



COPLAND

Dance Symphony

Symphony No. 1 • Short Symphony

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra • Marin Alsop



Aaron Copland (1900–1990)

Dance Symphony • First Symphony • Short Symphony

The *Third Symphony* of 1946 [Naxos 8.559106] may be the only such piece by Aaron Copland that conforms to traditional notions of what a ‘symphony’ is, but numerous other of his orchestral works might reasonably be termed ‘symphonic’, not least two groups of compositions that emerged relatively early and late in his career. Three works from that earlier group are included on the present disc.

Although not the first of his orchestral works to be performed, the *Dance Symphony* was chronologically the earliest to be composed. Copland derived it from his ‘vampire’ ballet *Grohg*, inspired by the German expressionist film *Nosferatu*, that he worked on during 1922–25. With little chance of its being staged (the ballet was not seen as such until after Copland’s death), the composer had already adapted its opening section, *Cortège macabre*, for performance in May 1925 and proceeded to arrange three further sections for the RCA Victor Company Prize in 1929. The *Dance Symphony*, the title no doubt reflecting its balletic origins, had its première in Philadelphia on 15th April 1931 with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Leopold Stokowski.

The first movement, *Dance of the Adolescent*, opens with an ominous slow introduction for brass – then woodwind – and strings, punctuated by sardonic gestures on xylophone. Muted trombone intones a motif that is to be of signal importance as the work progresses, and its first appearance sets the main portion of the movement in motion. A perky theme for clarinet and pizzicato strings is followed by a more soulful melody first heard on oboe, variously accompanied by violas, harp and glockenspiel, before reaching a brief climax on strings. Both themes are freely combined on the way to a forceful climax, after which lower strings usher in a varied return of the opening. The second movement, *Dance of the Girl Who Moves as if in a Dream*, begins with a languorous theme for woodwind and strings, followed by atmospheric music for divided strings and harp that continues on woodwind before expanding into a fervent orchestral

climax, brusquely cut off to reveal the solo viola in musing reverie. The finale, *Dance of Mockery* begins with a jaunty theme for woodwind and percussion, followed by a rhythmically incisive theme for strings and brass. These are alternated with a deftly ironic idea featuring *glissando* strings, before the trombone motif from near the work’s beginning sets off a vibrant amalgamation of all the material, returning to call time on proceedings with a decisive thud.

The *Symphony No. 1* also derives from an earlier work, the *Symphony for Organ and Orchestra* Copland wrote during 1923. First performed in New York on 11th January 1925, with his teacher Nadia Boulanger as soloist and the New York Symphony Orchestra conducted by Walter Damrosch, it scored a controversial success. Copland, perhaps mindful that the forces required might limit performance, re-orchestrated the work in 1928, reallocating the organ part to woodwind in quieter and more lyrical passages, and to additional brass in those that are more densely scored. In terms of content the piece remained essentially the same. It was given its première by Ernest Ansermet and the Berlin Symphony Orchestra during December 1931 though, ironically, it is the original version with organ that has always enjoyed more frequent hearing.

The *Prelude* begins a melancholic theme for flute, joined by strings and then responded to by woodwind and harp, before violas and solo woodwind have their own variant. The central section is introduced by *sul ponticello* violins and features flute along with lower strings in a more animated dialogue, while a motif heard discreetly on trumpet is to play a much more decisive rôle in the later movements. Strings now state the most extended version of the theme, before a return to the flute motif from the beginning quietly rounds off the movement. The *Scherzo* starts with animated woodwind rhythms over vamping strings, to which the other woodwind respond with a ‘French’ ditty. Gathering energy, the music erupts to uninhibited effect, but

fanfaring brass introduce a central section where woodwind methodically pursue a subdued but angular theme. Strings add a cool, Ravelian aura, before woodwind intone the basic rhythm that bursts in on brass and strings. The 'French' motif reappears, before the final climax makes ever more inventive use of the main rhythm on the way to a resounding close. The *Finale* opens with an austere theme for strings that steadily grows in volume and intensity until capped by brass and later the trumpet motif from the first movement (its ejaculatory two-note tail will pervade the movement's closing stages). Strings and horns now lead off with a determined variant of the main theme, aggressively answered by brass, before continuing on woodwind over pizzicato strings. Brass enter as this again builds to a weighty climax over pounding timpani, and capped by the trumpet motif. Solo violin now initiates a more inward passage in dialogue with the woodwind, which continues until solo woodwind then strings seize on a rhythmically more incisive motif. This takes hold of the orchestra section by section, until excited brass exchanges bring about the main climax which is outwardly similar to the preceding one but with all of the movement's various motifs now brought into play. The final pages reiterate the all-pervasive rhythm in powerfully unequivocal terms.

What is designated as Copland's 'Second Symphony' is better known as his *Short Symphony*. The work was finished in 1933 and first heard in Mexico City on 23rd November 1934 with the Mexico Symphony Orchestra and Carlos Chávez. Although scored for smaller forces

than either of the previous works, its rhythmic difficulties meant that it remained unheard in the United States until 1944. Copland had made a *Sextet* transcription in 1937 and this long remained the more familiar version, yet in terms of its motivic and textural ingenuity, the original surely ranks among his most successful works. The three movements, played with minimal pause, outline a Classical fast-slow-fast sequence.

The first movement opens with a lively dialogue between woodwind, piano and upper strings, frequently punctuated by heavier chordal gestures on lower strings and brass. These two ideas are not so much developed as elaborated, underlying momentum being provided by the constant polyrhythmic interplay. A brief culmination on the chordal idea presently makes way for the second movement, in which strings and woodwind unfold a gently elegiac polyphony, though not without a certain harmonic astringency, and which is itself contrasted with a pastoral-like music for solo woodwind and strings. This builds gradually to a finely-wrought yet understated climax, which then subsides with fleeting references to the movement's beginning. The finale revisits the intricate interplay from the first movement, though now with a demonstrably greater decisiveness and sense of humour. An intensive *fugato*, which resourcefully migrates from strings to brass, provides contrast before the return of the initial music and, after a pensive allusion to the second movement, a trenchant and no-nonsense coda.

Richard Whitehouse



Marin Alsop

Marin Alsop has been Music Director of the Baltimore Symphony since 2007 and was Principal Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra from 2002 to 2008 (now Conductor Emeritus). She won the Royal Philharmonic Society Conductor of the Year award in 2002 and Radio 3 Listeners' Award in 2006, and was named *The Gramophone* magazine's Artist of the Year in 2003. She regularly conducts the Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, London Symphony and London Philharmonic orchestras. Recent guest engagements in Europe include the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris and La Scala Milan. Marin Alsop studied at Yale and at the Juilliard School and won the Koussevitzky Conducting Prize at Tanglewood, where she studied with Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa. Her recordings for Naxos include Brahms's *Symphonies* and *Overtures* with the London Philharmonic, the complete orchestral works of Samuel Barber with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and many acclaimed recordings with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, notably *Carmina Burana* (Naxos 8.570033) and works by Adams (Naxos 8.559031), notably *Carmina Burana* (Naxos 8.557433). The first disc of her Dvořák cycle, *Symphony No. 9* and the *Symphonic Variations*, with the Baltimore Symphony has received widespread critical acclaim (Naxos 8.570714).

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Founded in 1893, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra has worked with many famous composers, conductors and musicians including Elgar, Sibelius, Holst, Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams and Thomas Beecham; and more recently with Michael Tippett, John Tavener and Peter Maxwell Davies. Principal conductors since the founder Sir Dan Godfrey have included Charles Groves, Constantin Silvestri, Andrew Litton and Marin Alsop, followed in 2009 by the dynamic young Ukrainian, Kirill Karabits. The BSO has toured worldwide, performing at Carnegie Hall, New York, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Vienna Musikverein, and Berlin Philharmonie, as well as regular British appearances at the Royal Festival Hall and Royal Albert Hall in London, the Symphony Hall in Birmingham and the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester. The BSO is known internationally through over three hundred recordings, and continues to release numerous CDs each year with Naxos. Recent critically acclaimed recordings have included CDs of Bernstein, Bartók, Sibelius, Glass, Adams and Elgar, and three discs featuring arrangements of Mussorgsky, Bach and Wagner by Stokowski were nominated for GRAMMY awards in 2004, 2005 and 2006.



Playing
Time:
58:44

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COMPACT
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NAXOS

Aaron
COPLAND
(1900–1990)

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|----------|---|--------------|
| | Symphony No. 1 | 25:26 |
| 1 | I. Prelude: Andante | 6:51 |
| 2 | II. Scherzo: Molto allegro | 8:01 |
| 3 | III. Finale: Lento | 10:27 |
| | Short Symphony (No. 2) | 15:35 |
| 4 | I. crotchet = 144 | 4:25 |
| 5 | II. minim = 44 | 5:08 |
| 6 | III. crotchet = 144 | 6:02 |
| | Dance Symphony | 17:24 |
| 7 | I. Dance of the Adolescent:
Lento/Molto allegro | 6:56 |
| 8 | II. Dance of the Girl Who Moves as if
in a Dream: Andante moderato | 5:12 |
| 9 | III. Dance of Mockery: Allegro vivo | 5:16 |

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
Marin Alsop

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American flag, folk artist, 1880s



AMERICAN CLASSICS

This second Naxos disc of Copland Symphonies (*No. 3* is available on 8.559106) opens with *Symphony No. 1*, an arrangement of the 1924 *Symphony for Organ and Orchestra*. Copland was especially fond of his *Short Symphony (Symphony No. 2)* on account of its complex, irregular rhythms and clear textures. The so-called *Dance Symphony*, described by the composer as ‘a large *symphonic work*’ (hence the *Symphony* title), is derived from his early vampire ballet *Grohg*, inspired by the 1921 German expressionist film *Nosferatu*. Copland wrote: ‘If the first movement is thin, dainty and pointed, the second movement is songful and sustained. The third movement is characterized by violence and syncopation.’

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