

(6) "Happy Ending," which, like "Morning on the Ranch," uses material from the beginning and ending of the film.

Britten was approached to write an orchestral composition for an unidentified Great Power, to be ready in 1940. With war threatening all over the world, and reflecting on the loss of his father a few years earlier, Britten responded with a work in three linked movements, each titled with the name of a section of the Latin Mass for the Dead. Always a pacifist, Britten clearly was taking the occasion to state his protest. The first movement is full of the sounds of grief, beginning with a funeral march employing massive drum-beats, with a central section featuring a crying saxophone solo. The second movement is the only fast one, a "Dies Irae" that obviously depicts war in martial fanfares and explosions, ending in chaos that threatens to tear the orchestra apart. This dies out and leads to "Requiem aeternam" in which an achingly beautiful theme on flutes brings, if not immediate consolation, a promise of peace to come. It is a strongly emotional and deeply personal work. As it turned out, the mysterious commission for the work came from the Japanese Empire, which had in mind to use it at ceremonies marking the 2,500th anniversary of the legendary date of the founding of the Imperial Dynasty. Japan rejected it with the explanation that its Christian basis made it incompatible with a Shinto celebration, so it was premiered in New York.

Aaron Copland: The Red Pony
Benjamin Britten: Sinfonia da Requiem
Andre Previn conducting the *St. Louis Symphony Orchestra*



Having won Academy Award nominations for each of his first three Hollywood film scores -- *Of Mice and Men* (1939), *Our Town* (1940), and *The North Star* (1943) -- Copland was much in demand for further film music. When he finally decided to return to films after completing his *Symphony No. 3* in 1947, it was once again in collaboration with producer-director Lewis Milestone, with whom Copland had worked on the first and third of the films mentioned above. Milestone, whom Copland called "a classy and intelligent director," had decided to make his first color film an adaptation of John Steinbeck's novella *The Red Pony*. Once he had read, and liked, the Steinbeck book, Copland decided to join the project, agreeing to write and record approximately an hour of music -- one of his largest musical efforts -- in ten weeks for a significant (for the time, at least) fee of \$15,000. The film and score were completed in 1948, with the film released the following year.

Steinbeck's novella tells the story of Jody Tiflin (renamed Tom in the film), a young boy who lives on a ranch near Salinas, CA, with his parents and the cowhand Billy Buck. The novella and film deal with the death of Tom's beloved pony Gabilan and the subsequent birth of Gabilan's foal, along with the relationships between the various characters and scenes of everyday life on the

ranch. Steinbeck himself wrote the film's screenplay, slightly condensing and rearranging the action of his book.

Even before the film was released, Copland had decided to extract a concert suite from the score (premiered in Houston, TX, on October 30, 1948, by the Houston Symphony conducted by Efrem Kurtz). The six-movement suite contains:

- (1) "Morning on the Ranch," which uses music from the beginning (early stirrings on the ranch) and ending (the birth of the foal) of the film;
- (2) "The Gift," depicting the moment when Gabilan is given to Tom and his excited presentation of Gabilan to his friends;
- (3) "Dream March and Circus Music," which accompanies two of Tom's daydreams -- one in which he and Billy Buck lead an army of knights in armor into battle, another in which Tom is a circus ringmaster;
- (4) "Walk to the Bunkhouse," with melodies representing Billy Buck as well as Tom's admiration for Billy and his mare;
- (5) "Grandfather's Story," in which Tom's visiting grandfather tells about how he led a wagon train across the country; and



André Previn Conducting Copland The Red Pony - Britten Sinfonia Da Requiem The St. Louis Symphony

Aaron Copland: The Red Pony **Benjamin Britten: Sinfonia da Requiem** **Andre Previn** conducting the **St. Louis Symphony Orchestra**

- The Red Pony Suite 24:29**
- Morning On The Rank 4:27**
- The Gift 4:46**
- Dream March And Circus Music 4:40**
- Walk To The Bunkhouse 2:45**
- Grandfather's Story 4:16**
- Happy Ending 3:10**
- Sinfonia Da Requiem**
- Lacrymosa / Dies Irae / Requiem Aeternam 18:34**

Recorded by Columbia Records 1964 - Producer – Thomas Z. Shepard



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