

THE KENNEDY CENTER

Performing Arts Series

AND

Exploring the Arts

WITH



Exploring the Arts with the Masters: Alan & Marilyn Bergman and Tony Bennett

March 19, 2010
Grades 9-12
Web Only Broadcast

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Join ASCAP's Director of Musical Theater, **Michael Kerker**, and students from New York City's Frank Sinatra School of the Arts for a conversation with master artists of The Great American Songbook. Iconic songwriting duo, **Alan and Marilyn Bergman**, discuss their creative process and influential legacy. Joined by legendary jazz and popular music singer, **Tony Bennett**, they discuss the relationship between songwriter and performer. The session includes musical performances by Alan Bergman and Tony Bennett.

THE ARTISTS

ABOUT ALAN AND MARILYN BERGMAN

Alan and Marilyn were born in the same hospital in Brooklyn, New York. Marilyn majored in Music at New York City's High School of Music and Art and went on to study Psychology and English at New York University. Alan studied Music and Theatre Arts at the University of North Carolina and later pursued his Masters at UCLA.

Their professional collaboration began more than 50 years ago, and they have since become the most beloved and respected songwriting duo in the Great American Songbook. Their life's work has spanned songs for film, television and stage and they have collaborated with the most distinguished composers, notably Michel Legrand, Cy Coleman, Marvin Hamlisch, Dave Grusin, John Williams, Henry Mancini and Johnny Mandel. Their lyrics have been sung by some of the greatest performers and recording artists of our time, among them Tony Bennett, Frank Sinatra, Rosemary Clooney, Barbra Streisand, Ray Charles, Luciano Pavarotti and Sting.



Alan and Marilyn's songs have won them multiple awards and nominations, including Emmys, Grammys, Golden Globes and three Academy Awards. They were inducted into the Songwriters' Hall of Fame in 1980 and have since been awarded numerous Lifetime Achievement Awards from such organizations as the National Academy of Songwriters and the Johnny Mercer Foundation.



In addition to their career as lyricists, the Bergmans have individually lent their expertise and leadership to the various Boards and Committees of the Library of Congress, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences and the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), which Marilyn served as President and Chairman of the Board for 15 years and continues to serve on its Board. ASCAP is a performing rights organization comprised of more than 370,000 U.S. composers, songwriters, lyricists, and music publishers of every kind of music.

ABOUT TONY BENNETT:

The son of a grocer and Italian-born immigrant, Tony Bennett was born and raised Anthony Dominick Benedetto in New York City's borough of Queens. He attended the High School of Industrial Arts in Manhattan, where he nurtured his dual passions, singing and painting. Today his paintings hang in the permanent collections of Washington D.C.'s Smithsonian Institution, Ohio's Butler Institute of American Art, Manhattan's National Arts Club, and the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, VA.



As a singer, Tony has received 15 Grammy Awards including the prestigious Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. A pillar of The Great American Songbook, Tony's repertoire includes traditional pop and jazz music standards. Throughout his long career, Tony has collaborated with many of the world's greatest performers, including Frank Sinatra, Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, Judy Garland, Duke Ellington, Paul McCartney, Elton John, Stevie Wonder, and k.d. lang. Tony has been the subject of both a filmed biography produced by Clint Eastwood and a major television special, *Tony Bennett: An American Classic*, which won seven Emmy Awards.

Together with his wife, Susan Benedetto, a former public school teacher, Tony founded Frank Sinatra School of the Arts, a public high school honoring his late friend and colleague, Frank Sinatra, which opened in 2001 in Tony's hometown neighborhood of Astoria, Queens. Tony and Susan also founded Exploring the Arts, a nonprofit organization committed to strengthening and supporting the arts in American public schools.



BEFORE THE PROGRAM: DISCUSSION TOPICS

- Artists give great importance to individuality and originality, yet why might it *also* be important to study other artists? What can we learn from studying tradition? How might the great masters of our past serve as guides to our future?
- What is the artist's role in society – is it simply to entertain, or is it something more? Why do you like to perform or make *your* art?

OBSERVE, REFLECT, AND DISCUSS

- We live in a society obsessed with fame. Popular culture today is dominated by instant success – and instant failure. Why do you think Tony Bennett and the Bergmans were able to build careers to last a lifetime? Which of their attitudes and work habits might hold the key to their longevity?
- Marilyn Bergman states, "Nothing is written, only *re-written*, and that is what separates the professional from the amateur: the ability to re-write." What was she referring to and what does she mean by this? Can you apply her statement about re-writing to artists other than songwriters? For example, what might this mean for dancers and choreographers, or for actors, or painters?
- The Bergmans discuss their admiration for Tony Bennett's voice and his interpretation of their songs. Who are *your* favorite singers, and *why*? Describe their use of rhythm, their emotional expression, and the unique characteristics of their voice. What makes your favorite singer stand out from all the rest?

TERMINOLOGY

- During the program, Tony Bennett performs a song written by the Bergmans, and its opening lines go as follows: "How do you keep the music playing? / How do you make it last? / How do you keep a song from fading too fast?" Is this song about music *literally*, or is it being used as a metaphor for something else? Define *metaphor*. How might we interpret the meaning of these opening lines – what do they suggest to you?
- The Bergmans discuss their preference for using *True* rhymes rather than *False* rhymes. Define these terms. Try writing some original lyrics or lines of poetry using an example of each.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES, CONT.

OBSERVE, REFLECT, AND DISCUSS

- The Bergmans discuss their musical influences and sources for inspiration. They mention reading the news, studying literature, and going to see theatre. Think back to what they said: how specifically did these activities and studies help their songwriting? Do you think it's enough for musicians to simply study music, or do you think it's important for artists to be knowledgeable in other areas as well – and *why*? Did you ever learn something in another class, like in History or Science, that inspired your creativity or that influenced your artistic work? Describe that experience. As young artists yourselves, where do you turn for inspiration? How do you come up with ideas?
- The Bergmans touch upon the fact that so many of their songs are about love: searching for love, falling in love, losing love. Think of *all* the many different songs you know. How many of them are about love in some shape or form? Why do you think we keep writing and singing about love – why do we need so many different love songs?

RESEARCH AND REPORT

- *Research and define* “The Great American Songbook.” Select a composer, songwriter or singer from The Great American Songbook and review some examples of their work. Describe their style of verse and lyrics, their use of rhythm, their harmonies. What do you think makes The Great American Songbook so *great*? If you could nominate an American singer, songwriter, or composer for inclusion in the Songbook, who would you choose – and *why*?
- The Bergmans mention Irving Berlin as one of the musical artists whose work they greatly admire. Who was he? Why was he so influential? What were some of his most famous works? Select one of his songs and describe why you like it. What artistic techniques does he employ?

MUSICAL ACTIVITY

- Pass out a 32-bar lead sheet from a song in the American Songbook repertoire with lyrics deleted (for example: “They Say It’s Wonderful” by Irving Berlin). Play the song’s melody and accompaniment for the students. Ask them to identify an emotion or topic they feel the music evokes (for example: Happiness, Hatred, Hope, Temptation, Triumph, or Loss). Have the students write original lyrics on that topic to fit the notes and phrasing. Have the students justify their choices in musical terms by discussing such elements as: tempo, key, rhythm, use of step-wise motion/leaps, chromaticism, etc. Complete for homework.

Websites:

- alanandmarilynbergman.com
- tonybennett.net
- jazzstandards.com
- greatamericansongbook.org

Films / DVDs:

- *The Way We Were* (1973)
- *Johnny Mercer: The Dream’s On Me* (2009)
- *Yentl* (1983)
- *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968)
- *The Happy Ending* (1969)

Television:

- *In the Heat of the Night* (1988-1995)

Music / CDs:

- *Lyricaly, Alan Bergman*
- *Yentl Soundtrack*
- *Tony Bennett Duets: An American Classic*
- *Tony Bennett Sings the Ultimate American Songbook, Vol. 1*
- *Margaret Whiting Sings the Jerome Kern Songbook*
- *The Complete Johnny Mercer Songbook*
- *Nat King Cole: After Midnight*
- *The Complete Ella Fitzgerald Songbooks*
- *Frank Sinatra: In the Wee Small Hours*

Books:

- *American Popular Song - The Great Innovators 1900-1950* by Alec Wilder
- *American Singers - 27 Portraits in Song* by Whitney Balliett
- *Easy to Remember - The Great American Songwriters & Their Songs* by William Zinsser
- *Poets of Tin Pan Alley - A History of America’s Great Lyricists* by Philip Furia
- *They’re Playing Our Song* by Max Wilk
- *Reading Lyrics* by Robert Gottlieb & Robert Kimball
- *Lyrics* by Oscar Hammerstein
- *Lyrics on Several Occasions* by Ira Gershwin
- *The Complete Lyrics of Johnny Mercer* by Johnny Mercer
- *A Hymn to Him - The Lyrics of Alan Jay Lerner* by Benny Green
- *Sondheim on Music – Minor Details & Major Decisions* by Mark Eden Horowitz
- *The House That George Built* by Wilfrid Sheed