



Recommended by Landmarks

A playlist listening guide for our friends in the
Music Circle

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1. Thomas Canning | *Fantasy on a Hymn by Justin Morgan* Recommended by Maestro Christopher Wilkins

American music began with tunes created for communal singing rather than professional performance. The best-known early composer of hymns was the Bostonian William Billings, author of *Chester* and *When Jesus Wept*. Born within months of Billings - in West Springfield, MA in 1747 - Justin Morgan wrote hymns prized for their plainspoken eloquence. He is better remembered today as the owner of a compact and refined horse named Figure, who sired the famous American breed of Morgan horse, named after its owner.

Two centuries later, Thomas Canning (1911-1989) revisited this New England musical tradition in his *Fantasy on a Hymn by Justin Morgan*, a luminous work recalling Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*.

2. Louis Moreau Gottschalk | Symphony No. 1 "A Night in the Tropics" Recommended by Maestro Christopher Wilkins

Pianist and composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk was America's first international star. Born in New Orleans of Creole heritage—like Pope Leo XIV—he was the first to incorporate the syncopated popular music of New Orleans and the Caribbean into concert works, anticipating ragtime by half a century. His two-movement First Symphony opens with sounds evoking the warmth and stillness of a tropical evening. The second movement bursts forth with infectious Afro-Cuban rhythms and the colors of an enormous orchestra.



The premiere took place in Havana in 1859 with over 650 performers, including a huge symphony orchestra, a US military band, and a percussion ensemble brought in from the eastern tip of Cuba, aka Guantánamo.

3. Richard Strauss | *Vier Letzte Lieder* (*Four Last Songs*) Recommended by Arthur Rishi, Executive Director

Strauss's sublime *Four Last Songs*, composed in 1948, represents both the 84 year old composer's autumnal farewell to life, and is arguably the very final work of the Romantic period that began with Beethoven. There are many fine recordings of this work (those with Schwarzkopf, Della Casa, Popp, Auger, and Te Kanawa all come to mind), but this recording from 1982 with Jessye Norman and Kurt Masur is surely among the greatest, featuring glorious, transcendent singing and equally inspired conducting. The superb playing of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra is beautifully captured on one of the earliest digital recordings ever produced.

4. Jean Sibelius | *Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 43* Recommended by Ben White, Director of Development

This is a meaningful piece to me because it was the first full symphony that I performed as a member of an orchestra. I have had the pleasure of revisiting it several times in different orchestras, and the journey that the piece takes listeners on is always transformative. The best part, though I'm biased as a bassoon player, is the D-minor bassoon theme during the second movement.

5. R. Nathaniel Dett | *The Chariot Jubilee* Recommended by Emilia De Leo, Project Manager

The Greater Seattle Choral Consortium describes Dett's *The Chariot Jubilee* as "a groundbreaking fusion of African American spirituals and classical oratorio." Boston Landmarks Orchestra performed this piece with our One City Choir in August 2019.



The One City Choir brings vocalists from across the greater Boston area together to perform alongside the orchestra, and it has become a Landmarks tradition beloved by the singers, musicians, and audiences alike. After hearing the Choir rehearse for several week, listening to the final product ring out from the Hatch Shell stage was not only a highlight of the season, but a memory that has stayed with me since.