

# Miscellaneous American Composers - Part II



**Howard Hanson** (1896-1981) was an American composer, conductor, educator, music theorist, and champion of American classical music. The Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, became (and still is) one of the top music schools in the country under his leadership. He served as the director of Eastman for 40 years, and in this position he provided opportunities for commissioning and performing American music.

Hanson was born in Wahoo, Nebraska, to Swedish immigrant parents. In his youth he studied music with his mother. Later, he studied at Luther College in Wahoo, receiving a diploma in 1911, then at the Institute of Musical Art (the forerunner of the Juilliard School) in New York City. Juilliard is one of the top music schools in the country, and it is also known for all aspects of fine arts (dance, theater, and visual arts).

In 1938 he was very interested in educating the general public through **innovative** means, so he engaged the talents of student ensembles at the Eastman School to present *Milestones in the History of Music* on the radio. This weekly series of programs presented a sweeping survey of the history of Western music and was broadcast locally in Rochester, New York on WHAM and nationally on the NBC Red Network. In recognition of these efforts, the Peabody Award for outstanding service to music was awarded to Hanson, to the Eastman School and to WHAM in 1946. As Hanson himself indicated, this was "the first attempt at a rather complete presentation of the American picture in music" to the general public. In 1944 he won a Pulitzer Prize for his Symphony No. 4, and he received numerous other awards.

Perhaps Hanson described his music best when he portrayed it as "springing from the soil of the American Midwest. It is music of the plains rather than of the city and reflects, I believe, something of the broad prairies of my native Nebraska."

Hanson met Margaret Elizabeth Nelson (pictured above) at her parents' summer home on Lake Chautauqua at the Chautauqua Institution in New York. Hanson dedicated the *Serenade for Flute, Harp, and Strings*, to her; the piece was his musical marriage proposal, as he could not find the spoken words to propose to her. They married on July 24, 1946, in the same house where they had first met, and they remained married until Hanson's death in 1981.

Here is a link to Hanson's Serenade for Flute, Harp and Strings:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLDNvSWNnog> (7:02)



**Alexander Nikolayevich Tcherepnin** (1899-1977) is pronounced "che-REP-noon." He was born into a Russian family in St. Petersburg, Russia. His father Nikolai studied with Rimsky-Korsakov, and his two sons and two grandsons were also composers. Alexander and his parents left their home in St. Petersburg in 1917 when the Russian Revolution broke out and moved to Tbilisi, Georgia. He took a suitcase with over 200 of his own piano compositions, even though he was only 17 at the time! He continued music studies in Georgia, but again, due to political unrest, the family had to move in 1921, and Tcherepnin

launched an international career as a pianist and composer, winning several competitions in various countries. In 1925 he traveled to the US and then farther east to Asia, where he met and married Lee Hsien Ming. He promoted composers in Japan and China, and even founded his own publishing house in Tokyo for this purpose.

In 1948 he returned to the United States and settled in Chicago, acquiring US Citizenship in 1958. He and his wife both taught at DePaul University in Chicago. In 1964 he moved to New York and subsequently divided his time between the US and Europe. He died in Paris in 1977.

Tcherepnin composed four symphonies, three operas, six piano concertos, and works for ballet, plus choral music, an alto saxophone solo and a large amount of solo piano music. Among those 200 compositions he took with him when he left home at age 17 was his **Opus 5 Bagatelles**. These *Bagatelles* are among his finest and most popular keyboard works. (FYI: a bagatelle is usually a short piece, normally written for piano, and has a light character.) The 10 miniatures each span only two to four pages, yet they are filled with a variety of mildly contemporary techniques. The more brilliant pieces help to develop a rapid finger technique, while the lyrical works are studies in the balance of melody and accompaniment figures. These miniatures give us a glimpse into Tcherepnin's own fine technique.

Here is a link to his Bagatelles. Numbers 1 and 10 have been on the Junior Festival list for many years. As you listen to all ten of these short pieces, please note which ones you like best.

Here are their tempo markings, which he uses as a sort of title:

1. Allegro marciale (Quickly and bright, march-like)	6. Allegro con spirito (Quickly and bright with spirit)
2. Con vivacita (with vivacity)	7. Prestissimo (As fast as possible)
3. Vivo (Lively)	8. Allegro
4. Lento con tristezza (Slowly with sadness)	9. Allegretto (A little slower than Allegro)
5. Dolce (Sweetly)	10. Presto (Fast)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wV9W8YZQqH8> (12:00)

**Randall Thompson (1899-1984)** was an American composer, born in New York City, who was best known for his choral works. His father was an English teacher at The Lawrenceville School in New Jersey, which Randall attended. He then attended Harvard University and later received a doctorate in music from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. He taught at Wellesley College, at the Curtis Institute of Music, at the University of Virginia, and at Harvard University. One of his most famous students at Curtis and at Harvard was Leonard Bernstein.



He wrote two operas, two string quartets, and three symphonies, but he is best known for his many vocal works, including *Americana*, *The Testament of Freedom*, *The Peaceable Kingdom* and *Frostiana* (based on poetry of Robert Frost). In 1940 conductor Serge Koussevitzky commissioned him to write *Alleluia* for the opening of the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood.

*Frostiana (Seven Country Songs)* is a piece for mixed chorus and piano composed in 1959. It premiered on October 18, 1959, in Amherst, Massachusetts. Thompson was commissioned by the town of Amherst to write a

piece commemorating its bicentennial. The town was known for its association with Robert Frost, who had lived there for some years. Frost had known Thompson for some time, and admired his music; accordingly, it was decided that the **commemorative** work would be a setting of some of Frost's poetry. Thompson asked to be allowed to choose his own texts. In the end, the composer selected seven poems, with which he constructed a **seven-movement suite** of choral art songs:

- "The Road Not Taken"
- "The Pasture"
- "Come In"
- "The Telephone"
- "A Girl's Garden"
- "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"
- "Choose Something Like a Star"

*Frostiana* **premiered** in Amherst in October 1959, and Robert Frost attended the performance. At the end of the last movement, Frost jumped up and cried, "Sing that again!" (A good **endorsement** that the poet liked the composition!) Thompson later scored the piece for chamber orchestra and chorus; this version was first performed six years later on April 23, 1965.

Before you listen to these songs, here are the explanations of the poetry you'll be hearing:

**The Road Not Taken:** The speaker, walking through an autumn forest, comes to a fork in the road. He regrets that he is unable to travel both roads and stands at the fork in the road for a long time. He can't see very far because the forest is dense, and the road is not straight. He chooses what he considers to be the better path, since it is grassy and looks less worn. He explains that he is just saving the first road and will travel it later. But he realizes that in real life it is unlikely he will ever return to that first road. He imagines himself in the distant future, recounting with a sigh, the story of making the choice of which road to take. Speaking as though looking back on his life, he says that he chose the less-traveled road, and the consequences of that decision made all the difference.

**Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening:** The speaker describes stopping in dark woods one night to watch the snow fall while on horseback or in a horse-drawn sleigh. While alone in the forest, the speaker reflects on the natural world and its contrast with society. Frost's natural world is depicted as "lovely, dark and deep." Though the speaker knows that he has promises he must keep, the woods are a tempting place to stop and rest, despite the cold, but he knows he cannot stay.

**Choose Something Like a Star:** The first fifteen lines of the poem are addressed directly to the star. The poet is attracted by the star's glory as it shines brightly at **unattainable** heights. The poet wants it to reveal something about itself...something he can learn by heart and repeat. The star answers with, "I burn." But that is not enough for the poet, who wants to know how hotly it burns. At this point, the poet speaks about the star in third person, and he praises its **steadfastness**, referring to Keats' *Ermit*, (which means hermit...implying seclusion or isolation.) The star is unswerving and **unswerving** and "it asks of us a certain height," by demanding of us a certain elevation of spirit and **loftiness** of character. When we get swayed by praise or blame, we should choose something like a star as a wonderful example of **stability** and **restraint**.

Here is a link to the work, sung by the Harvard University Choir. The lyrics are below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgotLc73va0&t=1008s>

Please listen to these three pieces and look for the following things:

1. *Road Not Taken:* Notice how the piano accompaniment is written in steady quarter-note chords, as if to portray someone walking. Also notice how the melody bends downward on the word "undergrowth" in the first verse, as if to paint the image of bushes bending downward. Thompson uses many subtleties to paint the words of the poem. At the end, there is a long piano interlude, perhaps to let the listener think

about that last line...taking the less-traveled road has made all the difference in life. Then he restates the last line quietly, to give it a little more importance by saying it twice.

2. *Stopping By Woods*: Thompson sets a magical mood of the quietude of a snowy field with a beautiful piano accompaniment. This poem is set for men only, as if to say the narrator is Frost himself. Do you know which is the darkest evening of the year? (Think winter solstice) Do you hear the piano make a harness bell shake? The last line can have a double meaning...“miles to go before I sleep” could also refer to “much to do before I die.”
3. *Choose Something Like a Star*: Listen for how Thompson sets the sopranos singing an octave leap of “O Star” to set the star high in the sky. Later, when he sets the line: “And steadfast as Keats' Eremite, Not even stooping from its sphere...”, he gives the sopranos these words on a high repeated note, while the rest of the choir sings in normal choral style. The sopranos are definitely NOT stooping from their sphere, but instead they are hovering high above the others!

## LYRICS

### THE ROAD NOT TAKEN (:00-5:03)

Two roads **diverged** in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had **trodden** black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

### STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING (17:40-22:00)

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

## CHOOSE SOMETHING LIKE A STAR

(22:00-end)

O Star  
The fairest one in sight  
O Star  
We grant your loftiness the right  
O Star  
To some **obscurity** of cloud  
O Star  
It will not do to say of night,  
O Star  
Since dark is what brings out your light.  
O Star...

Some mystery becomes the proud.  
But to be wholly **taciturn**  
In your reserve is not allowed.

Say something to us we can learn  
By heart and when alone repeat  
Say something! And it says 'I burn.'  
But say with what degree of heat.  
Talk Fahrenheit, talk Centigrade.  
Use language we can **comprehend**.  
Tell us what elements you blend.  
It gives us strangely little aid,  
But does tell something in the end.

And steadfast as Keats' Eremite,  
Not even stooping from its sphere,  
It asks a little of us here.  
It asks of us a certain height,  
So when at times the mob is swayed  
To carry praise or blame too far,  
We may choose something like a star  
To stay our minds on and be **staid**.

Here is one more movement of *Frostiana*, which I'm throwing in for fun. *The Pasture* is a simple song about someone who has farm chores to do and invites his friend to come along and keep him company. The link to the recording below was made by the Lamesa (Texas) High School choir in 1971, and the choral program that year was excellent...a sweepstakes mixed choir, sweepstakes boys choir AND sweepstakes girls choir. You will be able to hear a 17-year-old Dr. Holly playing the piano for this boys' choir. (Apologies for the condition of the recording...it was on an old record with some scratches which a friend found in a garage sale here in Weatherford a few years ago!)

<http://www.burchschool.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/5-The-Pasture-Thompson.mp3> (2:39)

## THE PASTURE

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring  
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away  
And wait to watch the water clear, I may  
I shan't be gone long  
You come, too

I'm going out to fetch the little calf  
That's standing by the mother  
It's so young  
It totters when she licks it with her tongue  
I shan't be gone long  
You come, too



**Paul Creston (1906-1985)** was born in New York City to Sicilian immigrants. Creston was self-taught as a composer. His work tends to be fairly conservative in style, with a strong rhythmic element. His pieces include six symphonies, a number of **concertos**, a **fantasia** for trombone and orchestra (composed for and premiered by Robert Marsteller). Also he wrote a Saxophone Rhapsodie for Jean-Marie Londeix plus a saxophone suite (1935) and a saxophone sonata (Op. 19, 1939), both dedicated to Cecil Leeson, plus also a suite for organ, Op. 70. Several of his works were inspired by the

poetry of Walt Whitman. He died in Poway, California, a suburb of San Diego. Creston was one of the most performed American composers of the 1940s and 1950s. Several of his works have become staples of the wind band repertoire. *Zanoni*, *Prelude and Dance* and the *Celebration Overture* have been and still are on several state lists for contests across the USA. Creston was also a notable teacher, whose students included the John Corigliano, whom we will study next month. He wrote the theoretical books *Principles of Rhythm* (1964) and *Rational Metric Notation* (1979). He taught at Central Washington State College from 1968 to 1975.

Please listen to the first movement of Creston's **Concertina** for Marimba and Orchestra played by the extraordinary Evelyn Glennie. She is a world-renowned percussionist from Scotland, and her first instruments were piano and clarinet. She also plays the Great Highland Bagpipes. She has performed all over the world, performing, giving master classes and lectures. She also commissions new works for solo percussion. Miss Glennie has been profoundly deaf since the age of 12, having started to lose her hearing at the age of 8. This does not inhibit her ability to perform, as you will see! She regularly plays barefoot during live performances and studio recordings in order to better feel the music.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HihOxPIAO6Y> First movement (0:00 - 4:42)



**Ross Lee Finney (1906-1997)** was an American composer, born in Wells, Minnesota. He taught for many years at the University of Michigan. He studied with Nadia Boulanger, Edward Burlingame Hill, Alban Berg (from 1931-2) and Roger Sessions (in 1935). His students included, among others, George Crumb and William Albright, whom we will review next month. He also received the Purple Heart during World War II. Finney received the Rome Prize in 1960 and the Brandeis Medal in 1968. He is quoted in those notes as having begun writing **serial** music from time to time beginning with his sixth string quartet (a work which uses serial principles). Finney wrote eight string quartets, four symphonies as well as other orchestral works, other chamber works and songs.

What is "serial" music? The German composer Arnold Schoenberg and the Austrian composer Alban Berg revolted against Romanticism in music in the early days of the 1900s. They approached musical composition as a mathematical endeavor, rather than an emotional one. They devised a system, called the 12-Tone system, also known as the Tone-Row System or Serial Music. They would choose a random order of all 12 notes of the chromatic scale. Then they would build their music based on this order. The rule was that all 12 notes had to appear in order before they could be repeated. This row could be stated in reverse, (retrograde) or flipped upside down, (inversion) or flipped upside down and stated backwards (retrograde inversion). Notes could be played simultaneously, as chords, but the row had to be obeyed in its sequence. You will hear the row in the opening of the string quartet. You will also hear that serial music is often dissonant and discordant, yet it can also be expressive and dramatic. Just listen to the first movement at the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NehXpCHWuk> (0:00 - 6:51)

**Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000)** was an American-Armenian composer, born in Massachusetts. He was one of the most **prolific** 20th-century composers, with his official catalog comprising 67 numbered symphonies (surviving manuscripts indicate over 70) and 434 opus numbers. The true number is well over 500 surviving works, since many opus numbers comprise two or more distinct works.

*The Boston Globe* music critic Richard Buell wrote: "Although he has been **stereotyped** as a self-consciously Armenian composer, his output **assimilates** the music of many cultures. What may be most American about all of it is the way it turns its materials into a kind of **exoticism**. The atmosphere is hushed, reverential, mystical, nostalgic."



He was born Alan Vaness Chakmakjian, but because his Armenian family had suffered discrimination during his early years in Massachusetts, and since people never pronounced his last name correctly, he decided to drop the Armenian last name and take his middle name with a little modification. Vaness became Hovhaness, with a stress on the second syllable.

Hovhaness had a world view that included cultures and music from all over the globe. He traveled to many countries to learn about their native instruments and folk music, including Japan, South Korea, Hawaii, India, Russia, Soviet-controlled Georgia and Armenia. He spent several summers touring Europe and spent much time in Switzerland. In the 50s he also taught summer sessions at Eastman School of Music, at the invitation of Howard Hanson, who was a big fan of his work.

Here is a recording of a piano solo called *Macedonian Mountain Dance*. It appears often on the Junior Festival required list and some of our students have performed it. Notice the "**ostinato bass**" throughout...the piece is in ABA form and in both of the A and B sections there is a repeating bassline...both bass lines are quite different but give the piece intensity and forward motion.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtBJ4g-E2IY&list=RDUtBJ4g-E2IY&start\\_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtBJ4g-E2IY&list=RDUtBJ4g-E2IY&start_radio=1) (3:33)



**Morton Gould (1913-1996)** was born in Richmond Hill, New York and was soon recognized as a child prodigy, with abilities in improvisation and composition. He studied piano with the very famous pianist Abby Whiteside, who no doubt gave him the foundation for creating many virtuoso piano pieces.

During the Depression, Gould (a teen) worked as a pianist in movie theaters and in vaudeville acts. When Radio City Music Hall opened, he was hired as the staff pianist. By 1935 he was conducting and arranging orchestral programs for WOR radio, where he reached a national audience. In this venue he programmed both popular and classical music throughout the decade. In 1942 he composed music for a short film called *Ring of Steel*.

He composed Broadway scores, music for television, and music for ballet. His music was commissioned by symphony orchestras all over the US, and he received commissions from the Library of Congress, The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the American Ballet Theater and the New York City Ballet. He could seamlessly combine multiple musical genres into formal classical structure better than any other living composer. Gould wrote for anything and everything, but there's no doubt that he was a born orchestral

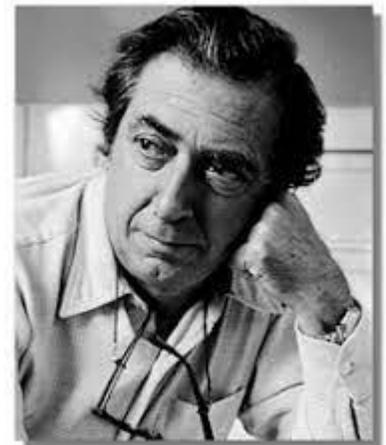
composer. While much of Gould's earlier work can be an impersonal mix of Stravinsky, Copland and Gershwin, it nonetheless always uses symphonic forces in ways both professional and creative. Gould was always busy yet never a superstar, so he managed to keep challenging himself, searching for the music he really wanted to write. At some point, his concert compositions began taking on a more lucid and serious tone.

Gould conducted all of the major American orchestras, along with orchestras of Canada, Mexico, Europe, Japan and Australia. He won a Grammy for recording Charles Ives' first symphony in 1966. He received the Gold Baton Award in 1983 from the American Symphony Orchestra League, and in 1986 he was elected to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. In 1993 he was commissioned by the ninth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition to write *Ghost Waltzes* as the competitors' "one-month piece." He was honored at the Kennedy Center in 1994...recognized for his lifetime contributions to American culture. In 1995 he won a Pulitzer Prize for his *Stringmusic*, and in 2005 he received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. His list of compositions is astounding, and it is hard to choose just one. I recommend that you look up recordings of the *Ghost Waltzes* and also *Boogie Woogie Etude*...both for piano solo. *Ghost Waltzes* was the Cliburn competition's required piece, given to each of the 30 competitors one month in advance of the contest. The *Boogie Woogie Etude* is often used as an encore in a piano recital of the major pianists. Both pieces are very demanding, showy and difficult.

Here is a movement from his *American Symphonietta, No. 2*, called *Pavanne*. A pavane (usually spelled with one "n") is a stately slow dance from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, in duple meter. However Gould gives it a modern flavor. It opens with a jazzy trumpet tune superimposed over a subtle, walking bass-like ostinato. Different instruments join in, and the work builds to replicate the sounds of a 1940s big band. It is one of his most-performed works.

*Pavanne* from *American Symphonietta No. 2*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pYk7mzOFc7c> (3:37)

**Norman Dello Joio (1913-2008)** is pronounced "Dello-Joy-oh." He was born in New York City to Italian immigrants. His father was an organist, pianist and vocal coach to several Metropolitan Opera stars, so young Norman was surrounded by music and musicians. At age 4 he began piano lessons with his dad, and later began studying organ and theory. He was a great sightreader, and by age 12 he began assisting his father at church. As a teen, he studied organ with his godfather, Pietro Yon (who is famous for composing the Christmas carol *Gesu Bambino*). He attended College of the City of New York, and later New York's Institute of Musical Art. He received a three-year scholarship for graduate studies at Juilliard where he studied composition. He decided that after spending his young years as a church musician, his first love was not organ, but rather composition. He enrolled in Tanglewood's composition program as a



student of Paul Hindemith, a prominent German composer who lived in the US in the 40s. Hindemith was a major influence on his career, telling him to never forget that his music was "lyrical by nature," and not to sacrifice that for atonality. He followed Hindemith to Yale in the fall of 1943 to continue his studies. His first published work was *Piano Sonata No. 1*, and in that same year his *Magnificat* won the Town Hall Composition Award and was nominated for the New York Critics Circle Award. He began his teaching career in composition at Sarah Lawrence college, followed by teaching positions at Mannes College of Music in New York and at Boston University, from which he retired in 1978. He continued to receive acclaim, including a Pulitzer Prize for his *Meditations on Ecclesiastes* for string orchestra.

Norman Dello Joio composed in a wide variety of **genres**, including ballets, operas, a number of television scores, works for orchestra and for band, choral music, masses, chamber music, works for solo instruments, and

works for solo voice. He was able to infuse his music with many elements, including popular music and jazz, sacred music, such as Gregorian chant, and Italian opera. His compositions are well-crafted and expressive of many different moods and feelings.

Dello Joio's list of works is quite impressive, with symphonies, ballets, operas, film scores, television scores, chamber works, solo works, and choral works. We will listen to a choral work based on the poet Walt Whitman. *A Jubilant Song* adapts some of Whitman's *A Song of Joys*, which is a poem about the joys of life.

## LYRICS

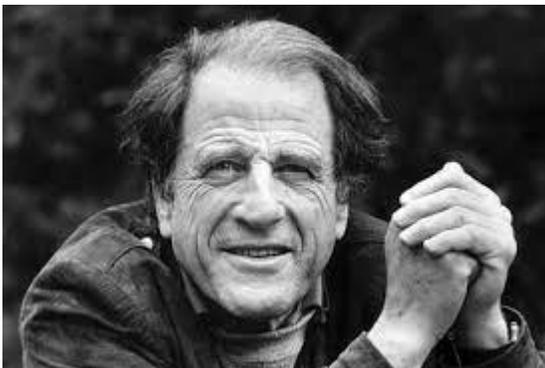
O! Listen to a jubilant song!  
The joy of our spirit, the joy of our spirit is uncaged,  
it darts like lightning!  
My soul it darts like lightning!  
Listen to a jubilant song,  
For we sing to the joys of youth,  
and the joy of a glad light-beaming day.  
O! O! Our spirit sings O!  
Our spirit sings a jubilant song that is to life full of music,  
a life full of concord, of music, a life full of harmony.

We sing prophetic joys, we sing prophetic joys of lofty ideals.  
We sing a universal love awaking in the hearts of men.  
We sing prophetic joys we sing of lofty ideals— we sing of love awaking in hearts of men,—a universal love.  
O! to have life, a poem of new joys, a poem of new joys, to shout! shout! shout! shout! shout! shout! shout!

To dance, exult, to shout, and leap, to dance and exult, shout and leap.  
O! to realize space and flying clouds, O! to realize space, the sun and moon,  
O! to be rulers of life, O! to be rulers of destiny, of life, of destiny, and of life.

O! O! la la la la la...  
Listen, listen, O! Listen to a song, a jubilant song.  
Listen to our song, the joy of our spirit is uncaged.  
Listen, listen to a song. We dance, exult, we shout and leap.  
O! O! O! Listen to our song. O!

<https://vimeo.com/80032541> New England Conservatory of Music (7:20)



**Lukas Foss (1922-2009)** was born Lukas Fuchs in Berlin, Germany in 1922. He was quickly recognized as a child prodigy. He began piano at age 6 and when his family moved to Paris in 1933, he continued his musical education with piano, composition and flute lessons. In 1937 the Foss family moved to Philadelphia and were sponsored by a Quaker family there. Upon Quaker advice, they changed their name to Foss, which was not so Germanic. (World War II was just getting started.) Foss studied piano, conducting and composition at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. There he met Leonard Bernstein and the two began a lifelong friendship. Bernstein described Foss as an “authentic genius.” In the summers Foss attended Tanglewood where he studied conducting with Koussevitzky, and in 1939-1940 he studied composition with Paul Hindemith at Yale University. In 1942 he became an American citizen.

He served as music director for various festivals and for various orchestras across the country and was appointed professor of music at UCLA in 1953. He became a professor of music, theory and composition at Boston University beginning in 1991, and he is grouped in the “Boston School” of composers.

His compositions range from atonal 12-tone serial music to a “Copland-esque” tonal sound with a definite American style. During his first year in America, Foss met Aaron Copland, who had a big influence on him and his musical direction. As Foss later recalled: “I had fallen in love with America because of people like Aaron,” and he later wrote to Copland, “Yours is the only American music I have performed consistently over the years.”

His first work, *Prairie*, made Foss famous and launched his career. He was only 17 when he first read Carl Sandburg’s poem upon which the work is based. He started composing a secular cantata on this text almost immediately and wrote most of it in the summers of 1941 and 1942. (What is a secular cantata? It is a piece for chorus and orchestra normally written for church service...only this one is not based on a sacred text). In 1943 Koussevitzky conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra in a partial sketch of the work, and later in 1944 Robert Shaw led the premiere of the complete cantata in New York’s Town Hall. It won the New York Music Critics’ Circle Award as the most important new choral work of the year.

We will listen to a piece by Foss for Flute and Piano...since he was accomplished at playing both instruments. The piece is *Three American Pieces*, written in 1944, and it contains three movements: *Early Song*, *Dedication*, and *Composer’s Holiday*. We will hear the third movement, which begins at 10:00 and lasts for 2:33 minutes. It is highly rhythmic and very quick. There are two demands for the flute which are modern techniques: one is the flutter tongue, where the flute player must play notes while his/her tongue flutters (like when you make the sound of an engine) and the other (measure 59 and again in measure 79) when the flute player has to sing while playing. As you follow the score you can also notice that Foss must have had very long fingers and big hands because he often writes octaves and ninths and even a tenth in one spot. He quotes the very first notes of the folk song *Dixie*: “Oh, I wish I was in the land of cotton” and occasionally writes music that sounds like a fiddle tune (measure 21 and 25). It is a high-spirited piece and a load of fun to play.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kv8oFR6OnOo> state the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement at 10:00



**Robert Muczynski (1929-2010)** is pronounced “mew-CHIN-skee.” He was a Polish-American composer who studied composition with Tcherpnin at DePaul University in Chicago where he received both his Bachelor of Music degree (1950) and his Master of Music degree (1952) in Piano Performance. He later taught at DePaul University, Loras College, Roosevelt University and then in 1960 he joined the faculty of the University of Arizona as composer-in-residence and chair of the composition department. He held both positions until his retirement in 1988.

Among the more than fifty published compositions in his catalog, the most frequently performed works include *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* and *Time Pieces for Clarinet and Piano*. His orchestral works have been performed by many symphonies in the US and abroad.

Here is Muczynski’s Flute Sonata. Here’s what he says about this movement: “The first movement [Allegro deciso] begins with a syncopated four note figure announced by the flute. It has a restless urgency about it. This motive is gradually expanded, developed and varied as the music unfolds. There is frequent reference to it as both flute and piano share the ongoing dialogue. A pulsating energy is maintained throughout.”

You are welcome to listen to the whole piece, but the first movement is required. Notice how he writes conversations between the flute and piano...they toss little snippets of music back and forth to each other. The music is highly rhythmic and very difficult to play if you aren't counting! 😊

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swT2czLbHE0> I. *Allegro deciso* (0:00-3:35)