The Legacy of

Aaron Copland

About this Recording

The Soldiers' Chorus of the United States Army Field Band proudly presents the second in a series of recordings honoring the lives and music of individuals who have made significant contributions to the choral repertoire and to music education.

Designed primarily as educational resources, these recordings are painstakingly researched to authenticate standard performance practices and to reflect the original intent of the composers. The biographical information, detailed program notes, and historical photographs are included to provide music educators and their students with insight into the compositions which they hear and perform.

This compact disc was recorded in September and December 1999 at Devers Hall, Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, using multi-track digital equipment. Its release coincides with the centenary celebration of Aaron Copland's birth, allowing educators to use it as a reference in preparing their own concert programs for the year 2000. This recording was reprinted in 2008.

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If any one musician today can be singled out as the "dean of American music," it is Aaron Copland…He has created, encouraged, and enriched the repertory, leading the way to a musical climate genuinely "made in America." It is a tribute to Copland the man and the musician that he is regarded by the musical public and his professional colleagues alike with admiration, respect, and above all true affection.[1]

—Richard Franko Goldman

Introduction

The story of Aaron Copland's life emanates from a family history that is quintessentially American. Born in Brooklyn, New York, on November 14, 1900, he was the youngest child of Russian immigrants Harris M. and Sarah (Mittenthal) Copland. His parents worked hard in their new country, taking advantage of opportunities available under the democratic system. They instilled in young Aaron enduring values based on immigrant themes of independence, self-reliance, motivation, self-education, and an incessant striving for something better. Throughout his life, Copland would demonstrate uncommon vision, exceptional talent, noble ideas, organizational excellence, and intense dedication to his art and craft. His extensive influence on and contribution to American music made him one of the most highly regarded composer-musicians of the Twentieth Century.

Aaron Copland (age 9) with his sister Josephine

Early Musical Training

As a youngster, he worked in his parents' dry goods store, often using his wages to purchase music. He learned to play the piano from his sister, Laurine, who would bring him *libretti* and programs from Metropolitan Opera performances. Although the family owned no phonograph, they often entertained themselves by making music together. His parents, who finally consented to music lessons, confidently expressed their attitude toward his aspirations: "If he thinks he can do it, let him do it."[2] He first attempted composing before the age of nine, started formal piano lessons with Leopold Wolfsohn at eleven, and by fifteen, made the decision to devote his life to music.

In 1916, he asked his piano teacher for the name of someone with whom he could study harmony, counterpoint, and form. Wolfsohn recommended Rubin Goldmark of Manhattan, who was a student of Dvorak and later head of the composition department at the Juilliard School of Music. Copland worked with Goldmark from 1917 to 1921, while studying piano with Victor Wittgenstein and Clarence Adler. He educated himself about the larger cultural world by reading extensively. The Brooklyn Public Library provided both books and musical scores to him, the latter used to teach himself orchestration. He was interested in all kinds of music and attended as many concerts as he could. During this time, he heard

performances by virtuosos Jascha Heifetz, John McCormack, and Ignacy Paderewski, as well as concerts of the New York and Boston symphonies.

Studies in France

In order to concentrate more fully on music after high school, he decided to pursue his musical studies independently. Rather than attending college, he followed the advice of his good friend Aaron Schaffer, who was studying French literature in Paris. In letters to Copland, Schaffer described the excitement of the new-music scene in Paris and inspired him to come to France to attend the new summer school for American musicians at the Palace of Fontainebleau. Created by the French government in 1921, the school was meant to show France's appreciation to America after World War I. The American director of the school was Walter Damrosch, the French director, Francis Casadesus, and its general director, Camille Saint-Saëns.

Nadia Boulanger at her home in Paris, 1922

On June 9, 1921, Copland sailed to France to begin study at Fontainebleau. That same year, he signed his first contract with French publisher Durand, who bought the rights to his piano piece *Le Chat et la Souris*.

While in France, Copland began his fruitful relationship with the great composition teacher Nadia Boulanger. Her international reputation

as an outstanding pedagogue was well-deserved. She worked tirelessly with scores of young composition students during her lifetime, and left a considerable legacy to the world of music. For three years she taught and mentored Copland, encouraging the tremendous gifts she saw in him. "One could tell his talent immediately,"[3] she reminisced. Later in life, she would place Copland at the head of a list of her pupils who went on to become prolific composers.

During this time, concerts by Serge Koussevitzky at the Paris Opera House frequently premiered works by modern composers. When Boulanger learned that Koussevitzky would be leading the Boston Symphony for the 1924–25 season, she saw a great opportunity for Copland. Boulanger introduced the young composer to the great Russian conductor in 1923. The meeting resulted in a lifelong association and friendship, as well as a commissioned work for organ and orchestra. Copland's *Organ Symphony* would feature Boulanger, who had already been invited to the United States by Walter Damrosch. It would be performed by both the Boston Symphony with Koussevitzky conducting, and the New York Symphony lead by Damrosch.

Copland became profoundly influenced by the artistry of Igor Stravinsky, describing him as "the most exciting musical creator on the scene" and "the hero of my student days."[4] He later met Stravinsky in 1930, and through the years they became good friends.

Defining American Music

When Copland returned to the United States in 1924, he was determined to create a distinctively American music. He energetically embarked on a lifetime of composing and promoting American composers and their work. He was

convinced that his nation should have her own representative musical voice, one that would withstand the test of time. His goal was to champion a new kind of "serious" music to represent the New World in the Twentieth Century. To that end, he engaged himself in a wide range of activities, always focused on elevating the American composer's voice in the world's cultural scene.

An Intellectual Viewpoint

Copland's interest was not only in furthering his own career. While he did strive to make a name for himself, he was constantly assisting his peers and young composers. He joined forces with Roger Sessions, Roy Harris, Virgil Thomson, and Walter Piston to help promote their music. Similar in character to France's *Les Six*, Thomson affectionately called the group "Copland's commando unit."[5]

From 1928–31, Copland collaborated with Sessions to produce a series of concerts that were an outlet for the music of developing composers, ages 25–35. In 1932 and 1933, he organized the Yaddo Music Festivals near Saratoga, New York. With Thomson, he started the American Composers' Alliance and helped found both Cos Cob Press and Arrow Press. He wrote critical essays about music for newspapers and magazines and authored two books, entitled *What to Listen for in Music* (1939) and *Our New Music* (1941).

Photo credit: Erika Stone 1947

Throughout his later life, he gave lectures and speeches, taught composition and music appreciation, and conducted his own works and those of others.

Copland was an active citizen who was deeply interested in world politics and current events. He voraciously read a variety of literature and publications each day to keep himself informed. His impressions of world history became the raw materials from which he constructed his compositions. Biographer Howard Pollack writes: "Without a vital concert tradition to build on, Copland concluded that America's serious composers might well look to their folklore."[6] Much of Copland's music draws on this heritage. History is reflected in the wide range of his compositions, from vocal solos to orchestral works, ballet and opera to film scores.

In his 1941 book, *Our New Music*, he expresses the vision that brought him such great success:

> *All musical history shows that composers shape their music not according to historical events, but according to musical needs created by historical events. In other words, historical changes bring on new functional needs for music, and it is these needs and not the events themselves that alter the course of music. More than we realize, music has always served functional ends…If I am correct in my analysis and music is written in a particular way because of some need in the composer's environment, then composers may well ask themselves: for whom are we writing our music today?*
>
> *Composers during the past ten years have gradually begun to realize that an entirely new public is listening to music. This is not a concertgoing public, but a public that gets its music through the radio, the phonograph, or even the movies. It seems to me that the introduction of these new means for reproducing music is comparable in importance to the invention of the printing press. The*

spread of good music among millions of new listeners is certain to have as profound an effect on composers as the spread of literacy had upon writers. For the first time democracy has entered the realm of serious music. This is a thrilling fact, which eventually will change every phase of our musical life.[7]

The Later Years

Although always interested in interpreting his own works, Copland did not start conducting until later in life. In a retrospective interview, he explained: "I would have started conducting much earlier than I did, but my great friend Serge Koussevitzky was dead set against it. He used to point his finger at me and say, 'You must not waste your time conducting. You must stay home and compose.' Of course it was good advice, but as soon as he died I began conducting."[8]

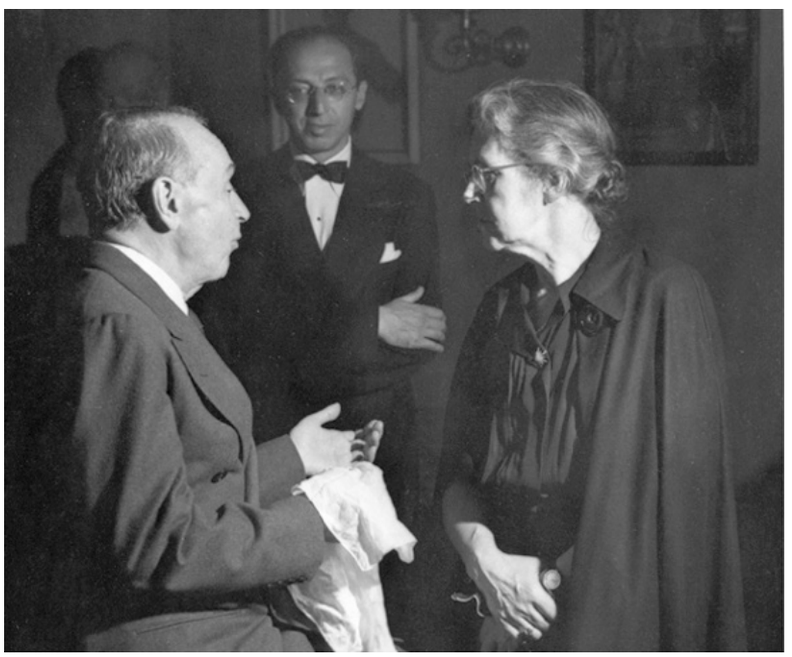

Photo credit: Victor Kraft

Serge Koussevitzky with Aaron Copland and Nadia Boulanger

Copland began a series of conducting tours in the 1950s that would take him throughout the world. In more than a quarter century of travels on six continents, he conducted programs of his own works and of many other American composers. His failing health and loss of memory became a significant problem in later years, forcing him to end his public performances with a Pearl Harbor Day concert in New Haven, Connecticut, on December 7, 1982.

Long known as a mentor of composers and other musicians, Copland was head of the composition department at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood from 1940–65, assuming the position as Chairman of the Faculty after 1957. In 1951, he became the first American composer to be named Norton Professor of Poetics at Harvard University.

President Jimmy Carter acknowledged Aaron Copland's legacy during the Kennedy Center Honors presentations in 1979: "You have set a magnificent example of what we Americans can accomplish by sharing our talents and energies with each other."[9] This award was one of many presented during Copland's lifetime, including a Pulitzer Prize for *Appalachian Spring* (1945), an Academy Award for *The Heiress* (1956), a Grammy Award for conducting the Boston Symphony recording of *The Tender Land Suite* (1960), the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Lyndon Johnson (1964), the Medal of the Arts from President Ronald Reagan (1986), and the highest civilian honor from Congress, the Gold Medal (1986).

Copland's contributions to American music did not end with his death in North Tarrytown, New York, on December 2, 1990. In his will, he established The Aaron Copland Fund for Composers, later renamed The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Inc. His personal residence in New York state has been taken over by the Copland Society to preserve it as a place for composers and scholars to study and work. While his personal library and original scores of other composers were willed to the Brooklyn Library, he left his personal papers, photographs, musical manuscripts, and recordings to the Library of Congress. Almost 400,000 items are now part of the Copland Collection, which opened in Washington, DC, in 1995. Exhibited alongside the nation's most precious documents, this Copland "portrait" stands as a literary monument to America's most prominent composer.

Program Notes

Stomp Your Foot and *The Promise of Living* from *The Tender Land (1954)*

In early 1952, Aaron Copland accepted a commission from the League of Composers to write an opera for television with a $1,000 grant provided by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. According to Copland biographer Howard Pollack, he decided to compose "a relatively small work, something appropriate not only to television but to the 'college trade.'"[10] Copland spent the next two years working on the project, collaborating with Erik Johns, who wrote the libretto under the pseudonym Horace Everett.

Johns used James Agee's book, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, as inspiration. The book, which includes photographs by Walker Evans, chronicles the lives of three sharecropper families in Alabama. By moving the setting from the South to the rural Midwest and casting itinerant workers on a family farm of the 1930s, Copland and Johns took aim for the heart of the American conscience. Following the success of his ballets *Billy the Kid* (1938) and *Appalachian Spring* (1944), Copland strove to create a score readily accessible to the general public.

Although the resulting opera, *The Tender Land*, was conceived as a student production to be premiered on television, it debuted instead on the professional stage of the New York City Opera on April 2, 1954. Copland responded to the mixed reviews and ambivalent praise by revising the opera for subsequent performances at Tanglewood and Oberlin Conservatory. In this 1955 version, *The*

Photo credit: Angus McBeam

Tender Land remains a staple in the college and amateur repertoire, as he originally intended.

In 1954, Copland prepared choral arrangements with challenging two-piano accompaniments of *Stomp Your Foot* and *The Promise of Living*. As part of the Soldiers' Chorus commitment to making the music of Aaron Copland more accessible to music educators and students, Thomas Duffy was commissioned to transcribe the opera score of these works for mixed chorus with band accompaniment. Ironically, he had first discussed the possibility of this transcription during a 1982 conversation with Copland, who was resting in Duffy's office at Yale before conducting the final performance of his career. Seventeen years later, Duffy's settings of the most recognized music from *The Tender Land* are recorded here for the first time.

The exhilarating *Stomp Your Foot*, which opens the second act of *The Tender Land*, provides the musical vehicle for a show-stopping barn dance. Copland's reworking of the folksong *Cottage by the Sea* is evocative of a country fiddle tune. It incorporates his characteristic octaves and open fifths, which help depict the opera's rural setting and emphasize the characters' simple lives.

With an instrumental introduction reprising *The Tender Land*'s opening strains, *The Promise of Living* closes the first act. The melody is one Copland derived

first as a countermelody to John G. McClurry's Revivalist song, *Zion's Walls*. In retrospect he wrote: "A funny thing happened while I was working with *Zion's Walls*: I began to develop a countermelody of my own and became more interested in my own tune than in the Revivalist one, and the piece ends up being more about my tune than the borrowed one."[11] When Copland later quotes *Zion's Walls* in an invitation to the harvest, he disguises the original through octave transposition and by rearranging the melodic sections.

The dominant message of hope goes beyond the action of the opera. Copland's *The Promise of Living* defines a deeper sociological issue: we reap what we sow—and the community on which we all depend is strengthened by the work of sowing love for our neighbors.

Lark (1938)

Copland composed *Lark* in 1938, while cloistered at the MacDowell Colony putting the finishing touches on his ballet *Billy the Kid*. As he endured the occasional boredom of orchestrating the popular ballet, this short choral work served to satisfy his creative impulses. Although the composition was commissioned by Alma (Wertheim) Weiner, a member of the Dessoff Choir of New York, it was premiered by the Collegiate Chorale under the direction of Robert Shaw on April 13, 1943, at New York's Museum of Modern Art.

Genevieve Taggard's poem, on which *Lark* is based, first appeared in *The Saturday Review of Literature* in 1933. Taggard, a popular feminist author and celebrated biographer of Emily Dickinson, was well-known in her time as a voice for egalitarianism and social reform. In "The Lark," she metaphorically expresses a hopeful message of renewal for a nation in economic peril and a political system prone to corruption. According to Howard Pollack, though less revolutionary than

many of her other poems, "The Lark's" imagery "of a bird arising 'from the great dark' to announce 'the great day-rise'...alludes to Taggard's hope that America might 'achieve economic democracy and by this means lay a foundation for a great culture.'"[12] This sentiment resonated well with Copland's own social ethic; in his *a cappella* setting, Taggard's words find a powerful platform. The skillful combination of music and text suggests an optimism which Leonard Bernstein described as an attitude of "spurtive ascension."[13]

Old American Songs (1950–1952)

Copland's collections entitled *Old American Songs*, comprised of traditional Nineteenth Century tunes which he gathered from varied sources, remain the most popular of his vocal repertoire. By keeping the melodic material of most of the original songs intact, he shows deference toward the folk cultures from which they came; yet, his genius as an arranger is ever present in his skillfully-conceived accompaniments.

The first set of five songs was written during an especially productive time when Copland's compositional output was high and the resulting demand for fresh ideas was mentally taxing. Although he was already working on the song cycle *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson*, he abruptly turned to the *Old American Songs* project in 1950 with "the hope of recharging my inspiration."[14]

Photo credit: Victor Kraft

Photo credit: Victor Kraft

Studio in the Berkshires, September 1946

Ironically, the premiere of *Old American Songs* did not take place in the United States, nor was it performed by Americans. Instead, it was debuted in England at the Aldeburgh Festival on October 17, 1950, by the renowned British tenor Peter Pears, accompanied by the eminent composer Benjamin Britten. The first American performance took place on January 28, 1951, at Town Hall in New York, with Copland at the piano accompanying the distinguished African-American baritone, William Warfield. Following the immediate success of these performances, Copland arranged an additional five folktunes in a second set which he premiered with Warfield at the Castle Hill Concerts in Ipswich, Massachusetts, on July 24, 1952.

Although these song settings were originally conceived for medium solo voice (baritone or mezzo-soprano) and piano, their popularity quickly led to a variety of choral arrangements for all manner of vocal ensembles. To meet the growing need for these ensemble settings, Copland authorized other composers to prepare the choral arrangements; chief among these was Irving Fine, who arranged six of the ten songs.

Between 1954–1957, Copland himself transcribed both sets of *Old American Songs* for solo voice and orchestra. Some of these songs have also been arranged in unpublished manuscripts for chorus with concert band; however, no complete adaptation of both sets exists. For this reason, the Soldiers' Chorus, with the approval of The Copland Fund and publisher Boosey and Hawkes, commissioned

William Silvester to finish a transcription of all ten songs during 1999. The entire collection of *Old American Songs*, arranged for mixed chorus with concert band accompaniment, is recorded here for the first time.

Set One (1950)

The Boatmen's Dance, first published in Boston in 1843, is a minstrel tune by Daniel Decatur Emmett, the composer of *Dixie*. Copland discovered it in S. Foster Damon's *Series of Old American Songs*, which is included in the Harris Collection of American Poetry and Players at Brown University Library. The clever adaptation by Copland includes an accompaniment imitating a minstrel banjo, while the river landscape comes complete with a musical echo.

The Dodger is a political satire which emerged during the 1884 presidential campaigns of Grover Cleveland and his rival, James G. Blaine. It was documented by music historians John A. and Alan Lomax, who published it in their 1949 folksong collection, *Our Singing Country*. The song targets not only politicians, but other authority figures as well. Although Copland's setting is limited to stanzas satirizing the political candidate, preachers, and overconfident men with amorous intent, other verses address doctors, lawyers, merchants, and farmers.

Long Time Ago, a sentimental ballad in the style of Stephen Foster, was also derived from the Harris Collection. It is thought to have originated as an anonymous blackface tune, which was adapted in 1837 with words by George Pope and music by Charles Edward Horn. The nostalgic lyrics, set amid Copland's delicate counterpoint, reminisce of "a maid beloved and cherished" who perished a "long time ago."

Simple Gifts is a hymn tune of the Shakers, a reclusive, nearly extinct religious sect, whose culture rejects all forms of worldly entanglements. Copland

had selected this melody, which dates back to as early as 1848, for his immensely popular ballet, *Appalachian Spring* (1944). He was careful in both arranging and performing his vocal edition to project the peaceful attitude that the text imparts. He held strongly to this interpretation and was known to be critical of musicians that did not heed his clear and concise markings: "Quietly flowing; to be sung freely, without rigid adherence to strict rhythm." According to William Warfield, "He wanted it simple, almost recitative-like in quality, so you wouldn't feel it as a rhythmic, bouncy thing… Aaron even put the chords on the off-accented beat to be sure it wouldn't be sung with that regular rhythmic feeling."[15]

Photo credit: Boosey and Hawkes

I Bought Me a Cat is a rollicking comedy featuring the sounds of barnyard animals, much like the children's song *Old MacDonald*. The capricious accompaniment, which punctuates the text with colorful dissonance, is especially prominent in the orchestral and band editions. Copland was introduced to this song by his friend, the playwright Lynn Riggs, who sang it as a boy in Oklahoma. Although Copland and Riggs originally planned to use the tune in *Tragic Ground*, a large work for musical theatre, the project was abandoned for want of a willing producer—all rejected the story due to lack of humor. However, *I*

Bought Me a Cat survives as the most memorable—and comedic—of the *Old American Songs*.

Four Motets (1921)

While Copland was in Paris in 1921 studying with Nadia Boulanger, he composed the first of his choral works, *Four Motets*. Drawing from his Jewish heritage, he compiled the Biblical text from fragments of the book of Psalms. The subject matter ranges from solemn petitions, as in "Have Mercy on Us, O My Lord" and "Help Us, O Lord," to the jubilant expressions of adoration voiced in "Sing Ye Praises to Our King" and "Thou, O Jehovah, Abideth Forever."

Boulanger reserved the *a cappella* motet, a centuries-old compositional form, as a pedagogical exercise for only her most gifted students. The contrapuntal style requires the composer to balance abstract expression with sensitivity to the text, while dealing with the limitations of the human voice. Although Copland felt his motets were "student pieces," Howard Pollack notes his French instructor's admiration: " 'Those motets sound in the voices in a stunning manner,' enthused Boulanger, who performed them regularly with her classes for decades, holding them up as a standard of contemporary choral writing to hundreds of young musicians from around the globe."[16]

In later years, Copland admitted that the motets revealed little of his personal style; nevertheless, they show an attitude toward simplicity and directness that pervades his mature compositions. Despite his reluctance to have them published, *Four Motets* was added to the Boosey and Hawkes catalog in 1979, Copland's eightieth year.

Photo credit: Bob Cato

Las Agachadas (1942)

Shortly after completing *Lincoln Portrait* and the ballet *Rodeo*, Copland received a request from Hugh Ross, with whom he had worked on both the Copland-Sessions Concerts and at Tanglewood. Ross was commissioning seven composers to arrange folksongs for a posthumous tribute to the renowned enthnomusicologist Kurt Schindler (1882–1935). Schindler, who founded the New York Schola Cantorum in 1909 and directed it for more than fifteen years, had frequently featured both contemporary works and folksong settings on its programs.

Copland selected the dance tune *Las Agachadas*, which Schindler had discovered in the Burgos province of Spain in 1929, while visiting the village of Peñaranda de Duero. The folksong was first published in Schindler's 1941 collection, *Folk Music and Poetry of Spain and Portugal*. For the memorial concert on March 25, 1942, Copland used the original Spanish text in an *a cappella* setting featuring a four-voice solo ensemble with an eight-part mixed chorus.

The simple strains of this song offer a humorous glimpse into the religious life of local monks, comparing the pious act of genuflection to a folkdance. The accompanying chorus emulates the percussive strumming of a Flamenco guitar, capturing the atmosphere and rhythmic drive of a Spanish dance. Copland's English setting of *Las Agachadas* bears no resemblance to an accurate interpretation of the original Spanish text. A more literal translation of the folksong is included on the following page.

Las Agachadas (English text)

—translation by SSG Alberto Torres

Drun de dun dun dun, etc.

The dance they call
The Genuflections, The Genuflections
The dance they call
The Genuflections, The Genuflections.

Drun de dun dun dun, etc.

With the Sacristan
I want to dance to it, I want to dance to it.

Drun de dun dun dun, etc.

Go on and kneel, Peter.
Go on and kneel, John.
Peter, John,
Go on and kneel once again.
For with the kneelings you will pay
the Sacristan, the Sacristan.
You will pay the Sacristan.
You will pay if you must pay.
You will pay the Sacristan.
Dance to the Genuflections.

Four Franciscan friars,
Four from Carmen, four from Carmen,
Four from Aguilera,
Are twelve Friars, are twelve friars.
Go on and kneel, Peter.
Go on and kneel, John.

SOLI GROUP

Go on and kneel once again
For with the kneelings
You will pay the Sacristan.
You will pay if you must pay.
You will pay the Sacristan.

Drun de dun dun dun, etc.

The dance they call
The Genuflections, the Genuflections.

Pay them
With the Sacristan,
With the Sacristan.

Drun de dun dun dun, etc.

Go on and kneel, Peter.
Go on and kneel, John.
Peter, John,
Go on and kneel once again.
For with the kneelings
You will pay the Sacristan.
You will pay the Sacristan.
You will pay if you must pay.
You will pay the Sacristan.
If you should pay, if you should pay.

Drun de dun dun dun, etc.

Old American Songs: Set Two (1952)

The Little Horses opens with an ethereal, dreamy quality—a characteristic well-suited to the lullaby published in the John A. and Alan Lomax collection, *Folk Song USA*. Copland sets the legato rhythm of the accompaniment on the weak pulse, with instructions to sing "almost sotto voce." In the ABABA arrangement, he alternates the opening section with a short staccato segment in a faster tempo, again with the emphasis on the weak beat. This section features a gradual increase in speed, concluding with a slight holding back; these subtle changes in tempo help convey the feel of a trotting horse. The choral arrangement of *The Little Horses* was prepared by Raymond Wilding-White.

Zion's Walls is a Revivalist song of the 1800s by John G. McClurry, compiler of *The Social Harp* (1855). Copland discovered it in George P. Jackson's 1943 compilation, *Down East Spirituals*. As with *I Bought Me a Cat*, he originally planned to use the tune in the ill-fated musical *Tragic Ground*. Again sensitive to his Jewish heritage, he altered the original text from "the praises of Jesus" to "the praises of Zion." The solo version of *Zion's Walls* predates its use in *The Tender Land*, where Copland was able to further develop his countermelody in *The Promise of Living*. This setting of *Zion's Walls* by Glenn Koponen was not added to the choral version of *Old American Songs: Set Two* until 1982, thirty years after the solo edition was premiered.

The Golden Willow Tree is based on the children's song *The Golden Vanity*, which Copland found on the Library of Congress recording, *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads*. This Anglo-American tale eulogizes a cabin boy who risks his life for his ship, *The Golden Willow Tree (Vanity)*, sinking an opposing vessel by drilling holes in its underside. However, instead of receiving the rewards promised

by the captain, he is allowed to drown. This sad story teaches an important lesson: admirable traits—courage, loyalty, and honor—are not always rewarded. Though Copland substantially reduced the number of verses from the original, it remains the longest of the *Old American Songs*. To maintain interest, he took great liberty with the melody and harmony, employing abrupt changes in tonality and adding varying interludes. Gregory Rose's arrangement for mixed chorus was published in 1996, making *The Golden Willow Tree* the last of the *Old American Songs* to be scored for vocal ensemble.

At the River is the most recognized of the *Old American Songs*. Composed in 1865 by the Baptist minister Robert Lowry, it offered hope and redemption to a country ravaged by the Civil War. Although the text speaks in metaphors of the heavenly gathering "at the river that flows by the throne of God," it expresses the postwar relief that "soon our happy hearts will quiver with the melody of peace." This choral setting by Raymond Wilding-White, like Copland's solo version, still resonates deeply among Americans as a source of comfort and healing.

Ching-a-Ring Chaw, whose choral version was completed by Irving Fine, is another minstrel tune from the Harris Collection at Brown University. As with *The Boatmen's Dance*, Copland again uses the banjo effect in the spirited refrain, "ching-a-ring-a ring ching ching." Drawn to the tune by its upbeat music and nonsense refrain, he was hesitant to use the original verses, which advocated the "repatriation" of African-Americans to Haiti. Instead, in his only effort as lyricist, Copland penned new text to describe a more universal vision of "the promised land."

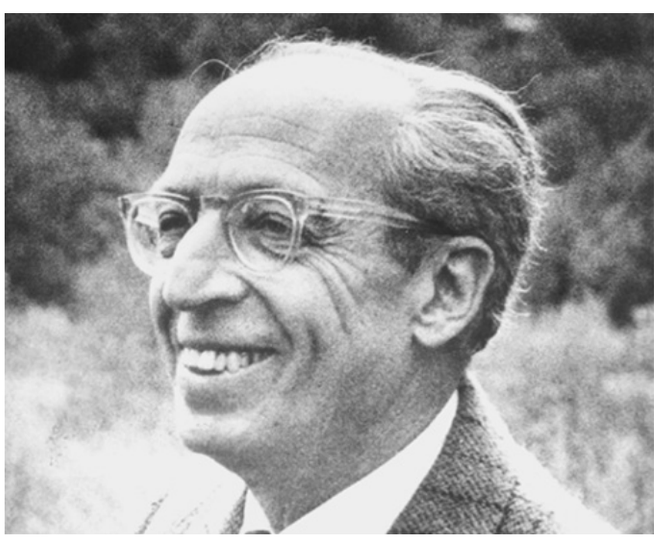

Photo credit: John Ardoin

Canticle of Freedom (1955)

Copland described his last vocal composition, the powerful *Canticle of Freedom*, as a work that "makes a big noise."[17] The text is derived from a Fourteenth Century epic poem by Scotland's literary patriarch, John Barbour (c. 1316–1395), who chronicles that country's long struggle for independence from England.

Originally scored for chorus with orchestra, the work is predominately instrumental until the third section, where the chorus enters in a grandiose finale. *Canticle of Freedom* is similar in spirit to Copland's better-known *Lincoln Portrait*, presenting a direct, uncomplicated musical statement that illuminates the poem's strong message. In an effort to reflect the culture of the original text, he uses the distinctive dance rhythm of the Scottish snap (short-long), which brings special emphasis to the word "freedom."

Canticle was commissioned in 1955 by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for the dedication of Kresge Auditorium. It was premiered on May 8 of the same year by the MIT orchestra and chorus, conducted by Klaus Liepmann. Knowing the limitations of MIT's nonprofessional chorus, Copland intentionally restricted the choral writing to unison and two parts, yet spared

Photo credit: Victor Kraft

Barn studio in the Berkshires, circa 1951

none of his talent for rhythmic complexity, offering a score that challenges the mathematical skills of any gifted musician.

This transcription of *Canticle of Freedom* was commissioned by the Soldiers' Chorus for this recording. Thomas Duffy's rendering for chorus with concert band maintains the instrumental strength of the composer's orchestral score, while showcasing the final vocal composition of Aaron Copland's lasting legacy of choral literature.

Freedom[18]

A! Fredome is a noble thing!
Fredome mays man to haiff liking;
Fredome all solace to man giffis,
He levys at ese that frely levys!
A noble hart may haiff nane ese,
Na ellys nocht that may him plese,
Gyff fredome fail; for fre liking
Is yarnyt our all othir thing.
Na he that ay has levyt fre
May nocht knaw weill the propyrte,
The angyr, na the wretchyt dome
That is couplyt to foule thyrldome.
Bot gyff he had assayit it,
Than all perquer he suld it wyt;
And suld think fredome mar to prise
Than all the gold in warld that is,
Thus contrar thingis evirmar
Discoweryngis off the tothir ar.

—John Barbour (c. 1316–1395)

Canticle of Freedom

Freedom is a noble thing!
Freedom makes man to have liking;
Freedom all solace to man gives,
He lives at ease that freely lives.
A noble heart may have no ease,
Nor aught beside that may him please
if Freedom fail. For free liking
is yearned for over all other thing.
Nor he that aye have lived free
May know well the misery,
the anger, and the wretched doom
that is coupled with foul thralldom.
But if he had essayed it,
Then throughout all he should it wit,
And should think freedom more to prize
than all the gold in world that is.

Copland omits the final two phrases and repeats others occasionally for dramatic effect.

—English adaptation by Willis Wager

Endnotes

1. Richard Franko Goldman, "Aaron Copland," *Musical Quarterly 47* (1961), pp. 1–3.
2. Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland: 1900 Through 1942* (New York: St. Martin's/Marek, 1984), p. 23.
3. Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1999), p. 46.
4. Copland and Perlis, p. 72.
5. Pollack, p. 164.
6. Pollack, p. 113.
7. Aaron Copland, *Our New Music* (New York: Whittlesey House Division of McGraw-Hill Books Co., Inc., 1941), p. 234.
8. Dana Davis, "A Copland Portrait," *Conductors Anthology*, Volume 2 (Northfield, IL: The Instrumentalist Company, 1993), p. 957.
9. Pollack, p. 460.
10. Pollack, p. 470.
11. Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland Since 1943* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 220.
12. Pollack, p. 328.
13. *Copland Since 1943*, p. 18.
14. *Copland Since 1943*, p. 166.
15. *Copland Since 1943*, p. 168.
16. Pollack, p. 77.
17. *Copland Since 1943*, p. 231.
18. *The Oxford Book of English Verse 1900* (Internet: Bibliomania Maytech Publishing Ltd.), www.bibliomania.com/Poetry/OxfordEnglishVerse/obev006.html.

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Colonel Finley R. Hamilton, *Commander*
Lieutenant Colonel Robert A. McCormick, *Director*
Captain Otis C. French, *Associate Conductor*

Soldiers' Chorus

Soprano	*Alto*	*Tenor*	*Bass*
MSG Maryann Fiaschetti*	MSG Eileen Lyle*	MSG Robert Barnett**	MSG Stephen Albritton*
SFC Martha Canipe	SFC Joan Mercer	MSG Joel Dulyea*	SFC Victor Cenales
SFC Jacqueline Clarys	SSG Sarah Anderson	SFC Douglas Cox	SFC Jeffrey Woods
SFC Janet Hjelmgren	SSG Lauren Hall	SFC William Gabbard	SSG Allen Bishop
SSG Laura Dause	SSG Samantha Hammer	SFC Daniel Hopkins	SSG James Hutson
SSG Elena Elliott	SSG Judith Norton	SSG Robert McIver, Jr.	SSG Robert Jefferson

Accompanist
SSG Sammy Marshall