



Roy Harris

February 12, 1898 - October 1, 1979

Santa Monica, California

Roy Harris - American composer whose symphonies and folk-rooted scores gave mid-century orchestras an unmistakably American accent - died in Santa Monica, California, on October 1, 1979. He was eighty-one. Born February 12, 1898, in Oklahoma's farm country, he studied seriously, taught widely, and wrote music that treated hymn tunes and open intervals as building materials rather than nostalgia.

His Symphony No. 3 became a landmark of American orchestral writing; When Johnny Comes Marching Home and other works kept wartime memory and civic feeling inside concert halls that often preferred European models. He believed a nation's music should sound like its landscapes and its labor.

Oklahoma plains taught cadence; California teaching posts taught patience. He composed as if democracy itself needed a soundtrack that did not apologize for being plain.

He died in Santa Monica on October 1, 1979. Somewhere a brass choir is still answering a folk tune with dignity.

Harris's gift was national voice - making the orchestra sound like home fields. Notice Nearby keeps the death date so October 1 remembers the Oklahoma composer who gave America a symphonic handshake.

Services

Died in Santa Monica, California, October 1, 1979. Composer; Symphony No. 3; When Johnny Comes Marching Home; American orchestral voice.

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