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Friends of Henderson Library Newsletter

Zach S. Henderson Library, Georgia Southern University

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A Fine Romance

Jewish Songwriters, American Songs, 1910-1965



Richard Leo Johnson

"A FINE ROMANCE" EXHIBIT AT HENDERSON LIBRARY THROUGH APRIL 20

Americans have always responded to the wit, the passion, and the sophistication of the ballads, dance tunes, jazz numbers, and show-stoppers that make up the great "American Songbook." Songs such as "As Time Goes By," "It Had to Be You," and "Over the Rainbow" have captivated generations of audiences and remain beloved musical icons of American popular culture.

A colorful new exhibit at the Zach S. Henderson Library celebrates American popular song during the period 1910-1965. The best musical artists of the time combined a genius for melody, a talent for pairing melody with the perfect words, and an ability to connect with a wide audience. A remarkably high percentage of them were Jewish, from families that had immigrated to America in the 1800s or fled pogroms and persecution in Europe at the turn of the century. "A Fine Romance: Jewish Songwriters, American Songs, 1910-1965" tells their story, using lively and striking images from Broadway musicals, classic films, posters, and personal collections.

The first half of the twentieth century saw the invention of the radio receiver, the broadcasting microphone, the talking movie, and the long-playing record, devices that helped artists and performers reach mass audiences. During their heyday between 1910 and 1965, songs from the great American songbook were essential to the success of Broadway musicals, Hollywood films, the jazz scene, Big Bands, popular vocalists, and night clubs. Songwriters who could craft tunes that appealed to the masses were able to make musical history in a country that offered them that chance. The sky was the limit for talented young people with big imaginations—young people such as Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein, and George Gershwin.

Irving Berlin, a cantor's son, had no formal music training and could play piano in only one key, but he was one of the few composers who were talented at writing both music and lyrics. Berlin's "God Bless America," "White Christmas" and "Easter Parade" have become American anthems. Jerome Kern composed the melodies for some of the world's most revered love songs—"Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," "The Way You Look Tonight," and the saucy "A Fine Romance." "The King and I," "Oklahoma," and "South Pacific" are only a few of the enduring American musicals created by Richard Rodgers

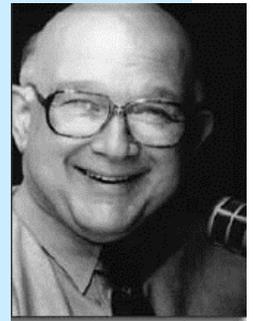
and Oscar Hammerstein. George Gershwin wrote jazz-inflected orchestral pieces that bridged the gap between classical and popular music. His "Rhapsody in Blue" and "An American in Paris" are still breathtaking to hear.

"A Fine Romance" is visiting 55 sites throughout the U.S. in 2011-2012. It was curated by David Lehman and developed by Nextbook, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting Jewish literature, culture, and ideas, and the American Library Association Public Programs Office. The national tour of the exhibit has been made possible by the Charles H. Revson Foundation, the Righteous Persons Foundation, the David Berg Foundation, an anonymous donor, and *Tablet: A New Read on Jewish Life*. *A Fine Romance: Jewish Songwriters, American Songs* is also a book by David Lehman, published by Nextbook/Schocken.

"We are delighted that Henderson Library was chosen as a site for this exhibit about a fascinating period of American popular music history," said Bede Mitchell, Dean of the Library. "The many Jewish composers who helped to create the great American Songbook will never be forgotten. Their compositions are a chronicle of American culture and history and their musical genius has made them immortal. We hope the whole community will be able to see the exhibit and attend some of the programs we have planned to celebrate and enjoy their lives and their songs."

The Henderson Library is sponsoring a number of free programs and other events for the public in connection with the exhibit. Selections from our vast collection of sheet music published between 1910 and 1950 are also on display in the second floor exhibit cases. The selections are by the composers highlighted in the traveling exhibit, such as Irving Berlin and Richard Rodgers.

Additional events supporting the exhibit include:



March 20, 7 p.m. in 1915 Nessmith-Lane. Michael Lasser will speak on "Jewish Songwriters and the Making of American Song." Mr. Lasser is co-author of *America's Songs: The Stories Behind the Songs of Broadway, Hollywood, and Tin Pan Alley*, and has hosted the National Public Radio program "Fascinatin' Rhythm" since 1980.

March 21, 7 p.m. in 1915 Nessmith-Lane. Panel discussion, "Jewish Songwriters and the Evolution of the American Musical Theater." Panelists will include Adrian Gnam, conductor of the Georgia Southern Symphony Orchestra, Professor Emeritus Michael Braz, and theatre director Roger Miller.

April 13, 7:30 p.m. in Georgia Southern's Performing Arts Center, the Georgia Southern Symphony will feature works by Jewish composers under the direction of Adrian Gnam. The program includes

"There's No Business Like Show Business (Irving Berlin)

Highlights from Porgy and Bess (George Gershwin)

"Glitter and Be Gay" from Candide (Leonard Bernstein)

Rebecca Flaherty, soprano

Ol' Man River" from Showboat (Jerome Kern)

Cyril Durant, bass-baritone

Steppin' Out Medley (Irving Berlin)

Steppin' Out With My Baby

Cheek to Cheek

Change Partners

It Only Happens When I Dance With You

Let Yourself Go

The Best Things Happen When You're Dancing

You're Easy to Dance With

Shaking the Blues Away

Rebecca Flaherty, soprano

Cyril Durant, bass-baritone

Allen Henderson, baritone

West Side Story for Brass Quintet, Drum Set and

Orchestra (Leonard Bernstein)

World premiere of this arrangement by Professor Bill Schmid



Eagle Nation on Parade Installation: "The Pursuit of Knowledge"



On Saturday, February 11, 2012, approximately forty people applauded as Shirley Wiley unveiled "The Pursuit of Knowledge," the first installation on campus from Georgia Southern University's public art project Eagle Nation on Parade. The statue was placed along the pedestrian on the east side of the Zach s. Henderson Library, overlooking the lake.

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Artist Rebecca Hampton decorated the eagle on a commission supported by the late Vera McElveen Ireland's gift to the Library's Naomi Davis McElveen Art Fund. The McElveen Art Fund was established in 1987 by Hassie McElveen McLendon, former campus library director from 1946 to 1970, in honor of her mother. Vera McElveen Ireland was Mrs. McLendon's sister, and Shirley Wiley is Naomi Davis McElveen's granddaughter.

Ms. Hampton's design pays tribute to the everlasting nature of books. She was born in Jacksonville, Florida and attended the Savannah Arts Academy. She graduated cum laude with a degree in painting from the Savannah College of Art and Design. Ms. Hampton resides in Hines-

ville, Georgia and works as a freelance artist.

The Eagle Nation on Parade public art project salutes the University's traditions, celebrates the unity of campus and community, and supports student scholarships and research initiatives.

In her introductory remarks, Mrs. Wiley stated "This is the perfect location for this design. It will be a significant addition to this landscape and a reminder that this institution, and this building in particular, is dedicated to the continuing pursuit of knowledge. Many people will walk by this eagle and be reminded of the proud history of the Eagle Nation."



HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN SOMETHING?

Yes, it's that time again when we need your help!

If you have not yet renewed your 2012 membership in the Friends of Henderson Library, it's not too late. Any donation to the Henderson Library gives you membership with the Friends, and, your donation is tax deductible! Your support helps with budget cuts and provides many services to our library patrons. Remember, that in addition to serving the research needs of Georgia Southern, Henderson Library is also a community resource. As a Friends member you are kept abreast of all the library's upcoming activities and events. Make your commitment today! You can show your support by donating online at <http://tinyurl.com/joinfohl>, or by sending your check directly to us at Henderson Library, PO Box 8074, Statesboro, GA 30460.