

Souvenir

A Fantasia on the Life of
Florence Foster Jenkins

by **Stephen Temperley**

Directed by **Wes Grantom**

December 6 - 21, 2024

SPOTLIGHT STUDY GUIDE For Teachers and Students



SALT LAKE COUNTY 

Pioneer Theatre Company's Student Matinee Program is made possible through the support of Salt Lake County's Zoo, Arts, and Parks Program, The Simmons Family Foundation, and The Meldrum Foundation Endowment Fund.





SETTING: Various locations in Manhattan from 1964 at first, returning to 1932 through the '40s.

SYNOPSIS: Stranger-than-fiction, *Souvenir* is the true account of Florence Foster Jenkins, a wealthy socialite with an insatiable passion for opera, despite possessing a hilariously tone-deaf voice. Set against the backdrop of New York City in the early 20th century, this heartwarming and humorous play follows Jenkins' ambitious pursuit of her dreams, supported by her loyal pianist, Cosmé McMoon. McMoon needs money, and thus he is willing to play for a woman who cannot sing to save her life. As the play continues, the audience enters Florence's world completely, finding there the beauty she'd heard in her head all along.

CHARACTERS

FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS: A wealthy socialite who believes she is a great soprano. She isn't. Far from it actually. Her belief in her talent and her love for music are oddly infectious and beguiling. She absolutely believes herself to be a major vocal artist.

COSMÉ MCMOON: The accompanist of Florence and an aspiring composer. He has an excellent command of the piano and a high musical standard. He is constantly trying to protect Florence even though he has no illusions about her musical abilities.



Florence Jenkins and Cosmé McMoon

The True Life Story of Florence Foster Jenkins

Childhood

Narcissa Florence Foster was born July 19, 1868, in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. She was the daughter of Charles Dorrance Foster, an attorney and part of a wealthy land-owning Pennsylvania family, and Mary Jane Hoagland Foster. Her only sibling, Lillian, died of diphtheria at the age of eight. Foster said her lifelong passion for public performance began when she was seven. She was a talented pianist and performed at society functions as “Little Miss Foster.” She even gave a recital at the White House during the administration of President Rutherford B. Hayes.

Marriage

Having graduated from high school, she expressed a desire to study music abroad. Her father opposed to encouraging or financing this ambition. In retaliation, Florence ran off with Dr. Frank Thornton Jenkins, a Philadelphia physician who was 16 years older, and married him in 1885. The following year, after learning that she had contracted syphilis from her husband, she ended their relationship and reportedly never spoke of him again. Years later, she claimed to have been granted a divorce decree on March 24, 1902, although no documentation of any such ruling has been found. She retained the Jenkins surname for the remainder of her life.

Becoming a Socialite

Left unprovided for by her husband and cut off from the support of her wealthy father, Florence was left struggling to survive. That situation became ever more serious after she suffered an arm injury which ended her activities as a piano teacher and ended her dream of becoming a concert pianist. Eventually her mother came to the rescue. Florence set her sights on New York and the two of them found themselves in a Manhattan apartment on West 67th Street. In 1909, her father died, leaving her enough money to at last pursue her ambition of becoming a singer. She threw herself into the social and cultural life of New York, serving as president of the American League of Pen Women and becoming the musical director of the Euterpe Club and its yearly *tableaux vivants*.

It was at the Club that same year that she met a British stage actor named St. Clair Bayfield. Bayfield's great-grandfather had been Lord Chief Justice of England and his maternal grandfather Governor General of India. Bayfield, who made well over 40 appearances on Broadway over the next few decades, became Florence's second husband and unofficial manager for the next 36

years. They do not seem to have lived together but were utterly devoted nonetheless. She paid for his cramped apartment in West 37th Street while she lived in luxury in various New York hotels.

Private Concerts

Starting in 1912 at age 44, Jenkins gave the first of a series of annual recitals in the foyer of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in New York. Yet it was not until her mother died in 1928, when she inherited a vast fortune, that things really took off. Florence founded The Verdi Club and sponsored its annual ‘Ball of the Silver Skylarks’. These gave full rein to her flair for costume design, her most famous creation being the ‘Angel of Inspiration’ involving tinsel, tulle and a huge pair of golden wings, ideal for a matronly stage entrance as one weaved one's way through the potted plants to the curve of the grand piano.

Rise to Fame

But of course it was primarily for the music that her audiences flocked to Jenkins's concerts, strictly limited to appearances once a year in either



Florence Foster Jenkins, known for her lack of skill as a singer, photographed in the 1920s.

Pictorial Parade/Getty Images

The True Life Story of Florence Foster Jenkins (cont.)



Newport, Rhode Island, Washington DC, Boston or in Saratoga Springs, New York. Songwriter Cole Porter never missed a Jenkins performance and, apparently, even wrote a song for her.

What became clear is that while Florence believed that she was a great singer, her audiences were entertained by the fact that she actually wasn't. The unique allure of her voice made Florence the Queen of the Quarter Tone, the Diva of Din. As the title of one compilation of her recordings has it, Jenkins's voice committed 'Murder on the High Cs'. Basically, Florence was tone deaf. It's believed that her inability to pitch notes was further made worse by the treatment for Florence's syphilis which ultimately attacks the central nervous system.

At every concert could be heard the sounds of smothered hysteria as members of the audience fought for breath, handkerchiefs and ties stuffed into mouths, tears of joy streaming down cheeks. The barely suppressed snorting and giggling emanated from hoodlums, planted there, Jenkins assured herself, by jealous rivals. 'People may say I can't sing,' she said, 'but no one can ever say I didn't sing.'

At first, her accompanist was Edwin McArthur until he was fired by Jenkins for guffawing in the middle of a number. After that, from the mid-1930s until her death, Jenkins was accompanied on the piano by the Cosmé McMoon.

The Historic Carnegie Hall Recital

After a crash in a taxi in 1943, Florence believed that she could sing "a higher F than ever before." Instead of suing the taxi company, she sent the driver a box of Havana cigars. Maybe it was this addition to her vocal range that encouraged her to take over Carnegie Hall on October 25, 1944 at age of 76. Word got around. 3,000 people paid \$2 each to hear the cult soprano at the peak of her powers.

Ticket scalpers were getting \$20 a ticket. 2,000 were turned away. The stage was, in the words of one observer, 'filled with flowers till it resembled an expensive mortuary'. Her program included Mozart, Puccini, three songs "sung in Russian in costume," and two by Rachmaninov. Among those present were songwriter Cole Porter, composer Gian Carlo Menotti, singer Kitty Carlisle, soprano Lily Pons and her husband André Kostelanetz who composed *Interlude* for her, one of the numbers Jenkins sang that night.

Death

The legendary Carnegie Hall performance was Florence Foster Jenkins's first public appearance – all the other private concerts had been by invitation only – and thus the first time that newspaper critics had attended. It was also her last public appearance. The reviews, according to McMoon, devastated her. Two days later, Jenkins suffered a heart attack. Exactly a month and a day after her Carnegie Hall sell-out, she died in the Hotel Seymour, her Manhattan home. She left no will. When her faithful St Clair Bayfield filed a petition as administrator of the estate, 15 cousins contested the action. Jenkins' jewelry and \$100,000 in cash that she left were gobbled up in the subsequent legal battle.

FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS

COLORATURA SOPRANO

Assisted by

THE PASCARELLA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY



CARNEGIE HALL

Wednesday Evening, October 25th
At 8:30 o'clock

PROGRAM OVERLEAF

Jenkins, Florence Foster. (1868-1944) 1944 Carnegie Hall Recital - Original Flyer

Florence Foster JENKINS

CARNEGIE HALL

Wednesday evening, October 25th at 8:30 O'clock.

"Mme. Florence Foster Jenkins was the bright particular star of last evening's concert at the Ritz-Carlton. She sang an exacting programme, and possesses a marked individuality in style and piquancy in her interpretations, and undaunted by either vocal difficulties or high tessitura. The brilliant aria "Queen of the Night" from Mozart's "Magic Flute" was sung as an encore.

New York Journal American, Greta Bennett.

"At The Washington Club, Washington, D. C., the capacity audience for the annual recital of Mme. Florence Foster Jenkins included persons in the political, cultural and intellectual society of Washington. She presented facets of aesthetic interest for her critically minded hearers . . . "Passion of St. Matthew" whose suspensions and difficult transitions was skilfully handled . . . nothing could be more baffling and intricate to anyone not so musically capable as the singer . . . "Perjura" was rendered with a roguishness which conserved all the color and atmosphere . . . "Una Voce Poco Fa" . . . delicacy marked this number . . . well vocalized finely sentimental rendition".

Dr. B. B. James.

"Orchids, minks" . . . the swankiest audience of the season attended at the Jenkins Recital, Mme. Jenkins sang a varied programme in her inimitable coloratura soprano. She is a personage of authority and indescribable charm, she is incomparable, her annual recitals bring unbounded joy".

Robert Coleman, New York Daily Mirror.

PROGRAMME

ENGLISH SONGS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| a. Phyllis | YOUNG |
| b. Love Has Eyes | BISHOP |
| c. Lo, Here the Gentle Lark | BISHOP |

(Flute obligato by Andrea del Vecchio)
MME. JENKINS

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Quartet Opus 1. No. 2 | HAYDN |
| Pascarella Chamber Music Society | |

ARIAS

- | | |
|---|--------|
| a. Divinites du Styx (Alceste) | GLUCK |
| b. The Queen of the Night (Magic Flute) | MOZART |
| MME. JENKINS | |

INTERMISSION

RUSSIAN NUMBERS

(Sung in Russian. In costume)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| a. Biassy (words by) | PUSHKIN |
| Melodie (song by) | Count ALEXIS PAVLOVITCH |
| Prelude XVI (Accompaniment) | JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH |

FANTASY STORY

A Baron rides through the sky where snow is falling fast. The moon as a coquette smiles fitfully between the clouds. The horses are lost in a trackless waste lured by an evanescent devil, who is also a friend of the House Devil and many other imps who join in a carnival. The question is — "Is this the funeral of a great King, or the marriage of a beautiful witch?"

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| b. In the silence of Night | RACHMANINOFF |
| c. Floods of Spring | RACHMANINOFF |

MME. JENKINS

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Quartet Opus 47 | SCHUMANN |
| Pascarella Chamber Music Society | |

ENGLISH AND SPANISH SONGS

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| a. Bird of the Wilderness | HORSMAN |
| b. Interlude | KOSTELANETZ |
| c. Clavelitos | VALVERDE |
| d. Seranata Mexicana | Mc MOON |

(Quartet Accompaniment)

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| e. Las Hijas del Zebedeo | CHAPI |
| MME. JENKINS | |

At the Piano COSME Mc MOON

Tickets, Orchestra \$3.00, Dress Circle, \$1.80, Balcony, 60c.

Lower Boxes seating 8, \$24.00. Upper Boxes seating 8, \$19.20. (Tax Included).

Recital Management

GEORGE LEYDEN COLLEDGE

R K O Building, Radio City, New York

Telephone Circle 7-1962

(OVER)



Jenkins the Socialite

Florence Foster Jenkins, 19th century Gilded Age socialite turned 20th century wannabe opera singer is often remembered as a symbol of “failing upward.” She’s a pop-culture icon and was even portrayed by Meryl Streep in the 2016 film *Florence Foster Jenkins*. Her life shows how privilege can create opportunities for success, even when seemingly undeserved. However, Jenkins' story also shows how she tried to carve out a purpose beyond her wealthy upbringing.

Jenkins, like Gilded Age women such as Alva and Alice Vanderbilt, sought meaning outside of society's rigid expectations for the wealthy. While her musical talents were famously lacking, her contributions as a patron of the arts were substantial. She founded the Verdi Club, supporting classical musicians in early 20th century America, and served as president of the American League of Pen Women, promoting female authors and artists. Much like Isabella Stewart Gardner, Jenkins used her resources to support the arts, although with less lasting communal impact.

While her personal musical ambitions became a comedic footnote in history, Jenkins' role as a supporter and organizer for the classical music community underscores her significance. The story of American classical music isn't only about talent but also about the patrons and institutions that nurtured it. Jenkins deserves recognition not only for her infamous performances but also for her efforts to foster and sustain the artistic landscape of her era.



What is a Socialite?

A socialite is a wealthy individual who actively participates in upper-class social activities, often gaining recognition through family connections or media attention rather than personal achievements. In the 19th century, American socialites were listed in the Social Register, a directory created by Louis Keller in 1886 that documented socially prominent families. By 1918, it had expanded to 18 volumes covering 26 cities.

In modern times, the term still denotes wealth and social status, but the distinction between socialites and celebrities has blurred. Popular culture and media have linked socialites to a party-focused lifestyle, often elevating them to fame based on public visibility rather than family pedigree.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialite#:~:text=Examples%20of%20modern%2Dday%20America,n,Derek%20Blasberg%2C%20and%20Jean%20Shafiroff>



<https://hipporeads.com/on-florence-foster-jenkins-who-loved-and-failed-at-the-arts/>

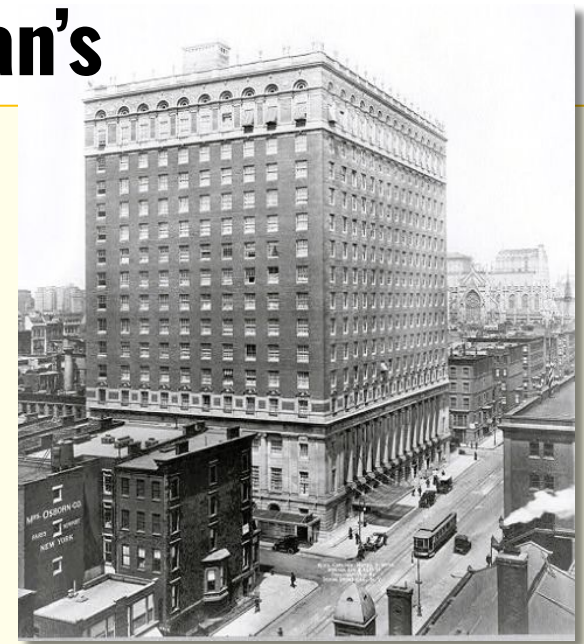
Souvenir Locations: Ritz-Carlton & Altman's

Ritz-Carlton Hotel

The first Ritz-Carlton in the U.S. stood in New York. It was designed by Warren & Wetmore, architects of the new Grand Central Terminal. The hotel was located on Madison Avenue and 46th Street, and opened in 1911 and operated until 1951 where it was demolished to make space for an office building. However in its time, the Ritz-Carlton in Manhattan was influential and revolutionized hospitality in America by creating luxury in a hotel setting. The Hotel also introduced a European attitude to personal service:

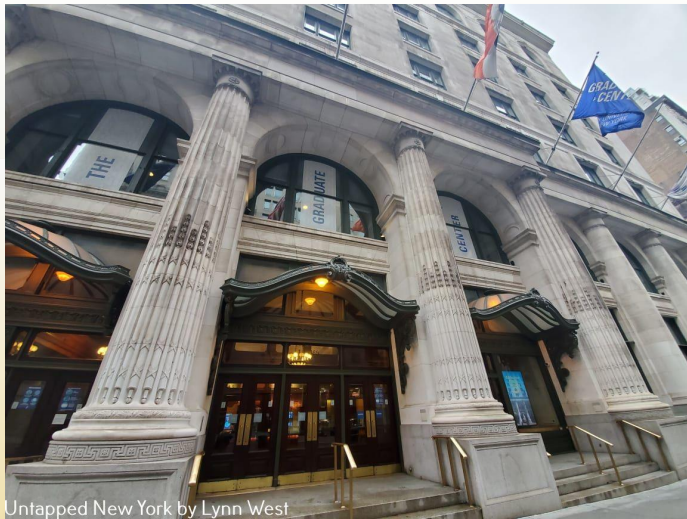
- Private bath in each guest room
- Lighter fabrics in the guest rooms to allow for more thorough washing
- White tie and apron uniforms for the waitstaff, black tie for the Maitre d' and morning suits for all other staff, conducive to a formal, professional appearance
- Extensive fresh flowers throughout the public areas
- A la carte dining, providing choices for diners
- Gourmet cuisine, utilizing the genius and cooking methods of Auguste Escoffier
- Intimate, smaller lobbies for a more personalized guest experience

Its ballrooms, lobbies, service and general ambiance were outstanding, and would've provided an elegant backdrop to Florence Foster Jenkins' private performances



*New York City - Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Madison Ave. & 46th St
Library of Congress*

Altman's *The Lost New York City Department Store*



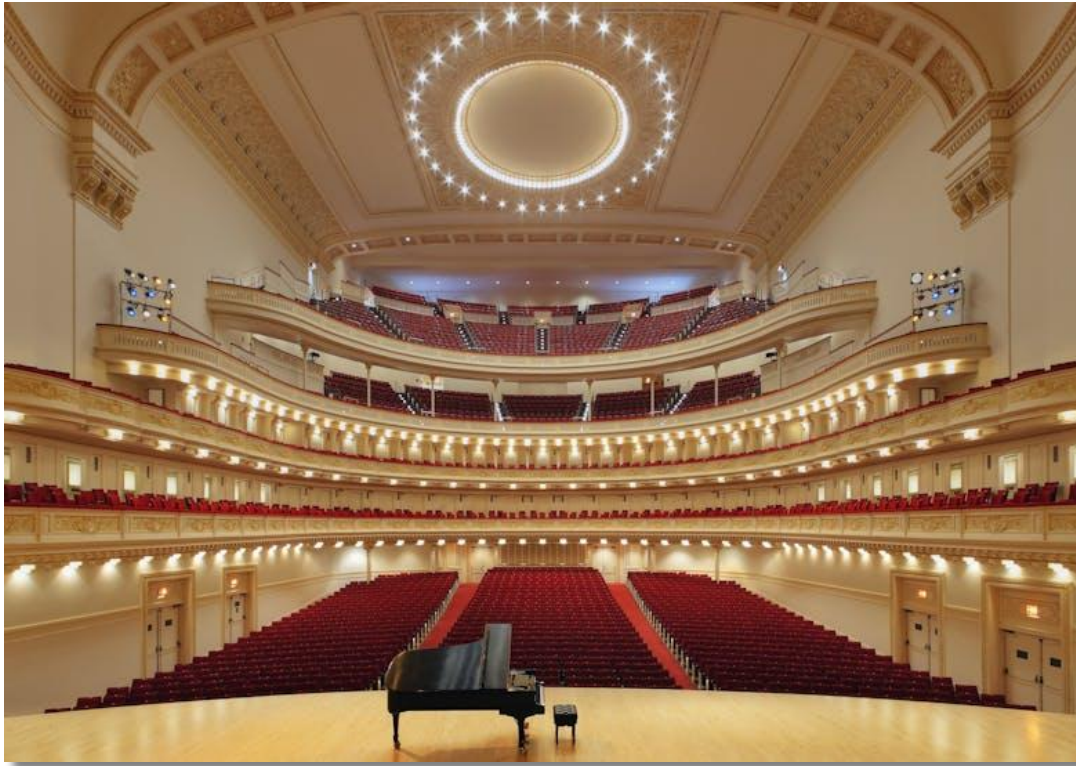
Untapped New York by Lynn West

The B. Altman and Co. department store, once a hallmark of luxury shopping and elegant design, an icon of New York's grand retail past. Founded in 1865 by Benjamin Altman, the store moved to a landmark location on Fifth Avenue and 34th Street, alongside upscale destinations like the Waldorf Astoria. The new store was an architectural masterpiece complete with limestone exteriors, expansive display windows, and interiors showcasing mahogany staircases. It became a "Palace of Trade" in 1906, celebrated for its dedication to fine clothing and distinct customer service features, like the "walker" position, a customer lounge, and an awning to shield patrons from the elements.

B. Altman played a significant role in advancing retail innovation, bringing Parisian fashion to New York, establishing individual departments for women, men, and children, and creating welcoming spaces where women could shop and dine independently. Even after Benjamin Altman's death in 1913, the store's philanthropic spirit continued under the Altman Foundation, which offered employee benefits like subsidized meals and health care. Altman's was among the first to introduce "Ladies Who Lunch," a refined dining spaces where women could shop and dine unaccompanied, a novel social freedom at the time.

Despite landmark status in 1985, economic shifts in the 1980s made department stores feel outdated, leading B. Altman to declare bankruptcy in 1989. By November 1990, it closed with a "going out of business" sale. The building, however, has been preserved, and since 2000, it has housed the City University of New York Graduate Center, with original architectural elements still visible.

Souvenir Locations: Carnegie Hall



Since it opened in 1891, Carnegie Hall has set the international standard for musical excellence as the aspirational destination for the world's finest artists. From Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, Mahler, and Bartók to George Gershwin, Billie Holiday, Benny Goodman, Judy Garland, and The Beatles, an honor roll of music-making artists representing the finest of every genre has filled Carnegie Hall throughout the years.

The Hall's unique history is rooted in its stunning acoustics, the beauty of its three concert halls, and its location in New York City, where it has played a central role in elevating the city into one of the world's great cultural capitals.

Namesake

The building was completely financed by industrialist Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919), who made his fortune in steel manufacturing. A board member of the Oratorio Society of New York and the New York Symphony Society, he and his fellow

members originally intended to turn the hall into the home base of these music organizations. One of the wealthiest Americans in history, Carnegie was often derided as a ruthless tycoon. But during his final two decades, he gave away about 90 percent of his fortune to charities and foundations, a total of \$350 million then (more than \$5.2 billion today).

Carnegie was inspired to build Carnegie Hall by his new wife, Louise, who sang with the Oratorio Society of New York. While on a honeymoon cruise to Scotland in 1887, Louise and Walter Damrosch—conductor of the Symphony Society of New York and the Oratorio Society, who was also on his way to Europe—asked Carnegie to create a new home for music in New York City.

When the Hall's cornerstone was laid in 1891, Andrew Carnegie proclaimed that “it is probable that this hall will intertwine itself with the history of our country.” This was true from the start when it opened on May 5, 1891, with a spectacular concert



Souvenir Locations: Carnegie Hall (cont.)

that featured famed Russian composer Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky, conducting his own music in his American debut. Since then, its walls have echoed with applause not only for the greatest classical, jazz, and popular musicians, but also for the foremost comedians, authors, social crusaders, world figures, and speakers of our time.

Design

The main hall seats 2,804 on five levels and was extensively renovated in 1986. Built in the Renaissance Revival architectural style developed in Florence, Italy, in the late 14th century, Carnegie Hall was designed by American architect William Burnet Tuthill (1855-1929). He reportedly won that commission through his connections. As a talented cellist, Tuthill served on the board of the Oratorio Society of New York with Andrew Carnegie. Tuthill had never built a concert hall before he received the Carnegie commission.

Comeback

It seems inconceivable now that Carnegie Hall, having fallen into disrepair in the late 1950s, almost was planned to be demolished. The building was saved only when it was bought in 1960 by the City of New York after a major campaign led by violinist Isaac Stern and other civic leaders. The City purchased the venue for \$5 million and established the non-profit Carnegie Hall Corp. to manage the theater. The federal government designated it as a National Historic Landmark in 1962.

Today, Carnegie Hall presents a wide range of exceptional musical performances each season on its three great stages—the renowned Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage, the intimate Weill Recital Hall, and the innovative Zankel Hall—including concert series, citywide festivals that feature collaborations with leading New York City cultural institutions, orchestral performances, chamber music, new-music concerts, and recitals. In addition to Carnegie Hall's presentations, the venue is also home to more than 500 independently produced events each year.

Lore

Though many greats have graced the Carnegie Hall main stage, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra maintains a special distinction in the theater's history. After performing Mahler's Symphony No. 5 in March 1970, the CSO and Sir Georg Solti reportedly received the longest ovation ever recorded there. According to one eyewitness, "It was an amazing, now legendary concert, with superhuman playing. The audience went totally nuts, like at a major sporting event. The whistling, hooting, hollering, stamping and applauding went on for 35 minutes."




Sing Your Way to Health and Happiness

Singing is a common pastime, maybe the most common form of participation in the performing arts. But is singing also good for you?



1 **SINGING RELEASES FEEL-GOOD HORMONES**

Singing releases endorphins and oxytocin. Endorphin is a hormone associated with the feeling of pleasure. Oxytocin is a hormone considered to decrease anxiety and stress as well as increase the feelings of trust and bonding.



2 **SINGING BOOSTS IMMUNITY**

Singing boosts immunity by promoting a healthy lymphatic system. Singing also helps fight diseases.



3 **SINGING LOWERS BLOOD PRESSURE**

A case study showed that singing can reduce blood pressure given its calming effect.



4 **SINGING IMPROVES BREATHING**

The act of singing requires breathing. As a result, the body has improved blood circulation and oxygen flow.



5 **SINGING IMPROVES OVERALL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

People who sing require fewer visits to the doctor and don't need as much medication. They are also less likely to be depressed.



6 **SINGING LOWERS ANXIETY AND STRESS**

Singing is associated with decreased levels of anxiety due to the release of oxytocin.



7 **SINGING PROMOTES SOCIAL BONDING**

Singing and especially choral singing creates opportunities for cooperation and social bonding.



8 **SINGING IMPROVES HAPPINESS**

Singers reported feeling happier and better connected. Singing reduces feelings of depression and loneliness.





SINGING IMPROVES COGNITION

9

Some studies found that musicians and singers have generally higher IQs than non-musicians. Many successful people are also good musicians.



SINGING LEADS TO LONGER LIFE

10

One report concluded that singing promoted both better health and mental state, which led to higher life expectancy.

A *Souvenir* Word Search

Find the following words in the puzzle.




Words are hidden     and 

FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS
RITZ CARLTON HOTEL
CARNEGIE HALL
COSME MC MOON
MANHATTAN
SOCIALITE
CASTANETS
LAUGHTER

TONE DEAF
APPLAUSE
RECITAL
AMATEUR
SOPRANO
TICKETS
ENCORE
ALTMAN

CARMEN
RECORD
ARIAS
PIANO
MUSIC
VOICE
ANGEL

HAPPY SINGING!

-  Join a local choir or take singing lessons
-  Sing in the shower or in the car
-  Surround yourself with diverse music. Listen to the radio, go to concerts, see musicals ...

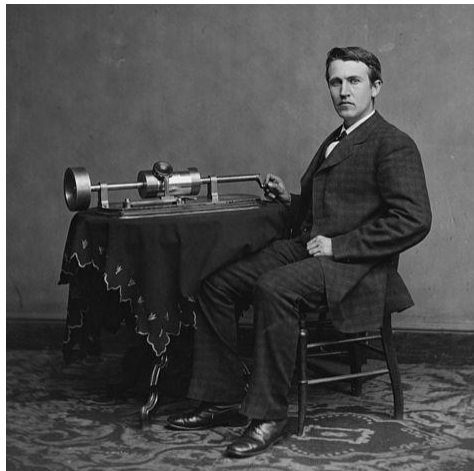
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P	Z	A	G	N	T	K	R	V	D	C	Y	Q	F	U	Y	S	G	Z	I	Z	O	K
R	C	N	A	T	T	A	H	N	A	M	R	P	P	K	P	Q	S	I	F	D	G	O
A	X	W	V	D	R	O	C	E	R	B	Q	H	I	T	G	Y	A	R	I	A	S	E
N	O	T	I	C	K	E	T	S	Q	G	K	U	A	O	B	F	E	X	Q	Q	I	G
O	L	T	M	S	O	C	I	A	L	I	T	E	N	C	D	W	M	H	B	Z	Z	R
Q	T	S	N	I	K	N	E	J	R	E	T	S	O	F	E	C	N	E	R	O	L	F
V	V	C	A	S	T	A	N	E	T	S	W	B	Q	V	Z	I	S	C	E	D	W	W
I	A	P	P	L	A	U	S	E	R	E	T	H	G	U	A	L	X	I	Y	L	Y	W
M	C	K	Q	M	H	B	O	N	J	P	B	N	O	A	T	H	W	O	D	U	U	N
G	J	F	A	E	D	E	N	O	T	H	D	K	G	G	V	G	I	V	Q	O	X	U

The History of Vinyl Records

Cylinder Phonographs

In 1877, Thomas Edison was working on two of his most notable inventions, the telephone and telegraph. In the process, he invented the phonograph as a way to play back recorded sounds.

Alexander Graham Bell, made improvements to Edison's designs during the 1880s, calling the enhanced device the gramophone. Instead of reading the sound from a wax cylinder like the phonograph, the gramophone operated via a hand-crank mechanism that turned a hard rubber disc on a flat plate.

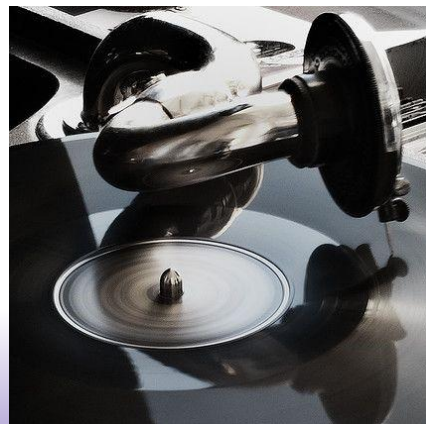


Thomas Edison and an early iteration of the phonograph. Image by Levin C. Handy

78s

In 1887, German-American inventor Emile Berliner developed lateral-cut flat discs to be played on the gramophone, similar in use and appearance to the vinyl records we know today. The flat disc records popularized by Berliner play at a speed of about 78 revolutions per minute (rpm), which is why they are called "78s" by most collectors. Improving on the quality of wax cylinders, these discs could store 3–5 minutes of sound per side. They were made from a shellac resin that feels a bit heavier and more brittle than modern vinyl records.

But during World War II, shellac was hard to come by, so some 78s started to be pressed using vinyl materials instead.



"Modern" Vinyl

By 1930, the company RCA Victor launched the first commercially available vinyl long-playing record. Instead of 78 rpm, the playback speed for this modern record was 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm, and the record itself was 12 inches in diameter. This meant that the records could play a longer duration of sound. A rival company, Columbia, followed suit in 1948, releasing the 12-inch "long play" 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm microgroove record. RCA responded with a smaller record, at 7 inches, that plays a single song on each side at 45 rpm, called the "extended play".

Today, recording artists still denote their releases as long plays and extended plays (LPs and EPs) — whether or not the music is available on a record!

By the 1970s, the introduction of compact cassette tapes (the only portable way to listen to music at the time) and eight-track tape cartridges caused vinyl to take a back seat. The introduction of CDs, digital downloads, and streaming services continued this trend.

But since the beginning of the 2000's there has been a rise in popularity for vinyl records over other forms. Like the record, the times have come back around!

Why Were Records Traditionally Black?

Records can be pressed in a variety of colors and patterns, making for rare editions — a collector's dream. However, vinyl records are most commonly pressed in black PVC, and the reason why could be explained by electrostatics. As it turns out, PVC is a natural insulator that builds up a static charge over time, and this charge can attract dust. Dust is a vinyl record's worst enemy: It can accumulate in the grooves and wear down a record player's stylus. Carbon black is added to the PVC blend to increase the overall conductivity of the material, which means less accumulation of static and dust on the record over time. (It also seems easier to spot a layer of dust on a black record, so you know to wipe it down before tossing it on!)

A Note from the Playwright, Stephen Temperley

Souvenir: a Fantasia on the Life of Florence Foster Jenkins

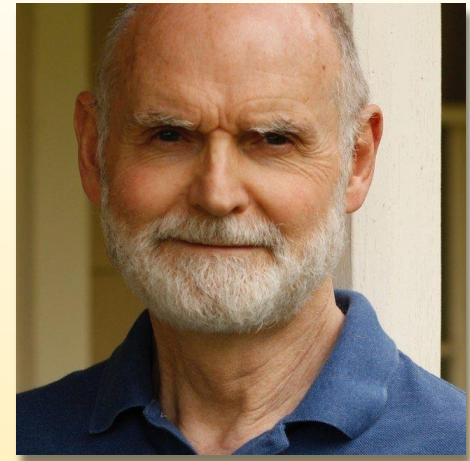
In '81, a friend stopped by one Sunday with a copy of the newly released tape cassette of *The Glory? Of The Human Voice*, Decca's spitefully titled LP of the 78s that Mrs. Jenkins had made for her own amusement, not meaning for them to be widely distributed. But events, and facts, had a way of escaping Mrs. Jenkins, then as now. I listened for a couple of minutes, and for a couple of minutes I thought it was funny. Then I stopped laughing, because it was too strange and too painful. I also thought it might make a play.

I talked to people who'd known FFJ, had worked for her, attended her recitals, and they seemed to be genuinely fond of her, regarding her mostly as a harmless crank, puzzled by her subsequent fame.

Time passed: in '03, I began work on what would become *Souvenir*, never thinking of it as the 'true' story—hence the subtitle. The real Mrs. Jenkins liked to sing difficult, bravura pieces, often comparing herself to Lily Pons, untroubled by the fact that she had no voice. She was seventy-six when she hired Carnegie Hall. The only honest account I've read of that night describes a pitiful old woman hopping dementedly about the stage. What does it say about the audience that they came to laugh? Shielded by her money she didn't hear them, or if she did she put it down to jealousy; no one, certainly not her accompanist Cosmé McMoon, cared to correct her.

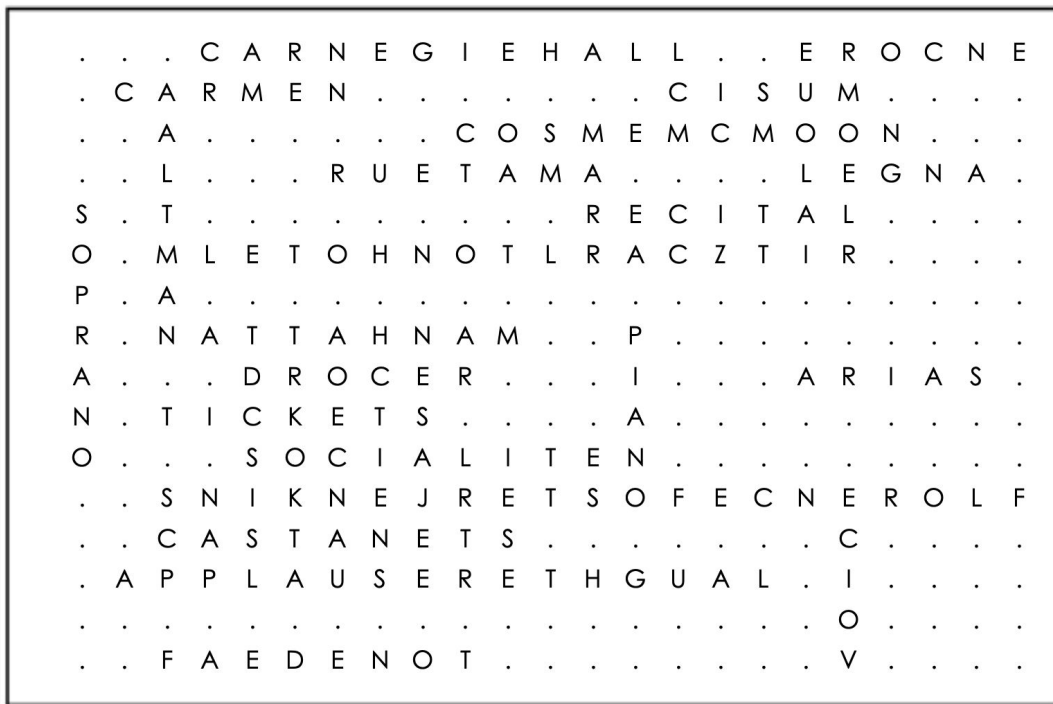
His name was real; a Scottish name—Cosmo McMahon?—adapted by Spanish speakers? He was born in Mexico, coming first to San Antonio then New York at the age of nineteen. In a late 70s radio interview, he describes at some length her Carnegie Hall performance of "The Laughing Song;" how she threw flowers into the audience, flowers he had to retrieve so she could throw them again. The interviewer laughs. It's a funny story. Only problem is she didn't sing that particular aria at that recital: I checked the program. When it's done, in a plot twist we didn't see coming, the interviewer tells us there was no Cosmé McMoon, that in fact we'd been listening to the distinguished accompanist Edwin McMaster working in disguise and it was all a hoax. Some people still believe that to be true. The story remains shrouded in misinformation, innuendo, and gossip.

If I'm asked, I say that the play is about the difference between the way we see ourselves and how the rest of the world sees us, about self-perception and lies. At a crucial moment, Mrs. Jenkins accuses Cosmé of having deceived her; 'Why didn't you tell me?' she demands, asking, 'Why did you lie to me?' Vehemently, he insists that he never lied—and strictly speaking he's correct, he never does lie. He just never tells the truth. Which is worse? Perhaps that's not for me to say.



Stephen Temperley, Playwright of
Souvenir

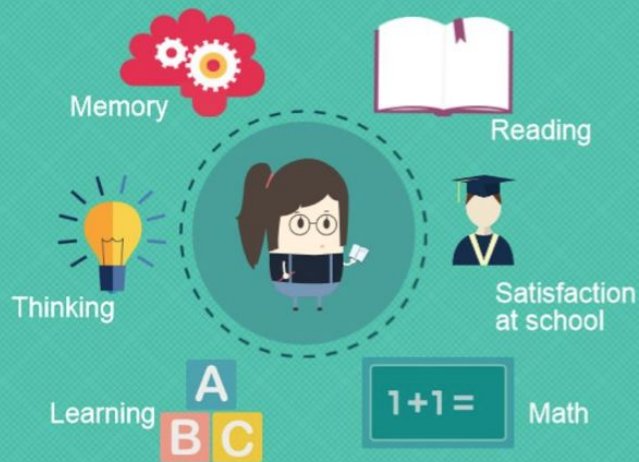
Word Search Answer Key



BENEFITS OF SINGING FOR CHILDREN



SINGING IMPROVES:



BENEFITS OF SINGING FOR THE ELDERLY



SINGING IMPROVES:



Florence Foster Jenkins (L) entertaining her socialite guests at a formal party in her home in 1937. Margaret Bourke-White—The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images

Meet the AEA Cast

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States



LINDA MUGLESTON* (Florence Foster Jenkins) Pioneer Theatre Company: *Christmas in Connecticut*. Broadway: *The Music Man*, *My Fair Lady*, *Hello, Dolly!*, *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, *On The 20th Century*, *Cinderella*, *Anything Goes*, *Young Frankenstein*, *Wonderful Town*, *Nine*, *Into The Woods*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *On The Town*. Regional: *Bye, Bye Birdie* (Kennedy Center) *Cinderella* (Geva Theatre) *Noises Off!* (Skylight Theatre) *Sweeney Todd* (Denver Center) *Wild Fire* (Denver Center) *A Christmas Carol* (Denver Center) *Sunset Boulevard* (Portland Center Stage) *The Sound of Music* (Muny, Carnegie Hall) *Kristina* (Royal Albert Hall, Carnegie Hall).



BOB WALTON* (Cosmé McMoon) is very pleased to be making his Pioneer debut, following in the footsteps of his two kids who performed here: Alex and Emily Walton. Broadway credits in *Girl From The North Country*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *42nd Street*, *Once Upon A Mattress*, *Showboat*, and *City of Angels*. TV credits include *Law and Order: SVU*, *Nurse Jackie*, *Person of Interest*, *The Good Wife*, and *Elementary*. As a writer, Bob co-wrote the Off-Broadway play *Game Show*. With his brother Jim Walton, they have written *Mid-Life! (The Crisis Musical)*, *Mid-Life 2! #WhatDidIComeInHereFor?*, and *Double Trouble (A Musical Tour de Farce)*, which recently ran for a year in Tokyo and Shanghai. They are currently writing a sequel which will premier in Tokyo in 2026. Thanks to Karen and the entire staff.