

## Handout – Brief Copyright Summary for Sheet Music Publications

### Copyright Term 1922 and Earlier

- Now in public domain.

### Copyright Terms 1923-1977

- Term was a total of 75 years. (28 years plus a renewal term of 47 years).
- Pseudonymous works were 100 years long.

### Copyright Term 1978 and Later

- New term was "life plus fifty."

### Copyright Amendment Provisions of 1998

AKA the "Sonny Bono Copyright Amendment" (Bill Clinton was president for this one.)

- Added 20 years to all existing copyright lengths. (Sections 301-304 of Title 17 U.S. Code)
- So, the earlier 75 years became 95 years.
- Pseudonymous works became 120 years long.
- The "life + 50" term became "life + 70."
- BTW - This same bill excluded small "mom and pop" establishments from a lot of earlier restrictions that had been in place with regards to their using copyrighted music in restaurants. It was sandwiched in with the Sonny Bono extension provisions and was not noticed by many.

### Copyright Terms in EU Countries

- They are all required to adjust their current copyright terms to "life + 70."
- The UK already changed theirs to "life + 70."

### Copyright Terms Elsewhere

- Mexico – It is "life + 100" years - which is the longest term anywhere!
- Canada is still "life + 50." (However, there is discussion underway to extend it to "life + 70.")

Under the 1923-1977 term, the clock started based on when the piece was first copyrighted. A work published in 1945, for example, would have a total copyright term of 95 years. So, it would fall into public domain in 2040.

"Life plus seventy" refers to 70 years after the death of the last surviving writer of a musical work.

The US belongs to the Berne Convention of 1889 which agreed on uniform world copyright standards. All member countries agreed to a minimum copyright term of fifty years after the death of the composer, beginning on March 1, 1989. The US also joined the Buenos Aires Convention in 1910, which covers the South American countries.