

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/harold-arden-and-his-songs/>

This video discusses the music of Harold Arlen, an influential composer during the golden age of American popular music from the 1920s to the 1960s. Although he is less recognized than contemporaries like George Gershwin and Irving Berlin, Arlen created numerous beloved songs, including the iconic "Over the Rainbow" from *The Wizard of Oz*. He was notable for his collaborations with African American artists and for his innovative approach to song structure, often exceeding conventional lengths with his compositions.

Arlen worked as a staff songwriter at the Cotton Club, where he wrote classics like "Stormy Weather." His ability to blend the Black musical tradition with mainstream American music led to admiration from influential artists, including Ethel Waters, who praised his genuine collaboration with Black musicians.

The discussion also touches on the collaborative nature of songwriting during this era, highlighting how Arlen, in contrast to some contemporaries who wrote both music and lyrics, often collaborated with distinguished lyricists like Yip Harburg and Ira Gershwin. Arlen's unique musical style sometimes resulted in complex compositions, which he referred to as "tapeworm" songs for their unconventional structures.

Additionally, his talents extended beyond composition; Arlen began as a singer and arranger before fully embracing songwriting, and he performed his own music on various platforms, including albums and television shows. His contributions to music continue to be celebrated, with notable figures like Stephen Sondheim regarding him as a significant and moving influence in the world of songwriting. Overall, the text presents Arlen as a profound artistic figure whose work shaped the landscape of American music.