

Everything Old is New Again

"I Got Rhythm"

"Tea for Two"

"Embraceable You"

"The Charleston"

"Georgia On My Mind"

Timeless Songs Reimagined

In music, some of the most meaningful moments come from rediscovery, when a familiar melody finds new life in a new voice. Each year, a new collection of songs enters the public domain, becoming free to share, perform, and reimagine.

The year 2026 brings a fresh group of beloved classics into the spotlight. This month's Perfect Harmony program celebrates some of these timeless melodies - songs that have stood the test of time and now belong to everyone.



Perfect 
Harmony

Song: "I Got Rhythm" (1930)

Songwriter: George and Ira Gershwin

Brief Context:

"I Got Rhythm," composed in 1930 by George Gershwin with lyrics by Ira Gershwin, was introduced in the Broadway musical *Girl Crazy*, where it was originally performed by Ethel Merman. With its upbeat tempo and unforgettable melody, the song quickly became one of the Gershwins' most popular hits. Over time, "I Got Rhythm" also became a beloved jazz standard, embraced by performers across generations. Celebrated for its joyful spirit and optimistic message ("Who could ask for anything more?"), the song remains a vibrant and enduring favorite, capturing the energy and excitement of Broadway's classic era.

Activity: Singing

What do you need?

- Perfect Harmony "I Got Rhythm" video ([YOUTUBE](#))
- Perfect Harmony "I Got Rhythm" lyrics

Fun Fact:

"I Got Rhythm" has continued to reach new audiences through film and popular culture. It was memorably featured in the 1951 film *An American in Paris*, where Gene Kelly brings the song to life with his signature energy and charm. Over the years, appearances like this have helped keep the song fresh and familiar, introducing the catchy tune to generations beyond the Broadway stage.



I Got Rhythm

I got rhythm

I got music

I got my gal

Who could ask for anything more?

I got daisies

In green pastures,

I got my gal

Who could ask for anything more?

Ol'Man Trouble,

I don't mind him.

You won't find him

At my door.

I got starlight,

I got sweet dreams,

I got my gal,

Who could ask for anything more?

Who could ask for anything more?

I Got Rhythm

Ol'Man Trouble,

I don't mind him.

You won't find him

'Round my door.

I got starlight,

I got sweet dreams,

I got my gal,

Who could ask for anything more?

Who could ask for anything more?

Song: "Tea for Two" (1924)

Songwriter: Vincent Youmans and Irving Caesar

Brief Context:

"Tea for Two," composed in 1924 by Vincent Youmans with lyrics by Irving Caesar, was introduced in the musical *No, No, Nanette* and quickly became Youmans' biggest hit. Originally developed from a melody Youmans conceived during his time in the Navy, the song's catchy melody and playful spirit have made it a favorite for performers and audiences alike, inspiring countless recordings, including Marion Harris' rendition recorded in 1925 and now in the public domain. More than a century later, "Tea for Two" remains a delightful and enduring standard, celebrating the timeless joy of dreaming about a life shared together.

Activity: Movement

What do you need?

- Perfect Harmony "Tea for Two" video ([YOUTUBE](#))

Suggested Seated Movement

Follow Perfect Harmony leader Karen or create your own seated movement!

Use movements like . . .

- Full body sways left and right
- Alternating step touches
- Extending arms up and outward like a sunburst



Song: "Embraceable You" (1930)

Songwriters: George and Ira Gershwin

Brief Context:

"Embraceable You," published in 1930 by composer George Gershwin and lyricist Ira Gershwin, began as part of an unpublished operetta before finding its way to the Broadway stage in *Girl Crazy*. Introduced by Ginger Rogers in a dance routine choreographed by Fred Astaire, the song quickly became one of several popular hits from the show. Over time, "Embraceable You" has grown into one of the most beloved jazz standards, recorded by artists across generations. Billie Holiday's 1944 recording was even inducted into the GRAMMY Hall of Fame in 2005. Today, the song remains a timeless expression of romance and longing, continuing to inspire new interpretations nearly a century after it was written.

Activity: Singing and Discussion

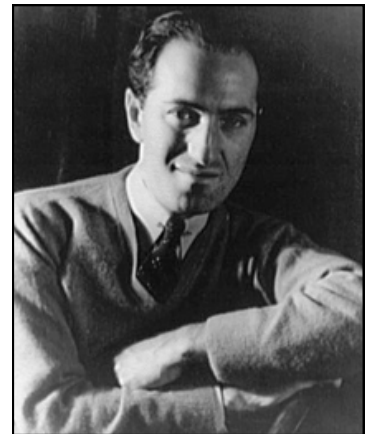
What do you need?

- Perfect Harmony "Embraceable You" video ([YOUTUBE](#))
- Perfect Harmony "Embraceable You" lyrics

Suggested Discussion

Nearly a century later, this song still captures that timeless feeling of being loved and held close.

Who in your life makes you feel embraced or cared for? Tell someone about that special person.



George Gershwin, 1937 (Carl Van Vechten, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons).

A Notice on Harmful, Offensive, or Misrepresentative Language

The following lyric sheet features a historical song with original lyrics that contain harmful terms and cultural stereotypes prevalent at the time of its creation. Our inclusion of this material is intended to foster critical engagement with our history, not to provide endorsement of the sentiments expressed. We encourage viewers to approach the content with an understanding of its original context.

If you encounter language you'd like us to reconsider, please let us know at Programs@TheSongbook.org.



Embraceable You

Embrace me, my sweet embraceable you

Embrace me, you irreplaceable you

Just one look at you my heart grew tipsy in me

You and you alone bring out the gypsy in me

I love all the many charms about you

Above all I want my arms about you

Don't be a naughty baby

Come to papa come to papa do

My sweet embraceable you

I love all the many charms about you

Above all I want my arms about you

Don't be a naughty baby

Come to papa come to papa do

My sweet embraceable you

Song: "The Charleston" (1923)

Songwriters: James P. Johnson and Cecil Mack

Brief Context:

"The Charleston," composed in 1923 by James P. Johnson with lyrics by Cecil Mack, was introduced in the Broadway musical *Runnin' Wild* and quickly became one of the defining sounds of the Jazz Age. Rooted in Black music and dance traditions from the American South, the song's infectious rhythm sparked a dance craze that swept the nation, and the world. More than just a popular tune, "The Charleston" came to symbolize the spirit of the 1920s, full of energy, innovation, and cultural change. Its lively rhythm and unmistakable style continue to evoke the excitement of the era, making it one of the most recognizable and enduring pieces of early jazz.

Activity: Movement

What do you need?

- Perfect Harmony "The Charleston" video ([YOUTUBE](#))

Suggested Seated Movement

Follow Perfect Harmony leader Idrienne or create your own seated movement!

Use movements like . . .

- Shoulder and arm rolls
- Traditional "Charleston" movements (jazz hands, step touches)
- Play imaginary instruments



Song: "Georgia on My Mind" (1930)

Songwriters: Hoagy Carmichael and Stuart Gorrell

Brief Context:

"Georgia on My Mind," written in 1930 by Hoagy Carmichael with lyrics by Stuart Gorrell, has become one of the most beloved songs in American music history. First recorded by Carmichael that same year, the song gained lasting fame decades later through Ray Charles's iconic 1960 recording. With its soulful melody and heartfelt lyrics, "Georgia on My Mind" has been embraced by generations of listeners and performers. Nearly a century after it was written, and now newly in the public domain, the song continues to evoke a deep sense of nostalgia, longing, and connection.

Activity: Listening

What do you need?

- Perfect Harmony "Georgia on My Mind" video ([YOUTUBE](#))

Fun Fact

It wasn't until Ray Charles recorded the song in 1960 that it became widely associated with the state. His version was so beloved that in 1979, Georgia officially named it the state song, and invited him to perform it at the capitol.

[Watch this performance on PBS.](#)



Ray Charles, 1967 (ABC Records, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons).

