

Aaron Copland

(1900-1990)

HARMONIE ENSEMBLE/NEW YORK

Steven Richman, conductor

Eugene Drucker, violin

Lawrence Dutton, viola

Diane Walsh, piano

Music for the Theatre (21:26)

Suite in Five Parts for Chamber Orchestra

1 Prologue (5:56)

2 Dance (3:19)

3 Interlude (5:16)

4 Burlesque (3:17)

5 Epilogue (3:46)

Harmonie Ensemble/New York; Steven Richman, conductor

Two Ballads for Violin and Piano *Premiere Recording*

(edited by Phillip Ramey and Bennett Lerner)

6 Andante: Simple and direct (2:22)

7 Moderato (2:47)

Eugene Drucker, violin; Diane Walsh, piano

Elegies for Violin and Viola (6:22)

8 Calm, expressive, firm; *(played without pause)*

Più mosso

Eugene Drucker, violin; Lawrence Dutton, viola

9 El Salón México *Premiere Recording* (10:40)

(arranged for piano by Arturo Toscanini)

Diane Walsh, piano

10 Appalachian Spring Suite for 13 Instruments (23:56)

(original version)

Harmonie Ensemble/New York; Steven Richman, conductor

Notes on the Program by Benjamin Folkman

In this CD, which offers several of Copland's most popular works along with a rarity and two world premiere recordings, conductor Steven Richman and Harmonie Ensemble/New York pay tribute to personal collaborations with Copland that date back to 1980 and even beyond.

On November 22 of that year, Mr. Richman and the Ensemble participated in the "Wall-to-Wall Copland" celebration of the composer's 80th birthday at Symphony Space in New York City: a fourteen-hour concert of his music performed by a stellar array of musicians, which was broadcast live on WNYC-FM, National Public Radio, and later featured in the film, *Copland at 80, A Self-Portrait*, telecast nationally by PBS and abroad. In addition, legendary conductor/composer Leonard Bernstein introduced the final two works on the concert. In what was undoubtedly the highlight of the program, Copland himself took the podium as guest conductor of Harmonie Ensemble/New York; leading his *Appalachian Spring*, that veritable touchstone for the ineffable quality we call *American* in concert music. HE/NY also offered Copland's *Music for the Theatre*, in a performance conducted by Mr. Richman, who had had the good fortune to rehearse in close consultation with the composer. Vivid memories of the concert and rehearsals remain among the most treasured of Mr. Richman's life, and inform his readings of these two works on this CD.

The first modern performance of an early Copland piano piece also figured in the Wall-to-Wall Copland program, played by one of his closest friends, the composer Phillip Ramey, who had unearthed the score on a visit to Copland's Peekskill home. Ramey's further delvings into Copland's manuscripts are represented on this CD by the *Two Ballads for Violin and Piano*, a score that

remains unavailable in print. Equally inaccessible is another of our works: the mordant *Elegies for Violin and Viola*, which the composer withdrew for recycling into other music. These unknown pieces display the voice and mind of Copland no less unmistakably than do the luminescent *Appalachian Spring* and the sassy *Music for the Theatre*. As heard on this CD, the remaining number, *El Salón México*, occupies an intermediate category between obscurity and celebrity: the music is an old friend, but this particular arrangement penned, improbably, by the hand of Arturo Toscanini remained unheard in public until Diane Walsh gave the world premiere at a Harmonie Ensemble/New York Copland concert on February 10, 2002.

Our premieres may lead many listeners to conclude that unknown Copland is, after all, merely vintage Copland that we have not yet had the good fortune to encounter. This is not surprising, however, given that the composer's careful and conscientious approach to his work kept his output small but ensured that everything he put on paper was purposeful and substantive.

Copland almost never proceeded from beginning to end when composing an extended piece. Instead, he would commence in scatter-shot fashion, sketching and increasingly elaborating an array of promising ideas, without a definitive sense of how they might all cohere in the narrative, rather as one attacks a jigsaw puzzle. "I may not know where a particular section will fit," Copland told Phillip Ramey, "but, inevitably, one day the different parts suddenly run to the right places. Naturally, that's a very nice day."

One project, however, never jelled: a violin concerto intended for Isaac Stern, which Copland began in 1957 but abandoned while it was still a slim folio of sketches. On a visit to Copland's house in 1986, Ramey and the pianist Bennett Lerner examined the concerto material, and realized that two attractive

portions could be extracted as short independent violin-piano pieces with only minor editing. The composer authorized the two to proceed, and was pleased to hear the results performed at an eighty-sixth birthday concert near his home. Copland himself supplied the title *Two Ballads for Violin and Piano*: "ballads, not ballades," he insisted. While the pieces both display Copland's characteristic shy lyricism, they evoke very different moods. The first is a restrained lament, with a ray of hope briefly illuminating its middle portion; in the second, a serenely flowing melody soon slows, taking on a stately character in piano chords decorated by animated violin figuration that eventually rises to ardent song.

Inspired in part by the suicide of the poet Hart Crane, Copland's *Elegies for Violin and Viola* was written in 1932 in Mexico. It had been commissioned for the upcoming tenth anniversary concert of the New York League of Composers, where it duly received its premiere on April 2, 1933, played by violinist Ivor Karman and his violist wife Charlotte Karman. Oddly, two other composers contributed string duos to this program that utilized different instrumental pairings, Serge Prokofiev employing two violins, Alexander Tcherepnin, violin and cello.

After the premiere, Copland decided to revise *Elegies*. Beginning this process in November 1933, he soon found himself turning the score's first section into a movement for orchestral strings without doublebasses, which became section No. 4 (titled "Subjective") of his *Statements for Orchestra*. Rather than write a new opening for *Elegies*, Copland quietly retired the piece. Some dozen years later, however, he reused a passage near the close of the second elegy in the slow movement of his *Symphony No. 3*.

Perhaps as a reaction to the extravagance and grandiosity of his *Symphonic*

Ode (1927-29), austerity and economy had increasingly become watchwords in his *Piano Variations* (1930), and his *Short Symphony* (1931-33). Such rarefaction reaches its peak in *Elegies*, which offers little of the conventional consolation of funerary music but frequently presents stern, acerbic, tight-lipped proclamation, boiling down the composer's "laying down the law" style to bare bones. There are two elegies, heard without pause. The opening of the second lightens the mood and texture, but the melody's optimism soon dissipates as its elaboration takes on querulous undertones. In preparing this commentary, the annotator was fortunate in being able to check facts against Mather Pfeifferberger's extensive researches into the origins of *Elegies*.

The legendary conductor Arturo Toscanini, a youthful champion of Debussy and Strauss, was over forty-five when he first encountered the avant-garde idioms of Stravinsky and Schoenberg, and he developed little liking for either composer. In his later years, however, he made periodic attempts to assimilate modern works, feeling an obligation to present American scores in acknowledgement of the privileged position he held among musicians in the United States. One composer who seemed particularly unlikely to gain Toscanini's interest, however, was Copland first, because Copland reveled in Stravinskian techniques, second because Copland was the particular protege of Serge Koussevitzky, a conductor who enjoyed a veneration that Toscanini questioned, deeming his musical knowledge incomplete, his taste not always dependable, and his stick technique (self-taught when he belatedly turned to conducting in adulthood) imperfect.

Thus it was surprising when Toscanini announced plans to perform Copland's *El Salón México* with the NBC Symphony in 1942. To be sure, Copland was now increasingly recognized as American's leading composer, but



Toscanini's reason for taking him up may have been less altruistic. He undoubtedly knew that Koussevitzky's inability to master Copland's trickiest rhythmic intricacies had forced him to cancel or abridge some Copland scores; indeed, biographer Howard Pollack finds that Koussevitzky's exciting 1939 recording of *El Salón México* sometimes betrays the conductor's discomfort with metrical complexities. If Toscanini intended a perfectly prepared performance that would serve as an example to Koussevitzky, this would merely have been one more instance where Toscanini programmed a piece for his colleague's education (a notorious example was a Mozart *Divertimento* in which Koussevitzky had perpetrated harmonic nonsense by failing to support cellos with basses, and left a gaping hole where a cadenza was clearly required).

It was presumably to help fix the work's metrical patterns firmly in his head and hands that Toscanini prepared a transcription of the score that he could play and study at the piano. The NBC performance turned out satisfactorily, but he did not retain *El Salón México* in his repertory. A copy of Toscanini's manuscript was given to Copland by Walter Toscanini, the conductor's son, in 1961. Mr. Richman discovered the arrangement while researching in the Toscanini archive in New York.

Commentators rightfully cite *El Salón México* as the crucial piece in which Copland turned away from abstraction and austerity and embraced the type of populism that would continue through his series of Americanist masterpieces. Yet, ironically, the idea of writing *El Salón México* first occurred to him when his abstract manner was still at apogee. While working on *Elegies* in Mexico City in 1932, Copland went to a famous entertainment palace named *El Salón México* that housed three separate dance halls: one for the middle class, one for denimed proletarians, and one for barefoot campesinos. The cross-sec-

tion delighted Copland, and pleasant memories of the evening resurfaced so frequently that he decided to evoke the experience in music. From books of Mexican folk songs Copland chose "El Mosco," "El Palo Verde," "La Jesuita" and "La Malacate." *El Salón México* largely took shape in 1935, composed side-by-side with the decidedly abstract *Statements for Orchestra* (a score partly derived, as we have seen, from *Elegies*). Completed in 1936, *El Salón México* received its premiere in Mexico City on August 27 of the following year, conducted by Carlos Chavez. Koussevitzky introduced it to America in 1938, and it rapidly became Copland's most popular piece to date.

Toscanini in no way tried to make his transcription a pianistic show-piece, intending it basically as a study aid that faithfully replicated the details of the original. The result is lucid and effective, a testament to the musical solidity of Copland's conception, which emerges even in the absence of his scintillating orchestration. Toscanini never gave his manuscript a final editing, and it is amusing to note that he made two small musical departures (both surely inadvertent) from the original. At one point, he left a short repeated motif out of a melody, thus dropping a measure; at another, turning to a new page in his manuscript, he repeated the last four measures from the previous page. These errors have been corrected in the version edited and prepared by Mr. Richman for Ms. Walsh's premiere performance and recording. Mr. Richman has also transferred numerous orchestral articulation and expression marks to the piano score, as Toscanini did not supply a definitive treatment of these, indicating them only haphazardly.

Arriving back in America after three years of study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, Copland plunged into what was in effect his "thesis" for her, the *Symphony for Organ and Orchestra* (later recast as his *Symphony No. 1*). As

this rather European-sounding score progressed, Copland was re-entering the stream of American life. One change he noticed was how rapidly jazz had evolved during his absence, and how much more deeply it had permeated public consciousness. His reacclimatization was glaringly evident in the work that followed the symphony: *Music for the Theatre*, completed in September 1925. Historians stress that in several episodes of this suite, Copland made his first conscious use of jazz. Even more important, however, was that in *Music for the Theatre*, Copland suddenly found that an American musical vernacular was recognizable in everything he uttered. The personal voice had emerged that would remain forever audible in his work. Copland made the following observations:

Music for the Theatre was written with no specific play in mind The music seemed to suggest a certain theatrical atmosphere, so I chose the title after developing the ideas into five short movements. The "Prologue" has a certain brashness about it that was typical of my age and the times . . . "Dance," short and jazzy, quotes the familiar popular tune "East Side, West Side"; "Interlude" [is] a kind of song without words . . . "Burlesque" [was] partly inspired by the popular comedienne Fanny Brice. The "Epilogue incorporates material from the first and third movements and recaptures the quiet mood of the "Prologue".

Serge Koussevitzky conducted the premiere of *Music for the Theatre* on November 20, 1925, in Boston and soon brought the piece to Carnegie Hall and other venues. When he presented it at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, several of the hall's directors came backstage to denounce its ill-bred modernism.

Koussevitzky probably concealed a chuckle as he suavely rejoined, "But gentlemen, Copland is one of your boys. I played it here in Brooklyn to do honor to your city."

In 1942, the renowned arts patron Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge commissioned Copland to compose a ballet score for the celebrated choreographer Martha Graham, scheduled to be introduced by the Graham troupe at the Coolidge Foundation's 1943 fall festival. Graham, however, delivered the scenario to Copland three months later than promised, and other problems eventually prompted her to postpone the production for a year. Copland accordingly put aside his half-finished score, which he had been working on since June in Hollywood and Mexico. Returning to it in early 1944, he completed a preliminary piano version that spring in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and finished the instrumentation during July in New York City and Fire Island.

Copland's working title for the piece had been "Ballet for Martha," and it was only on October 29, 1944, a day before the premiere at the Library of Congress in Washington D. C. that Graham told him she had decided to call it *Appalachian Spring* (a phrase taken from Hart Crane's poem "The Bridge"). "It really has nothing to do with the ballet, she confessed to Copland. "I just liked it." The audience greeted *Appalachian Spring* with great enthusiasm the following evening, and the score has gone on to become the most popular by far of Copland's extended works.

Given that the ballet's title was merely the choreographer's afterthought, Copland found it amusing and bemusing that listener after listener praised him for his superbly atmospheric evocation of spring-time in the Appalachians. Discussing what had actually been in his mind when he wrote the score, Copland told Phillip Ramey:

It was [Martha Graham's] very personal manner that inspired the style of the music. Martha is rather prim and restrained, simple yet strong, and her dance style is correspondingly direct. One thinks of these qualities as being especially American and, thus, the character of my score, which quotes only one actual folk tune, "Simple Gifts," but which uses rhythms, harmonies and melodies that suggest an American ambiance.

Because the Library of Congress auditorium had an extremely small orchestra pit, Copland scored his music for a chamber complement of thirteen players. Such was the interest generated by *Appalachian Spring*, however, that the composer quickly made a full-orchestra version, also culling a suite. While it was the symphonic adaptation that won the piece its large following, many experts believe that the intimate original complement heard on this CD best serves the music's plain spoken, oddly poignant simplicity.

Copland prepared this guide to *Appalachian Spring*:

The Suite arranged from the ballet contains the following sections, played without interruption:

1. Very slowly. Introduction of the characters, one by one, in a suffused light.
2. Fast. Sudden burst of unison strings in A-major arpeggios starts the action. A sentiment both elated and religious gives the keynote to this scene.
3. Moderate. Duo for the Bride and her Intended's scene of tenderness and passion.
4. Fast. The Revivalist and his flock. Folksy feeling suggestion of

squaredances and country fiddlers.

5. Still faster. Solo dance of the Bride--presentiment of motherhood. Extremes of joy and fear and wonder.
6. Very slowly (as at first). Transition scene to music reminiscent of the introduction.
7. Calm and flowing. Scenes of daily activity for the Bride and her Farmer-husband. There are five variations on a Shaker theme. The theme, sung by a solo clarinet . . . is called "Simple Gifts."
8. Moderate; Coda. The Bride takes her place among her neighbors. At the end the couple are left "quiet and strong in their new house." Muted strings intone a hushed, prayer-like passage. The close is reminiscent of the opening music.

THE ARTISTS

Conductor **Steven Richman**, a winner of the Concert Artists Guild Award, is Conductor and Music Director of the Dvorák Festival Orchestra of New York. Since 1980 he has served as Music Associate for United Nations Day Concerts and TV broadcasts, collaborating with such distinguished conductors as Zubin Mehta, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, Lorin Maazel, and Richard Bonyngé. A recognized author and radio personality, Maestro Richman writes on a variety of musical subjects and reviews concert laserdiscs, as well as CDs on WQXR-FM's nationally syndicated "First Hearing." He has led Harmonie Ensemble/New York in five highly acclaimed recordings, including the 2003 Grammy Award Nominated Stravinsky: *Histoire du Soldat*, Premieres & Rarities (Koch International Classics), as well as Dvorák and Friends, Salute to France, Overture!, and Dvorák Discoveries on the Music & Arts label. His recent engagements included the Janáček Philharmonic in the Czech Republic, and the Highlands, NC Festival, where he conducted members of the National Symphony of Washington, D.C. In spring, 2004, he will organize and conduct a Dvorák Centennial Concert and, for HE/NY's 25th Anniversary Concert, perform and record Grofé-Gershwin-Whiteman Symphonic Jazz premieres.

In September 1997, Mr. Richman organized and conducted the Dvorák Day Celebration, including the dedication of a statue of Dvorák in New York City's Stuyvesant Square Park, and a gala concert at St. George's Church which drew over 2000 people, including members of the Dvorák family, the Czech Ambassador, and film director Milos Forman as honored guests. Czech violinist Josef Suk (Dvorák's great-grandson) and members of the Guarneri String Quartet performed, and Mr. Richman conducted the Dvorák Festival Orchestra

of New York in the "New World" Symphony with members of major American and Czech orchestras in a program of works Dvorák composed across the street at 327 East 17th Street, his New York residence at the time. The historic Dvorák Day Concert was released on Music & Arts CD-1078 to international acclaim in 2001; Mr. Richman has organized and conducted four subsequent annual Dvorák Day Concerts. In 1997, C.F. Peters published Dvorák's Arrangement for Baritone, Chorus and Orchestra of Stephen Foster's "Old Folks at Home" for the first time, in Mr. Richman's edition. He has also contributed to the book "Dvorák in America," and written several internationally published articles on Dvorák. His upcoming recording projects include music by Cherubini, Beethoven, Saint-Saëns, Martinu, Mozart, Gershwin, Rodrigo, and Gil Evans.

Harmonie Ensemble/New York
Steven Richman, Conductor

Violins

Richard Rood, *concertmaster*
Katsuko Esaki, *principal*
Martha Caplin
Michael Roth
Carol Zeavin
Basia Danilow
Michael Levin
Krystof Witek

Violas

Nardo Poy, *principal*
Olivia Koppell
Christine Ims

Cellos

Jesse Levy, *principal*
Ann Kim

Bass

Lewis Paer

Flute/Piccolo

Judith Mendenhall

Oboe/English horn

Robert Ingliss

Clarinet/Eb Clarinet

Robert Yamins

Bassoon

Peter Simmons

Trumpets

Raymond Mase, *principal*
Kevin Cobb

Trombone

Michael Powell

***Percussion/
Personnel Mgr.***

Jonathan Haas

Piano

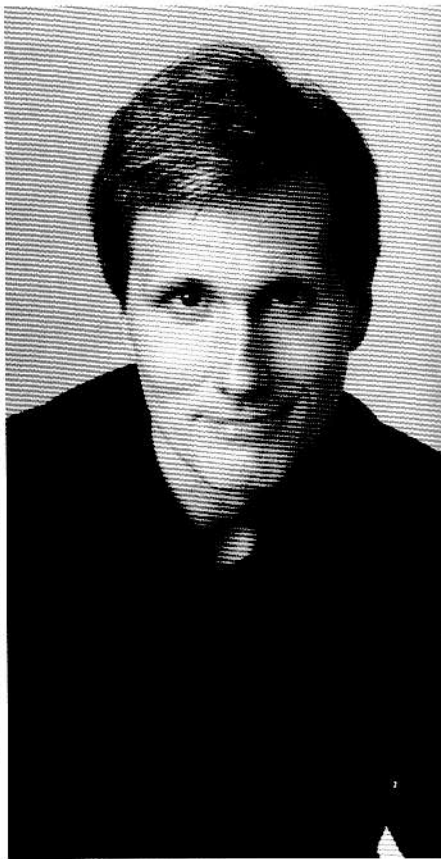
John Van Buskirk

Harmonie Ensemble/New York, now celebrating its 25th Anniversary Season, was founded in 1979 by its Conductor and Music Director, Steven Richman. Winner of the Lincoln Center Community Arts Award and the WQXR-FM Action for the Arts Award, it comprises members of major New York orchestras including the Metropolitan Opera, New York Philharmonic, City Opera, City Ballet, and Mostly Mozart Festival. In 1980 HE/NY performed at the Copland 80th Birthday Concert at Symphony Space in New York City. Mr. Copland conducted the group in *Appalachian Spring*, and Mr. Richman conducted *Music for the Theatre*. Harmonie Ensemble/New York has performed orchestra, chamber orchestra, chamber and wind ensemble works in virtually all of New York's concert halls, throughout the United States, and on radio and television internationally. Acclaimed for unique programming and "first-rate" (The New York Times) performances, it has given the U.S., New York, world premiere and recording premiere of works by Handel, Stravinsky, Shostakovich, Nino Rota, Brahms, Copland, Grofé, Mussorgsky, Harry Burleigh (Dvorak's assistant) Leopold Godowsky III, and Krommer, the world premiere of Dvorák's *Octet-Serenade*, and the first performances in over 50 years of Gershwin's original symphonic orchestrations, at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. The group has performed special events devoted to Stravinsky (100th birthday), Bernstein (70th birthday), Morton Gould (75th birthday), Handel (300th birthday), Toscanini (40th anniversary of his final concert, performed at his Wave Hill, NY estate), Gershwin (50th anniversary of his death), Walton (100th birthday), and Dvorák (150th birthday), which have attracted record-breaking and sold-out audiences to Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, and the 92nd Street "Y".

Eugene Drucker, a founding member of the Emerson String Quartet, has performed as soloist with the orchestras of Antwerp, Liege, Brussels, Montreal, Omaha, Austin, Anchorage, Richmond and Hartford, and with the Aspen Chamber Symphony, Westchester Philharmonic and American Symphony Orchestra. A prizewinner in the 1975 International Violin Competition in Montreal, Drucker won a Bronze Medal at the Queen Elisabeth International Competition in Brussels in 1976. Later that year he gave his New York debut as a Concert Artist Guild Winner. He has recorded the complete unaccompanied violin works of J.S. Bach for Novello Records, re-issued by Pamassus Records, and the complete sonatas and duos of Bartók for Biddulph Records with pianist Diane Walsh and Emerson colleague Philip Setzer.



Lawrence Dutton, hailed by the New Yorker as "a poetic violist," performs over 100 concerts each season as a member of the world renowned Emerson String Quartet, and has won six Grammy Awards. He has collaborated with many of the world's great performing artists, including Isaac Stern, Mstislav Rostropovich, Oscar Shumsky, Walter Trampler, Menahem Pressler, Lynn Harrell, Yefim Bronfman, Joseph Kalichstein, Misha Dichter, Jan DeGaetani and Edgar Meyer. Guest artist with such leading chamber groups as the Juilliard and Guarneri Quartets, he recorded the Shostakovich *Piano Quintet*, Op. 57, and the Fauré *G-minor Piano Quartet*, Op. 45, with the Beaux Arts Trio on the Philips label. His Aspen Music Festival recording with Jan DeGaetani for Bridge Records was nominated for a 1992 Grammy Award. For BRAVO television he recorded works by Stravinsky and Hindemith.



Diane Walsh, winner of the Munich International and the Salzburg Mozart Competitions, has given solo recitals in major concert halls in New York City, Washington, Chicago, London, Amsterdam, Prague, Leningrad and Salzburg. In 2002, she performed Mozart's Concerto No. 25 with the Austin (Texas) Symphony Orchestra, following appearances ranging from New York to Colorado in concert works by Strauss, Berg, Chopin and Mozart. Ms. Walsh's CDs include Twentieth Century Piano Classics (Music and Arts), with sonatas by Barber, Bartók and Prokofiev and Frank Martin's *Preludes*; the Bartók violin-piano sonatas, with Eugene Drucker (Biddulph); and the all-Griffes CD "Goddess of the Moon" (Newport Classics), which includes her performances of the Piano Sonata and the Kairn of Korwidwen. She has also recorded for Sony Classical, Nonesuch, Koch International, Stereophile, CRI, Arabesque and Book-of-the-Month Records.



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Cover designer **Alex Steinweiss** invented the LP record jacket and illustrated album cover. He designed over 2000 classic record jackets as Art Director for Columbia Records, and for the Decca, London, and Everest labels. This is his third CD cover design for Harmonie Ensemble/New York.

State of the Arts



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Arturo Toscanini, courtesy of Walfredo Toscanini.

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