



KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY
Classical Series

Sunday, May 23, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts
Jason Seber, conductor, *David T. Beals III* Chair

AARON COPLAND

Three Latin-American Sketches

- I. Estribillo
- II. Paisaje Mexicano
- III. Danza de Jalisco

ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD

Symphonic Serenade in B-flat Major, op. 39

- I. Allegro moderato semplice
- II. Intermezzo
- III. Lento religioso
- IV. Finale: Allegro con fuoco

The 2020/21 Season is generously sponsored by

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Orchestra Roster

MICHAEL STERN, *Music Director*

JASON SEBER, *David T. Beals III Associate Conductor*

FIRST VIOLINS

Sunho Kim, *Acting Concertmaster*

Miller Nichols Chair

Stirling Trent,

Acting Associate Concertmaster

Chiafei Lin,

Acting Assistant Concertmaster

Gregory Sandomirsky ‡,

Associate Concertmaster Emeritus

Anne-Marie Brown

Betty Chen

Anthony DeMarco

Susan Goldenberg*

Tomoko Iguchi

Dorris Dai Janssen

Vladimir Rykov

Alex Shum*

SECOND VIOLINS

Tamamo Someya Gibbs, *Principal*

Kristin Velicer, *Acting Associate Principal*

Minhye Helena Choi,

Acting Assistant Principal

Nancy Beckmann

Mary Garcia Grant

Kevin Hao ‡

Kazato Inouye

Rena Ishii

Stephanie Larsen

Francesca Manheim

VIOLAS

Matthew Sinno, *Acting Principal*

Jessica Nance, *Acting Associate Principal*

Duke Lee, *Acting Assistant Principal*

Kent Brauninger

Sean Brumble

Marvin Gruenbaum

Jenifer Houck

Jesse Yukimura

CELLOS

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Robert A. Kipp Chair

Susie Yang, *Associate Principal*

Richard Hill Chair

Alexander East, *Assistant Principal*

Maria Crosby

John Eadie

Lawrence Figg

Rung Lee*

Meredith McCook

Allen Probus

DOUBLE BASSES

Jeffrey Kail, *Principal*

Evan Halloin, *Associate Principal*

Brandon Mason ‡

Caleb Quillen

Richard Ryan

Nash Tomey

FLUTES

Michael Gordon, *Principal*

Marylou and John Dodds Turner Chair

Shannon Finney, *Associate Principal*

Kayla Burggraf

PICCOLO

Kayla Burggraf

OBOES

Kristina Fulton, *Principal*

Shirley Bush Helzberg Chair

Alison Chung, *Associate Principal*

CLARINETS

Raymond Santos, *Principal*

Bill and Peggy Lyons Chair

Silvio Guitian, *Associate Principal*

John Klinghammer

E-FLAT CLARINET

Silvio Guitian

BASS CLARINET

John Klinghammer

BASSOONS

Ann Bilderback, *Principal*

Barton P. and Mary D. Cohen Chair

Thomas DeWitt, *Associate Principal*

Maxwell Pipinich

CONTRABASSOON

Thomas DeWitt

HORNS

Alberto Suarez, *Principal*

Landon and Sarah Rowland Chair

David Sullivan, *Associate Principal*

Elizabeth Gray

David Gamble

Stephen Multer,

Associate Principal Emeritus

TRUMPETS

Julian Kaplan, *Principal*

James B. and Annabel Nutter Chair

Steven Franklin, *Associate Principal*

Brian Rood ‡

TROMBONES

Roger Oyster, *Principal*

Porter Wyatt Henderson,

Associate Principal

Adam Rainey

BASS TROMBONE

Adam Rainey

TUBA

Joe LeFevre, *Principal*

Frank Byrne Chair

TIMPANI

Timothy Jepson, *Principal*

Michael and Susan Newburger Chair

PERCUSSION

Josh Jones^, *Principal*

David Yoon, *Associate Principal*

HARP

Katherine Siochi, *Principal*

LIBRARIANS

Elena Lence Talley, *Principal*

Fabrice Curtis

* Non-Rotating Musician

^ New Member

‡ On Leave of Absence

AARON COPLAND***Three Latin-American Sketches (1959/1972)*****11 minutes***Flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, xylophone, conga drum, cymbals, triangle, claves, woodblock, ratchet, whip, slapstick, piano, strings*

Aaron Copland's delightful *Three Latin-American Sketches* resulted from two different requests separated by a dozen years. In 1958, the composer Gian Carlo Menotti founded the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy. For the 1959 festival, he commissioned new works from Samuel Barber, Lukas Foss and Aaron Copland. Copland's contribution, composed while he was in Acapulco, Mexico, was *Two Mexican Dances*, well in keeping with Menotti's desire to juxtapose American and European culture at the festival. "Paisaje Mexicano" (Mexican Landscape) was not performed but "Danza de Jalisco" (Dance of Jalisco, a region in Mexico) was premiered in 1959. Both dances were finally heard together at a private concert in Washington, D.C. in 1965 with Copland conducting. However, he chose not to release the dances at that time.

In 1971, conductor Andre Kostelanetz approached Copland about a piece intended for the New York Philharmonic's popular Promenades concert series. Thirty years prior, Kostelanetz had commissioned *Lincoln Portrait* but by this point, Copland's inspiration was running dry. "It was," he said, "exactly as if someone had simply turned off a faucet." He turned to Venezuelan popular music and found the kernel of what became "Estrillo," the first of the *Sketches*. Casting about for suitable material, Copland decided that *Two Mexican Dances* complemented "Estrillo" and so he put the works together and changed the name to *Three Latin-American Sketches*. Kostelanetz and the New York Philharmonic premiered the newly-minted composition on June 7, 1972.

Copland's interest in Latin American music extended back decades, from a 1932 sojourn in Mexico at the invitation of composer Carlos Chavez and subsequent vacations there, to travels throughout Central and South America as a cultural diplomat for the U.S. State Department. He enjoyed the wide range of folk music and commented: "I myself am far from being expert in this area, but I do retain vivid impressions of an unbelievably rich and comparatively little-known territory of folk expression in Latin America."

The vivacious sounds in "Estrillo" are classic Copland, with angular rhythms and melodic fragments tossed about the ensemble, punctuated by percussion. "Paisaje Mexicano" offers a lovely contrast, its gentle cantilena lines soothing cares away. The solo winds float languidly as the strings murmur softly in response. The concluding "Danza de Jalisco" is energetic and spicy.

In a somewhat self-deprecating assessment, Copland described the *Sketches* this way: "The tunes, the rhythms, and the temperament of the pieces are folksy, while the orchestration is bright and snappy and the music sizzles along — or at least it seems to me that it does." *ETW*



AARON COPLAND (1900-1990)

A multi-faceted musician, Aaron Copland was a composer, teacher, writer and conductor, earning the informal title “Dean of American Composers.” Showered with awards and accolades later in life, Copland’s early years were unremarkable by comparison. Born to immigrant parents in Brooklyn, New York, Copland and his four siblings helped out in the family shop, H.M. Copland’s, where they lived above the store. His mother arranged for music lessons and Copland began writing songs when he was 8 years old. He studied deeply and decided to become a composer at age 15. Formal lessons in harmony, music theory and composition followed with Rubin Goldmark. He took full advantage of New York City’s musical resources, regularly attending performances by the Metropolitan Opera and the New York Symphony (a rival orchestra to the New York Philharmonic).



Copland’s life changed radically in 1921 when he went to Paris to study at the Fontainebleau School of Music. Initially he studied with composer Paul Vidal but quickly switched to Nadia Boulanger, a brilliant teacher who taught such famous and varied musicians as Leonard Bernstein, Quincy Jones, Astor Piazzolla, Philip Glass, Elliott Carter, Walter Piston and Darius Milhaud. He worked with Boulanger for three years amidst the heady milieu of 1920s Paris. Writers such as Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce and Gertrude Stein frequented the cafes as did artists Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall and Salvador Dalí. The intellectual atmosphere was rarified, with Marcel Proust, Jean-Paul Sartre and André Gide holding forth. The musical environment was similarly invigorating with musicians such as Igor Stravinsky, Erik Satie and Cole Porter contributing their talents to the lively scene. Copland avidly sought out the latest music and soaked up the many influences, including jazz.

An early advocate of Copland’s music was longtime Boston Symphony Music Director Serge Koussevitzky. In 1924, he commissioned Copland to write an organ concerto featuring Boulanger as soloist. The resultant Symphony for Organ and Orchestra helped launch his professional career.

Back in the U.S., Copland interacted with a wide range of artists and musicians exploring the notion of “American” art and music. The young composer sought to incorporate this aesthetic in his music but with scant past examples for guidance, he sought inspiration in American popular music and jazz. His abstract tendencies led him away from this path but the genres made a lasting impact in his use of syncopation and vibrant rhythms.

Copland began teaching classes at The New School in New York City in the late 1920s and also wrote articles for the New York Times as well as several journals. The onslaught of the Great Depression and rising tides of populism prompted him to reevaluate his compositional style, seeking to broaden the accessibility of his music to larger audiences. This coincided with

extensive travels in Europe, Africa, and Mexico. Notable successes of this new approach included *El Salón México* (1936) and the ballet *Billy the Kid* (1938). Hollywood beckoned and he completed film scores for “Of Mice and Men” and “Our Town” in 1939.

Copland’s works from the 1940s are among his most famous and beloved today. They include ballet scores for *Rodeo* (1942) and *Appalachian Spring* (1944), *Lincoln Portrait* (1942), *Fanfare for the Common Man* (1942), *Third Symphony* (1946), and his film score for “The Red Pony” (1949).

Following a 1949 trip to Europe, Copland became interested in the twelve-tone technique developed by Arnold Schoenberg and the even more radical serialism of Pierre Boulez, who was among the most avant-garde of post-war composers. He began applying the technique, filtered through his own sensibilities and voice. The result was still “Coplandesque” but rather gnarled and thorny. He traveled widely in the 1950s and eagerly explored the latest compositional trends, hoping to refresh his own style.

Copland was caught up in the anti-communist fervor of the 1950s due to his leftist views. Many members of the musical community came to his defense, and the investigation did not seriously impede his career or damage his reputation even though it posed a significant danger.

Beginning in the 1960s, Copland began conducting more frequently, declared by several orchestral musicians to be more natural at it than most composers. He programmed works by many contemporary composers as well as his own compositions, advocating strongly for new music. Inspiration for composing waned so he set about recording his music, documenting his own interpretations of his works that had become staples of the orchestral repertoire.

Eventually, his health started to decline and Copland retreated to his home at Cortlandt Manor, New York. He died shortly after his 90th birthday, leaving a rich legacy of compositions, recordings, books and encouragement for new music, particularly American music. *ETW*



ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD

Symphonic Serenade for String Orchestra, op. 39 (1948)

30 minutes

Erich Korngold’s *Symphonic Serenade* had its genesis during a turning point in the composer’s life. Having retired from a successful career composing Hollywood film scores, he was trying to reestablish himself as a composer of concert music. He made plans to return to Europe for the first time since fleeing the Nazis almost ten years earlier, but suffered a heart attack and was delayed. While recovering in the hospital, however, he began composing the *Serenade* in his head. He completed the piece in 1948 and finally arrived in Austria in 1949. The *Serenade* received its premiere the following year with Wilhelm Furtwängler conducting the Vienna Philharmonic. It proved to be both a critical and a box-office success.



The Serenade's score bears the inscription "Dedicated to Luzi, my beloved wife, my best friend." It is written in four movements, showcasing virtuosic string writing and creative divisions of the parts throughout. (The first movement begins with the cello section divided into four separate parts in a disproportionate manner.) From the outset there are contrasts of beautiful melodies with darker, more dissonant passages, and this conflict continues through the entire piece. The second movement is an Intermezzo (interlude) that directs the strings to play pizzicato "möglichst schnell" — as fast as possible! The pizzicato is contrasted with sections of very high ethereal music. The slow third movement is marked "Lento religioso" and features long-spun, gorgeous melodies, interrupted briefly in the middle by a passionate outburst. The fiery finale begins with fast, gruff statements in the cellos and basses, leading to perpetual motion sixteenth notes combined with the pizzicatos of the second movement. This music is interspersed with an expressive melody, reminiscent of the first and third movements, and later a melody played in parallel fourths and fifths, evoking a somewhat "Coplandesque" feel. The soaring theme from the very beginning returns briefly before the piece ends with a flourish. *AJH*

ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD (1897-1957)

Music history has had its share both of wunderkinds and wannabes (Beethoven's harsh instruction at the hands of his father was his father's attempt to profit from Mozart's success as a child prodigy). But Erich Wolfgang Korngold was the real deal. He could play four-hand piano music beside his father at the age of 5 and was writing original music by age 7. At age 9, he met Gustav Mahler, who proclaimed him a "musical genius." A few years later his father had several of his scores printed and mailed to music critics and composers, including Engelbert Humperdinck and Richard Strauss. Strauss particularly praised the young composer's originality and assurance of style, and advised Korngold's father not to enroll him at a conservatory, because his abilities already exceeded whatever he could learn there.



Korngold's ballet *Der Schneemann* (The Snowman) was composed when he was 11, and a performance at the Vienna Court Opera (which Emperor Franz Josef attended) catapulted him to fame. By the time he was 30 he had composed four operas, which were performed across Europe by famous singers, conductors and orchestras. His recreations of several previously lost scores by Johann Strauss II brought him to the attention of Max Reinhardt, a theatre director and producer. In 1934 Reinhardt was directing a film adaptation of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and commissioned Korngold to arrange Mendelssohn's incidental music for the film. The film shoot, which included almost every star and character actor under contract with Warner Brothers at the time, took six months. This luxurious pace allowed Korngold an unprecedented amount of time to perfect the score, and both the finished film and the score left a strong impression on the industry.

The following year, Warner Brothers asked Korngold to write an original score for its movie “Captain Blood,” starring Errol Flynn. He agreed, composing an hour of symphonic music in only three weeks. The score earned him the first of his four Oscar® nominations and made him the first composer of international fame to sign a contract for original music with a Hollywood studio. He divided his time between composing and conducting concert music in Europe and scoring films in Hollywood until the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in 1938. Korngold was in America scoring “The Adventures of Robin Hood” at the time, and later said that the chance to score that movie saved his life. He was to remain in Hollywood without returning to Europe until 1949.

Korngold’s background in operatic composition revolutionized film music. He made extensive use of Wagnerian leitmotifs, a musical idea connected to a character or theme, and would often match his music’s rhythms and pitches with the speech of the actors. His scores masked weaknesses in subpar productions and made good movies great. The “Robin Hood” soundtrack, which won the Best Score Oscar®, established the musical style that would become standard for action and adventure movies for decades to come.

Korngold had vowed to his father that he would not return to composing concert music until Hitler was deposed. He grew disillusioned with the declining quality of the films he was asked to score in the 1940s, and with the end of World War II he enthusiastically returned to concert composition. His Violin Concerto, written in 1945, was a spirited work that drew its themes from several of the composer’s film scores. Premiered by Jascha Heifetz and the St. Louis Symphony, the concerto received the most enthusiastic ovation in the history of the orchestra. Following its success, Korngold composed a cello concerto, the Symphonic Serenade for string orchestra, and his only symphony, dedicated to the memory of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Many of his later works were dismissed unjustly by critics and audiences as outdated, too Romantic and the unserious work of a film composer. His final film work was writing arrangements for “Magic Fire,” a biography of Richard Wagner released in 1955. Debilitated by a stroke in October 1956, Korngold died in November 1957 convinced that he would be forgotten.

Indeed, both his film music and concert music received little attention for several years. But in 1962 an album featuring his film music conducted by Lionel Newman was released, followed in the 1970s by retrospective recordings of Hollywood’s “Golden Age” scores performed by the National Philharmonic Orchestra under the supervision of Korngold’s son, George. A steady stream of recordings and performances followed, helping to restore Korngold’s well-earned reputation as one of the twentieth century’s most brilliant and versatile composers. *AJH*



Program notes written by AJ Harbison (AJH) and Eric T. Williams (ETW).



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