

Course to be offered as part of LLAIC. The first class will be on March 2nd and will run on ten consecutive Mondays after that.

A Musical Journey

Art Gerstenfeld

This course is based on the premise that the more we know about music, the more we will enjoy music. In this course we will be re-introduced to “old friends” (music we may not have heard for a while), and some “new friends”. We will start with some music from the U.S. (New York and New Orleans), then go to Germany, Russia, London, Africa, Israel, South America, and then having circled the world will return to the U.S. The music and composers we will listen to and discuss will start with the elements of jazz (Scott Joplin), some classical masters in the middle. The course will include listening to and discussing some of our greatest Jewish composers such as Felix Mendelsohn, George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, and Aaron Copland and performers such as Itzhak Perlman (born in Tel Aviv), Leonard Bernstein and Benny Goodman.

Week One

The elements of jazz: This week we will listen to and discuss the rise and fall of Ragtime, New Orleans Dixieland, and the Swing Era. We will include performances by Scott Joplin “The Entertainer”, Louis Armstrong (Sachmo) singing “What a Wonderful World” and performing “When The Saints Go Marching In”, and Benny Goodman at Carnegie Hall, 1938. We will include Bei Mir Bistu Schoen to a Salsa beat.

Week Two

We have now flown to Germany and will listen to and discuss the life and music of Beethoven. We will include parts of his famous Symphony #9. **On YouTube we will listen and watch Leonard Bernstein explaining and then conducting Beethoven's Music (Bernstein about Beethoven's Music)**. Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) was born in Lawrence, MA the son of Ukranian Jewish parents. He was one of the most talented successful musicians in American history. We will also hear and discuss Itzhak Perlman playing and discussing Beethoven's Violin Concerto.

Week Three

Continuing our stay in Germany, we now focus on Felix Mendelsohn. We first listen to his famous violin concerto (six years in the making) played by Janine Jansen and note that there is no introduction as we go right into the familiar theme. The theme is first presented by the violinist and then picked up by the full orchestra. It is now one of the best loved of all violin concertos.

Week Four

We fly to Moscow and St. Petersburg and meet up with our old friend Peter Tchaikovsky. We learn about his life of turmoil and pain while at the same time he is composing some of the most beautiful music in the world. We will be focusing on a part his ballet "Swan Lake". In addition, we will listen to and discuss parts of his Violin Concerto in D Major, on YouTube. We will hear and see amazing views of Sayaka Shoji, soloist, as the first Japanese and youngest winner of the Paganini Competition in 1999.

Week Five

We decide to stay in Moscow and St. Petersburg another week but to now turn our attention to Stravinsky. No course like this would be complete without his “Rite of Spring”. We then continue on to Japan where we watch and discuss the YouTube of Japan’s newest rock star Hatsune Miku “The World is Mine”.

Week Six

We now find ourselves in downtown London as we examine the works of Frederick Handel and of course, the Beatles. We will listen to and discuss Beatles pieces such as “Come Together”, “Something”, and “Oh! Darling”.

Week Seven

This is perhaps the most unusual week as we now find ourselves in Africa. We start first with South Africa and listen to and discuss “Ladysmith Black Mambazo” and an amazing all male African a cappella group. Ladysmith has been winner of four Grammy awards having risen to fame when they appeared with Paul Simon in his album “Graceland”. On YouTube we will see and hear “Ladysmith Black Mambazo and the Soweto Choir”. **Flying north from South Africa we find ourselves in Israel to listen to Etti Ankri, the female singer of the year (the “rock genius” contemporary voice of Israel).**

Week eight

We continue our circle of the world and find ourselves in South America. Here we will be listening to the enchanting rhythm of the tango, the samba, and other Latin American dances.

Week Nine

This week we return to the U.S. and focus on the classic American composers including George Gershwin and Aaron Copland (The Rodeo). We listen to and discuss Leonard Bernstein playing George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue".

Week Ten

This final week is as yet undecided. Perhaps we will ask the class to bring in their favorite pieces of music along with a bit of background research so that we can share it all together. We may want to focus this week on American folk music including the works of James Taylor, and Bob Dylan (& Susan Tedeschi) "Highway 61 Revisited".

Home Work: There will be no exams, but I do expect full participation in class discussions. We want to learn from each other. Before each class I will expect that you will have read a bit about the subject matter for that day so that you will be prepared to discuss the composer or the musical piece (s) assigned for that week.

References

The History of Jazz, Ted Gioia, 2nd edition, May 2011

Beethoven – His Life and Music, Prof. Robert Greenberg, Audible Series: The Great Courses: Fine Arts and Music, July 2013

Mozart, A Life, Paul Johnson, Viking, Penguin Group, 2013

Exploring American Folk Music, Kip Lornell, April, 2012

Stravinsky – His Life and Music, Prof. Robert Greenberg, Audible
Series: The Great Courses

YouTube: Leonard Bernstein explaining Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony.

YouTube: Hatsune Miku “The World is Mine”, Japan’s newest rock star
with concerts now in Los Angeles and New York.

YouTube: “Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Soweto Gospel Choir”

YouTube: “Aretha Franklin – White House Performance 2014”

You Tube: “Benny Goodman – Sweet Georgia Brown”

YouTube: “Louis Armstrong – What A Wonderful World”

Tchaikovsky – His Life and Music Kindle Edition, 2012

Great Masters – Tchaikovsky - His Life and Music, Audible.com