



Music of the Great Depression (American History Through Music)

William H. Young Jr., Nancy K. Young

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Prior to the stock market crash of 1929 American music still possessed a distinct tendency towards elitism, as songwriters and composers sought to avoid the mass appeal that critics scorned. During the Depression, however, radio came to dominate the other musical media of the time, and a new era of truly popular music was born. Under the guidance of the great Duke Ellington and a number of other talented and charismatic performers, swing music unified the public consciousness like no other musical form before or since. At the same time the enduring legacies of Woody Guthrie in folk, Aaron Copeland in classical, and George and Ira Gershwin on Broadway stand as a testament to the great diversity of tastes and interests that subsisted throughout the Great Depression, and play a part still in our lives today. The lives of these and many other great musicians come alive in this insightful study of the works, artists, and circumstances that contributed to making and performing the music that helped America through one of its most difficult times.

The *American History through Music* series examines the many different styles of music that have played a significant part in our nation's history. While volumes in this series show the multifaceted roles of music in our culture, they also use music as a lens through which readers may study American social history. The authors present in-depth analysis of American musical genres, significant musicians, technological innovations, and the many connections between music and the realms of art, politics, and daily life.

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