

DALLAS SYMPHONY · ANDREW LITTON

ORCHESTRA

CONDUCTOR

A COPLAND PROFILE

SYMPHONY
FOR ORCHESTRA
AND ORGAN

Wayne Marshall, organ

MUSIC FOR
THE THEATRE

SUITE FROM THE RED PONY



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A COPLAND PROFILE

AARON COPLAND (1900 - 1990)

The Red Pony Film Suite for Orchestra [24:30]

- 1 I. Morning on the Ranch (4:39)**
- 2 II. The Gift (5:02)**
- 3 IIIa. Dream March (2:43)**
- 4 IIIb. Circus Music (1:50)**
- 5 IV. Walk to the Bunkhouse (2:49)**
- 6 V. Grandfather's Story (4:18)**
- 7 VI. Happy Ending (3:09)**

Music for the Theatre Suite in Five Parts for Small Orchestra [21:10]

- 8 I. Prologue (5:41)**
- 9 II Dance (3:18)**
- 10 III. Interlude (5:10)**
- 11 IV. Burlesque (3:15)**
- 12 V. Epilogue (3:46)**

Symphony for Organ and Orchestra [23:52]

Wayne Marshall, organist

- 13 I. Prelude (6:08)**
- 14 II. Scherzo (7:40)**
- 15 III. Finale (10:04)**

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 69:32

Dallas Symphony Orchestra
Andrew Litton, Conductor
Wayne Marshall, organ

Aaron Copland's most beloved music is associated with the ballet stage: *Appalachian Spring*, *Rodeo*, and *Billy the Kid*. While these scores are cornerstones of the American symphonic literature, they only reflect one aspect of Copland's development as a composer. Born in 1900, Copland had a long, rich, and prolific career that lasted until the 1970s. Inevitably, his style and approach altered over the course of a half-century of productivity. In this recording, Andrew Litton and the Dallas Symphony present three lesser-known works by Copland. One is a film score, a genre in which he excelled. The other two are early scores immediately postdating Copland's study with Nadia Boulanger in the 1920s.

Symphonic Suite from The Red Pony

Copland made a substantial contribution to the growing genre of film scores during an era when Hollywood was coming of age. His first cinematic foray was the music for Lewis Milestone's *Of Mice and Men* (1939), based on the Steinbeck novel. Close on its heels followed scores for *The City* (1939) and the movie adaptation of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (1940). Copland pursued cinematic composition for several additional projects: *North Star* (1943), *Fiesta* (1947), *The Red Pony* and *The Heiress* (both 1949), and *Something Wild* (1961).

The *Red Pony* was a particularly felicitous project for Copland because it gave him the opportunity to collaborate again with Lewis Milestone, the producer/director of *Of Mice and Men*. Of that earlier project, Copland later observed:

Milestone sensed that there were scenes where music should take over to express the emotions of the characters, and others involved with the production wanted a composer who would not follow the formulae for movie music. Not even the music director got in my way.... was an outsider to Hollywood, but I did not condescend to compose film music; I worked hard at it. Perhaps this is why I was accepted.

Composers in today's world rarely enjoy such luxury or empathy.

The *Red Pony* is about a California ranch boy whose father gives him a pony. Capitalizing on the rural American scenario, Copland followed the same instincts that served him so well for his American ballets. The music is in his "folk-song" style, yet all of the themes are original, a fact of which he was very proud.

Copland adapted the Suite from *The Red Pony* the same year. Its six movements basically track life on the ranch, colored by the

imagination of a young boy. Noteworthy are the two parts of the third movement, "Dream March" and "Circus Music." The latter, appropriately, uses only winds and percussion. Copland's "Happy Ending" reworks material from the opening "Morning on the Ranch," neatly tying together both plot and music.

Symphony for Organ and Orchestra (1924)

This Symphony, Copland's first, could well head up a collection of "The Unknown Copland." It dates from 1924, the year Copland concluded his composition studies with Nadia Boulanger. A distinguished organist, Boulanger had been invited by Walter Damrosch, conductor of the New York Symphony, and Serge Koussevitzky, recently appointed to lead the Boston Symphony, to perform an organ piece with both orchestras in the United States.

Boulanger wished to commission a new work by an American composer for the occasion, and asked her gifted student if he were interested. Thrilled, Copland set to work, completing the symphony by early autumn, 1924. He sent the manuscript to Mlle. Boulanger in France, eager for her reaction. Her response is one of the most famous and heartwarming documents in the Copland literature. "I can't tell you my joy — the work is so brilliant, so full of music," Boulanger

wrote. "I am writing by the same mail to Dr. Damrosch to tell him how happy I am to play the work in New York (I think also in Boston and afterwards, I hope in Paris)." What meant as much to Copland was her implicit acceptance of him as colleague and friend: "I must at once thank you profoundly for the dedication to which, I assure you, I attach a value that surpasses in everything obvious questions.... This to me is truly a genuine pride of an artist and the real joy of a friend."

Walter Damrosch conducted the premiere in New York's Aeolian Hall on January 11, 1925. In his autobiography, jointly written with Vivian Perlis, Copland recalled:

At its conclusion, there was considerable applause, and when Mr. Damrosch pointed to the upper box where I was seated, I rose to bow. As things quieted down, Mr. Damrosch advanced to the footlights and to everyone's surprise, addressed the audience. "Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "I am sure you will agree that if a gifted young man can write a symphony like this at 23" —and here he paused dramatically, leaving the audience to expect a proclamation of a new musical genius — then continued, "within five years he will be ready to commit murder!"

It was a joke, of course, and I laughed along with the audience, but it was also Damrosch's way of smoothing the ruffled feathers of his conservative Sunday afternoon ladies faced with modern American music.... The day after the premiere, a news article proclaimed, "Young Composer to Commit Murder!"

Although the Organ Symphony was not Copland's first symphonic composition, it was his first orchestral premiere, and did much to establish his reputation as a major figure to watch in American music. Several years later, Copland revised it in a version without organ, and opined that it was excessively derivative of European composers. Today, that very characteristic provides much of the piece's fascination. American audiences of the mid-1920s, whose tastes were securely tied to post-Wagnerian late romanticism, had a decidedly mixed reaction to this "modernist" score. Nearly a decade later, after hearing a Chicago Symphony performance of the Organ Symphony, acid-tongued Claudia Cassidy —only 34 herself at the time —reacted much like one of the Sunday afternoon ladies.

It begins with a reverie, breaks into a swualling scherzo and ends, screaming like a bewildered banshee which by

some twist of locale has found itself at the wailing wall.

Our late-1990s ears have survived the onslaught of minimalism, rap, neo-expressionism, reggae, elevator music and electronic music. Damrosch's famous 'murder' comment and Cassidy's summation may seem like overstatements today. Context, of course, is everything, and *Appalachian Spring* this is not.

Nor is it a traditional symphony: three movements Whose proportions are significantly altered. The heart of the piece is its lengthy *Scherzo*, which Copland described as his idea of what could be done to adapt the raw material of jazz. "I was not yet using jazz openly and directly," he told Vivian Perlis. "Nevertheless, if you listen to the Scherzo even now, you hear rhythms that would not have been there if I had not been born and raised in Brooklyn."

The Scherzo is introduced by a quiet *Prelude*, whose opening flute theme contains the musical material from which the entire Symphony develops. If melody and mood guide the Prelude, rhythm is the governing principle of the Scherzo. Copland's Finale comes closest to a traditional symphonic sonata form movement, but it also has elements of the Baroque *passacaglia*, a slow variation form without pauses. Copland uses the

organ in a variety of ways, most often integrated into the orchestral fabric. Copland has written music for the organ that is almost entirely independent of the material for the orchestra. Its solo passages are brief, reminding us that this is not a concerto.

Music for the Theatre

As the Organ Symphony eloquently demonstrates, Copland wrote a very different sort of music in his youth. He was part of a generation of eager and gifted Americans who, lacking a strong tradition of native music and musicianship (or so they then perceived) sought guidance and refinement of their gifts in Europe. When Copland returned to the United States in 1924, he had heard a considerable quantity of music by European contemporaries.

Copland's biographers agree with his own assessment — made years later — that his first works to follow the French sojourn were modernist, decidedly European, and a shade derivative. Perhaps recognizing this trend earlier than he acknowledged publicly, the young composer began to seek a specifically American musical language through which he could set forth his musical ideas. Sergei Koussevitzky forthwith presented him with a timely opportunity to explore this new direction by arranging for the League of Composers to commission a new work in

1925. Copland wrote to Boulanger:

At first, I thought of setting part of Rimbaud's 'Saison en Enfer,' but I have changed my mind, and now I think I will write a series of pieces to be called 'Incidental Music for an Imaginary Drama.'

Copland worked on the piece in New York, at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire, and at New York's Lake Placid through the summer of 1925. Koussevitzky conducted the premiere on November 20, 1925 at Boston's Symphony Hall.

The new piece turned out to be a suite in five movements which, despite its eventual title of *Music for the Theatre*, is absolute music. Copland's note in the score stated:

The composer had no play or literary idea in mind. The title simply implies that at times this music has a quality which is suggestive of the theatre.

Much later, he acknowledged that *Music for the Theatre* was an attempt at a specifically American style, as opposed to the more European approach of the Organ Symphony. He resolved the quandary of Americanism by incorporating jazz ideas and techniques such as polyrhythms into his music. The

instrumental resources were modest: only one each of woodwinds (emulating a jazz band, brasses limited to two trumpets and trombone, percussion but no timpani, piano, and reduced strings. Both the reduced size of the orchestra and the musical language took a bow to the lively jazz culture of the United States in the 1920s.

Copland's cross-pollination of jazz and the symphonic idiom was controversial at the time. His colleague, the critic and composer

Virgil Thomson, called the piece "Copland's one wild oat." Within a few years, however, *Music for the Theatre* was being programmed more frequently than any other Copland composition. Although it was soon supplanted in popularity by his richly American ballet scores, *Music for the Theatre* was prophetic in the sense that Copland was to leave his greatest legacy in the realm of stage music.

Laurie Shulman © 1998

Andrew Litton became Music Director of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra in 1994 following a highly successful six year tenure as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of Britain's Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. As Conductor Laureate of the Bournemouth Symphony, he won the 1997 Grammy[®] for best choral recording of Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* with baritone Bryn Terfel. Also nominated for a 1997 Grammy[®] was Mr. Litton's recording of the *1812 Overture* and other great Tchaikovsky works, the first in an enterprising series of recordings with the Dallas Symphony on the Delos label.

When appointed to the Dallas Symphony, Mr. Litton was the first American in a decade, and one of the



youngest ever, to head a major American orchestra. He has embarked on an ambitious program, strongly supported by the Dallas community, to significantly raise

the orchestra's international standing in anticipation of its centennial celebrations in the year 2000. The Dallas Symphony makes its first European tour under Mr. Litton's direction in 1997, including a concert at London's Royal Albert Hall as the only American orchestra to participate in the 1997 BBC Proms.

Mr. Litton's dynamic leadership on the podium and in the community is attracting new and younger audiences. A Dallas Symphony multimedia television series for children, "Amazing Music," is being distributed internationally. The Dallas Symphony is featured in a number of PBS Television Specials, including the music of Bernstein, Barber, and Beethoven and "Happy Birthday, George Gershwin," a centennial salute with Mr. Litton as host, conductor, and pianist.

Closely identified with the music of George Gershwin, Mr. Litton led a triumphant 1992 Royal Opera Covent Garden premiere of *Porgy and Bess* and in 1995 he was Music Director for a special Washington, D.C. Gala Concert honoring the Library of Congress' George and Ira Gershwin Collection.

Mr. Litton's over 40 CDs include the Rachmaninov Symphonies with the Royal Philharmonic and the complete

Tchaikovsky Symphonies with the Bournemouth Symphony. He has conducted some 100 orchestras worldwide, including the Chicago Symphony, the Philadelphia Orchestra, all the principal orchestras of Great Britain, the Orchestre National de France, the Tokyo Philharmonic, the Moscow State Symphony, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, the Israel Philharmonic, among many others. His opera credits, in addition to the Royal Opera, include the Metropolitan Opera *Eugene Onegin*, the English National Opera *Falstaff* and *Salome*, the Los Angeles Opera *Tosca*, a forthcoming *Billy Budd* with the Welsh National Opera, and the Music Director-ship of a Bregenz Festival (Austria) new production of *Porgy and Bess*.

Upon completion of his Juilliard studies Mr. Litton became Exxon/Arts Endowment Assistant Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra. The University of Bournemouth awarded Mr. Litton an Honorary Doctor of Music Degree in recognition of his work in Great Britain, for which he and the Bournemouth Symphony also received the Royal Philharmonic Society's Award. Born in New York City, he presently resides in Dallas, Texas.

Internationally-known British organist **Wayne Marshall** has an exceptionally varied and wide-ranging career. Organist-in-residence at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall, he has been featured as solo organist or solo pianist (and sometimes in both capacities) in London's prestigious Prom concerts, with the Cleveland Orchestra, the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Toronto Symphony, the Royal Philharmonic, the BBC Symphony, the Oslo Philharmonic, the Dallas Symphony, the Bournemouth Symphony and many others. Other musical activities include improvisation, conducting, compo-



sition and jazz. His remarkable gifts in improvisation are showcased on a solo Delos CD (release date Fall, 1998). He has toured European capitals with Ole Edvard

Antonsen, giving trumpet/organ and trumpet/piano duo recitals. He has also toured with singers Kim Criswell and Maureen Brathwaite in classical, Broadway and cabaret repertoire. Wayne Marshall is also closely associated with Gershwin's music; he has performed, recorded and conducted music of Gershwin, notably *Porgy and Bess*, *Rhapsody in Blue*, *Second*

Rhapsody and the *Piano Concerto*. He and Andrew Litton have worked together on both sides of the Atlantic.

Delos' Dolby Surround recordings are encoded naturally during the basic recording session through the use of microphone techniques that randomize stereo pickup of ambient and reverberant cues in the recording space. This creates the spacious sound in normal two-speaker stereo listening for which Delos is noted. Through careful monitoring, these techniques also insure that surround playback enhances the listening experience by reproducing an ambient sound field more closely approaching that of a musical performance in a reverberant space.

John Eargle, Director of Recording



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Recording Producer: *Andrew Keener*
Recording Engineer: *John Eargle*
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John Eargle describes VR² and Surround Sound

We are at a new golden age in sound recording. Since the early days of the art of recording, the industry has striven for realism; the improvements of the LP, stereo, and digital technology have each represented great steps forward. Now we are entering the era of *discrete surround sound* playback in the home. **Virtual Reality Recording (VR²)** represents Delos' commitment to this new medium.

In terms of recording technology, each VR² recording begins as a set of multiple stereo program pairs which are mixed into normal two-channel stereo for current CD release, and archived for later mixdown into surround sound. While the actual audio consumer carrier of discrete surround is a couple of years away, this stereo CD can be heard in surround through Dolby Pro-Logic surround sound decoders, which are at the heart of many home theater systems. Listen, and you will hear the difference.

As with our previous Dallas Symphony VR² releases, the unique acoustical qualities of McDermott Hall at the Meyerson Symphony Center have provided Delos with an opportunity to employ the latest in recording technology. For this recording of Copland's music we shortened the reverberation time in the hall to achieve a feeling of more intimacy. We also reduced the distance between the "house microphones" and the main array, giving the effect of a slightly smaller recording space appropriate for this music. The overall miking strategy remains basically the same as for all other Delos symphonic recordings, but more spot mikes were used for subtle delineation of musical lines. An added requirement in this recording was picking up the organ effectively. The organ is located some 35 feet above the stage, so microphones were hung from the large canopy positioned over the orchestra. We wanted the degree of intimacy of the organ to match that of the orchestra.

John Eargle



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