

IMPRESSIONS FROM THE AMERICAN TWENTIETH CENTURY

for solo piano
Matthew Galinn

- I. 1930
- II. 1950
- III. 1970
- IV. 1990

In conjunction with the *All Night Party* Exhibition in the CA Gallery,
Towson University, August 28-October 10

ALL NIGHT
PARTY

Impressions from the American Twentieth Century seeks to imagine, through music, the attitudes, emotions, and desires of American people at various points during the previous century. Each movement is a brief snapshot, a musical “impression,” highlighting important moments in American history. The 1918 Flu Pandemic, the Great Depression, WWII, the Civil Rights Movement, and the rise of new technology and resulting global interconnectedness; these events all had a profound impact on American society. Developed alongside ***All Night Party***, this work adds additional aural and experiential layers to the exhibition, which features the work of artists Dennis Beach, Bobby Coleman, Alex Epstein, Tim McFarlane, Dominine Nash, and McKinley Wallace. Also included in the exhibition are dresses on display from the Towson University Historical Clothing Collection.

Composer and saxophonist Matthew Galinn has written for, and performed in a variety of ensembles, from piano trio to symphony orchestra. In addition to composing and performing, he has also worked professionally as an arranger and editor. He began his musical education at the Community College of Baltimore County, Essex before continuing at the University of Maryland Baltimore County where he earned his bachelor’s degree in music composition. He is currently pursuing his Master’s in Music Composition at Towson University.

Galinn has composed original works for solo piano, piano and voice, saxophone quartet, brass quintet, piano trio, synthesizer, and found objects in addition to creating arrangements and transcriptions of famous works for saxophone quartet and symphony orchestra. His music has been performed by notable ensembles including Strata and the Balance Campaign. Additionally, his music has been recognized through awards from the MMEA and the Three Arts Club of Homeland.

This project was made possible through the support and guidance of Dr. Erin Lehman and the Towson University Department of Art+Design, Art History, and Art Education. Additionally, Dr. Christopher Dillon’s interpretation and performance of the music on piano has been essential in bringing this project to fruition, as was the guidance of composer Dr. William Kleinsasser. The virtual presentation of this music was made possible through the assistance of Towson University audio technician Andie Verbus.

Impressions from the American Twentieth Century (2020)

for solo piano

Matthew Galinn (b. 1996)

*To my Great Grandfather, Gordon J. Kelly Sr., who has witnessed firsthand the entirety of the decades explored in this music. Thank you for sharing your stories and experiences with me.
Happy 100th birthday.*

I. 1930

“How can you frighten a man whose hunger is not only in his own cramped stomach but in the wretched bellies of his children? You can't scare him—he has known a fear beyond every other.”

-John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*

The end of WWI and the 1918 Flu Pandemic led much of America into a frenzied and desperate decade-long party. However, the Stock Market Crash of 1929 ended the celebration, and when coupled with a weak banking system, low farm prices, and industrial over-production, it led to the worst economic downturn in American history. Millions lost their jobs and the ability to provide for their families; desperation, hunger and poverty became widespread. Minorities suffered especially high rates of unemployment as a result of racism. Drought and dustbowls led to mass migration, and the election of Franklin Roosevelt brought about The New Deal and the beginning of a social safety net for Americans.

II. 1950

“In our seeking for economic and political progress, we all go up - or else we all go down.”

-Franklin D. Roosevelt

WWII brought the American economy out of the Depression and into a decades long economic boom. Although there was a tremendous loss of life in the war, the outlook for the future was more optimistic. Many returning veterans were able to seek further education and housing with the financial support of the GI Bill, leading to a burgeoning middle-class and the growth of the suburbs. Rock n' roll and television descended on Americans and there was a renewed sense of excitement for the future as well as a newfound confidence in America's status as a world power. However, the developing Cold War, continuing segregation and racism, and the sense of cultural constraint tempered this optimism. Multiple forces came together to push women out of the workplace after

the war. Additionally, LGBTQI people faced frequent persecution. Institutional inequalities in access highlighted the need for social reform and motivated both action and change among disadvantaged groups that ultimately lead to even greater activism in the following decades.

III. 1970

“We've got to face the fact that some people say you fight fire best with fire, but we say you put fire out best with water. We say you don't fight racism with racism. We're gonna fight racism with solidarity.”

- Fred Hampton, Black Panther Party

**In memory of the victims of racial violence and in recognition of the ongoing work needed to achieve equity for African Americans today.*

The Civil Rights Movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s predominately engaged in the fight against legal segregation. Their non-violent tactics soon gave way to a more confrontational style, ultimately engaging Native peoples, Chicanos, Black Power groups, and the early Feminist and Gay Rights Movements, amongst others, all of which were intertwined with anti-Vietnam War activism. The social and political progress resulting from their efforts and sacrifice were important steps in the ongoing fight for the equality of all Americans. Against this backdrop of strife was a concurrent explosion in music, art, fashion, film and performance, highlighting new voices and viewpoints that strove to break free from the cultural conformity and homogeneity of the previous decade.

IV. 1990

“I'm a great believer that any tool that enhances communication has profound effects in terms of how people can learn from each other, and how they can achieve the kind of freedoms that they're interested in.”

-Bill Gates

The 1980-90s saw an explosion of technology that forever changed the way people lived, worked, and socialized. These new technologies enabled an unprecedented connection between Americans and people around the world. The dismantling of Great Society programs began in earnest amidst the cultural celebration of wealth and Wall Street. The manufacturing sector, long a bedrock of the middle class, began to hemorrhage jobs. Drugs flooded the inner cities, crippling their ability to continue making economic progress. The AIDS crisis both decimated and radicalized those affected. A long period of anxiety surrounding the Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and Globalization progressed at an unprecedented rate with consequences both positive and negative.