

Master Songwriter

Module 11 of *Music: Under the Hood*

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Outline

- Biography of Harold Arlen
- Analysis of *Stormy Weather*

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Biography


- **Harold Arlen, 1905-1986**
 - Born Hyman Arluck in Buffalo, NY
 - Son of Jewish cantor
 - Loved to sing
 - Began studying piano at 9 but hated practicing
 - Formed a combo (Snappy Trio) as a teenager
 - Wrote arrangements for it.



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Biography

- **Career**
 - Wanted to be a professional singer
 - But his arrangements were always more popular than his singing.
 - Moved to NYC, age 22
 - Met lyricist Ted Koehler
 - They wrote *Get Happy*, 1929, Arlen's first hit.
 - Wrote for Cotton Club, 1930-34.
 - *Stormy Weather* also a hit.




Harold Arlen and Ted Koehler

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Biography

- **Career**
 - *Wizard of Oz*
 - Arlen teamed with lyricist Yip Harburg for the movie
 - He felt the movie needed a ballad with a broad, sweeping melody.
 - It came to him while driving on Sunset Blvd...



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Biography

- **Career**
 - *Over the Rainbow*
 - *Over the Rainbow* was cut from the film 3 times.
 - Associate Producer Arthur Freed, who hired Arlen, lobbied to have it restored
 - Ranked *Best Song of the Century* by Recording Industry Association of America.
 - Named *Best Movie Song of All Time* by American Film Institute.



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Stormy Weather

- Music by Harold Arlen, lyrics by Ted Koehler

- A lament

- Illustrates Arlen's gift for expressive melody

- First performed 1933

- by Ethel Waters at Cotton Club
- She made first recording same year.
- Also sung by Frank Sinatra, Lena Horne, Billie Holiday



Harold Arlen and Ted Koehler

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STORMY WEATHER (KEEPS RAININ' ALL THE TIME)

[Audio file](#)
(first recording by Ethel Waters)

Melody

[Audio file](#)

This repeated motif emphasizes yearning

...as does this prolonged leading tone

Dramatic octave drop suggests exhaustion and release

Anticipates middle section

Drop of a fourth or third echoes octave drop earlier (also used by Chopin)

Extra 2 bars. Standard is 32 bars, here it is 34.

Echoes motif from first section

Inspired by chorus of African American spiritual

Solid rhythm and repetition contrast with opening lament

Melody echoed in accompaniment

STORMY WEATHER (KEEPS RAININ' ALL THE TIME)

Harmony
Audio file

Repeated ii-V-I

Melody is suspended over ii⁷, resolves after chord change

Diminished chord provides passing tones

ii⁷ is suspended over V, resolves after chord change

IV - I pattern is common in spirituals

Dissonant 7 chord marks return to lament (we heard it in *Satin Doll*)