

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (August 25, 1918–October 14, 1990) was a world-renowned musician throughout his entire adult life. He was Music Director of the New York Philharmonic and conducted the world's major orchestras recording hundreds of these performances. His books and the televised Young People's Concerts with the New York Philharmonic established him as



a leading educator. His compositions include Jeremiah, The Age of Anxiety, Kaddish, Serenade, Five Anniversaries, Mass, Chichester Psalms, Slava!, Songfest, Divertimento for Orchestra, Missa Brevis, Arias and Barcarolles, Concerto for Orchestra and A Quiet Place. Bernstein composed for the Broadway musical stage, including On the Town, Wonderful Town, Candide and the immensely popular West Side Story. In addition to the West Side Story collaboration, Mr. Bernstein worked with choreographer Jerome Robbins on three major ballets, Fancy Free, Facsimile and Dybbk. Mr. Bernstein was the recipient of many honors, including, the Antoinette Perry Tony Award for Distinguished Achievement in the Theater, eleven Emmy Award, the Lifetime Achievement Grammy Award and the Kennedy Center Honors.

Copland

Four Dance Episodes From "Rodeo" Billy The Kid (Ballet Suite) Leonard Bernstein New York Philharmonic



It was ballet impresario Lincoln Kirstein who had the inspiration to bring together composer Aaron Copland and choreographer Eugene Loring to create a work based on the legend of Billy the Kid. Kirstein was particularly drawn to Walter Noble Burns' 1925 best-seller *The Saga of Billy the Kid*, a mix of lore, fantasy, and historical research. As related by Burns, Billy, a gambler, cattle rustler, and vigilante frontiersman, made his claim to fame in having killed a man for each of his 21 years. Loring devised a scenario which calls for four principals, along with "pioneers, men, women, Mexicans, and Indians." Much of the ballet's action, form, and mood reflects Burns' *Saga*, particularly the grotesque celebration which follows a central shoot-out scene.

Copland, having already composed works evocative of the American west and Mexico like *El Salon Mexico* (1933-1936) and *Saga of the Prairies* (1937), was well prepared for this "cowboy ballet." The composer provided period flavor by incorporating six cowboy tunes into the score: "Great Granddad," "Git Along Little Dogie," "The Old Chisholm Trail," "Goodbye, Old Paint," "The Dying Cowboy," and "Trouble for the Range Cook."

Copland's score provides a vivid sonic depiction of prairie life. An opening processional is distinguished by Copland's trademark widely spaced "open" harmonies in the woodwinds, followed by a bass figure centered on a syncopated two-note motive. This plodding bass moves dramatically from pianissimo to a triple-forte climax, suggesting the laborious trudging of the settlers. The music of the processional brings the ballet full circle with its reappearance as the coda. "Street in a Frontier Town" moves from pastoral innocence to mechanistic violence, incorporating several cowboy tunes along the way. The rest of Billy's story moves unfolds in short vignettes, including "Card Game at Night" (also known as "Prairie Night"), which draws upon the familiar image of the lone cowboy, including snatches of "The Dying Cowboy." "Gun Battle" is dominated by violent percussion, the sounds of gunfire represented by snare and bass drums. In "Celebration After Billy's Capture" Copland neatly transforms the trudging bass of the opening processional into a dissonant "oompah" figure that underpins a crude bitonal melody, while a waltz section transforms "Trouble for the Range Cook" into an ironic ditty with solos in the trombone and bassoon. "Billy's Death" is a solemn epilogue for strings, harp, and winds.

Billy the Kid was first performed by the Ballet Caravan in Chicago in a two-piano version on October 6, 1938. The familiar version for full orchestra was premiered in New York on May 24, 1939, to critical and popular raves. In 1940 Copland extracted a concert suite from the ballet, the form in which the music is today most frequently heard.

The essential spirit of Aaron Copland's music is embodied perhaps nowhere so well as in his ballet scores, which are among his best-known works. Copland wrote *Rodeo* (1942) for Agnes de Mille, and it proved to be the choreographer's most enduring success. The scenario tells the story of a young woman, accomplished in all the skills of a cowpoke, who hopes to attract the attentions of the head wrangler on a ranch. In a decidedly pre-feminist resolution, he is unimpressed by her skill but succumbs to her charms when she trades her cowboy duds for a dress and shows a more "womanly" side at the rodeo dance.

Both the ballet and the popular concert suite derived from it are divided into four musical scenes. The opening "Buckaroo Holiday" incorporates two cowboy tunes, "If He Be A Buckaroo By His Trade" and "Sis Joe"; this section is marked by the use of ever-changing rhythms and unpredictable turns of harmony. The "Corral Nocturne," in an asymmetrical 5/4 meter, is a plaintive portrait of a cowgirl's loneliness. "Saturday Night Waltz" makes use of another cowboy song, "Goodbye, Old Paint," to which Copland adds his own stamp by the employment of cross-rhythms. "Hoe-Down" is undoubtedly the ballet's best-known episode, largely through its use as the music to accompany the words "Beef: It's What's for Dinner" on television. Written in the midst of Copland's "populist" period, *Rodeo* is distinguished throughout by the composer's exuberance, evocative sense of orchestral color, distinctive harmonic language, and singular expressivity.

Rodeo was premiered at the Metropolitan Opera House on October 16, 1942. To make the suite called *Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo* Copland shortened four of the main dance scenes of the ballet and dropped some connecting music, including a delightful ricky-ticky barroom piano solo reputed to have been written by the young Leonard Bernstein for insertion into the ballet as a gift to his mentor.

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Leonard Bernstein New York Philharmonic

4 Dance Episodes from Rodeo:

- 1 Buckaroo Holiday - Allegro con spirito 6:58
- 2 Corral Nocturne - Moderato 3:59
- 3 Saturday Night Waltz - Introduction - Slow Waltz 4:09
- 4 4 Dance Episodes from Rodeo: Hoe-Down 3:06

Billy the Kid (Ballet Suite):

- 5 Introduction. The open Prairie 3:13
- 6 Street in a Frontier Town 3:22
- 7 Mexican Dance and Finale 3:09
- 8 Prairie Night (Card game at night) 3:12
- 9 Gun Battle 1:49
- 10 Celebration (after Billy's capture) 2:21
- 11 Billy's Death 1:19
- 12 The open Prairie again 1:47

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