

Colorful Colorado:

The People, The History, The Stories



Resource Pages

Brent Michael Davids

Brent Michael Davids (Mohican/Munsee-Lenape) is a professional composer, and a music warrior for native equity and parity, especially in concert music where there is little indigenous influence. Davids places Native voices front and center. He originated and co-founded the award-winning Native American Composer Apprentice Project (NACAP), championing indigenous youth to compose their own written music.



He uses indigenous instruments, including handmade quartz flutes, and pens performable notations that are themselves visual works of art. Davids is co-director of the Lenape Center in Manhattan, and is enrolled in the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. His composer career spans nearly five decades, with countless awards and commissions from America's most celebrated organizations and ensembles.



John Denver

John Denver (born Henry John Deutschendorf Jr., December 31, 1943 – October 12, 1997) was a beloved American singer-songwriter, actor, and humanitarian, best known for his folk and country-inspired music that often celebrated nature and personal reflection. He rose to fame in the 1970s with a string of hits including "Take Me Home, Country Roads," "Annie's Song," "Sunshine on My Shoulders," and "Rocky Mountain High"—the latter of which became one of Colorado's official state songs.

Though born in Roswell, New Mexico, Denver developed a deep connection to Colorado, where he lived for much of his life. The state's majestic landscapes inspired many of his most iconic songs and fueled his environmental advocacy. He was also active in humanitarian causes, including conservation, world hunger, and space exploration.

John Denver died in a plane crash on October 12, 1997, while piloting a small aircraft off the coast of California.

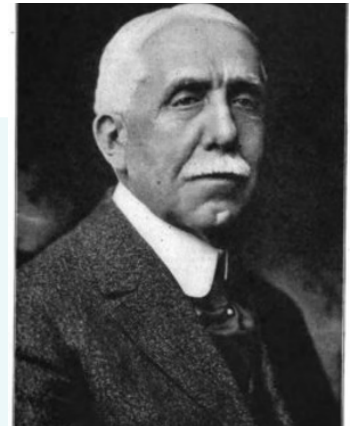
Dr. Arthur John Fynn

Dr. Arthur John Fynn (1857-1930) was an American educator, historian, and composer best known for writing and composing Colorado's first official state song, *Where the Columbines Grow* (1911).

After moving to Colorado, Fynn served as a principal and superintendent in Central City, Alamosa, and Denver.

Beyond music, Fynn was a respected author of scholar. He published *The American Indian as a Product of Environment* (1907) and *North America in Days and Discovery* (1923). These publications showed a deep interest in history, Native American cultures, and the relationship between people and their environment.

He lived in Denver until his death in 1930.



Martin Gilmore

Martin Gilmore is a Denver-based singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist known for blending traditional folk and bluegrass with original compositions. His rich vocals and guitar skills showcase authenticity and innovation. With multiple records since his 2009 debut, notable works include the cross-cultural 2017 EP "East-West" and the praised 2021 album by The Martin Gilmore Trio.

In 2024, he won prestigious songwriting competitions, further establishing his reputation in folk and bluegrass.

Apart from performing, he is an educator at the University of Northern Colorado and Swallow Hill Music Association, teaching various music subjects. Gilmore has performed globally and has been featured in several media outlets. His commitment to storytelling and tradition continues to inspire audiences worldwide.

Stephen Lias

The music of adventurer-composer Stephen Lias (b. 1966) is regularly performed in concert and recital throughout the United States and abroad by soloists and ensembles including the Arianna Quartet, the Anchorage Symphony, the Oasis Quartet, the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival Orchestra, the Ensamble de Trompetas Simón Bolívar, the Boulder Philharmonic, and the Russian String Orchestra.



His music is published by Alias Press, and distributed worldwide exclusively by Theodore Presser. His pieces are regularly featured at major national and international conferences including the International Trumpet Guild, the North American Saxophone Alliance, and the ISCM World Music Days. Lias served for eleven years as Composer in Residence and Music Director at the Texas Shakespeare Festival.

Oscar Navarro



Óscar Navarro is an award-winning Spanish composer and conductor whose music spans symphonic and film genres. A clarinetist by training, he studied composition at the University of Southern California, where he was awarded the Harry Warren Scholarship.

His works have been performed by top orchestras like The Cleveland Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, and the Spanish National Orchestra, and

featured in major venues including Carnegie Hall, Musikverein (Vienna), and La Scala (Milan). He has also recorded at studios such as Capitol Records and Warner Bros.

Navarro has received over 20 international awards, including a Goya nomination, and was commissioned to write the Obertura Rey Felipe VI in honor of the King of Spain. He leads his own ensemble, the Oscar Navarro Symphony Orchestra, and is a member of the Spanish Film Academy and Latin Grammy Academy.

Osha Renee

Osha Renee is a Denver-born rapper, writer, and the reigning Miss Black Colorado, using her platform to amplify voices, spark change, and inspire confidence. With raw lyrics and soulful energy, her music tells real stories—about healing, growth, and power. Off the mic, Osha is just as passionate about mentoring youth, helping them discover their worth and walk boldly in who they are. Crowned or not, she shows up with purpose, turning every stage, classroom, and conversation into a space for impact.



Gioachino Rossini



Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868) was a renowned Italian composer, best known for his operas. Born in Pesaro to a musical family, he began performing at a young age and composed his first opera *Demetrio e Polibio* at 14. By 18, he debuted *La cambiale di matrimonio*, and in 1813 gained fame with *Tancredi* and *L'italiana in Algeri*, establishing himself as a master of Italian opera.

His greatest success, *The Barber of Seville*, remains a landmark in comic opera. Between 1815 and 1823, Rossini wrote 20 operas and later worked in Vienna, London, and Paris. He married soprano Isabella Colbran in 1822, and after her death, married Olympe Pélissier in 1845.

Rossini retired early from opera but continued composing smaller works. He died in Paris in 1868, and his remains were later moved to Florence. His most celebrated works include *William Tell*, *The Barber of Seville*, *The Thieving Magpie*, and *The Italian Girl in Algiers*.

BEDŘICH SMETANA

Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884) was a Czech composer widely regarded as the founder of Czech national music. Born in Litomyšl, Bohemia, he showed remarkable musical talent from an early age and studied in Prague. Influenced by the Romantic movement and the rise of Czech nationalism, Smetana aimed to create a uniquely Czech sound in classical music.



His best-known works include the opera *The Bartered Bride*, a lively and patriotic piece that helped establish Czech opera on the international stage, and the symphonic cycle *Má vlast* ("My Homeland"), which celebrates the landscapes, legends, and spirit of the Czech people. The most famous movement from this cycle, *Vltava* ("The Moldau"), evokes the journey of the Czech river through music.

In his later years, Smetana tragically lost his hearing, but he continued to compose, producing deeply expressive and nationalistic music despite his disability. His influence paved the way for later Czech composers like Antonín Dvořák and Leoš Janáček. Smetana died in Prague in 1884 and remains a central figure in Czech cultural history.

References

For more detailed information about these composers, please go to the following:

- <https://www.onavarro.com/web/concert/en/biography/>
- <https://filmcomposer.us/>
- <https://johndenver.com/>
- <https://www.classicsforkids.com/composer/gioachino-rossini/>
- <https://www.martingilmore.com/>
- <https://www.stephenlias.com/atstns>

For additional resources not linked in the lessons, please go to the following:

- <https://westernmininghistory.com/4785/the-colorado-gold-rush/>
- https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2018/ColoradoMagazine_v36n2_April1959.pdf
- <https://www.historycolorado.org/>
- <https://utetribes.com/about/>
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- <https://verbs.colorado.edu/ArapahoLanguageProject/RMNP/history/history.htm>
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