• Beethoven was known for having a hot temper and occasionally lashing out at his fans.
• He was very fond of nature and often took long walks in the countryside to find inspiration.
• More than 20,000 people lined the streets of Vienna for Beethoven’s funeral procession.

Featured Work: Symphony No. 7, Mvt. II: Allegretto

The overall sound of the instruments that are playing... it’s how the music feels
Woody Guthrie

Born: July 14, 1912, Okemah, OK
Died: October 3, 1967, Queens, NY

Woody Guthrie was born in Oklahoma. While growing up, he learned to play the guitar, mandolin, fiddle and harmonica, just by listening to people around him playing and by practicing on his own. At age 19, he left Oklahoma to seek his fortune in Texas, where he formed a band called the Corn Cob Trio. When the Great Dust Storm hit the Great Plains in 1935, he traveled west like many other people—hitchhiking and hopping trains all the way to California, paying for food and a place to sleep by singing and playing guitar. In Los Angeles, Guthrie hosted a show on KFVD radio, before moving to New York City in 1940. There he began recording songs and became friends with many other musicians, including Pete Seeger and Huddie “Lead Belly” Ledbetter. With Seeger, Guthrie formed a musical group called the Almanac Singers, later known as the Weavers. They became very popular, singing songs of political protest and activism, though many people tried to censor them. During World War II, Guthrie served in the Army and kept writing songs. In the late 1940s, he and his friends began to be targeted by the anti-Communist movement. He was diagnosed with Huntington’s disease in 1954. He spent the rest of his life in the hospital, visited by many young musicians whom he inspired, like Bob Dylan and Joan Baez.

Fun Facts
- Guthrie wrote more than 1,000 songs during his life, and over 3,000 song lyrics.
- “Woody” is short for Woodrow Wilson—Guthrie was named for the 28th President of the United States.
- Guthrie published two novels and created many drawings and paintings.

Featured Work: “This Land”

“This Land” can also be played with instruments, like the recorder. We hope to hear an instrumental group from your school perform this song at your concert before you sing it with the orchestra. For those who will play, here are the instructions:

1. Learn to play “This Land” on an instrument, such as recorder, stringed instrument, bells, guitar or other.
2. Memorize the music so you can watch your conductor.
3. Play the song through one time at your North Carolina Symphony concert.

The main idea of the music... the line that you walk away singing

FOR RECORDER

NOTES ON THE MELODY

This Land Is Your Land

words and music by Woody Guthrie

melody

The main idea of the music... the line that you walk away singing
Aaron Copland

Born: November 14, 1900, Brooklyn, NY
Died: December 2, 1990, North Tarrytown, NY

Aaron Copland was the son of Jewish immigrants from Poland and Lithuania who moved to America for a better life. He learned to play the piano as a teen and regularly attended orchestra performances in New York City. When he turned 20, Copland moved to France to study music under Nadia Boulanger, a very famous composer and piano teacher. There he began to develop his personal style. Copland wanted to create a distinctively American style of music, influenced by the jazz and popular music he had grown up hearing on the streets of New York City. Although his early music was often too complex for audiences to appreciate, Copland eventually found a style that audiences loved. He became most famous for his ballets such as *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo*. He loved the American Western style and produced many songs for movie soundtracks. He even won an Oscar for his movie score for *The Heiress*.

Fun Facts

- Before he became a composer, Copland worked as a pianist at a resort entertaining guests.
- Copland once taught as a professor at Harvard University in Boston, Massachusetts.
- Throughout his career, Copland received over 30 honorary degrees.

Featured Work: “Hoedown” from *Rodeo*