

JOHN STAFFORD SMITH *The Star-Spangled Banner*

John Stafford Smith (1750-1836) was an English composer, organist, and musicologist. A tune that Smith composed for the English Anacreontic Society in the 1770s was later famously adopted by Francis Scott Key to accompany his poem “Defence of Fort McHenry” during the War of 1812. Smith’s tune and Key’s poem eventually became known as “The Star-Spangled Banner,” which was officially recognized as the U.S. national anthem by the U.S. Navy in 1889, by President Woodrow Wilson in 1916, and by a congressional resolution in 1931.

FANNY MENDELSSOHN *Overture in C Major*

Despite her family’s attempts to diminish her artistic career, German composer and pianist Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel (1805-1847) wrote more than 375 songs, piano works, and instrumental chamber pieces. The *Overture in C Major*, which is full of rich chromaticism, was likely composed around 1830 for one of her family’s regular in-home concerts in Berlin. The score was rediscovered in the 1990s and given its 20th-century premiere by the Women’s Philharmonic.

JONATHAN LESHNOFF *Dancing Blue Crabs!*

Baltimore-based composer Jonathan Leshnoff is quickly becoming one of the most performed living composers by American orchestras, and his works have been performed and recorded by leading ensembles around the world. His *Dancing Blue Crabs!* was commissioned by the BSO in 2015 as part of the Centenary Encore Project. With a dedication of “Happy 100, hon,” the piece features the solo contrabassoon and was inspired by a humorous video of a blue crab dancing.

AARON COPLAND *Variations on a Shaker Melody from Appalachian Spring*

American composer, educator, writer, and conductor Aaron Copland (1900-1990) composed extensively for both the classical stage and Hollywood. Today he is most known for his vernacular “populist” works in which he endeavored to evoke the American pioneer spirit by incorporating traditional folk tunes into his music. Copland uses the familiar Shaker song “Simple Gifts” in his 1944 *Appalachian Spring*, which is a ballet depicting the festivities of 19th-century pioneers who have just completed the construction of a new farmhouse in Western Pennsylvania.

GEORGE WALKER *Mvt’s I + III from Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra*

George Walker, born in Washington D.C., began piano lessons at age five and gave his first recital at age 14; he later toured Europe extensively to great acclaim. As a black artist in 1950’s America, he collected a number of notable “firsts”: the first black student to graduate from the Curtis Institute of Music; the first black pianist to play a recital in New York City’s Town Hall and perform with the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the first black composer to receive a Pulitzer Prize. His Trombone Concerto, written in 1957, was one of the first concertos ever composed for the modern trombone and draws inspiration from both classical and jazz traditions.

NKEIRU OKOYE *Voices Shouting Out*

Nkeiru Okoye is an internationally recognized composer of opera, symphonic, choral, chamber, solo piano, and vocal works. She is a 2021 Guggenheim Fellow in music composition and the inaugural recipient of the Florence Price Award for Composition. Her 2002 *Voices Shouting Out* was composed as a musical response to 9/11 and is a testament to the necessity of national optimism in a time of profound suffering.

JOHN WILLIAMS “Adventures on Earth” from *E.T.*

The music of John Williams is so intimately tied to timeless blockbuster movies that it’s hard to imagine *Jaws*, *Star Wars*, *Superman* or *Harry Potter* without the soaring melodies that we all know and love. The soundtrack for *E.T.*, which won the 1983 Academy Award for best original film score, provides a wondrous and poignant depth to the friendship between Elliott and his extra-terrestrial friend. “Adventures on Earth” combines themes from the movie’s final scenes, including the famous bicycle chase and the spaceship’s departure.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY *Clair de lune*

Debussy was inspired by paintings and images and was not interested in following the rules established by earlier composers. His use of color and harmony was groundbreaking: *Clair de lune (Moonlight)* seems to shimmer and hover in the air, a musical picture of nocturnal serenity. This beloved piece is often found in pop culture, most famously in the final minutes of the film *Ocean’s Eleven*.

GIOACHINO ROSSINI Overture to *William Tell*

Rossini was one of the most celebrated Italian composers of the 19th century and wrote 39 operas; *William Tell* was his last work before he retired a famous and wealthy man. The Overture is most recognized for its energetic final three minutes: a galloping tune which became the theme for radio and TV’s beloved Wild West character, the Lone Ranger. The opening cello solo, supported by the string section, contrasts this frenzy with peaceful lyricism and beauty.