



AARON COPLAND

**Rodeo
(Four Dance Episodes)**

The Red Pony (Suite)

Prairie Journal

Letter from Home

**Buffalo Philharmonic
Orchestra**

JoAnn Falletta

Aaron Copland (1900–1990)

The Red Pony • Prairie Journal • Letter from Home • Rodeo

For many years Aaron Copland held an unassailable position in the music of the United States of America. The son of Jewish emigrants from Poland and Lithuania, he was born in Brooklyn in 1900 into circumstances comfortable enough to allow him the study of music. He took lessons from Goldmark, a distinguished emigrant from Vienna, and in 1920 went to Paris, where he studied with Nadia Boulanger, the first of her American pupils. In Europe he was able to meet a number of the leading young composers of the day and to see performances by Dyagilev's Ballets Russes. At the same time he was feeling his way towards a characteristically American style of composition that should be as clearly recognisable as the national style of the late nineteenth-century Russian composers.

In 1924 Copland returned to America, where his compositions began to attract interest. At the same time he continued to maintain contact with musical trends in Europe and with expatriate American composers. He organized important concerts of contemporary American music, which he did his utmost to publicise through his writing and lecturing, the second activity intermittently at Harvard. During the course of an exceptionally active career he exercised a strong influence over a younger generation of composers, without in any way fostering an exclusive nationalism. His achievements won him awards of all kinds, at home and abroad, from the Pulitzer Prize in 1945 to the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1970. Copland's final years were shadowed by increasing debility. He died in 1990.

The suite *The Red Pony* was taken by the composer from his score for the 1948 film of John Steinbeck's novel of that name. The film, starring Robert Mitchum and Myrna Loy, centres on the boy, Tom, his grandfather and his parents, and their life on a ranch in California. The suite, described by Copland as a suite

for children, consists of six scenes, with music that the composer described as 'folklike', although the themes are all original. There was a suggestion that the music should be accompanied by a spoken narrative, to be delivered by Steinbeck, but the writer demurred at the idea of a version for children.

K.A.

Prairie Journal was commissioned in 1936 by the Columbia Broadcasting System for a broadcast performance by its radio orchestra. It was one of several works in the network's first American Composer Commission series, with pieces commissioned from Louis Gruenberg, Howard Hanson, Roy Harris, Walter Piston and William Grant Still. Copland was invited to make a contribution, it seems, when George Gershwin refused the commission. The original published title of Copland's piece was *Music for Radio*. Composed in 1937, the first performance took place in July of that year over the Columbia network under the direction of Howard Barlow. At that time listeners were invited to submit possible sub-titles. The winning suggestion, *Saga of the Prairie* by Miss Ruth Leonhardt of Grosse Pointe, Michigan, prompted the composer to retile the work. The composition is dedicated to Davidson Taylor, the then head of the Music Division of the Columbia Broadcasting System. As for the music, *Prairie Journal* offers a vivid, sonic evocation that resonates with Copland's out-doorsy cachet. Straightaway from the downbeat, we jostle, hustle and bustle on a western range, but in turns, twilight seems to reflect across the musical canvas, though with an excitement that echoes the brilliant spirit of the locale, as the mood-set swings to and fro in quaint cycles to the serene close.

A work of gentle nostalgia, *Letter from Home* beautifully conjures the plaintive feelings one would likely experience perhaps at a far-away army camp,

especially during a time of war. The work was completed in 1944, during the peak of World War II, commissioned for a radio broadcast during the Philco Radio Hour on the new ABC network in New York. The broadcast première in October 1944 was conducted by Paul Whiteman, the most celebrated 'Pops' and dance orchestra conductor of the era. Marked *Moderato*, with simple warmth the score also calls for phrases to be '*Broadly sung*.' About the piece Copland noted: "It's very sentimental, but not meant to be taken too literally – I meant only to convey the emotion that might naturally be awakened in the recipient by reading a letter from home."

Copland enjoyed enormous success with his pair of 'cowboy ballets', *Billy the Kid* of 1938, and *Rodeo*, commissioned by Agnes de Mille and the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in 1942. Not only did de Mille write the story-line for *Rodeo*, she also created the choreography and danced in the starring rôle as the Cowgirl, with Frederic Franklin as the Champion Roper and Kasimir Kokitch as the Head Wrangler. About the ballet, George

Balanchine and Francis Mason write: *Rodeo* (subtitled *The Courting at Burnt Ranch*) is a love story of the American Southwest. It deals with a perennial problem: how an American girl, with the odds seemingly against her, sets out to get herself a man. The girl in this case is a cowgirl, a tomboy whose desperate effort to become a ranch cowhand creates a problem for the cowboys and makes her the laughing-stock of the other women-folk. Happily, by the final curtain it all turns out well, as the love triangle ends when the Head Wrangler goes off into the sunset with a rancher's daughter and the Cowgirl and her Champion Roper decide to 'get hitched'. Shortly after the ballet's première, Copland extracted the concert suite, excluding less than five minutes from the original score. Along the way, the composer has a great deal of musical fun, quoting a variety of American folk-tunes, like *Sis Joe*, *Old Paint*, and *Bonyparte* and *McLeod's Reel* in the famous *Hoe Down*, which gives the orchestra a sassy workout.

Edward Yadzinski

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra

The world-renowned Buffalo Philharmonic was founded in 1935 and makes its home in Kleinhaus Music Hall, a National Historic Site with an international reputation as one of the greatest concert halls in the United States. Through the decades the orchestra has grown in stature under a number of distinguished conductors, including William Steinberg, Joseph Krips, Lukas Foss, Michael Tilson Thomas, Maximiano Valdez, Semyon Bychkov and Julius Rudel. As Buffalo's cultural ambassador, the Philharmonic has performed across the United States and Canada, including concerts at Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, Boston's Symphony Hall, San Francisco's Davies Hall, Montreal's *Place des Arts*, with 22 appearances in Carnegie Hall. The orchestra has also appeared in Milan, Geneva, Zurich and Vienna, in the course of concert tours in Europe.

JoAnn Falletta

Buffalo Philharmonic Music Director JoAnn Falletta has been hailed by the *Los Angeles Times* as "one of the brightest stars of symphonic music in America," and by *The New York Times* as "one of the finest conductors of her generation." Recipient of the Seaver/National Endowment for the Arts Conductors Award, winner of the Stokowski Competition, and Toscanini, Ditson and Bruno Walter conducting awards, she has also received eight consecutive awards from the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP). A champion of American music, she has presented nearly three hundred works by American composers including over seventy world premières. In addition to her post as Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic, JoAnn Falletta is Music Director of the Virginia Symphony and Artistic Advisor to the Honolulu Symphony. In great demand as a guest conductor, she has been invited to conduct many of the world's great symphony orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Houston Symphony, the National Symphony, the St Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, as well as orchestras throughout Europe, in South America, South Africa and the Far East. Her growing discography, which includes some forty titles, consists of recordings with the London Symphony, the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Virginia Symphony, the English Chamber Orchestra, the New Zealand Symphony, the Long Beach Symphony, the Czech National Symphony and the Women's Philharmonic. For Naxos she has recorded works by Kenneth Fuchs, Charles Griffes and Frederick Converse, part of a continuing programme of recordings of American music.



AMERICAN CLASSICS

This Copland collection is devoted specifically to works inspired by the spacious landscape of the American prairie. The Suite for the 1948 film of John Steinbeck's novel *The Red Pony*, depicts life on a ranch in California. The composer described the music as 'folkish', although the themes are all original. The second of Copland's 'cowboy ballets', *Rodeo*, about the desperate attempts of a cowgirl to become a ranch cowhand, quotes a variety of American folk-tunes, and includes the irrepressible *Hoe Down*. *Prairie Journal* offers a vivid sonic evocation of life on a western range, while *Letter from Home*, completed during the peak of World War II, beautifully conjures the feelings of nostalgia one might experience at a far-away army camp.

This recording was made possible by the kind generosity of the Wilson and Eleanor Greatbatch family



Aaron COPLAND

(1900-1990)

Playing
Time:
59:55

- | | | |
|-----------|---|--------------|
| 1 | Prairie Journal (1937) | 10:55 |
| | Rodeo (Four Dance Episodes) (1942) | 18:54 |
| 2 | Buckaroo Holiday | 7:20 |
| 3 | Corral Nocturne | 3:41 |
| 4 | Saturday Night Waltz | 4:26 |
| 5 | Hoe Down | 3:26 |
| 6 | Letter from Home (1944) | 6:23 |
| | The Red Pony – Film Music (Suite) (1948) | 23:42 |
| 7 | I Morning on the Ranch | 4:27 |
| 8 | II The Gift | 4:35 |
| 9 | III a: Dream March | 2:29 |
| 10 | III b: Circus Music | 1:48 |
| 11 | IV Walk to the Bunkhouse | 2:58 |
| 12 | V Grandfather's Story | 4:15 |
| 13 | VI Happy Ending | 3:11 |

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra
JoAnn Falletta

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Booklet Notes: Edward Yadzinski
(with introduction by Keith Anderson)
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(Photo: KC Kratt) • American flag, folk artist, 1880s.

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