Arapahoe Philharmonic Plays Ellington, Still, Gershwin in “The Jazz Age”

The concert is a collaboration with students and faculty from Denver School of the Arts.

Littleton, CO – The Arapahoe Philharmonic (AP), under the direction of Music Director and Conductor Devin Patrick Hughes, explores orchestral jazz in “The Jazz Age” on Friday, February 7, 2020, featuring music by Duke Ellington, William Grant Still, George Gershwin and a medley of big band tunes. The concert begins at 7:30 p.m. at Denver First Church of the Nazarene, 3800 E. Hampden Avenue, Cherry Hills Village, CO 80113. Maestro Hughes will offer a pre-concert talk at 6:45 p.m. and kids of all ages are invited to a Children’s Corner presentation in the lobby at 7:10 p.m.

Black, Brown and Beige was Duke Ellington’s first symphony, composed for his first performance at New York’s Carnegie Hall in 1943. Ellington noted the work as “a parallel to the history of the American Negro” through music representing times of slavery, emancipation, wartime service and life for African Americans in 1940s America, and word of the premiere instilled hope that the work would help bridge the racial divide in the country at the time. It was a juxtaposition of jazz and classical that left audience and critics unsure of what they had just heard. While Ellington only performed the work a handful of times, the work has survived as a significant representation of the African American experience. The Arapahoe Philharmonic will be performing the Maurice Peress orchestration.

William Grant Still remains a relative unknown name in the classical music world despite having written five symphonies and eight operas during his career. He was the first African American composer to have a symphony performed by a leading orchestra in the U.S., conduct a major American orchestra, have an opera premiered by the New York City Opera, and have an opera performed live on national television. His first symphony, the Afro-American Symphony, was the most widely performed American symphony until the 1950s. The piece follows a traditional symphony form, but integrates blues harmonic progressions and rhythms more commonly heard in the African-American music of the day. Still wrote of the piece: "’I seek in the 'Afro-American Symphony' to portray...the sons of the soil, who still retain so many of the traits peculiar to their African forebears; who have not responded completely to the transforming effect of progress.'"

If asked to name an American composer, it’s likely most people will include George Gershwin at the top of their list. Gershwin had a prolific career spanning the classical, jazz, Broadway, opera and popular...
The opera *Porgy and Bess* is one of his most popular works. The Arapahoe Philharmonic will be performing the *Porgy and Bess Suite* arranged by Gershwin’s good friend Robert Russell Bennett.

Calvin Custer’s *A Salute to the Big Bands* features a medley of popular songs: *I’m Getting Sentimental Over You, April in Paris, Pennsylvania 6-5000, Serenade in Blue* and *Sing, Sing, Sing*.

Students and faculty from Denver School of the Arts’ band and orchestra departments will be joining the Arapahoe Philharmonic for the program and will be featured in a short jazz combo performance during the concert. The instrumental music program at DSA, under the leadership of Dave Hammond and Enrique Lasansky, is award-winning, receiving multiple Downbeat Student Music Awards, top awards from the State Concert Band Festival and the National Orchestra Festival at the American String Teachers Association Conference, and nationwide recognition through multiple invitations to compete at the Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Fest in New York City. This month, both the DSA orchestra and concert band will be featured performers at the prestigious Colorado Music Educators Association conference in Colorado Springs.

Tickets and more information on the program may be found at [https://www.arapahoe-phil.org/event/concert-4-the-jazz-age/](https://www.arapahoe-phil.org/event/concert-4-the-jazz-age/).

**THE 2019–2020 CONCERT SEASON: On With the Dance!**

**Friday, February 7, 2020: The Jazz Age**
Duke Ellington: *Black, Brown and Beige*
William Grant Still: Symphony No. 1, “Afro-American”
George Gershwin: *Porgy and Bess Suite*
Calvin Custer (arr.): *A Salute to the Big Bands*
And a special performance by the Denver School of the Arts Jazz Combo

View the full 2019–2020 Season Brochure: [https://www.arapahoe-phil.org/season-brochure/](https://www.arapahoe-phil.org/season-brochure/)

*The Arapahoe Philharmonic is grateful for season support from the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District and Colorado Creative Industries.*

**About the Arapahoe Philharmonic**
The Arapahoe Philharmonic has served as a musical and cultural resource to the South Metro Denver community for over 65 years. The organization is dedicated to engaging, enriching and inspiring our community through musical performance, education and outreach. The orchestra’s musicians are primarily volunteers playing for the love of music, with a core of compensated section principals who provide technical leadership and support the excellence of performance.

Concerts feature repertoire spanning the centuries, from the great masters to composers of the current day. The Philharmonic is invested in future generations, presenting an annual Children's Discovery Concert, sponsoring outreach to schools, working with area student honor orchestras, sponsoring a Play-In side-by-side event for high school students and presenting three collegiate-level competitions, the T. Gordon Parks Concerto Competition and the Vincent C. LaGuardia, Jr. Conducting and Composition Competitions. Recent initiatives include a Family Concert and music therapy-inspired programs for individuals with developmental disabilities and dementia.
About the Music Director
Devin Patrick Hughes is highly regarded for his exhilarating score interpretations, advocacy for music accessibility and promotion of music of our time. He is concurrently serving as Music Director and Conductor of the Arapahoe Philharmonic and Boulder Symphony, and has established himself as a musical leader in the region through previous positions with the Santa Fe Youth Symphony Association, Denver Young Artists Orchestra, Denver Philharmonic Orchestra and Denver Contemporary Chamber Players. In 2010, Hughes was the only American selected with eleven other finalists in the Arturo Toscanini International Conducting Competition in Parma, Italy. He was also selected from hundreds of his peers across the globe to compete in the 2017 Solti International Conducting Competition in Hungary. Hughes was a conducting fellow at the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen and has conducted ensembles across North America and Europe, including the Winnipeg Symphony, Colorado Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Green Bay Symphony and Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini. More information may be found at www.devinpatrickhughes.com.

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