

The BYU-Idaho Department of Music
presents

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



Aaron Copland 1900 - 1990

JUNE 27, 2024
7:30 PM
BARRUS CONCERT HALL

PERSONNEL

Dr. Robert Tueller, Director

Flute

Alina Williams

Clarinet

Megan O'Dell

Bassoon

Elizabeth Crawford

Horn

Tyler Allen

Caleb Nielsen

Piano

Dr Claire Thueson

Violin I

Natasha Davis

Sarah Campbell

Nicole Graham

Jenna Williams

Kaylyn Allison

Carli Salas

Dr. Dallin Hansen

Violin II

Haylee Johnson

Miriam Marinez

Carson Duncan

Tyler Deibel

Tyler Hilton

Brynna Layton

Viola

Naomi Smith

Dallin Parish

Faith Hamilton

Cello

Lewis Garner

Elizabeth Edwards

Emma Ballif

Ada Brown

Emily Caballero Green

Paloma Urquiza

Samantha Snarr

Samantha Slater

Bass

Joey Moore

Brennan Ockerman

Ana Howell

PROGRAM

Romance for String Orchestra Op. 11Gerald Finzi
1901 - 1956

Concerto in Eb major "Dumbarton Oaks"Igor Stravinsky
1882 - 1971

I. Allegro giusto

II. Allegretto

III. Con moto

Appalachian Spring SuiteAaron Copland
1900 - 1990

NOTES

This program opens with a work for string orchestra: Finzi's *Romance*, Stravinsky's "Dumbarton Oaks" concerto follows and we close a suite from the greatest of Copland's "American" ballets, *Appalachian Spring*.

This wistful work for string orchestra by Finzi may have been a reaction to the deaths of his father and brothers.

Gerald Finzi

Born: July 14, 1901, London, United Kingdom.

Died: September 27, 1956, Radcliffe Infirmary, United Kingdom.

Romance in E-flat Major, Op.11

- **Composed:** 1928, revised 1951, and published in 1952.
- **Premiere:** 1951.
- **Duration:** 6:00.

Background

Gerald Finzi was one of the fine English composers whose careers blossomed between the two world wars. Though he taught briefly at London's Royal Academy of Music, he preferred to stay outside of the British musical mainstream. Composition in fact seems to have been secondary to his real passion, raising apples on his farm in the Wiltshire countryside! Finzi is known today primarily as a composer of vocal music —art-songs and choral music, but he also composed fine instrumental works: the *Five Bagatelles*, for clarinet and cello, is perhaps his best-known work of chamber work, but there are also well-known concertos for violin, cello, and clarinet and the fine *Romance* for string orchestra heard here.

What You'll Hear

This lovely work begins with a haunting introduction, with moments for the solo violin, before the flowing main theme appears. Solo violin introduces a more pastoral second idea, and the music moves towards a brief moment of passionate agitation. The romance ends with the reprise of the main ideas, and a hushed, wistful coda.

This is Stravinsky's distinctly 20th-century take on Bach's 18th-century *Brandenburg Concertos*.

Igor Stravinsky

Born: June 17, 1882, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Died: April 6, 1971, New York City, New York.

Concerto in E-flat Major (Dumbarton Oaks)

- **Composed:** 1937-38.
- **Premiere:** May 8, 1938, at the home of Robert and Mildred Bliss, near Washington, DC, conducted by Nadia Boulanger.
- **Scoring:** Flute, clarinet, bassoon, two horns, strings.
- **Duration:** 15:00.

Background

In late 1936, Stravinsky was at the end of an exhausting concert tour of Europe, South America, and the United States. He was able to relax for a time at Dumbarton Oaks, the estate of his friends Robert and Mildred Bliss, in the Georgetown suburb of Washington, DC. The Blisses were a true “power couple” in Washington society. Robert Woods Bliss was a respected retired diplomat, and his wife Mildred—whom British art historian Kenneth Clark called “the Queen of Georgetown”—were philanthropists and generous patrons of the arts. Mildred Bliss offered Stravinsky a commission of \$2500 for a composition honoring the Blisses' 30th wedding anniversary. Stravinsky completed the concerto in March 1938. It would in fact be the last composition that he completed in Europe, prior to his return to the United States in 1939. Stravinsky lived in United States for the rest of his life, and would become an American citizen in 1945.

Like most of his works of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s Stravinsky's *Dumbarton Oaks* can be described with the rather slippery term “Neoclassical.” One of the dominant musical idioms of the early 20th century, Neoclassical compositions reject both the emotionalism of Romantic music, and the more shocking elements of the early 20th-century *avant garde*. Stravinsky and others often adopted 18th-century forms of Mozart and Bach as the basis of their compositions. These works use the clear and logical forms of 18th-century music to explore musical ideas in a rational and sometimes ironic way. This is often described as simply “music about music”—that is, there is no story line or interpretation implied or needed. In *Dumbarton Oaks*, he referred to Bach—Stravinsky called it “a little concerto in the style of the Brandenburg concertos.” The scoring of the strings, in groups of three, is in fact the same as in the *Brandenburg Concerto No.3*, and Stravinsky's viola part actually quotes Bach's theme in the first

movement. Stravinsky noted that “I do not think that Bach would have begrudged me the loan of these ideas and materials, as borrowing in this way was something he liked to do himself.”

What You’ll Hear

Though the harmonies, constantly-changing meters, and spiky melodies of the opening movement (*Allegro giusto*) are unmistakably by Stravinsky, it works very much like a Baroque concerto: short solo passages alternating with the full ensemble, and a central fugue-style episode. A sudden change of texture provides a link to the *Allegretto*. This opens with an oddly-accented string figure that expands into extensive solos for the woodwinds. There is a contrasting middle section, where short woodwind solos play against a static string background, before the opening idea returns, now with elaborate decoration by the flute. Once again, Stravinsky ends with a short passage that links to the next movement (*Con moto*). The third movement begins with short figures set above a plodding background from the low strings, before the horns announce a fugue theme. What sounds very much like Baroque hunting-horn music leads into a furious string passage that ends the first section. The middle section has brief, relaxed duets passed around the orchestra from pair to pair. A densely-scored transition leads to an energetic coda.

One of the defining American works of the 20th century, *Appalachian Spring* is the last of Copland’s great trilogy of “American” ballets, following *Billy the Kid* (1938) and *Rodeo* (1942).

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Born: November 14, 1900, New York, New York.

Died: December 10, 1979, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Appalachian Spring Suite (Original Version for 13 Instruments)

- **Composed:** *Appalachian Spring* was written in 1943-44 for Martha Graham’s dance company.
- **Premiere:** Washington DC, October 30, 1944. He extracted the suite heard here, a shortened version of the ballet’s music using the original scoring, shortly afterwards.
- **Duration:** 25:00.

“It is essentially the coming of a new life. It has to do with growing things. Spring is the loveliest and saddest time of the year.”

- Martha Graham

Background

Appalachian Spring was created in response to a 1942 commission from the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation of the Library of Congress, for a new ballet by the Martha Graham dance company. Graham, who knew Copland's earlier ballet scores *Billy the Kid* (1938) and *Rodeo* (1942), asked him to provide a score for this new ballet, which was also to be on an American theme. The result, which Copland titled simply *Ballet for Martha*, is one of the landmark works of American twentieth-century music. (It was Graham who applied the title *Appalachian Spring*, taking it from a poem by Hart Crane.) *Appalachian Spring* was a success—among other honors, it earned Copland a Pulitzer Prize—and it remains America's most enduringly popular ballet. The music exists in four distinct versions, the most familiar of which is a suite for full orchestra Copland produced in 1945. At this program, however, we present a suite extracted from the original ballet score, which was written for 13 instruments (Though we double string parts in this performance.) This chamber version can be a revelation to those who know only the full orchestration, casting Copland's music in transparent, delicate, and sometimes austere textures, with prominent solo work for the clarinet, flute, and bassoon.

What You'll Hear

The scenario for Graham's ballet centers around a young pioneer couple who are about to be married in early 19th-century Pennsylvania, and around their newly-built homestead. The couple receives visits and advice from neighbors, and a revivalist preacher, and are finally left alone to their new lives and home. Copland's music is optimistic and evocative, calling up images of strength, courage, and religious faith from the American frontier. His earlier ballets had used folk songs to create an American quality, but nearly all of the melodic material in *Appalachian Spring* is Copland's own—only at the climactic point of the ballet does he introduce folk material in the guise of an old Shaker melody.

The *Appalachian Spring Suite* is cast in eight sections, which are played without pauses. Copland gave the following description of the suite:

1. Very slowly. Introduction of the characters, one by one, in a suffused light.
2. Fast. Sudden burst of A Major arpeggios to start the action. A sentiment both elated and religious is the keynote to this scene.
3. Moderate. Duo for the Bride and her Intended—scene of tenderness and passion.
4. Quite fast. The Revivalist and his flock. Folksy feelings—suggestions of square dances and country fiddlers.

5. Still faster. Solo dance of the Bride—presentiment of motherhood. Extremes of joy and fear.
6. Very slowly (as at first). Transition scene to music reminiscent of the introduction.
7. Calm and flowing. Scenes of daily activity for the Bride and her Farmer-Husband. There are five variations on a Shaker theme. The theme, sung by a solo clarinet, was taken from a collection of Shaker melodies compiled by Edward D. Andrews, and published under the title *The Gift to be Simple*. The melody I borrowed and used almost literally is called ‘Simple Gifts’. It has this text:
 ‘Tis the gift to be simple,
 ‘Tis the gift to be free,
 ‘Tis the gift to come down
 Where we ought to be.
8. Moderate. Coda. The Bride takes her place among her neighbors. At the end, the couple are left quiet and strong in their new house. Muted strings intone a hushed, prayer-like passage. The close is reminiscent of the opening music.”

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