



# WHAT IS THE GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK?

HINT: IT'S NOT AN ACTUAL BOOK - IT'S A TERM!

The Great American Songbook consists of enduring standards, the songs that are played and sung over and over by multiple generations. These songs have a timeless meaning and resonance, whether they are days or decades old. [Learn more at TheSongbook.org.](http://TheSongbook.org)

## FOUNDATIONAL PERIOD (1920S - 1960S):

This cannon represents the most important and influential American popular songs and jazz standards of the early 20th century that were created for Broadway musicals, Tin Pan Alley, and Hollywood musical films.  
(\*often referred to as Golden Age)

### QUICK FACTS:

- The 1920s - 1960s period represents the **foundation** of American popular music when a uniquely American sound was developed for the first time
- The physical materials and recording formats from this era are **in danger of being lost forever** (reason why the Songbook Foundation focuses preservation efforts on this era)
- Music was **built to last** with a song structure that supports a song's ability to be reinterpreted and lyrics that tell a story about basic human experiences/emotions
- Often referred to as "**American Standards**"

## SONGWRITER & ARTIST SPOTLIGHTS:

**Songwriters:** Irving Berlin, Duke Ellington, George & Ira Gershwin, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, Harold Arlen, Johnny Mercer, Hoagy Carmichael, Fats Waller, Rodgers & Hammerstein II, & many others

**Artists:** Ella Fitzgerald, Fred Astaire, Rosemary Clooney, Nat King Cole, Sammy Davis, Jr., Judy Garland, Billie Holiday, Lena Horne, Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Mel Tormé, Andy Williams, Bing Crosby, Doris Day, Peggy Lee, Johnny Mathis, & many others

## THE "NEW" AMERICAN SONGBOOK:

The Songbook is **ever-evolving** with new songs being added that have a more **contemporary feel**, but are written in the same tradition (i.e. well crafted lyrics that tell a story with a musical sophistication).

- Examples include songs by Billy Joel, Carole King, Paul Simon, Joni Mitchell (written from the **1960s through today**)