

Gian Carlo Menotti, (born July 7, 1911, Cadegliano, Italy—died Feb. 1, 2007, Monaco), Italian composer, whose operas gained wider popularity than any others of their time. His realistic operas on his own librettos represent a successful combination of 20th-century dramatic situations with the traditional form of Italian opera. Menotti used largely traditional harmonies, resorting at times to dissonance and polytonality to heighten dramatic effect.

Menotti wrote his first opera, *The Death of Pierrot*, by the age of 11. He studied at the Milan Conservatory and in the late 1920s emigrated to the United States, where he continued his studies at the Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia (1928–33), at the suggestion of Arturo Toscanini. There he met Samuel Barber, who became his lifelong companion and frequent collaborator. Although Menotti worked extensively in the United States, he retained his Italian citizenship.

Menotti's opera *Amelia Goes to the Ball*, a witty satire on society manners and morals, was produced in Philadelphia in 1937 with great success and was transferred to the Metropolitan Opera in New York City in 1938. It was followed by a radio opera, *The Old Maid and the Thief* (1939), and *The Island God*, produced at the Metropolitan in 1942. These works were less successful, and Menotti turned to writing chamber operas—requiring fewer singers and smaller orchestras—on melodramatic subjects. His first opera of this type, *The Medium* (1946), was a tragedy about a medium who becomes a victim of her own fraudulent voices. It was followed by a one-act comic opera, *The Telephone* (1946). In 1947 the two operas were paired in an unprecedented Broadway run. In 1951 *The Medium* was made into a motion picture.

In 1950 Menotti's opera *The Consul*, which won a Pulitzer Prize, was produced on Broadway. Like all of his operas, it is a work of great theatrical effectiveness. Set in an unnamed country under totalitarian rule, it deals with the vain efforts of a woman to gain an exit visa to join her husband, an enemy of the state. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (1951), the first opera composed for television, is the story of a lame shepherd boy who gives his crutch to the Three Wise Men as a gift for the Christ child. With *The Saint of Bleeker Street* (1954) Menotti won a second Pulitzer Prize.

In 1958 Menotti wrote the libretto for Barber's opera *Vanessa*. His "madrigal fable" *The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore*, for chorus, instruments, and dancers, was produced in 1956. His grand opera *Maria Golovin* (1958) was less successful than his earlier tragic operas. In 1963 he produced a cantata, *The Death of the Bishop of Brindisi*; a television opera, *Labyrinth*; and a comic opera, *The Last Savage*. His instrumental works include the symphonic poem "Apocalypse" (1951) and concerti for piano and for violin. In 1958 Menotti established the Festival of Two Worlds, for opera, music, and drama, in Spoleto, Italy, and its American branch in Charleston, S.C., in 1977. *Help, Help, the Globolinks!* (1968) is a satiric opera, and *Tamu-Tamu* (1973) is an antiwar opera that is sung in English and Indonesian. The opera *Goya* (1986) dealt with the life of the Spanish painter of that name. A prolific composer, Menotti also wrote ballets and chamber music. In addition, he staged many of his works. In 1984 he received a Kennedy Center Honor.

Aaron Copland

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

Earl Wild, piano

Aaron Copland, conductor

Gian Carlo Menotti

Concerto In F For Piano And Orchestra

Earl Wild, piano

Jorge Mester, conductor

Few figures in American music loom as large as Aaron Copland. As one of the first wave of literary and musical expatriates in Paris during the 1920s, Copland returned to the United States with the means to assume, for the next half century, a central role in American music as composer, promoter, and educator. Copland's sheer popularity and iconic status are such that his music has transcended the concert hall and entered the popular consciousness; it both accompanies solemn and joyous celebrations the world over (*Fanfare for the Common Man*) and punctuates the familiar words "Beef: It's What's for Dinner!" (*Rodeo*) for millions of television viewers.

Copland was the youngest of five children born to Harris and Sarah Copland, Lithuanian Jewish immigrants who owned a department store in Brooklyn. He did not take formal piano lessons until he was 13, by which time he had also begun writing small pieces. Instead of attending college, Copland studied theory and composition with Rubin Goldmark and piano with Victor Wittgenstein and Clarence Adler, and attended as many concerts, operas, and ballets as possible. In 1921, he went to Fontainebleau, France, taking conducting and composition classes at the American Conservatory. He went on to study in Paris with Ricardo Viñes and Nadia Boulanger and spent the next three years soaking up all the European culture, both new and old, that he could. He learned to admire not only composers like Stravinsky, Milhaud, Fauré, and Mahler, but others such as author André Gide. Boulanger's performance of Copland's 1924 *Organ Symphony* with Koussevitzky was the beginning of a friendship between the conductor and composer that led to Copland teaching at the Berkshire Music Center (Tanglewood) from 1940 until 1965.

After his return to America, Copland drifted toward an incisive, austere style that captured something of the sobriety of Depression-torn America. The most representative work of this period -- the *Piano Variations* (1930)

-- remains one of the composer's seminal efforts. He tried to avoid taking a university position, instead writing for journals and newspapers, organizing concerts, and taking on administrative duties for composers' organizations, trying to promote American music. By the mid-1930s, taking the direct engagement of and communication with audiences as one of his central tenets, Copland's compositions developed (in parallel with other composers like Virgil Thomson and Roy Harris) an "American" style marked by folk influences, a new melodic and harmonic simplicity, and an appealing directness free from intellectual pretension. This is nowhere more in evidence than in Copland's ballets of this period, and it finally earned him the respect of the general public. While Copland gradually became less prolific from the mid-1950s on, he continued to experiment and explore "fresh" means of musical expression, including a highly individual adoption of 12-tone principles in works like the *Piano Fantasy* and *Connotations* for orchestra. Still, the fundamentally lyrical nature of Copland's language remained intact and occasionally emerged -- with an often surprising retrospective air -- in works like the *Duo* for flute and piano (1971). He continued to teach and write and received numerous awards both in America and abroad. In 1958, he began conducting orchestras around the world, performing works by 80 other composers as well as his own over the next 20 years. By the mid-'70s, Copland had for all intents and purposes ceased composing. One of the last of his creative accomplishments was the completion of his two-volume autobiography (with musicologist Vivian Perlis), an essential document in understanding the growth of American music in the twentieth century.

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Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

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Menotti Concerto In F For Piano And Orchestra

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| 1 | Allegro | 13:44 |
| 2 | Lento | 9:17 |
| 3 | Allegro | 10:20 |

Copland Concerto For Piano And Orchestra

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| 4 | Part I | 6:20 |
| 5 | Part II | 9:20 |

Released by Vanguard Records 1961



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