**1 January 1939** Having started a business together in Palo Alto, California, William Hewlett and David Packard toss a coin to decide on a name for it.

**3 January 1939** Amy Beach (71), Daniel Gregory Mason (65), John Alden Carpenter (62), Wallingford Riegger (53), Aaron Copland (38), Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, Efrem Zimbalist, Olin Downes and Alfred Hertz sign a letter urging the United States to lift the arms embargo against the “legitimate Spanish government.”

The 76th Congress of the United States convenes in Washington. President Roosevelt’s Democratic Party maintains comfortable majorities in both houses.

Twelve Short Pieces Written in the Twelve-Tone Technique for piano by Ernst Krenek (38) is performed for the first time, by the composer, over the airwaves of NBC originating in Washington.

**4 January 1939** Spanish rebels and the Italian army capture Borjas Blancas, turning a government retreat into a rout.

**5 January 1939** Baron Kiichiro Hiranuma replaces Prince Fumimaro Konoye as Prime Minister of Japan.

Hitler warns the Polish ambassador that Danzig must be restored to Germany.

**6 January 1939** Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassmann publish the results of their experiments wherein they bombarded uranium with neutrons thus creating barium. They do not understand that they have produced nuclear fission. The experiments took place only a few blocks from Hitler’s headquarters in Berlin.

**8 January 1939** Luigi Dallapiccola (34) assumes the chair in composition at the Conservatorio Luigi Cherubini in Florence.

**9 January 1939** Libya is incorporated into Italy.

Jean Perrin presents a report to the Académie des Sciences in Paris entitled “On an element 87, derived from actinium.” It details the discovery of Francium by Marguerite Perey.

Movements one and three of *Contrasts* for violin, clarinet, and piano by Béla Bartók (57) are performed for the first time, in New York by Joseph Szigeti, Benny Goodman, and Endre Petri. See 4 February 1941.

**11 January 1939** Spanish rebels capture Montblanch.

British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and Foreign Minister Lord Halifax make a visit to Rome to try to persuade Mussolini to help in pacifying Hitler. The visit has little effect.

**13 January 1939** Hungary joins the Anti-Comintern Pact.

**15 January 1939** Piano Trio op.150 by Amy Cheney Beach (71) is performed for the first time, at the MacDowell Club in New York the composer at the keyboard.

**18 January 1939** *A Stolen Life*, a film with music by William Walton (36), is shown for the first time, in the Plaza Theatre, London.

**19 January 1939** Germany lays claim to part of the Antarctic continent from 20°E to 10°W.

The Birth Control Federation of America is founded by a merger of the American Birth Control League and the Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau.

**20 January 1939** Hjalmar Schacht is sacked by Hitler as President of the Reichsbank after he urges the Führer to reduce military spending.

The “official” premiere of Piano Sonata no.2 “Concord, Mass., 1840-1860” by Charles Ives (64) takes place in Town Hall, New York. The critics are generally tepid or negative. See 21 June 1938 and 28 November 1938.

**21 January 1939** Double Trio for strings by Ralph Vaughan Williams (66) is performed for the first time, in Wigmore Hall, London. See 20 March 1938.

Lawrence Gilman publishes a review of last night’s concert in the *New York Herald Tribune*. He calls Charles Ives (64) “probably the most original and extraordinary of American composers”, and his *Concord Sonata*, “the greatest music composed by an American.”

**22 January 1939** Spanish rebels capture Igulada.

**23 January 1939** *Chants de terre et de ciel,* a cycle for soprano and piano by Olivier Messiaen (30) to his own words, is performed for the first time, in Paris, the composer at the piano. It is listed in the program as *Prismes: Six poèmes d’Olivier Messiaen*.

After making several arrangements and writing a new song called *Take the A Train*, Billy Strayhorn is told by Duke Ellington (39) that he is hired, at a theatre in Newark, New Jersey.

**24 January 1939** An earthquake centered in Chillan, Chile kills 28,000 people.

**25 January 1939** Spanish rebels capture Tarragona and reach within five km of Barcelona. The Spanish government flees to Gerona.

Refik Ibrahim Saydam replaces Mahmud Celal Bayar as Prime Minister of Turkey.

**26 January 1939** Forces of the democratically elected government of Spain surrender Barcelona to the fascist rebels and their Italian allies, who enter the city.

At a conference at George Washington University, Niels Bohr publicly announces the discovery of nuclear fission.

**27 January 1939** A universal conscription law is passed by the Hungarian Parliament.

**28 January 1939** Paul Hindemith (43) sails from Boulogne aboard the Dutch liner *SS Volendam* for New York.

William Butler Yeats dies in Menton, France at the age of 73.

**30 January 1939** Speaking to the Reichstag on the sixth anniversary of his assuming power, Hitler “declares war” on all Jews all over the world. Blaming them for all the problems of the earth he says: “Stop, before you force me to kill you.”

**31 January 1939** Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels attend a production of Werner Egk’s (37) opera *Peer Gynt* in Berlin. The two are ecstatic. Hitler calls Egk to his box at intermission and says “I am pleased to make the acquaintance of a worthy successor to Richard Wagner.”

Stefan (36) and Irma Wolpe move into a new apartment at 138 West 91st Street, New York.

**2 February 1939** The USSR breaks relations with Hungary for joining the Anti-Comintern.

On his 57th birthday, James Joyce shows his friends the first bound copy of *Finnegan’s Wake*.

*The Vyborg Side*, a film with music by Dmitri Shostakovich (32), is shown for the first time.

**3 February 1939** US Attorney General Frank Murphy creates a civil liberties unit within the Department of Justice.

**4 February 1939** Manchukuo reports new border clashes with Soviet troops near Manchuli (Manzhouli).

**5 February 1939** Spanish fascist rebels capture Gerona.

Dragisa Cvetkovic replaces Milan Stojadinovic as Prime Minister of Yugoslavia.

Carl Orff’s (43) theatrical microcosm *Der Mond* to his own words after the Brothers Grimm is performed for the first time, in the Nationaltheater, Munich.

**6 February 1939** William Grant Still (43) receives a final divorce from his first wife, Grace Bundy. He is now free to marry Verna Arvey.

**7 February 1939** Paul Hindemith (43) arrives in Hoboken, New Jersey aboard the Dutch liner *SS Volendam* for his third concert tour of the United States in as many years.

**8 February 1939** Ernst Krenek (38) accepts a two-year appointment as full professor at Vassar College.

William Grant Still (43) marries Verna Arvey, a pianist, in Mexico.

**9 February 1939** Japanese forces capture Hainan.

*L’Or dans la montagne*, a film with music by Arthur Honegger (46), is shown for the first time, in ABC Cinema, Geneva.

**10 February 1939** Ambrogio Damiano Achille Ratti, Pope Pius XI, dies in Rome.

**11 February 1939** Lise Meitner and Robert Frisch publish a paper in *Nature* about how a nuclear chain reaction could convert mass to energy. They call it “nuclear fission.”

Nadia Boulanger (51) becomes the first woman to conduct the New York Philharmonic, in Carnegie Hall. During the evening she also performs on the piano and organ.

**14 February 1939** The German battleship *Bismarck* is launched in Hamburg.

**15 February 1939** Luigi Dallapiccola’s (35) appeal of last 17 December is accepted. He is to regard the letter of 26 October “as never having been sent.” (Sala, 294) He may pick up his membership card in the National Fascist Party whenever he wishes.

*The Little Foxes* by Lillian Hellman opens in New York.

**16 February 1939** Pál, Count Teleki de Szék replaces Béla Imrédy de Omoravica as Prime Minister of Hungary.

The *Richard-Wagner-Forschungsstätte*, created to encourage study of Wagner’s (†56) music and philosophy, is officially opened in Bayreuth in a ceremony attended by many Nazi officials.

*Miroirs brûlants*, a cycle for voice and piano by Francis Poulenc (40) to words of Eluard, is performed completely for the first time, in the Salle Gaveau, Paris. Also premiered is Poulenc’s *Le Portrait* to words of Colette, for voice and piano. The composer plays the piano for both. See 14 October 1938.

**18 February 1939** Trois danses for orchestra by Florent Schmitt (68) are performed for the first time, in Paris.

Trois réalisations op.107/1 for organ by Charles Koechlin (71) is performed completely for the first time, in Salle Gaveau, Paris. See 8 April 1935.

**20 February 1939** Hubert Pierlot replaces Paul Henri Spaak as Prime Minister of Belgium.

**21 February 1939** In San Francisco, Paul Hindemith (43) writes to his wife about a stop in Cheyenne, Wyoming. “This is still genuine cowboy country. Even the non-cowboy citizens wear the appropriate hats, not to speak of the heavy watch chains and cowboy boots. Everywhere in the shops you find a marvelous selection of guns, of shirts in the most unpredictable colors and fabrics of all kinds, of riding boots, spurs, and fascinating saddles. It was a most interesting stop. However, I cannot imagine them playing Mozart in these outfits.”

**22 February 1939** Incidental music to Priestley’s play *Johnson over Jordan* by Benjamin Britten (25) is performed for the first time, in the New Theatre, London.

**24 February 1939** Symphony no.3 by Roy Harris (41) is performed for the first time, in Symphony Hall, Boston.

Several songs by Charles Ives (64) are performed for the first time, in Town Hall, New York: *Autumn*, to words of his wife, Harmony Twichell, and *Berceuse*, *The Side Show* and *Down East* to his own words, and *Two Little Flowers* to words of both Ives and his wife. John Kirkpatrick also reprises the *Concord Sonata*. Due to the recent notoriety of Ives’ music given by the critic Lawrence Gilman, the hall is filled.

**25 February 1939** *One Thing is Certain*, a ballet by Hugo Weisgall (26) to a scenario by Hart, is performed for the first time, in Baltimore.

**26 February 1939** Sextet for clarinet, piano, and string quartet by Aaron Copland (38) is performed for the first time, in Town Hall, New York.

*Fancy Fannie’s Judgement Day*, a dance by Wallingford Riegger (53) to a scenario by Gerrard, is performed for the first time, in New York.

**27 February 1939** Great Britain and France recognize the fascist dictatorship of Francisco Franco as the legitimate government of Spain.

In the case of *NLRB v. Fansteel Metallurgical Corporation*, the US Supreme Court rules that sit-down strikes are illegal.

Incidental music to a composite of scenes from Shakespeare’s plays entitled *The Five Kings* by Aaron Copland (38) is performed for the first time, in the Colonial Theatre, Boston along with Copland’s incidental music to Irwin Shaw’s play *Quiet City* for clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, and piano.

**28 February 1939** The constitutional President of the Republic of Spain, Manuel Azaña y Diez, resigns after learning that Great Britain and France have recognized the fascist rebels as the legitimate government of Spain.

Paul Hindemith (43) visits several film studios in Los Angeles in search of a contract. He stops at the Disney studio and talks with Walt Disney as they are creating *Fantasia*. “I spoke with the great music god Stokowski and had the feeling that in spite of his friendliness he was very insecure and did not particularly like my being there. When I saw what kind of trash he was making and that he was wearing an ultramarine blue silk shirt and a lemon-yellow cravat with albino-like face I really could not muster up the proper feeling of awe.”

**1 March 1939** Laura Dallapiccola, wife of Luigi Dallapicolla (35), is dismissed from her position as librarian at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence because she is Jewish.

Piano Trio no.1 by Ross Lee Finney (32) is performed for the first time, in the Chamber Music Hall of Carnegie Hall, New York.

**2 March 1939** Igor Stravinsky’s (56) wife Yekaterina dies of tuberculosis in Paris.

Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli becomes Pope Pius XII in Rome.

**3 March 1939** Mohandas K. Gandhi begins a fast at Rajkot in favor of administrative reform.

**5 March 1939** The Spanish fleet, loyal to the constitutional government, revolts in Cartagena and puts to sea.

**6 March 1939** Prime Minister Miron Cristea of Romania dies and is replaced by Armand Calinescu.

**7 March 1939** The rebel troop ship *Castillo de Olite* is struck by loyalist shore batteries and sunk off Cartagena, Spain. 1,476 of the 2,112 men on board are killed. About 300 are captured by local fishermen.

**9 March 1939** Cuatro piezas para piano by Joaquín Rodrigo (37) are performed for the first time, in Paris by the composer.

**10 March 1939** President Emil Hacha of Czechoslovakia declares martial law in Slovakia and sends troops to occupy all public buildings.

NKVD agents arrest Lev Sergeyevich Termen (Leon Theremin) (42) at the Hotel Kievskaya in Moscow and take him to Butyrka Prison. All of his possessions are confiscated.

**14 March 1939** After being summoned to Berlin last night and told that Hitler wants Bohemia and Moravia, but not his land, Josef Tiso, Prime Minister of Slovakia, declares a state independent of Czechoslovakia. On the same day, President Hacha goes to Berlin and throws himself at the mercy of Hitler.

*Romance*, a song by Claude Debussy (†20) to words of Bourget, is performed for the first time, in Paris.

**15 March 1939** 03:55 President Emil Hácha of Czechoslovakia signs a communique in Berlin, placing his country in the hands of Adolf Hitler and Germany. Later in the morning, German troops and the Führer himself roll into Bohemia and Moravia. Hungary, at German insistence, takes Ruthenia in heavy fighting against armed citizens. By nightfall, the German army has occupied Prague.

A concert scheduled for today, which was to include the premiere of the Fantasy no.4 for quarter-tone piano op.25 by Alois Hába (45), is cancelled due to the takeover of Czechoslovakia.

Two Symphonic Interludes from Macbeth by Ernest Bloch (58) is performed for the first time, in Bournemouth.

**16 March 1939** Germany declares a protectorate over Bohemia and Moravia.

The synagogue in Jihlava, Czechoslovakia, where Gustav Mahler (†27) grew up, is burned to the ground by the Germans.

In Paris, Bohuslav Martinu (48) learns about the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia by reading about it in *Le Figaro*.

**17 March 1939** The “independent” state of Slovakia asks for German protection.

The fascist dictatorships of Spain and Portugal sign a treaty of friendship and mutual respect.

Prime Minister Daladier of France is granted wide power by the French Chamber of Deputies to rearm.

Speaking in Birmingham, Prime Minister Chamberlain announces that he has been deceived by Hitler and that the United Kingdom will resist any further territorial expansion by Germany.

**20 March 1939** The United States ambassador to Berlin is recalled over the crisis in Czechoslovakia.

In a Moscow prison, Lev Sergeyevich Termen (Leon Theremin) (42) is forced to sign a confession that he belonged to a fascist organization and spied for foreign countries. See 15 August 1939.

Virgil Thomson (42) writes to Aaron Copland (38) calling Copland’s new book *What to Listen for in Music*  “a bore.” See 1 May 1939.

**22 March 1939** A treaty between Germany and Lithuania cedes the Memel Territory to Germany. By this time, 21,000 people, Lithuanians and Jews, have fled the district.

Germany demands the return of Danzig (Gdansk) and the Polish corridor.

**23 March 1939** Hungarian troops march into the newly independent Slovakia.

Great Britain and France pledge military intervention against any attack on Belgium, the Netherlands, or Switzerland.

Béla Bartók’s (57) Violin Concerto (no.2) is performed for the first time, in Amsterdam. The press is ecstatic.

The Duke Ellington (39) band sets sail from New York aboard the *Champlain* for a tour of Europe.

**24 March 1939** Slovakians counterattack against invading Hungarians.

Forces of the democratically elected government of Spain surrender Madrid to the fascist rebels.

*Imaginary Landscape no.1* by John Cage (26) for muted piano, cymbal, and two variable speed turntables, is performed for the first time, in Seattle to accompany Jean Cocteau’s *Marriage at the Eiffel Tower*. The work is produced in two studios by the composer, his wife Xenia, Doris Dennison, and Margaret Janson, and broadcast to the theatre. It is, perhaps, the first electroacoustic composition. Also premiered is Henry Cowell’s (42) music for the same play.

**25 March 1939** The aria from *Bachianas Brasileiras no.5* for soprano and eight cellos by Heitor Villa-Lobos (52) is performed for the first time, in Rio de Janeiro. See 10 October 1947.

**26 March 1939** Spanish loyalist and rebel radio stations broadcast their versions of the peace negotiations. Loyalist troops are allowed to disband, thus ending the Spanish Civil War.

A Set of Three Pieces for two pianos, four hands by Lukas Foss (16) is performed for the first time, in New York.

**27 March 1939** Japanese forces occupy Nanchang.

Italy sends an ultimatum to Albania demanding it become an Italian protectorate.

**28 March 1939** Hitler denounces the 1934 non-aggression pact with Poland.

Fascist rebels enter Madrid.

Jonas Cernius replaces Vladas Mironas as Prime Minister of Lithuania.

Harvard Prof. Edward Forbes writes to Igor Stravinsky (56) in Paris, informing him that he has been selected as this year’s holder of the Charles Eliot Norton Chair of Poetry.

**29 March 1939** All hostilities in the Spanish Civil War end.

**31 March 1939** Prime Minister Chamberlain announces to the House of Commons that his government, and that of France, guarantee the independence of Poland.

After a week of fighting, conflict largely ends in the war between Slovakia and Hungary.

Two works for chorus are performed for the first time, in Temple Emanu-El, New York: *Heart not so Heavy as Mine*, by Elliott Carter (30) to words of Dickinson, and *Chorale Fanfare* by Roy Harris (41) to words of Taggard.

**1 April 1939** President of the Spanish State Francisco Franco Bahamonde names himself Prime Minister and announces the end of the war.

The United States recognizes the Franco government as the legitimate government of Spain.

*Durch Einsamkeiten* for male chorus by Richard Strauss (74) to words of Wildgans is performed for the first time, in Vienna.

Flourish for Wind Band by Ralph Vaughan Williams (66) is performed for the first time, in Royal Albert Hall, London.

**3 April 1939** The Duke Ellington (39) band performs in the Théâtre National, Paris to a full house. The scene will be repeated tomorrow.

Elections to the Danish Folketing result in modest losses for the Social Democrats and little change elsewhere. It also sees the election of three members of the fascist National Socialist Workers Party.

**4 April 1939** Hungary and Slovakia sign a peace treaty in Budapest to end their brief conflict. Slovakia is forced to give up a small amount of territory to Hungary.

**5 April 1939** *Ballad of Heroes* op.14 for solo voice, chorus, and orchestra by Benjamin Britten (25) to words of Auden and Swingler, is performed for the first time, at a concert of the Festival of Music for the People in Queen’s Hall, London. The work was composed in honor of the men of the British Battalion of the International Brigade who fell combating fascism in Spain.

**6 April 1939** The Albanian cabinet and parliament vote to reject the Italian ultimatum of 27 March.

Duke Ellington (39) and his band play two concerts at the Majestic Theatre in Antwerp.

**7 April 1939** Earle Christmas Grafton Page replaces Joseph Aloysius Lyons as Prime Minister of Australia.

Italian forces invade Albania as Italy formally annexes the country.

Spain joins the Anti-Comintern Pact.

Duke Ellington (39) and his band perform at The Hague.

**8 April 1939** Italian forces enter Tirana. Albanian resistance collapses.

Duke Ellington (39) and his band play in Utrecht in the afternoon and in the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam at night.

**9 April 1939** Contralto Marian Anderson gives an open air concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to an audience of 75,000 on Easter Sunday. She uses this venue after she is denied use of the DAR Constitution Hall because she is of African descent. The incident causes Eleanor Roosevelt to resign from the DAR. The last offering on her program is Florence Price’s arrangement of *My Soul’s Been Anchored in the Lord.* Today is Ms. Price’s 52nd birthday.

**10 April 1939** Italian troops complete the occupation of Albania.

**11 April 1939** Hungary leaves the League of Nations.

Duke Ellington (39) and his band play a concert in Malmö, Sweden. In order to get to Sweden from the Netherlands, they travelled by train and bus through Germany.

Igor Stravinsky (56) accepts the Charles Eliot Norton Chair of Poetry at Harvard University.

**12 April 1939** The Albanian Parliament abolishes the 1928 constitution and offers the crown to Vittorio Emanuele III.

Elections for an expanded Belgian Parliament show losses for the two largest parties, the Catholics and the Socialists, with the Catholics holding a slight edge.

**13 April 1939** The anti-imperialist Hindustani Lal Sena (Indian Red Army) is founded.

Great Britain and France guarantee the independence of Romania and Greece.

The Duke Ellington (39) band performs two concerts in Copenhagen.

**14 April 1939** *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck is published by Viking Press.

**16 April 1939** King Vittorio Emanuele III of Italy accepts the crown of Albania, effectively annexing the country.

The USSR proposes a defensive alliance with Great Britain against Germany.

Two ancient Egyptian trumpets found in the tomb of King Tutankhamun are played for the first time in 3,297 years, on a worldwide radio broadcast.

The Duke Ellington (39) band performs two concerts in Stockholm.

**17 April 1939** *The Virgin Martyrs* op.8/1 for female chorus by Samuel Barber (29) to words of Siegebert of Gembloux (tr. Waddell) is performed for the first time, at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Also premiered is Barber’s choral work *Mary Hynes* op.16/1 to words of Stephens. See 26 July 1949.

**18 April 1939** Serenade no.2 for two violins and viola by Bohuslav Martinu (48) is performed for the first time, in Prague.

Duke Ellington (39) and his band plays two concerts in the Coliseum Kino, Oslo.

**19 April 1939** *The King of the Stars*, a cantata for chorus and orchestra by Igor Stravinsky (56) to words of Balmont, is performed for the first time, in Brussels 27 years after it was composed.

Sinfonietta for orchestra by Ulysses Kay (22) is performed for the first time, in Syracuse, New York.

**20 April 1939** Sonata for violin and piano by Walter Piston (45) is performed for the first time, in Brunswick, Maine.

**21 April 1939** A favorable review of the performance of 19 April in the *Rochester* *Times Union* brings the name of Ulysses Kay (22) to the public for the first time.

The seventh movement of *Les Illuminations* op.18 for voice and strings by Benjamin Britten (25) to words of Rimbaud is performed for the first time, at Queen’s College, Birmingham. See 30 January 1940.

Incidental music to Aristophanes’ play *The Birds* by Leonard Bernstein (20) is performed for the first time, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, directed by the composer in his conducting debut.

**22 April 1939** The SC Johnson Wax Administration Center in Racine, Wisconsin opens for use. It was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Gian Carlo Menotti’s (27) radio opera *The Old Maid and the Thief* to his own words, is performed for the first time, over the airwaves of the National Broadcasting Company Blue Network originating in New York. See 11 February 1941.

**23 April 1939** Three new works are performed for the first time, in Town Hall, New York: Quartet for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano, and Sonata for viola and piano no.3, both by Paul Hindemith (43) as well as the Soliloquy from *Soliloquy and Dance* for viola and piano by Roy Harris (41). See 10 March 1940.

**24 April 1939** *Angels* for four muted trumpets and two muted trombones, or four violins and two cellos by Carl Ruggles (63) is performed for the first time, in Miami conducted by the composer. This is the final orchestration of this work. See 27 April 1922 and 17 December 1922.

**26 April 1939** Robert Gordon Menzies replaces Earle Christmas Grafton Page as Prime Minister of Australia.

The British government proposes the first peacetime conscription in the nation’s history.

After his third concert tour of the United States, Paul Hindemith (43) sails from New York aboard the *SS President Roosevelt* making for Le Havre.

**28 April 1939** In a speech to the Reichstag, Hitler denounces the German-Polish agreement of 1934 and the Anglo-German naval agreement of 1935.

Germans carry out a pogrom in Jihlava, Czechoslovakia, forcing out the 1,200 Jews in the town. It is where Gustav Mahler (†27) grew up.

*West London*, a song by Charles Ives (64) to words of Arnold, is performed for the first time, at the Fine Arts Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

**29 April 1939** Benjamin Britten (25) and Peter Pears sail aboard the *SS Ausonia* for Canada. They will spend three years in North America. They are seen off by Britten’s teacher Frank Bridge (60) and his wife. It is the last time Britten and Bridge will see each other.

A performance by the Duke Ellington band in the Konserthuset, Stockholm becomes a celebration of his 40th birthday.

**30 April 1939** The National Broadcasting Company inaugurates regular television broadcasts beginning with coverage of President Roosevelt at the opening of the New York World’s Fair. He is the first sitting president to be seen publicly on television. Also at today’s opening, cosmic rays are harnessed for the first time to produce electricity. They are trapped by a Geiger-Mueller counter at the Hayden Planetarium, turned into electric current and sent to the fair grounds in Flushing Meadows to operate switches on colored lights at the Lagoon of Nations.

Ellen Taaffe (Zwilich) is born in Miami, Florida, the adopted daughter of Edward Porter Taaffe and Ruth Howard.

Kurt Weill’s (39) historical pageant *Railroads on Parade* to words of Hungerford is performed for the first time, at the New York World’s Fair. Also premiered at the fair is William Grant Still’s (43) *Song of a City* for chorus and orchestra to words of Stillman.

**1 May 1939** Austria is completely integrated into the German Reich. Any autonomy it may have enjoyed ends.

Aaron Copland (38) answers Virgil Thomson’s (42) letter of 20 March saying “I enjoyed reading your strictures on the book more than much of the praise it has had.”

On the 20th night of 20 one-night-stands, the Duke Ellington (40) band plays its last concert in Scandinavia on this tour.

**3 May 1939** The All India Forward Bloc is formed by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Calcutta as a leftist alternative to the Indian National Congress.

The Hungarian Parliament passes strict anti-Jewish legislation. Jews are expelled from government and professions. Emigration is restricted.

Jonathan Dean Harvey is born in Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire, UK, the son of Gerald and Noel Harvey.

**4 May 1939**  *Finnegan’s Wake* by James Joyce goes on sale in London and New York.

Duke Ellington (39) and his band sail from Le Havre for New York aboard the *Île de France.*

**5 May 1939** Dorothy Garrod is elected Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge University. She is the first woman to hold a professorship at either Oxford or Cambridge.

**6 May 1939** String Quartet no.5 by Heitor Villa-Lobos (52) is performed for the first time, in Rio de Janeiro.

**7 May 1939** Prologue for chorus and orchestra by William Schuman (28) to words of Taggard, is performed for the first time, in New York by the New York Federal Symphony and funded by the Federal Music Project. This concert is the first FMP concert featuring all-Guggenheim recipients. Along with Schuman, music by Aaron Copland (38), Roy Harris (41), Walter Piston (45), and Paul Nordoff is performed.

**8 May 1939** Spain leaves the League of Nations.

The largest anti-Semitic demonstration in Cuba’s history takes place in Havana. They protest the impending departure of the *SS St. Louis* from Hamburg with almost a thousand Jewish refugees bound for Cuba.

Piano Sonata no.1 op.3 by Vincent Persichetti (23) is performed for the first time, at Philadelphia Conservatory by the composer.

**9 May 1939** Benjamin Britten (25) and Peter Pears arrive in Quebec from Britain for an extended stay in North America. Within a month, they are lovers.

**10 May 1939** Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Capricorn* is officially released in France. It will be banned in the United States.

The Duke Ellington (40) band returns to New York after six weeks of a European tour.

**11 May 1939** A six-month long border war begins near Lake Bor between Japanese and Soviet troops. Their surrogate local troops are Manchukuo and Mongolia respectively.

**12 May 1939** Great Britain and Turkey pledge mutual aid should war break out in the Mediterranean.

Incidental music to a puppet show entitled *From Sorcery to Science* by Aaron Copland (38) is performed for the first time, in the Hall of Pharmacy at the New York World’s Fair.

**13 May 1939** The German liner *SS St. Louis* sails from Hamburg. On board are 938 passengers, almost all of whom are Jewish refugees. Their destination is Havana where most of the Jews are to await entry visas for the United States.

Prelude and Fugue for strings and four trumpets by Roy Harris (41) is performed for the first time, at the High School of Music and Art, New York.

**15 May 1939** *The Garden*, a film with music by Aram Khachaturian (35), is released.

**16 May 1939** The first food stamps in the United States are distributed in Rochester, New York.

**17 May 1939** The first television broadcast in Japan takes place from the NHK laboratories in Kamata, near Tokyo.

The British Parliament approves the MacDonald White Paper plan for partition of Palestine. Both Arabs and Jews denounce the plan.

*Alexander Nevsky* op.78, a cantata for mezzo-soprano, chorus, and orchestra by Sergey Prokofiev (48) to words of Lugorsky and the composer, with music from his film score of the same name, is performed for the first time, in Moscow the composer conducting. See 1 December 1938.

The National Broadcasting Company broadcasts the first televised sporting event in North America, a baseball game between Princeton and Columbia.

**19 May 1939** Hans Pfitzner’s (70) 31-year-old daughter Agnes takes her own life.

*Eight Column Line*, a ballet by Ernst Krenek (38), is performed for the first time, in Avery Memorial Auditorium, Hartford, Connecticut conducted by the composer.

Four works for percussion are performed for the first time at the Cornish School in Seattle conducted by John Cage (26): *Pulse* and *Return*, both by Henry Cowell (42) and Lou Harrison’s (22) *Fifth Simfony* and *Counterdance in the Spring*.

**20 May 1939** Pan-American Airways begins regular commercial flights (air mail) between the United States and Europe.

**22 May 1939** Germany and Italy conclude a military alliance hereafter called “The Pact of Steel.”

**23 May 1939** Dmitri Shostakovich (32) is appointed a professor at Leningrad Conservatory.

**24 May 1939** *München*, an “occasional waltz” for orchestra by Richard Strauss (74), is performed for the first time, in Munich. The waltz is to accompany a film about the city’s cultural heritage but it has been banned by Hitler because they plan new building developments in Munich. Today, the mayor arranges a private showing of the film. See 14 March 1940.

The reworked and orchestrated version of Elliott Carter’s (30) ballet *Pochahontas* is performed for the first time, in the Martin Beck Theatre, New York. See 17 August 1936, 4 December 1939, 4 June 1940.

*Billy the Kid*, a ballet by Aaron Copland (38), is performed for the first time with orchestra, in the Martin Beck Theatre, New York. See 6 October 1938 and 9 November 1940.

**26 May 1939** *The City*, a film with music by Aaron Copland (38), is shown for the first time, at the New York World’s Fair.

*Symbolistic Study no.6 “Mountain Vision”* for piano and orchestra by Arthur Farwell (67) is performed for the first time, over the airwaves of the CBS Radio Network.

**27 May 1939** Marc Blitzstein (34) arrives in Boston for the local premiere of his *The Cradle Will Rock*. Sponsored by the Harvard Student Union, it is put on in Sanders Theatre by a Harvard senior named Leonard Bernstein (20) who serves as accompanist, takes two roles and has cast his 15-year-old sister as the prostitute. The two of them spend the afternoon walking along the Charles and talking. The performance, held tonight, enthralls Blitzstein and the two musicians become life-long friends.

The *SS St. Louis* arrives in Havana harbor, 14 days out of Hamburg. Of the 938 mostly Jewish refugees aboard, the Cuban government allows 22 to disembark. Attempts by the others to get entry visas to the United States will be denied.

**28 May 1939** An attorney for the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee arrives in Havana to try to negotiate with the Cuban government to allow the refugees from the *SS St. Louis* to disembark. He will fail.

**31 May 1939** Germany signs a non-aggression pact with Estonia and Lithuania.

**1 June 1939** Michael Cardew moves his family from Gloucestershire to Wenford Bridge, near Bodmin in Cornwall where his son Cornelius (3) will grow up.

**2 June 1939** Six days after docking, President Federico Laredo Brú orders the *SS St. Louis* to depart Cuban waters.

**6 June 1939** The *SS St. Louis* departs Havana for Europe. The Jewish refugees on board will be taken in by Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. Of the 907 refugees who return to Europe, 254 of them will eventually die in the holocaust.

**6 June 1939** Louis Andriessen is born in Utrecht, the last of six children born to Hendrik Andriessen, a composer and organist, and Johanna Justine Anschütz, a professional pianist.

**7 June 1939** Benjamin Britten (25) and Peter Pears arrive in Toronto to make arrangements for a joint recital and a broadcast. Here, their relationship is cemented permanently.

**8 June 1939** Fantasy for piano by Ross Lee Finney (32) is performed for the first time, at the New York World’s Fair.

**9 June 1939** Benjamin Britten (25) and Peter Pears arrive in Grand Rapids, Michigan for a ten-day stay. Here, their relationship is cemented permanently.

Symphony no.7 by Arnold Bax (55) is performed for the first time, in Carnegie Hall as part of the New York World’s Fair.

Incidental music to Euripides’ play *The Trojan Women* by Lou Harrison (22) is performed for the first time, at Mills College, Oakland.

**10 June 1939** *Five Variants on Dives and Lazarus* for orchestra by Ralph Vaughan Williams (66), is performed for the first time, in Carnegie Hall, New York.

**11 June 1939** On the occasion of the 75th birthday of Richard Strauss, the composer is able to have a two-hour conversation with Propaganda Minister Goebbels in Vienna. Goebbels tells Strauss that he will ask Hitler for protection for his daughter-in-law (a Jew) and grandsons. The protection is never granted.

The first episode of Helweg’s (after White) play *The Sword in the Stone* entitled “The Quest”, with music by Benjamin Britten (25) is broadcast for the first time, over the airwaves of the BBC.

**14 June 1939** When British officials refuse to hand over the killers of an important Chinese collaborator, Japan begins a blockade of the British concession at Tientsin (Tianjin). They make several demands, including the handing over of the suspects and all Chinese silver reserves in British banks.

Concertino pastorale for string orchestra by John Ireland (59) is performed for the first time, in the Cloisters of Canterbury Cathedral.

**15 June 1939** Music for Ravenne’s play *Voyage au pays du rêve* by Darius Milhaud (46) is performed for the first time, over the airwaves of Radio France, the composer conducting.

**17 June 1939** Convicted murderer Eugène Weidmann is executed by guillotine at the Saint-Pierre prison in Versailles. It is the last public execution in France.

Symphonic Variations by Witold Lutoslawski (26) is performed in a live concert for the first time, in Krakow. It was broadcast over Polish Radio, Warsaw last April.

**18 June 1939** The second episode of Helweg’s (after White) play *The Sword in the Stone* entitled “Merlyn’s New Job” with music by Benjamin Britten (25) is broadcast for the first time, over the airwaves of the BBC.

**20 June 1939** The Russian theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold is arrested in Leningrad.

**21 June 1939** The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia are forbidden to buy or sell land.

Francis Poulenc’s (40) Concerto for organ, strings, and timpani is performed publicly for the first time, in the Salle Gaveau, Paris, Maurice Duruflé at the organ. See 16 December 1938.

**22 June 1939** Leonard Bernstein (20) graduates from Harvard University.

*Paul Bunyan*, a ballet by William Bergsma (18), is performed for the first time, in San Francisco.

**23 June 1939** In an agreement signed in Ankara, France cedes Alexandretta (Iskenderun) to Turkey.

**25 June 1939** The third episode of Helweg’s (after White) play *The Sword in the Stone* entitled “Wart and the Hawks” with music by Benjamin Britten (25) is broadcast for the first time, over the airwaves of the BBC.

**27 June 1939** Benjamin Britten (25) and Peter Pears move to New York City.

**28 June 1939** Olivier Messiaen (30) departs Paris for his summer holiday in Petichet. Here he will compose *Les corps glorieux*. He will finish it on the day he is called up into the army.

Pan American Airways begins regular fixed wing transatlantic passenger service with a flight from Port Washington, New York to Marseille.

**29 June 1939** Jewish professionals in Italy are limited to serving Jewish clients and patients.

Irving Fine (24) sails from the United States for France aboard the *SS De Grasse* to study with Nadia Boulanger (51).

**30 June 1939** The Federal Theatre Project in the US ceases to exist.

**2 July 1939** The fourth episode of Helweg’s (after White) play *The Sword in the Stone* entitled “Adventure with a Witch” with music by Benjamin Britten (25) is broadcast for the first time, over the airwaves of the BBC.

**3 July 1939** John Ireland (59) moves to Guernsey with John Longmire.

Nadia Boulanger (51) disembarks at Le Havre after six months in the United States.

**4 July 1939** Baseball player Lou Gehrig, forced to retire after contracting ALS, gives a speech in Yankee Stadium, New York on a day named in his honor. He declares himself “the luckiest man on the face of the earth.”

**5 July 1939** A composite of the two earlier versions of the Symphony no.8 by Anton Bruckner (†42) is performed for the first time, in Hamburg.

**6 July 1939** Elliott Carter (30) marries Helen Frost Jones, a sculptor and art critic, in Chatham, Massachusetts.

James Smith McDonnell incorporates his St. Louis company McDonnell Aircraft, in Maryland.

**7 July 1939** Irving Fine (24) arrives at Le Havre and takes a train for Paris.

**8 July 1939** Americans Philip Levine and Rufus Stetson publish an article in the *Journal of the American Medical Society* where they describe a previously unknown factor in blood. It will come to be known as the Rhesus (Rh) factor.

**9 July 1939** The fifth episode of Helweg’s (after White) play *The Sword in the Stone* entitled “The Owl’s Dream” with music by Benjamin Britten (25) is broadcast for the first time, over the airwaves of the BBC.

**14 July 1939** Harry Partch (38) begins writing for the Federal Writers’ Project in California.

**16 July 1939** Soviet planes bomb Fularki, Manchukuo. Japan will retaliate with a raid on Halunarshan.

The sixth and last episode of Helweg’s (after White) play *The Sword in the Stone* entitled “The Sword” with music by Benjamin Britten (25) is broadcast for the first time, over the airwaves of the BBC.

**22 July 1939** The Leipzig music publishers CF Peters is forcibly sold to Johannes Petschull and Kurt Herrmann. The Hinirichsen family, who formerly owned the firm, are Jewish.

**23 July 1939** At his second lesson with Nadia Boulanger (51), Irving Fine (24) is told by his teacher that he has “a definite gift for composition.” (Ramey, 26) She asks him to stay on in Paris for a year. This will be impossible once war begins and he will return to Boston at the end of August.

**27 July 1939** *School Music*, nine pieces for various combinations of instruments by Ernst Krenek (38), is performed for the first time, in Hill Auditorium, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

**2 August 1939** Albert Einstein writes to President Roosevelt informing him of the possibility of a weapon whose explosive power is derived from a nuclear chain reaction. He also urges the president to prevent Germany from developing such a weapon.

**4 August 1939** Nazis in the Free City of Danzig (Gdansk) tell the Polish government that they can no longer serve as a port of entry. When Poland demands that they rescind this decision, Danzigers claim that the incident never happened and that Poland is looking for an excuse to invade.

**9 August 1939** Germany warns Poland that any more “ultimata” to Danzig will not be tolerated.

Max Neuhaus is born in Beaumont, Texas.

**10 August 1939** Dirk Jan de Geer replaces Hendrikus Colijn as Prime Minister of the Netherlands.

**11 August 1939** At the Lucerne International Music Festival, Sergey Rakhmaninov (66) performs in Europe for the last time.

**12 August 1939** *The Wizard of Oz* is shown for the first time, in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin.

**13 August 1939** The first four of the Six Orchestral Songs from *Das Marienleben* by Paul Hindemith (43) are performed for the first time, in Scheveningen, Switzerland. See 21 September 1959.

**15 August 1939** In an office in Butyrka Prison, Moscow, Lev Sergeyevich Termen (Leon Theremin) (42) is sentenced to eight years in a labor camp. He will be sent to Kolyma, in the far northeast of the country. See 20 March 1939.

**17 August 1939** The fifth movement of *Les Illuminations* op.18 for voice and strings by Benjamin Britten (25) to words of Rimbaud is performed for the first time, in Queen’s Hall, London. See 30 January 1940.

**20 August 1939** After two months of blockade of the British concession in Tientsin (Tianjin), the British hand over to the Japanese the accused killers of an important Chinese collaborator. They accede to no other Japanese demands. The crisis is concluded. The Japanese will execute the suspects.

**21 August 1939** To mark the 500th anniversary of the victory of Hussites over German crusaders, citizens of Prague protest their current predicament by boycotting streetcars.

**22 August 1939** Julian Seth Kahn of New York receives a US patent for an aerosol can.

**23 August 1939** To the shock of the world, implacable enemies Germany and the USSR conclude a treaty pledging mutual non-aggression and delineating spheres of influence in eastern Europe.

At Cherbourg, France, Sergey Rakhmaninov (66) boards ship for America. He will never see Europe again.

**24 August 1939** In response to the Soviet-Nazi pact, the British Parliament passes the Emergency Powers Act giving the government broad powers to organize defense of the country.

**25 August 1939** A treaty between Great Britain and Poland formalizes Britain’s declaration of 31 March, guaranteeing Polish independence.

Germany cuts off all telecommunication going beyond its borders.

*The Wizard of Oz* is officially released in the United States.

Dos canciones for voice and piano by Alberto Ginastera (23) to words of Silva Valdés are performed for the first time, in Buenos Aires.

**26 August 1939** Croatia is given almost complete autonomy within Yugoslavia.

**27 August 1939** The first flight by an airplane powered by turbojet, the Heinkel He 178, takes place in Marienehe, Germany. The engine was originally developed by Hans von Ohain.

*Young Apollo* op.16 for piano, string quartet, and string orchestra by Benjamin Britten (25) is performed for the first time, over the airwaves of the CBC originating in Toronto the composer at the keyboard.

**30 August 1939** Nobuyuki Abe replaces Baron Kiichiro Hiranuma as Prime Minister of Japan.

The evacuation of tens of thousands of children from Paris begins.

**31 August 1939** The German government announces that its demands of Poland have been rejected.

A second concert by the Federal Music Project featuring Guggenheim recipients includes the music of Ross Lee Finney (32), William Schuman (29), and Paul Creston.

**1 September 1939** 04:45 Artillery fire begins all along the border between Germany and Poland, and from a German cruiser in Danzig harbor to a Polish military installation nearby. Later, German armored and infantry units enter Poland while the Luftwaffe bombs Warsaw and other Polish cities. Danzig (Gdansk) is incorporated into the German Reich. Italy announces its neutrality while Great Britain and France demand that the Germans withdraw. Germany annexes Danzig, West Prussia, Wartheland, and Upper Silesia. The Second World War has begun.

The BBC stops television broadcasts for the duration of the war.

Plans to evacuate hundreds of thousands of children from London and other major British cities to rural areas go into operation.

Joaquín Rodrigo (37) and his wife return to Madrid from Paris to take up permanent residence. He has spent the Civil War abroad and now returns to take up a position in the music department of Spanish National Radio. In his suitcase is the manuscript of *Concierto de Aranjuez.*

The London Proms are cancelled because the BBC Symphony Orchestra has been evacuated to Bristol.

Concerto for Horns by Carlos Chávez (40) is performed completely for the first time, in the Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City.

**2 September 1939** The Germans establish a concentration camp at Stutthof near Danzig (Gdansk).

President Douglas Hyde of Ireland declares the neutrality of his country in the European war.

Igor Stravinsky (57) is discharged from Sancellemoz sanitarium near Paris where he has been treated for tuberculosis.

**3 September 1939** Germany rejects British Prime Minister Chamberlain’s ultimatum that it withdraw from Poland by 11:00 today. At 11:15 Chamberlain announces to his nation on radio that they are at war. At the same time, France hands over its ultimatum to the Germans which will also be rejected. At 17:00 France declares war before the ultimatum expires.

Australia and New Zealand declare war on Germany.

A German U-boat torpedoes the British passenger liner *Athenia* killing 112 people. The liner is out of Liverpool bound for Montreal, having sailed before the declaration of war. The U-boat commander errs in identifying the ship.

German forces capture Czestachowa and immediately begin a series of pogroms.

Spain, Italy, and Belgium declare neutrality in the European war.

Michael Tippett (34) begins composing *A Child of Our Time.*

Arnold Bax (55) writes, “It was an awful shock when I accidentally overheard the twelve o’clock news and at first could not take it in.” (Foreman, 356)

All public entertainment in Great Britain is cancelled until further notice.

**4 September 1939** Advance members of the British Expeditionary Force land in France.

Olivier Messiaen (30) is called up into the French army.

The first Allied bombing raid over Germany takes place as the RAF attacks Wilhelmshaven. Little damage is done to the shipping while five of the ten bombers are shot down.

**5 September 1939** United States President Franklin Roosevelt implements the Neutrality Act of 1937, including an arms embargo on all belligerents in the European war.

**6 September 1939** South Africa declares war on Germany. Jan Christiaan Smuts becomes Prime Minister.

German forces capture Krakow. The Polish government evacuates Warsaw and moves to Lublin while their troops withdraw to a line of the Rivers Narew, Vistula, and San.

Aaron Copland (38) writes from Woodstock, New York to Benjamin Britten (25) urging him to avoid conscription. “Anyone can shoot a gun--but how many can write music like you?”

**7 September 1939** French forces cross into Germany southeast of Saarbrücken.

The Polish naval base at Westerplatte surrenders to the Germans.

**8 September 1939** At Bedzin, Poland, Germans heard hundreds of Jews into a synagogue and set it alight. 200 people are burned to death.

German forces capture Aleksandrow.

All Jewish businesses in the occupied territories are to be marked with a Star of David.

US President Roosevelt declares a limited national emergency.

**9 September 1939** Polish forces counterattack around Kutno and make modest gains.

Germans burn down the synagogues of Aleksandrow.

**10 September 1939** Canada declares war on Germany.

**11 September 1939** German troops cross the River San north and south of Przemysl.

**12 September 1939** After advancing eight km along a 25 km front into Germany, the French army halts.

**13 September 1939** Auto Avio Costruzioni is founded in Modena by Enzo Ferrari.

Mines accidentally explode on the French cruiser *Pluton* in the port of Casablanca. 186 people are killed, 120 are wounded.

**14 September 1939** German troops enter Przemysl. 43 leading Jews are arrested, beaten, and shot.

Germans reach Brest-Litovsk (Brest, Belarus).

Russian born American engineer Igor Ivanovich Sikorsky flies his Vought-Sikorsky VS-300 direct-lift aircraft in Stratford, Connecticut. It is the first practical helicopter.

**15 September 1939** Cease-fire and neutrality agreements are signed by the Soviet Union and Japan.

**16 September 1939** The Polish government refuses to surrender Warsaw. On the eve of Rosh Hashanah, German bombers deliberately target the Jewish quarter of the city.

Bulgaria declares official neutrality in the current war.

**17 September 1939** Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov announces from Moscow that the Polish government has ceased to exist and therefore the USSR is taking possession of eastern Poland. The action was secretly agreed to a month ago in the Soviet-German non-aggression pact.

President Ignacy Moscicki of Poland, Prime Minister Felicjan Slawoj-Skladkowski, and his government cross the border into Romania.

The British aircraft carrier *HMS Courageous* is sunk by a German submarine off the southwest coast of Ireland. She goes down with 519 of her crew.

**18 September 1939** German and Soviet troops, devouring Poland from opposite sides, meet, ironically enough, in Brest-Litovsk (Brest, Belarus).

Soviet forces capture Vilna (Vilnius).

William Joyce begins broadcasting over German radio to England as Lord Haw-Haw.

President of the Reichsmusikkammer Peter Raabe issues a decree banning the performance of all music of composers from enemy countries. This goes for all music not in the public domain.

**19 September 1939** After a protracted, heroic defense of ten days, Polish forces surrender Poznan to the Germans.

Soviet troops occupy Vilna (Vilnius) and blockade the Estonian coast.

Adolf Hitler makes a triumphal entry into Danzig (Gdansk).

Hitler empowers the leading medical officers of the Reich to begin a policy of killing the insane.

**20 September 1939** German Field Marshall von Runstedt orders the end of anti-Jewish SS operations in Katowice.

Witold Lutoslawski (26), serving in the signal corps, is taken prisoner by the Germans. He will escape and make his way to Warsaw.

**21 September 1939** Prime Minister Armand Calinescu of Romania, his bodyguard and driver are shot to death by the fascist Iron Guard in Bucharest. Calinescu is replaced by Gheorghe Argesanu. Numerous members of the Iron Guard are arrested or murdered.

Reinhard Heydrich issues the following orders to the commanders of the Einsatzgruppen: 1. Country Jews will be concentrated in large cities. The districts of Danzig, West Prussia, Poznan, and Upper Silesia will be emptied of Jews. 2. Jewish councils are to be established which will have authority over executing all orders. 3. All Jewish businesses and property will be confiscated and exploited.

**22 September 1939** Over the next four days the SS loot Jewish shops, blow up synagogues, and murder dozens of leading Jewish citizens in Wloclawek.

Soviet forces capture Lvov (Lviv).

**23 September 1939** 800 Poles, intellectuals and municipal leaders, are shot to death by the SS over the next two days in Bydgoszcz.

Sigmund Freud dies at his home in Hampstead, London.

The USSR and Hungary resume diplomatic relations broken in February.

Elliott Carter (30) sends the score to a suite from his ballet *Pochahontas* to Serge Koussevitzky in Boston, along with a letter of support from Aaron Copland (38). See 4 December 1939.

**25 September 1939** 400 German planes attack Warsaw, dropping 72 tons of incendiaries and causing widespread fires.

Food rationing is instituted in Germany.

Igor Stravinsky (57) flees the war in Europe by boarding ship in Bordeaux, heading for New York.

**27 September 1939** As German Foreign Minister von Ribbentropp lands in Moscow to negotiate a new treaty over Poland, Warsaw surrenders to the Germans. The treaty of friendship between Germany and the Soviet Union sets down the latest partition of Poland. The first eleven notes of Chopin’s (†89) Military Polonaise, the signature of Warsaw State Radio, are sounded for the last time.

**28 September 1939** Polish troops in Modlin surrender to the Germans.

Estonia grants the Soviet Union the right to garrison troops within its borders.

Constantine Argetoianu replaces Gheorghe Argesanu as Prime Minister of Romania.

Manuel de Falla (62) leaves his home in Granada, travelling to Barcelona.

Arthur Farwell (67) marries Betty Richardson, his former student 40 years his junior, in New York.

**29 September 1939** The Soviet-German treaty of friendship is announced including the partition of Poland. The border is set along the River Bug and Germany recognizes Soviet sovereignty over Lithuania.

A treaty of mutual assistance between Estonia and the USSR allows the Soviets to lease bases and station troops in Estonia.

**30 September 1939** On the first anniversary of the Munich agreement, citizens of Prague boycott streetcars.

General Wladyslaw Sikorski sets up a Polish government-in-exile in Paris.

Igor Stravinsky (57) arrives in New York from France.

**1 October 1939** German troops enter Warsaw.

The last Polish resistance ends, on the Helska Peninsula. Six Polish ships escape the German blockade and will make their way to British ports. Approximately 100,000 people died in the Polish campaign.

**2 October 1939** Manuel de Falla (62) and his sister board the *SS Neptunia* in Barcelona heading for Buenos Aires. He will never again see Spain.

**3 October 1939** Representatives of 21 American nations meet in Panama and declare a security zone of between 500-1,000 km from their shores in which no act of war should be committed.

**4 October 1939** The French army completes a retreat of their forces behind the Maginot Line.

**5 October 1939** Adolf Hitler leads a victory parade around Warsaw.

A treaty of mutual assistance between Latvia and the USSR allows the Soviets to lease bases and station troops in Latvia.

*Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats* by TS Eliot is published.

**6 October 1939** *American Festival Overture* by William Schuman (29) is performed for the first time, in Boston.

Ernst Lubitsch’s film *Ninotchka*, starring Greta Garbo and Melvyn Douglas, is shown for the first time, in Hollywood.

**7 October 1939** *Médée*, an opera by Darius Milhaud (47) to words of M. Milhaud is performed for the first time, in Opéra Flamand, Antwerp.

**8 October 1939** Germany annexes Polish frontier regions to Silesia and East Prussia and creates three districts of the German Reich, Greater East Prussia, Danzig West Prussia, and Posen.

An order is issued establishing a Jewish ghetto in Piotrkow, the first such order in occupied Poland.

**9 October 1939** As a Finnish delegation leaves for Moscow, Finnish troops organize on the border.

**10 October 1939** Germany begins the deportation of Polish Jews to Lublin.

A treaty of mutual assistance between Lithuania and the USSR allows the Soviets to lease bases and station troops in Lithuania. Vilnius, taken by the Red Army from Poland, is returned to Lithuania.

After a bout with the flu in New York, Igor Stravinsky (57) travels to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he will deliver the Norton Lectures at Harvard University.

*Trenzinho* for chorus by Heitor Villa-Lobos (52) to words of Santoro, is performed for the first time, under the baton of the composer.

**11 October 1939** An American economist, Alexander Sachs, meets with President Roosevelt. He brings a letter from Dr. Albert Einstein telling of the enormous destructive capability of the atom.

**12 October 1939** German-held areas of Poland not included in the annexations of 8 October are constituted as a General-Government with a capital at Krakow.

**13 October 1939** The Finnish foreign minister refuses to sign a “Soviet-dictated” agreement.

**14 October 1939** A German U-boat enters the Royal Navy’s main base at Scapa Flow and sinks the battleship *HMS Royal Oak*. 833 people are killed.

Broadcast Music Incorporated is organized in New York in opposition to ASCAP.

**15 October 1939** New York Municipal Airport is dedicated in Queens. In 1947, it will be named after the force behind its development, Mayor Fiorella La Guardia.

**16 October 1939** Germans order all Poles out of Gdynia.

Alois Hába (46) and his wife Emilie divorce after eleven years.

*The Man Who Came to Dinner* by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart is performed for the first time, in New York.

**17 October 1939** Lord Linlithgow, Governor-General of India, proclaims dominion status to be the goal of constitutional government.

In two days of fighting, small groups of the German army clear any remaining French forces from German territory.

**18 October 1939** Igor Stravinsky (57) delivers the first of his Norton Lectures in the New Lecture Hall (Lowell Hall) at Harvard University.

An exhibition entitled “Contemporary Unknown American Painters” opens at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. It includes three works by 79-year-old Anna Robertson Moses. She will become famous as Grandma Moses.

Manuel de Falla (62) arrives in Buenos Aires to direct a series of concerts of his works.

**22 October 1939** Little Suite for piano by George Perle (24) is performed for the first time, in Chicago.

**24 October 1939** *Cowboy Songs* for orchestra by Roy Harris (41) is performed for the first time, over the airwaves of CBS radio originating in New York.

**25 October 1939** Germany decrees that all Jews in Poland aged 14-60 are required to work on government labor projects.

The first performance in the newly built State Theatre in Athens is Giacomo Puccini’s (†14) *Madama Butterfly*. In attendance tonight are King Georgios and, at the special invitation of the Greek government, the son and daughter-in-law of the composer. See 28 October 1939.

In an attempt to attack the New Deal, the House Un-American Activities Committee publishes what it claims to be a membership list of the American League for Peace and Democracy. It contains 563 names of federal employees. Some members of the committee claim the league is controlled by the Communist Party.

**26 October 1939** Mgr. Jozef Tiso becomes President of an “independent” Slovakia.

**28 October 1939** Italy declares war on Greece.

On Czechoslovakian independence day, students of Charles University demonstrate in Prague against the German occupation. Police open fire, killing two, and brutally suppress the demonstration.

Heinrich Himmler issues his first “procreation order” designed to create a superior German race.

**29 October 1939** Soviet troops enter Latvia.

Vojtech Tuka replaces Jozef Tiso as Prime minister of Slovakia.

**31 October 1939** Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov makes public several Soviet demands on Finland currently being negotiated in Moscow. Among other things, they demand the town of Hanko for a naval base.

**1 November 1939** Hermann Göring issues orders creating the Main Trustee Office East to handle the expropriation of wealth and property in Poland.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. drives the final rivet into 10 Rockefeller Plaza, thus completing the nine year, 14 building project in Manhattan.

**2 November 1939** Béla Bartók (58) completes *Mikrokosmos* in Budapest.

**3 November 1939** 96 Polish schoolteachers are arrested and shot in Rypin by the Gestapo.

The United States Congress repeals a section of the Neutrality Act forbidding the shipment of arms to belligerent countries.

**4 November 1939** President Roosevelt rescinds the Neutrality Act he implemented on 5 September.

**5 November 1939** All 167 Polish professors and lecturers at Krakow University are arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

**6 November 1939** *Elegy in Memory of Maurice Ravel* by David Diamond (24) in the version for string orchestra and percussion is performed for the first time, in New York. See 28 April 1938.

**8 November 1939** 50 Polish officers are shot to death by the Germans in Ciechocinek.

Hitler addresses the annual reunion of the veterans of the Munich Putsch. Georg Elser, an opponent of Hitler, places a bomb in the podium, designed to go off at 23:20, one hour and 20 minutes after the speech is due to begin. Hitler, however, is uncharacteristically brief and leaves the Beer Hall at 23:12. The bomb explodes on schedule while many people crowd around the podium after the speech. Seven are killed, 63 injured, including the father of Eva Braun.

**9 November 1939** A thousand Polish intellectuals are arrested in Warsaw.

**11 November 1939** On Polish independence day, 350 Poles are taken from a labor camp near Gdynia to a prison yard in Wejherowo. They are ordered to dig a series of deep pits. They are then divided into groups and each group is brought to the edge of the pit and shot. Just before their deaths, every prisoner cries out “Long live Poland!”

A long funeral procession bringing the body of a student killed on 28 October to his home in Moravia turns into a demonstration against German occupation. The Nazis respond by closing all Czech institutions of higher education. 1,200 students are arrested and sent to concentration camps.

Numbers 1, 2, 3, and 5 from Album 1 of the *Guia prático* for children’s voices by Heitor Villa-Lobos (52) are performed for the first time, in Rio de Janeiro.

**13 November 1939** Unable to accede to Soviet demands, the Finnish delegation breaks off negotiations in Moscow.

The pre-Columbian village of Lagunillas de Agua on Lake Maracaibo is destroyed when the film of oil on the lake ignites (whether deliberate or otherwise is unclear). Over 200 people are killed.

Incidental music to Howard’s play *Madam, Will You Walk?* by Kurt Weill (39) is performed for the first time, in Baltimore. The music is prerecorded.

**15 November 1939** The main synagogue in Lodz is burned down.

**16 November 1939** Books from the Jewish Religious Academy in Lublin are taken to the marketplace and burned. The fire lasts for 20 hours.

The Nazis arrest 1,800 Czech students and teachers in Prague. Nine student leaders are shot on the spot.

Suite for solo cello by Ernst Krenek (39) is performed for the first time, in Skinner Recital Hall of Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York.

**17 November 1939** Hitler closes all Czech colleges and universities. 17 university students and professors are executed in Prague.

A Czechoslovak government-in-exile is created in France under Jan Srámek.

Kleine Sinfonie op.44 by Hans Pfitzner (70) is performed for the first time, in Berlin.

**18 November 1939** The Nazis close all the technical schools in Czechoslovakia. This forces Karel Husa (18), who is contemplating an engineering career, to seek another line of work.

Concerto for harp and orchestra by Alyeksandr Vasilyevich Mosolov (39) is performed for the first time, in Moscow.

*Homenajes*, for orchestra by Manuel de Falla (62) is performed completely for the first time, in the Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires the composer conducting.

**19 November 1939** Francis Poulenc (40), a reservist, is assigned to the Education nationale, administration des Beaux-Arts.

The first suite from the film score *Descobrimento do Brasil* by Heitor Villa-Lobos (52) is performed for the first time, in the Teatro Municipal, Rio de Janeiro conducted by the composer. The score was commissioned by the Brazilian Cacao Institute of Bahia.

**20 November 1939** The Foreign Currency Division of the General Government directs that all assets held in banks under Jewish names be blocked. Jews are required to transfer all assets to the central bank by 31 December.

**21 November 1939** Antanas Merkys replaces Jonas Cernius as Prime Minister of Lithuania.

Symphony no.6 op.54 by Dmitri Shostakovich (33) is performed for the first time, in the Leningrad Philharmonic Bolshoy Hall. The audience requires the finale to be repeated.

**22 November 1939** 53 inhabitants of 9 Nalewski Street, Warsaw, all Jews, are executed in reprisal for the death of a Polish policeman. The man who killed the policeman lives at 9 Nalewski Street.

**23 November 1939** The Krakow government requires all Jews in Poland to wear identifying armbands.

The armed merchant cruiser *HMS Rawalpindi* is sunk by German surface ships north of the Faroe Islands. 238 of her crew are lost while 48 are rescued.

Variations on a Hungarian Folksong, the “Peacock” Variations for orchestra by Zoltán Kodály (56), is performed for the first time, in Amsterdam.

**24 November 1939** Pursuant to an act of Parliament, Imperial Airways Ltd. and British Airways Ltd. merge to form British Overseas Airways Corporation.

**25 November 1939** Gheorghe Tatarescu replaces Constantine Argetoianu as Prime Minister of Romania.

**26 November 1939** The USSR claims that Finnish troops fired across the border on the town of Mainila and demands that Finland withdraw all forces 25 km from the border.

**27 November 1939** *The Great Citizen* (series 2), a film with music by Dmitri Shostakovich (33), is shown for the first time.

Several works for piano by Heitor Villa-Lobos (52) are performed for the first time, in Rio de Janeiro: *Bachianas Brasileiras no.4*; *Valsa da dor*; Plantio do Caboclo and Festa no sertão from the *Ciclo brasileiro*; *As très Marias*; and several selections from the series *Guia prático* for children’s voices--Album 2 (nos.1,2,4,5), Album 3 (nos.2,4,5), Album 5 (no.3), Album 7 (no.2), and Album 9 (nos.1,4,6).

**28 November 1939** Instructions are issued to begin the deportation of Jews and undesirable gentiles from occupied territories into the General Government of Poland.

*Inspiration* for orchestra by Ralph Shapey (18) is performed for the first time, in Philadelphia, conducted by the composer.

**29 November 1939** *Pages from a Diary* for piano by Roger Sessions (42) is performed for the first time, in New York. This concert is a production of the New York City Composers’ Forum of the Federal Music Project.

**30 November 1939** Soviet forces invade Finland, simultaneously bombing Helsinki. The attack comes through the Karelian Isthmus, north of Lake Ladoga, from Soviet Karelia and from Murmansk.

**1 December 1939** Risto Heikki Ryti replaces Aimo Kaarlo Cajander as Prime Minister of Finland. A puppet Finnish government is set up in Terijoki.

**2 December 1939** The Soviet news agency TASS announces the establishment of a Peoples Government of Finland.

As part of his minor fellowship at Cambridge, Roberto Gerhard (43) gives his first concert at the University Musical Club.

**4 December 1939** Serge Koussevitzky writes to Elliott Carter (30) about the suite from *Pochahontas* that Carter sent him for possible performance in Boston. Koussevitzky calls the work “brilliant” but says it is “too light for introducing your name for the first time in the Boston Symphony programs.” (Wierzbicki, 27) Carter sent the score at the suggestion of Aaron Copland (39).

**7 December 1939** The Soviet Union announces a blockade of Finland.

William Walton’s (37) Violin Concerto is performed for the first time, in Severance Hall, Cleveland by its dedicatee, Jascha Heifetz.

**9 December 1939** *First Construction (In Metal)* for six percussionists by John Cage (27) is performed for the first time, at the Cornish School of Music, Seattle.

**10 December 1939** Congressman Martin Dies publishes a report from his House Un-American Activities Committee showing that almost all consumer organizations in the United States are communist fronts designed to destroy the capitalist system.

**11 December 1939** All Jews in the Polish General Government are now liable for two years forced labor.

**12 December 1939** In below-zero temperatures, Finns put up a fierce five-day resistance in hand-to-hand fighting east of Suomussalmi 560 km north of Helsinki, against a superior Soviet force.

The destroyer *HMS Duchess* collides with the battleship *HMS Barham* in fog off the west coast of Scotland. She goes down with 124 of her crew.

**13 December 1939** The Soviet ship *SS Indigirka* strikes ground and rolls over in a snowstorm near Sarufutsu on Hokkaido. Japanese rescuers manage to save many on board, but 741 people, almost all of them Gulag prisoners locked in the hold, are killed.

Hans Pfitzner (70) marries his second wife, Maria (Mali) Stoll, 24 years his junior, with whom he has been friends since 1928.

Three British ships encounter the German pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee* off Montevideo. All ships are damaged.

**14 December 1939** In its last major action, the League of Nations brands the USSR as an aggressor in Finland and expels them from the League.

1,500 Jews are deported from Poznan to the General Government of Poland.

**15 December 1939** Nylon yarn is manufactured for the first time, by EI du Pont de Nemours & Company, Inc. of Wilmington, Delaware. Yarn will be shipped to mills to make women’s stockings.

Victor Fleming’s film *Gone With The Wind* is shown for the first time, in Atlanta.

**17 December 1939** A major Soviet offensive against the Mannerheim Line begins at Summa. Finnish defenders hold the line.

The memorial sculpture *The Young Man playing Pan-pipes on a Wingless Pegasus* is unveiled in Copenhagen to honor Carl Nielsen (†8). It was created by the composer’s wife, Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen,

The crew of the German pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee*, surrounded by British vessels, scuttles the ship in the harbor of Montevideo, Uruguay.

**18 December 1939** Soviet troops occupy the Finnish corridor to the Arctic.

**19 December 1939** Captain Langsdorff of the *Admiral Graf Spee* kills himself in Montevideo.

**21 December 1939** *Hail to Stalin* op.85, for chorus and orchestra by Sergey Prokofiev (48), is performed for the first time, in Moscow. The work was composed in honor of Stalin’s 60th birthday.

**22 December 1939** Finnish troops begin a counterattack at Suomissalmi. Over the next four days, in temperatures around -35°C the Soviets are driven back across the border.

An express train traveling at full speed crashes into the rear of a stopped train at Genthin, northeast of Magdeburg. The official accounting is 132 killed and 109 seriously injured. Estimates place the dead at 278.

*Of Mice and Men*, a film with music by Aaron Copland (39), is shown for the first time, in Hollywood. The composer attends the premiere.

**23 December 1939** The first Canadian troops arrive in Britain.

**26 December 1939** An earthquake centered in Erzincan, Turkey kills 30,000 people.

**27 December 1939** Finnish forces are pushed back from Suomussalmi and north of Lake Ladoga.

All remaining Jews in Aleksandrow, Poland are expelled from the city. Most will make it on foot to the General-Government.

**30 December 1939** Finnish troops defeat the Soviets north of Lake Kianta.

©2004-2016 Paul Scharfenberger

19 March 2016