

GRANT PARK MUSIC FESTIVAL

Carlos Kalmar Artistic Director and Principal Conductor

Christopher Bell Chorus Director



Wednesday, July 5, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Jay Pritzker Pavilion

AN AMERICAN SALUTE: RHAPSODY IN BLUE

Grant Park Orchestra

Christopher Bell, conductor

Michelle Cann, piano

Joan Tower

Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman

Aaron Copland

Variations on a Shaker Theme

Morton Gould

American Salute

Edmond Dédé

Chicago: Grande valse à l'américaine

George Gershwin

Rhapsody in Blue

MICHELLE CANN

Leonard Bernstein

*Symphonic Dances from
West Side Story*

Samuel Ward

America the Beautiful

John Philip Sousa

Stars and Stripes Forever

This concert is graciously supported by Jim and Ginger Meyer and presented with generous support from *American Accents Series* Sponsor AbelsonTaylor.

Special thanks to Nancy Meyerson and to the color guard from the Rickover Naval Academy, a Chicago public school.

Piano provided by Steinway Piano Gallery of Chicago.

Tonight's concert is being broadcast and streamed live on 98.7WFMT/wfmt.com



Pianist **Michelle Cann** performs with major orchestras across the country. A champion of music by Florence Price, Cann is the recipient of the 2022 Sphinx Medal of Excellence, the highest honor bestowed by the Sphinx Organization, and the 2022 Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award. Embracing a dual role as performer and pedagogue, Ms. Cann frequently teaches master classes and leads residencies. She serves on the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music as the inaugural Eleanor Sokoloff Chair in Piano Studies.

AN AMERICAN SALUTE

What *is* American music? The great conductor, composer, and communicator Leonard Bernstein posed this very question in a Young People's Concert broadcast on CBS in 1958: "What makes certain music seem to belong to America, seem to belong to us?" The answer lies in our rich heritage as a nation of immigrants. "There are as many sides to American music as there are to the American people—our great, varied, many-sided democracy," Bernstein explained. By the 1920s, these multiple influences started to coalesce into something of a national sound: "So what our composers are finally nourished on is a folk music that is probably the richest in the world, and all of it is American in spirit, whether its jazz, or square-dance tunes, or cowboy songs, or hillbilly music, or rock and roll, or Cuban mambas, or Mexican huapangos, or Missouri hymn-singing. It's like all those different accents we have in our speaking... But they're all American accents."

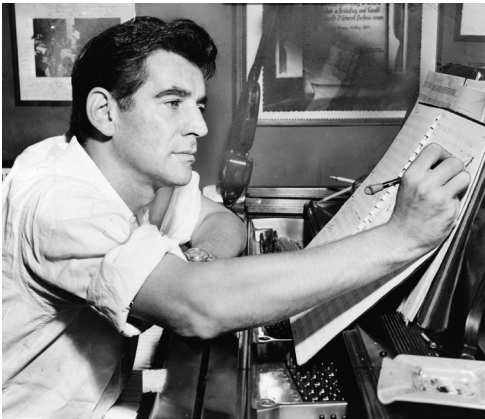


IMMIGRANT ARRIVALS AT ELLIS ISLAND

In this American Salute program, much of the music you will hear was written by the children of immigrants. Their families were among the millions who made the arduous journey to our shores at the turn of the twentieth century in search of a better life. Little did they know that their children would go on to define the sound of American classical music.

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1980) himself was the child of Ukrainian Jewish immigrant parents. Though he was born and raised in Massachusetts, he is most associated with

New York City due to his longstanding relationship with the New York Philharmonic. It was there in that beautifully cacophonous clash of cultures that Bernstein was inspired to write his musical masterpiece, *West Side Story*. When the musical opened on Broadway in 1957, it was a landmark achievement in American theater. In it, Bernstein uses an eclectic mix of musical traditions, including Tin Pan Alley songs, jazz, and Latin dance forms, to represent the warring Sharks and Jets. In 1961, the busy composer enlisted the help of Sid



LEONARD BERNSTEIN

Ramin and Irwin Kostal, who had reorchestrated the score for the film, to extract nine sections from the score to create *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*.

Besides Leonard Bernstein, **George Gershwin** is probably the composer most associated with the sound of New York City. George Gershwin (1898–1937) was born in Brooklyn to Russian Jewish immigrant parents. George left school after ninth grade to work as a song plugger for a Tin Pan Alley music publisher. Bored with the repetitiveness of the job, he started

writing songs of his own. He eventually landed a gig as a rehearsal pianist on Broadway, and his songs began to appear in shows. By 1919, he had written his first full musical.

The story of how *Rhapsody in Blue* came to be is almost as legendary as the piece itself. George and his brother Ira were reading the paper one day in early January 1924 when they came across a startling announcement: the famous dance bandleader Paul Whiteman was holding a concert on February 12, featuring a new jazz concerto by George Gershwin. This was news to the composer. Gershwin had either forgotten about the commission, or there was a miscommunication. Regardless, he had to write something—and fast, especially as he was in the middle of rehearsals for a new musical in Boston. Gershwin composed *Rhapsody in Blue* in just a few weeks with the help of Whiteman's go-to arranger, Ferde Grofé. Grofé orchestrated Gershwin's piano reduction for Whiteman's idiosyncratic “jazz” band and later scored it for symphony orchestra.

Again, it was the bustling soundscape of urban America that inspired the composer. Gershwin later wrote, “It was on the train, with its steely rhythms, its rattley-bang that is often so stimulating to a composer. . . . And there I suddenly heard—and even saw on paper—the complete construction of the rhapsody, from beginning to end. . . . I heard it as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America—of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our metropolitan madness.” Though other classical composers before Gershwin had integrated elements of jazz rhythms and harmonies into their music, *Rhapsody in Blue* is often considered the landmark piece that brought “jazz” into the concert hall in full force.

Unlike Bernstein and Gershwin, whose music evoked the hustle and bustle of urban life, Aaron Copland's (1900–1990) music has come to represent rural America in its use of open chords that conjure images of vast landscapes. Copland, too, was the son of Russian Jewish immigrants. *Variations on a Shaker Theme* appears at the heart of Copland's 1944 ballet *Appalachian Spring*. It uses a Shaker song by Elder Joseph Brackett called “Simple Gifts,” which was relatively unknown outside the Shaker community until Copland brought it into the national consciousness with this piece.

Joan Tower's (b. 1938) *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman* is a direct response to one of Copland's most famous works, *Fanfare for the Common Man*. Written in 1986, Tower's fanfare employs the same brass instrumentation as Copland's, plus extra percussion. Considered the feminist counterpoint to Copland's piece, *Fanfare for the*

Uncommon Woman is dedicated “to women who take risks and who are adventurous.”

Working even more quickly than Gershwin did for *Rhapsody in Blue*, **Morton Gould** (1913–1996) composed and scored *American Salute* in just eight hours. Using the Civil War-era song “When Johnny Comes Marching Home” as the melodic basis, Gould composed *American Salute* in 1942 during the early days of the United States’ involvement in World War II upon request from a government radio producer who wanted a new patriotic piece to play on the air the next day.

Unlike most of the other composers on this program, **Edmond Dédé** (1827–1901) was not a first-generation American. Previous scholars erroneously claimed that Dédé’s parents were refugees from the West Indies. But historian Sally McKee recently discovered that Dédé’s great-grandparents had bought their freedom in 1785, and both of Dédé’s parents had grown up in the relatively large and prosperous community of free Creoles of color in New Orleans. Dédé’s father played clarinet in a militia band, spurring his son’s interest in music. After taking music lessons from both Black and white instructors, Edmond Dédé soon became an accomplished violinist.



EDMOND DÉDÉ

Though people of color were able to participate more fully in the musical life of New Orleans than in other US cities at the time, Black musicians still were disallowed from playing in the city’s major theaters and opera houses. In search of more opportunities and additional training at the Paris Conservatoire, Dédé booked passage to France in 1856. Unfortunately, the conservatory only accepted students up to age 22, and Dédé was already 29. The school allowed him to audit classes, and he took private lessons in composition, violin, and conducting. Dédé spent the rest of his life in France, mostly working in Bordeaux as an orchestra leader at cafés-concerts (music halls that presented light, popular music).

However, he aspired to be a composer of ballets, symphonies, and grand operas. Consequently, much of his music straddled the line between popular and “art” music. Composed in 1891, *Chicago: Grande valse à l’Américaine* is an example of his attempt to meet various cultural expectations.

Though he never quite found the success he desired and did face prejudice in France, he still had many more opportunities and greater freedom of movement than he would have had in the United States. After emigrating, he only returned to the United States once in 1893, where he was confronted with the grim realities of Jim Crow. Understandably, he stretched the truth about his achievements during his homecoming, wishing to present himself to his former community as the esteemed conductor, performer, and composer he longed to be recognized as in France. It is for this reason that details of Dédé’s biography are somewhat murky. Nevertheless, McKee writes, “He may not have prospered to the extent or in the way that he would have preferred to, but in the end the people who use him as an index of their hopes were right to do so.”

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