



ARKANSAS SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

# Quapaw Quartet Presents *American Road Trip*



**New York City,  
New York**  
(George Gershwin)

**Washington  
D.C.** (John Philip  
Sousa)

**Nashville,  
Tennessee**  
(Jay Ungar and  
Molly Mason)

**Texarkana,  
Arkansas**  
(Scott Joplin)

**Los Angeles/  
Hollywood,  
California**  
(Carl Stalling)



## George Gershwin

George Gershwin was one of the most significant American **composers** of the 20th century, known for popular stage and screen music as well as classical **compositions**. He was born Jacob Gershowitz on September 26, 1898, in Brooklyn, New York. The son of Russian-Jewish immigrants, George began to play piano at age eleven. His teacher, Charles Hambitzer wrote, "I have a new pupil who will make his mark if anybody will."

Beginning at age fifteen, Gershwin played in several New York nightclubs and as a 'song plugger' for one of **Tin Pan Alley's** music publishers. After three years of doing this, he had become a highly skilled composer. To earn extra cash, he also worked as a rehearsal pianist for Broadway singers. In 1916, he composed his first published song.

Gershwin wrote numerous songs for stage and screen that quickly became standards, including "Oh, Lady Be Good!" "Someone to Watch over Me," "Strike Up the Band," "Embraceable You" and "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off." [Listen to them on YouTube.]

In 1925, he **composed** "Rhapsody in Blue" for piano and orchestra, which became his most often-performed work. Ten years later, his most ambitious **composition**, "Porgy and Bess" was staged. Gershwin called it his "folk opera" and it is considered to be among the most important American musical dramas of the 20th century. [Listen to Rhapsody in Blue performed by Leonard Bernstein on YouTube.]

Developed in collaboration with



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## John Philip Sousa



John Philip Sousa was born in Washington, DC, on November 14, 1854, the third of ten children. His father was from Portugal, and his mother came to this country from Germany. John's father had played trombone in the United States Marine Band. By the time he was seven, John was taking voice lessons, and by age ten, he was learning to play the cornet, flute, piano, trombone and violin. When he was thirteen years old John decided to run away and join a circus band as a musician. His father found out about that plan, and on June 9, 1868, he took John instead to the United States Marine Corps (USMC) headquarters to join the band.

Sousa left the Marine Band in 1875 to begin his musical career. A very fine violinist, John played in many orchestras in the Washington and Philadelphia areas, learned how to be a **conductor** and **composed** different types of music, including marches. By 1880 his fame as a conductor had spread, and he was appointed leader of the U.S. Marine Band.

## Jay Ungar & Molly Mason

(<http://www.jayandmolly.com/promo/index.shtml>)

Jay Ungar & Molly Mason have become one of the most popular duos in the American acoustic music scene. They have performed on the radio show, *A Prairie Home Companion*, and their own show, *Dancing on the Air* on WAMC's Northeast Network. Their recordings have been used for film soundtracks such as *Legends of the Fall* and *Brother's Keeper*, and Ken Burns' PBS documentary *The Civil War*. Their performance of the series' signature tune, Jay's composition *Ashokan Farewell*, contributed to the soundtrack which received an Emmy Award.

Jay & Molly run camps for musicians and dancers at Ashokan Center in the Catskill Mountains. People attend the camps to become better fiddlers, guitarists, mandolin players, percussionists, dancers, dance callers and instructors. In doing so, they're becoming links in the chain that connects our folk legacy from the people who came before us to those who will follow.



## Scott Joplin



Scott Joplin was born not far from Texarkana, Texas, in 1867 or 1868, the second of six children. His father was an ex-slave from North Carolina who worked for the railroad, and his mother was a "free-born" African-American from Kentucky. Mr. Joplin loved music with a 'beat' and started composing 'rags' soon after he moved to St. Louis. Rags had a **syncopated rhythm** and a very heavy two-beat accompaniment. The beat came out of the African-American music **heritage**.

Ragtime music is for dancing! Its syncopated rhythm in the melody and a steady two-beat rhythm in the accompaniment makes you want to get up and move to the music.

## Carl W. Stalling (Source: Wikipedia)

**Carl W. Stalling** (November 10, 1891 – November 29, 1972) was an American **composer** of music in animated films (cartoons). He is known for the *Looney Tunes* and *Merrie Melodies* cartoons produced by Warner Bros. He had to compose one complete score each week over 22 years!

*Looney Tunes* rose to great fame for creating such popular cartoon stars as Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, Elmer Fudd, Sylvester, Tweety, Wile E. Coyote and The Road Runner. From 1942 into the 1960s, *Looney Tunes* and *Merrie Melodies* were the most popular cartoon shorts in movie theaters.

*Looney Tunes* characters continue to appear in several television series, feature films, comic books, music albums, video games, and amusement park rides. The most popular *Looney Tunes* character, Bugs Bunny, is regarded as a cultural icon and has appeared in more films than any other cartoon character.



## Connections to American Culture

Culture is a word we use to describe how we live from day to day. It includes the art we make, music we listen to and how we dance along with many other things we do as a family or in our community. Various groups of people live differently based upon where they live, how much money they have to spend and the **traditions** followed by their families.

**African American Culture** – African traditions have combined with those of other cultures in the African American community. The influence of African music and dance on is **prominent** in the music and dance performed across America today. Examples of African American music performed by the Quapaw Quartet include **Ragtime music by Scott Joplin** and **Jazz music composed by George Gershwin**.



**Dance:** The African American Dance Company from Indiana University is one of many across America that incorporates elements of African dance into modern classical dance.



Jazz **music** originated in the African American community and is now performed around the world. Drums, trumpets and saxophones are commonly used to play jazz music.

**American Culture from Appalachia** – When people started moving west in America, many settled in the Appalachian Mountain area. They brought with them the customs and traditions that formed the culture of the Appalachia.



Appalachia is famous for its **artistic** quilts. A quilt is a set of square pieces of fabric sewn together. How many squares can you count in this quilt? \_\_\_\_

The Grand Ole Opry (right) is a famous concert hall for country music in Nashville, Tennessee. **Jay Ungar and Mollie Mason** are popular performers there.



Banjoes and fiddles are popular **Bluegrass** musical instruments. Percussion instruments used can be almost anything found around the house that makes an interesting sound.



## Vocabulary

*Appalachia* - a region in the eastern US in the area of the southern Appalachian Mountains  
*Bluegrass music* - a form of American country music inspired by the music of Appalachia in which violins are played as fiddles  
*compose* - in music, to come up with an original piece of music  
*composition* - music that a composer writes  
*conductor* - a person who leads a musical group such as a wind band or orchestra, standing in front of the musicians and using his arms, hands, head and eyes to communicate  
*heritage* - the culture handed down from one generation to the next

*prominent* - standing out in an important way  
*syncopated rhythm* - pattern of notes used in jazz (or rap) music where many notes (or words) fall between steady beats  
*Tin Pan Alley* - An area of New York City where, in about 1885, a number of music publishers set up shop. "Tin Pan" refers to the sounds that came from many pianos playing the latest popular music at the same time sounding like tin pans.  
*tradition* - a cultural practice or custom that is handed down from parents to their children over several generations.

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