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A Young Brit Takes On The American Songbook



The so-called "Great American Songbook" is made up of popular songs that made your grandparents and parents dance. They were written for movies and Broadway musicals by composers like Rodgers and Hart, Cole Porter, George and Ira Gershwin, and others.

The singers who discover this music now often make it their own. That's the case with a 29-year-old British jazz and pop singer named Anthony Strong.

"I think I learned very early on that 'dance' [British inflection] and 'romance' don't rhyme," he says. "For me that was always a problem. I sing a lot of American music — American music is really my inspiration. So early on in my career, I decided that kind of 'mid-Atlantic' sound works for me."

Strong recently released a new album called *Stepping Out*, which also features his original songwriting and piano. He spoke with NPR special correspondent Susan

Stamberg about standards, the late British jazz icon and how he went from studio musician to starring act.

"It should've been [scary], but for me, I kind of felt like it was time," he says. "I'd been doing the session thing for a few years, and I'd been writing for many years. And I kind of just decided that now is the right time. I didn't want to go out at 21 and record a jazz album that wasn't authentic."