

**PROGRAM NOTES**  
**By Steven Ledbetter**

**AARON COPLAND**  
**Symphony No. 3**

*Aaron Copland was born in Brooklyn, New York, on November 14, 1900, and died in New York on December 2, 1990. He composed his Third Symphony on a commission from the Koussevitzky Foundation, working on the piece over a two year period from the summer of 1944, completing the orchestration while staying on in the Berkshires after the 1946 Tanglewood season. Serge Koussevitzky led the Boston Symphony Orchestra in the world premiere on October 18 and 19, 1946. The score calls for three flutes and piccolo; three oboes and English horn; two clarinets, E-flat clarinet, and bass clarinet; two bassoons and contrabassoon; four horns, four trumpets, three trombones and tuba; timpani, percussion (bass drum, tam-tam, cymbals, xylophone, glockenspiel, tenor drum woodblock, snare drum, triangle, slapstick, ratchet, anvil, claves, tubular bells), two harps, celesta, piano, and strings. Duration is about 43 minutes.*

Copland's Third Symphony was his first abstract orchestral score in over a decade, since the completion of the Short Symphony of 1932-33. He had, of course, written a great deal of music in that busy decade, but it had either been intended for the ballet or films (therefore designed to color and illustrate a dramatic situation), or it had been designed specifically for a limited purpose (such as the *Outdoor Overture* for a school ensemble or the *Lincoln Portrait* for a popular concert by André Kostelanetz). Thus, the Third Symphony was Copland's first essay in years in what is generally regarded as the most significant and demanding of orchestral genres. He was determined to do justice to the work, both for his own musical satisfaction and because of his close relationship at Tanglewood with Serge Koussevitzky, through whom the commission was offered. Copland could be a very fluent composer, but in this case he was determined not to rush into the piece; he began slowly and worked steadily, with some necessary pauses, for over two years.

Already familiar with Mexico from a number of visits in the Thirties, Copland chose to spend the summer of 1944 in a secluded spot in Topoztlan, far from intrusion by telephone or radio; by his return home in October, he had drafted the first movement. His retreat in 1945 was a shorter one, to Bernardsville, New Jersey, where, between March and October, he completed the first two movements. The third movement was begun in the fall of 1945 in Connecticut. Before coming to the first post-war Tanglewood season in July 1946, Copland completed drafts of the last two movements at the MacDowell Colony in Peterboro, New Hampshire. Finally, with the premiere drawing close, he stayed on in the converted barn where he lived for several summers, to finish the orchestration after the close of the Tanglewood season before the first performance in mid-October.

No musical genre arouses greater expectations from a composer's audience than the symphony, long regarded as the summit of orchestral creation. And Copland's Third is his largest purely instrumental score. Though he was surely concerned (as all creative artists must be) to please himself first of all, Copland was naturally aware that his new symphony would be appearing in a musical milieu very different from that of his earlier symphonic works.

The preceding decade had seen a proliferation of serious large-scale composition by American composers, and notable American symphonies were no longer exceptionally rare. Copland himself had helped effect this change, for by bringing talented composers to the attention of Serge Koussevitzky, he had paved the way for

performances that had in turn generated new compositions. Already the Third Symphony of Roy Harris (1939) had been hailed as the “great American symphony.” Similar acclaim greeted the Third Symphony of William Schuman (1941). Now the best-known and most popular composer of his generation was to appear with a Third Symphony. Though unlikely to worry about critical puffery regarding the “great American symphony,” Copland certainly knew that something substantial would be expected of him.

More important for the mood of the new symphony was the time of its composition—in the closing days and just after the end of the largest war known to human history. The elation generated by the successful conclusion of the war certainly affected everyone, including the composer. It was time for music of affirmation, of positive and forward-looking moods.

With any large creative project—whether in music or any other discipline—the artist's most difficult task is to find a concrete way into the work. No amount of theoretical speculation or generalizing about its nature and character can match a single precise phrase—a harmony, a melodic figure, a key to the basic language of the piece. Copland found his key in a short work he had composed not long before, intended primarily as a small contribution to the home morale in the war effort, but one that proved to have remarkable staying power. In 1942, on a commission from the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Copland had composed a short fanfare. He was one of ten composers so commissioned; their works were designed to begin each of the orchestra's concerts that season. Nine of the works are forgotten today. But Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* is one of his best-known pieces, even to the point of having been used as a television theme in the 1950s (for CBS's dramatizations of historical events, “You Are There”).

Copland chose to insert the fanfare *in toto* into the last movement of his Third Symphony, and to build much of the finale explicitly on that theme. To first-time listeners, it may come as something of a shock, suddenly hearing very familiar music in the middle of a new piece. But greater familiarity with the symphony as a whole reveals that every movement contains musical ideas made up of closely related musical material. Indeed, I once proposed the theory that Copland planned the symphony from the beginning to include the Fanfare and shaped the themes of earlier movements accordingly. My hypothesis was dealt a death-blow by musicologist Elizabeth Bergman Crist, who studied Copland's sketches for the work and showed that some of the symphony's themes had actually been sketched for an unfinished project (possibly a piano concerto, though this is not certain) in the late '30s, well before the *Fanfare for the Common Man*.

On the other hand, Copland said that he used the *Fanfare for the Common Man* in order to end the symphony in a positive mood. But he never mentioned *when* that idea first occurred to him. If it was part of his original plan to end the symphony in this way, he could certainly have chosen to use those particular older sketches precisely because they were so similar in character to the fanfare theme.

This is not to suggest that the symphony has a hidden program. It expresses its own solidly built structure in absolute musical terms. But the creative artist lives in a time and place that inevitably has some effect on the rhetoric of his work. The grand heroic gesture of 1942 can be reconsidered in a time of approaching victory (when Copland began the symphony, D-Day had already occurred) or of newly won peace (the final two movements were composed after the war had ended).

So it is worth pointing out that the *Fanfare* opens with a rising fourth, followed by a rising fifth—perhaps the fundamental gesture of the entire symphony. Though often heard in slightly different guise, the idea of a smaller leap followed by a larger leap in the same direction is nearly ubiquitous. The other figures in the *Fanfare* also appear in many places throughout the symphony. It is perfectly true that, by themselves, most of these

ideas are commonplace gestures in tonal music. But taken together, with the number of quotations or variations that seem to occur in the first three movements, it seems hard to avoid the conclusion that the sound of the fanfare provided the essential idea of the Third Symphony. The assertive, widespread figures, the straightforward harmonic basis of the theme, and the quality of lyricism that is present despite the large leaps are all characteristics of Copland.

The symphony opens with a movement in a large arch form, starting slowly and "with simple expression," then growing more agitated and building to a climax before returning to the mood and color of the opening.

The gentle mood is abruptly broken as the horns introduce the principal motto of the second movement (*Allegro molto*), which traces the outline of the principal fanfare motive, with two steps filled in. This sets off a brilliant, sardonic scherzo in which the tiny opening motive is rarely absent. A contrasting middle section, whose lyrical oboe tune in 3/4 time has suggested to some listeners the kind of cowboy song that Copland had already employed in *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo*. This "cowboy song," though, is original Copland. The scherzo returns, only to bring the "cowboy song" along with it in a vigorous full-orchestra canon between strings and winds before the final explosion.

The third movement begins gently and quietly with a new version of a theme first heard in the trombones in the first movement, now heard *pianissimo* in the first violins, the beginning of a slowly developed conversation leading to a lovely flute theme that undergoes extensive development. A slightly faster section, in which clarinet and bassoon inaugurate a duet, becomes an extended passage, light on its feet and filled with the spirit of the dance.

The movement dies away on a sustained chord of A-flat. The woodwinds gently sing out phrases from the fanfare, in a chorale-like harmonization. A sudden shift to C major brings in the brass, harps, and timpani with the beginning of the actual *Fanfare for the Common Man*, now played in its entirety. As it dies away, the oboe begins in an improvisatory mood that turns into a long, imaginative phrase of bustling sixteenth notes. A joyous dance ensues, seeming to come from an entirely different world, light and sparkling throughout. Only when the trombones and trumpets return with a new statement of the fanfare theme do we realize that the entire dance is a counterpoint to it. The mood of joy dominates as the dance continues, though wrenched into silence at one point by a violent dissonance in the full orchestra. No sooner is that past than the piccolo pluckily begins again with the figure that had introduced the joyful passage. Followed by the other woodwinds, the piccolo and flutes lead the re-established dance. Elements of the fanfare gradually reappear until a final ringing affirmation brings the symphony to a close. No doubt the time and circumstances of its composition had a lot to do with its mood and character, but the imagination and craft that Copland brought to this, his largest orchestral score, place it firmly among the ranks of the finest symphonies yet produced by an American.

## GEORGE ANTHEIL

### **McKonkey's Ferry (Washington at Trenton), A Concert Overture**

George Antheil was born in Trenton, New Jersey, on July 8, 1900, and died in New York on February 12, 1959. He composed *McKonkey's Ferry* in 1948. Duration is about 9 minutes.

George Antheil, self-styled "bad boy of music" in his autobiography (surely the funniest such work ever written by a composer), made his early reputation as a pianist who sponsored performances of the most advanced new music (including, of course, his own pieces), but he eventually abandoned the concert stage for the role of composer full-time, writing purposely "machine-like" music in reaction to what he called the "mountainous sentiment" of Strauss and the "fluid diaphanous lechery" of the impressionists.

When he played his own piano works in Paris in 1923, the subsequent riot ensured his notoriety and gained him admission to the circles of such writers as Joyce, Yeats, and Pound, as well as composer Erik Satie and artists like Picasso.

No doubt the greatest moment of his life was the first performance of the *Ballet Mécanique*, which made him notorious. Later he turned to opera; his *Transatlantic*, a wild parody of an American presidential election, may be the first American opera to have had a significant production in a foreign country (it was staged in Frankfurt in 1930). After 1936 he settled in Los Angeles, where he pursued a wide range of activities, composing for films, writing a lonely hearts column for the newspapers, acting as war analyst for the press and radio, and inventing a torpedo in collaboration with actress Hedy Lamarr. He also published a mystery novel, *Death in the Dark*, under the pseudonym of Stacy Bishop.

From the time of his Fourth Symphony (1942), he returned to writing music in a more romantic spirit than in his earlier works. His later music was softened in style from the dissonance of his early work, often employing folk tune quotations, boogie-woogie rhythms, and a generally lyrical character. In the 1940s, Antheil composed several concert overtures on American subjects, including "Tom Sawyer" and "Decatur at Algiers" (whose exploits as a naval officer in the first Barbary War motivated the phrase "to the shores of Tripoli" in the Marine Anthem). On the face of it, *McKonkey's Ferry* does not strike a familiar patriotic note to most Americans until we see the subtitle. Antheil's theme is Washington's surprise crossing of the Delaware on Christmas of 1776. The bold move, striking the Hessian soldiers hired by the British to help put down the American rebellion, was one of the first outright victories that Washington enjoyed in that war, and one that was badly needed to keep up the morale of the colonies.

Antheil's overture is energetic, thrilling in a way that could easily make us think of the score to a dramatic film of the event. There is little need to describe the music; the listener can easily imagine the hard-driving push to victory that marked the occasion.

**Program Notes**  
**ALBERT SCHWEITZER PORTRAIT**  
**by Jonathan McPhee**

The Longwood Symphony Orchestra embodies many of the characteristics we associate with Dr. Schweitzer. It is the Orchestra of Boston's Medical community. Dr. Schweitzer was a medical doctor, theologian, an accomplished organist, and the respected editor of organ works by J.S. Bach and Widor. He was a humanitarian. The Longwood Symphony utilizes its activities as a musical organization to benefit under served medical charities; in other words, music for the common good.

On this anniversary of Dr. Schweitzer's only visit to America, we wanted to pay tribute to the man and his mission. The idea was sparked by another unique individual, Thurston Moore, who suggested creating a musical work that would immortalize Dr. Schweitzer in much the same way as Aaron Copland's famous portrait of Abraham Lincoln.

I was fortunate enough to have worked with Mr. Copland on many occasions surrounding revivals of both RODEO and APPALACHIAN SPRING. During that time, we talked about many of his works, including his LINCOLN PORTRAIT. Aaron struck a wonderful balance in that piece immortalizing the man and his ideals without preaching. I followed his lead, creating the text for the ALBERT SCHWEITZER PORTRAIT from the words of Schweitzer himself as well as what others said about him. Like the LINCOLN PORTRAIT, the central concepts are the destiny of change, his origins, his mission, and his personal epiphany. Both Schweitzer and Lincoln inspired others, lead by example, and shared a universal concept for humanity as it should be. My thanks to Lachlan Farrow, Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and President of the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, for his help with this text.

Finally – what music to use? I was captivated by the songs written by Gene Scheer for the PBS series "The War" by film maker Ken Burns. After describing the project, I asked Gene to send some songs that might provide the thematic material I needed to develop the composition. Once again, his ideas were perfect. After putting together a piano score, I collaborated with Gary Fry (orchestrator for Gene's music for the Ken Burns film) who did a superb job with the finished orchestration and the organ version of the score.