

PHCD 154

# AARON COPLAND

*Works for Piano Duo*

MUSIC FOR THE THEATER • EL SALON MEXICO • BILLY THE KID • RODEO

Arianna Goldina and Rémy Loubbrozo, pianos



Copland Music for Piano Duo Goldina and Loubbrozo PHCD 154



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*Works for Piano Duo*

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1. Dance of the Adolescent (1924) (2 pianos) (5:37)
- Music for the Theater (1925)  
(world premiere recording of the composer's  
version for one piano, four hands)
2. I-Prologue (5:55)
3. II-Dance (3:05)
4. III-Interlude (6:07)
5. IV-Burlesque (3:04)
6. V-Epilogue (3:43)
7. El Salon Mexico (1937)  
(arranged for 2 pianos by Leonard Bernstein) (10:44)
- Billy the Kid (1938) (2 pianos)
8. I-The Open Prairie (3:33)
9. II-In A Frontier Town (4:42)
  - a) Cowboys with Lassos
  - b) Mexican Dance and Finale
10. III-Billy and his Sweetheart (4:18)
11. IV-Celebration after Billy's Capture (2:23)
12. V-Billy's Demise (1:40)
13. VI-The Open Prairie Again (1:40)
- Two Dance Episodes from Rodeo (1942)  
(arranged for 2 pianos by Gold and Fizdale)
14. I-Saturday Night Waltz (4:06)
15. II-Hoe Down (2:54)
16. Danzon Cubano (1942) (5:52)
17. Danza de Jalisco (9:59) (3:42)

Total timing 73:46

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FILE UNDER CLASSICAL/COPLAND



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Copland Music for Piano Duo Goldina and Loubbrozo PHCD 154



Throughout his long and distinguished career Aaron Copland (1900-1990) held a leading position in American classical music. The diversity of his output is extraordinary: it ranges from early avant-garde works to the folkloric and immediately accessible compositions, to experiments with atonality and serialism. Yet, regardless of the stylistic approach, Copland's music, always characterized by clearly shaped structures and easily recognizable and economical thematic material, consistently upholds his highly-set musical ideals.

The piano was central to Copland's creative work. He always composed at the keyboard and its sonorities and gestures are clearly discernable in his music. Not only was the piano featured in numerous larger scores but many of his orchestral works were, essentially, original pianistic conceptions written down first for two pianos and orchestrated only later. Not surprisingly, the two-piano versions received several public performances, given by the pianist John Kirkpatrick and Copland himself. Another duo piano partner was the composer's friend and colleague Leonard Bernstein, who not only collaborated with Copland in performance but also made a two-piano arrangement of *El Salon Mexico*, heard on this CD.

#### **Dance of the Adolescent**

*Dance of the Adolescent* is a youthful work, written during Copland's years of studies in Paris (1921-24). Originally it was a part of his first large-scale work, the one-act ballet *Grogh* that was inspired by the German Expressionist horror movie "Nosferatu" and tells a story of a magician-vampire, who revives the dead and makes them dance. Not entirely satisfied with the result, Copland used excerpts from the ballet to form the *Dance Symphony* (1929), the opening movement of which is the "Dance of the Adolescent." Later still, the composer transcribed the "Dance" for two pianos. The work opens with a brief, slow introduction, the jarring, polytonal harmonies of which evoke the macabre world of Grogh. The dance itself is built upon two main ideas: one -propulsive and vigorous, the other -more sensuous and, according to Copland, "more French in its harmonies." Both themes appear alternately and combined, creating a rhythmically complex, intense, and colorful musical fabric. The composition concludes with a brief restatement of the opening material.

#### **Music for the Theater**

During the 1920's, American composers searching, to quote Copland, for "a music that would speak of universal things in a vernacular of American speech rhythms," began turning to jazz as a stylistic source of inspiration. Copland responded to this quest with several works: *Music for the Theater*, *Piano Concerto* (1926), and *Four Piano Blues* (1926-1948).

*Music for the Theater* was commissioned by the League of Composers and composed in 1925. It is a five-movement suite that reflects Copland's fascination with jazz rhythms. Although written with no specific play in mind, the music suggests a theatrical atmosphere, hence, the title. Opening with a brassy fanfare, the "Prologue" contrasts lyrical outer episodes with a fast and jazzy middle section. While the short and snappy "Dance" makes use of the then popular tune "East Side, West Side," the gently flowing "Interlude" is built upon several slightly altered reiterations of the thematic material. The "Burlesque," grotesque and dissonant, is followed by the slow and quiet "Epilogue" that reprises the musical material from the first and third movements of the work.

The piano duet version of *Music for the Theater* was rediscovered by the historian and co-author of Copland's autobiography, Vivian Peris. It was first performed in concert at the Yale University on November 8, 2000. The recording of the one piano four-hand version of the work, heard on this disc, is a world premiere.

#### **El Salon Mexico**

*El Salon Mexico*, written in 1936, marks a turning point in Copland's musical style, brought about by a growing need to express himself in a more accessible, simple, and widely appealing idiom. Stimulated by impressions from his trip to Mexico in 1932, notably by a visit to a night club named "El Salon Mexico," Copland conceived a piece that for the first time made use of folk song material. Always an eloquent commentator, he gave the following account of writing this composition:

I realized that it would be foolish for me to attempt to translate some of the more profound sides of Mexico into musical sounds...for that, one really had to know a country well. But my

thoughts kept returning to that dance hall. It wasn't so much the music or the dances that attracted me as the spirit of the place. In some inexplicable way, while milling about in those crowded halls, I had felt a live contact with the Mexican "people"... I remember quite well that it was at such a moment I conceived the idea of composing a piece about Mexico and naming it *El Salon Mexico*.

For Copland "...quotation of folk tunes is a sure way for a composer to translate the flavor of a foreign people into musical terms." Consequently, he incorporated several Mexican folk songs into the intricate musical fabric of *El Salon Mexico*. Copland did not, however, merely quote these folk songs; he used them as a point of departure introducing modifications, fragmentations, and extensions of the tunes. The final climax of the piece features all folk songs in their original keys and rhythms, presented simultaneously. *El Salon Mexico* received its world premiere in Mexico City on August 27, 1937. It was the first composition that brought Copland wide public acclaim. In 1939, Copland's publisher Boosey and Hawkes commissioned Leonard Bernstein to make a two-piano transcription of the work

#### **Billy the Kid**

In 1938, Lincoln Kirstein, the director of Ballet Caravan, commissioned Copland to write a ballet, based on a scenario by the choreographer Eugene Loring about the events in the life of the notorious cowboy-turned-bandit William Bonney, known as Billy the Kid. To render the thoroughly American theme of the first "western" ballet, the composer decided to use several authentic cowboy songs such as "Great Grand-Dad," "Get Along Little Dogies," "The Old Chisholm Trail," "Goodbye, Old Paint," "The Dying Cowboy," and others. The quotations, however, were never literal; Copland used the altered tunes to create lean, sophisticated, and rhythmically inventive musical textures.

The action of the ballet begins and ends on the open prairie. The sparse and static music of the introductory prelude "The Open Prairie" evokes the loneliness and vastness of the plains. It is followed by the "In a Frontier Town," a collage of fragmented cowboy tunes that captures the kaleidoscopic effect of a crowd scene. Copland provided the scenario of the ballet in the score and described this scene as follows:

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Cowboys saunter into town, some on horseback, others on foot with lassoes; some Mexican women do a *Jarabe*, which is interrupted by a fight between two drunks. Attracted by the gathering crowd, Billy is seen for the first time as a boy of twelve with his mother. The brawl turns ugly, guns are drawn, and in some unaccountable way, Billy's mother is killed. Without an instant's hesitation, in cold fury, Billy draws a knife from a cowhand's sheath and stabs his mother's slayers. His short but famous career had begun.

The third movement "Billy and His Sweetheart" is a tender, somewhat awkward-sounding waltz. While its halting rhythm is generated by syncopations and an occasional intrusion of a double meter, its melodic material is made expressive by lengthening of the stressed notes. This movement is not included in the orchestral suite that Copland arranged from the ballet score in 1939. The "Celebration after Billy's Capture," where the tonal disagreement between the gaudy melodic material and its harmonic bass helps to achieve a vivid depiction of a drunken celebration, is followed by "Billy's Demise" and "The Open Prairie Again," which recapitulates the stark musical material of the introduction.

*Billy the Kid* was first performed by Ballet Caravan on October 6, 1938 in Chicago to a two-piano accompaniment, played by Arthur Gold and Walter Hendl. The six movements, heard on this CD were extracted by Copland from this early two-piano version of the complete ballet and published separately.

#### **Two Dance Episodes from Rodeo**

*Rodeo*, Copland's second "cowboy" ballet, was composed in 1942 for the dancer and choreographer Agnes de Mille and the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. According to De Mille, the plot of the ballet revisits the story of the "Taming of the Shrew- cowboy style." The action takes place on a ranch, where a cowgirl, infatuated with a head wrangler, tries unsuccessfully to impress him by dressing and acting like a man. Having realized her mistake, the cowgirl finally dresses up for the Saturday night dance. Amazed at her transformation into a pretty girl, the cowboys compete for her attention and she finds her happiness at long last. The ballet, premiered at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1942, was a remarkable success. Its popularity prompted Copland to extract four dances from the score and publish them separately as an orchestral suite under the title *Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo* in 1943. Although the orchestral score contains a significant piano part and, therefore, lends itself easily to a keyboard transcription, only two

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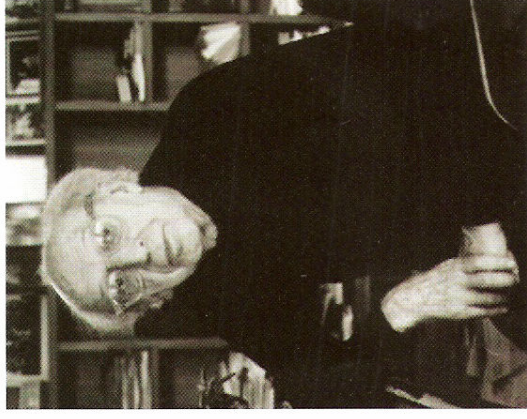
movements - "Hoe-down" and "Saturday Night Waltz" - were arranged for two pianos by the well-known duo-pianists Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale. "Saturday Night Waltz" opens with a musical image of country fiddlers tuning up, followed by fragments of "Old Paint." The slow and wistful tune in 3/4 meter is enlivened by means of cross-rhythms, resulting from the employment of a different rhythmic structure in the accompaniment. "Hoe-down" is the most popular dance of the ballet. Copland used two square dance tunes - "Bonyparte" and "McLeod's Reel" - to capture the spirit of this lively and dynamic country dance, performed to the accompaniment of country fiddlers.

#### **Danzon Cubano**

*Danzon Cubano* for two pianos was composed in 1942 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the League of Composers. Indebted in spirit to a sectional Cuban dance, *Danzon* is typified by a relentless syncopated beat and a pronounced polyrhythmic texture. Four Cuban dances, treated freely to underline the complex rhythmic organization of the work, provide melodic material for two distinctly articulated and contrasting sections of the composition. Copland described *Danzon Cubano* as "a genuine tourist souvenir." He was joined by Leonard Bernstein in the first performance of the piece, given on December 9, 1942.

#### **Danza de Jalisco**

Latin American music was a source of interest and inspiration to Copland ever since his first visit to Mexico in 1932. In 1958 Copland revisited Mexican folk materials in his *Two Mexican Pieces*: "Paisaje Mexicano" and "Danza de Jalisco," written for the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy. "Danza de Jalisco" (Jalisco is a state in Mexico) is bright and brassy, with changing rhythms and melodic material evocative of Mexican folk tunes. Assertive grace notes and syncopations characterize the slightly halting middle section that briefly interrupts the buoyant mood of the dance. To emphasize the rhythmic aspect of the composition, unusual sound effects, such as hand-clapping, were introduced in the score. In 1968 Aaron Copland transcribed "Danza" for two pianos. In 1971 Copland added another piece "Estrabillo," to the "Two Mexican Pieces," and renamed the newly formed composition *Three Latin-American Sketches*.



AARON COPLAND

If any one musician today can be singled out as the "dean of American music," it is Aaron Copland. Without his scores, without his generous encouragement of an entire generation of young American composers, without his unstinting labors to create and maintain an audience for music in 20th-century America, we might never have enjoyed the lively and vital musical scene we know today. Copland, born in Brooklyn in 1900, became a classic in his time. He first studied with Rubin Goldmark and then, in 1921, with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. Returning in 1924, he sought a style "that could speak of universal things in a vernacular of American speech rhythms." Copland seemed to know what to remove from the music of the European tradition, simplifying the chords and opening the melodic language, in order to make a fresh idiom. With his ballet and theater scores - including Appalachian Spring, Billy the Kid, and Rodeo - and his contributions to the orchestral and recital repertory - including notably El Salon Mexico, Lincoln Portrait, Orchestral Variations, Quiet City, and Emblems, the Sonata for Piano, his symphonies, and the Piano Variations - he created, encouraged, and enriched the repertory. He was a great teacher, whether to the classes of composers at the Tanglewood Festival or to broad spectrum audiences of laymen. In his later years, he was often called upon to conduct and narrate his own works. It can honestly be said that Copland set America's soul to music.

Arianna Goldina



ARIANNA GOLDINA and RÉMY LOUMBROZO

The exceptional musicianship of the American-French duo-pianists Arianna Goldina and Rémy Loumbrozo has brought them consistent praise from critics and audiences alike, and international recognition as one of today's leading duo-piano teams. Their rare beauty of ensemble playing has been characterized as a 'four-hand symphony'. The husband and wife team is widely known to North American and European audiences, where they regularly perform in recitals, international music festivals, and as soloists with orchestras. They have been heard in numerous music centers of the United States, Canada, England, France, Italy, Germany, the Baltic States, Russia, and Scandinavia, and have appeared, among others, with The Detroit Symphony, The Pacific Symphony, The New World Symphony, The Symphony of the Americas, The Philharmonic Orchestra of Florida, and The Latvian National Symphony Orchestra. They were featured on the ABC TV network in the United States and on French and Russian National TV.

Goldina and Loumbrozo captured public attention after winning First Prize at two major international duo-piano competitions: the 7th Valentino Bucchi Competition of 20th Century Music in Rome, Italy, and the 2nd Murray Dranoff Two-Piano Competition in Miami. The duo's debut recording was an all-Liszt program on the *Pianissime* label. This was followed by two releases on the *Phoenix USA* label: an all-French album with music by Duruflé, Casadesus and Ravel (PHCD135) and, in 1998, a highly acclaimed CD with three world premiere recordings by Oscar-winning composer John Corigliano and Pulitzer-Prize winner Ned Rorem (PHCD138).

Born far apart, in Latvia and France, Arianna Goldina and Rémy Loumbrozo met at The Juilliard School of Music in New York City, from which they received their Master of Music degrees. Ms. Goldina holds a Ph.D. in piano performance from New York University and is an artist-lecturer at the Moravian College. In 1997, Mr. Loumbrozo was named Chevalier in the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture. He is on the music faculty of The Lycée Français de New York.