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SEATTLE SYMPHONY  
COLLECTION

# COPLAND

Rodeo: Four Dance Episodes  
Piano Concerto • Billy the Kid: Suite

Lorin Hollander, Piano  
Seattle Symphony  
Gerard Schwarz



## Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

### Rodeo: Four Dance Episodes

Aaron Copland occupies 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 Diaghilev'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 organised important series of 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.

*Rodeo* was completed in 1942 and first staged in the same year by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, with choreography by Agnes de Mille, niece of the Hollywood film producer and one of the most

distinguished American ballerinas of the day. The subtitle of the ballet, *The Courting at Burnt Ranch*, describes accurately enough its slender plot. The cowboys chase every woman they see but pay little attention to the girl working with them on the ranch. The situation changes, however, when she appears at a Saturday night ball dressed for the occasion, and the famous 'Hoe Down' is danced, the first time a square-dance had intruded into the world of ballet. The four dance episodes that form the orchestral suite open with 'Buckaroo Holiday', followed by the tranquillity of 'Corral Nocturne'. The mood changes with 'Saturday Night Waltz' and the final 'Hoe Down'.

Keith Anderson

### Piano Concerto

Copland's *Piano Concerto*, like *The Tender Land*, a work not often heard, is 'early Copland': 1926. It comes two years after George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and a year following Gershwin's *Piano Concerto in F*, works that created a great stir and controversy in the music world. Paul Rosenfeld, who championed Copland in the intellectual press, treated the *Piano Concerto* as a response to these Gershwin piano-and-orchestra vehicles (which he argued were compositionally inferior to Copland's 'improvement'). Copland himself never confirmed that Gershwin was a catalyst for his one composition for piano and orchestra. In fact, Copland rarely spoke or wrote about Gershwin. An exceptional occasion, when he did, was a question-and-answer at New York's WPA Theatre of Music in 1937. Copland was asked to compare his music 'with Mr Gershwin's jazz'. His answer: 'Gershwin is serious up to a point. My idea

was to intensify it. Not what you get in the dance hall but to use it cubistically – to make it more exciting than ordinary jazz.’

In the *Piano Concerto*, arguably the ‘jazziest’ piece in Copland’s entire output, the evident jazz voice is wedded to a conscious compositional sophistication that Copland put into words when he commented that his aim was ‘to explore new avenues in the area of polyrhythms’ and ‘to experiment with shifting beats by introducing a variety of highly unorthodox and frequently changing rhythms that made the music polymetric’.

Copland’s *Piano Concerto* resulted from a commission from Sergey Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony. ‘If you write a piano concerto’, Koussevitzky told him, ‘you can play it yourself.’ While we may not today remember Copland as a pianist – in his later performing career he was a conductor – his recording of the concerto with Leonard Bernstein, and even more his live performances captured on broadcast, reveal a bracing keyboard talent. In a note for the concerto Copland wrote of the soloist ‘improvising’, and the concerto’s second movement is headed *molto rubato* (inviting rhythmic license). While there is no actual improvisation in the keyboard part, Copland’s own performances of the work bristle with impressions of freedom and spontaneity, even to the point of wildness.

The two movements are linked. The first is bluesy. The second, once termed by the composer a ‘snappy number’, is introduced by a remarkably rambunctious piano solo. Near the close, preceding a wicked coda, there is an expansive reprise of the first movement’s blues song; here it is difficult not to be reminded of a similar reprise at the close of Gershwin’s concerto. And, again like that work, it is a 1920s ‘New York’ piece: brassy, exuberant, ever confident in its bluesy swagger.

The Boston reviews were unkind. ‘No music heard at these concerts in the past fifteen years has

created so great a sensation,’ reported the *Globe*. ‘The audience forgot its manners, exchanging scathing verbal comments, and giggled nervously... creating so great a bustle that at times it was difficult to hear the music clearly.’ Focusing on the opening solo, ‘struck by fingers apparently directed at random, as a child amuses itself by making noises when it is restless in the room’, Philip Hale – an important Boston voice – amplified in the *Herald*: ‘the audience laughed, as if the *Concerto* were a huge joke played on the hearers, also on Mr Koussevitzky.’ A third critic wrote, ‘with no effort at all the listener visualizes a jazz dance hall next door to a poultry yard.’ Today, we no longer hear a barnyard when we hear Copland’s *Piano Concerto*. But it is worth being reminded how bold this music once sounded.

Joseph Horowitz

## Billy the Kid: Suite

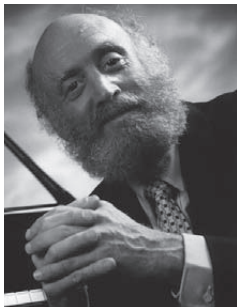
Copland composed his hugely popular one-act ballet *Billy the Kid* in Paris and Peterborough, New Hampshire, in the summer of 1938. Written for Lincoln Kirstein’s Ballet Caravan and with choreography by Eugene Loring and decor by Jared French, the work was first made in an arrangement for two pianos (the soloists were Arthur Gold and Walter Hendl) on 6 October 1938 in Chicago. The orchestral version was first performed in New York the following year and in 1940 the seven-movement orchestral suite from the ballet was given its first performance by the NBC Symphony Orchestra under William Steinberg, once again in New York.

The scenario centres upon the chief episodes in the short-lived career of the American outlaw William H. Bonney (1859-1881). The action, framed by depictions of the open prairie, starts in the street of

a frontier town: during a drunken brawl guns are drawn and Billy's mother is accidentally shot and killed. In a rage, Billy, then a boy of only twelve, draws a blade from a cowboy's sheath and stabs his mother's killers: so begins his life as an outlaw. Several scenes from his later life are depicted, including a night-time card game, a gun battle between Billy and his former associate Pat Garrett, and the celebrations that follow Billy's capture. After his escape from prison and a *pas de deux* with his girlfriend in the desert, both omitted from the orchestral suite, Billy finally meets his demise.

**Peter Quinn**

## Lorin Hollander

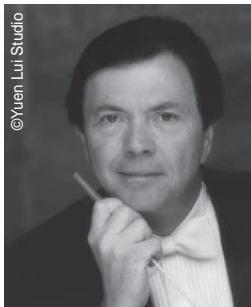


Lorin Hollander is a world-renowned concert pianist with a continuously acclaimed fifty-five-year international career that began with a Carnegie Hall debut at the age of eleven. He was an infant child prodigy who composed music at the age of three and performed Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* at five. He has appeared as guest soloist with virtually every major symphony orchestra in the world and is a veteran of over 2,500 performances: with orchestra, in recital, lecture/recital, chamber music, and as a symphony and choral conductor. Hollander has collaborated with the leading conductors of our time, among them Bernstein, Copland, Haitink, Leinsdorf, Levine, Mehta, Monteux, Ormandy, Ozawa, Previn, Schwarz and Szell. He has performed with the orchestras of Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Washington D.C., and internationally with the London Philharmonic, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Jerusalem Symphony, O.R.T.F. and New Tokyo Philharmonic, among many others. He performed on the soundtrack of *Sophie's Choice* and has recorded for RCA Victor, Columbia, Angel, Delos and PianoDisc.

## Seattle Symphony

The Seattle Symphony, founded in 1903, has gained international prominence with more than 140 recordings, twelve GRAMMY® nominations, two Emmys and numerous other awards. Under the leadership of Music Director Ludovic Morlot since September 2011, the Seattle Symphony performs in one of the world's finest concert venues – the acoustically superb Benaroya Hall – in downtown Seattle. Gerard Schwarz led the orchestra from 1985 to 2011, and is now Conductor Laureate. The Seattle Symphony is internationally recognized for its innovative programming and extensive recording history. From September through July, the Symphony is heard live by more than 315,000 people. For more information on the Seattle Symphony, visit [www.seattlesymphony.org](http://www.seattlesymphony.org).

## Gerard Schwarz



Gerard Schwarz has a vast repertoire that includes major commitments to Germanic, Russian and American music. He was Music Director of the Seattle Symphony from 1985 to 2011. He currently serves as Seattle Symphony Conductor Laureate and Music Director of the Eastern Music Festival. Previously, he was Music Director of New York's Mostly Mozart Festival, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and New York Chamber Symphony, as well as Artistic Advisor to Tokyu Bunkamura with the Tokyo Philharmonic. His considerable discography of over 300 releases showcases his collaborations with some of the world's greatest orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic, the London Symphony, Berlin Radio Symphony, Orchestre National de France, Tokyo Philharmonic, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, New York Chamber Symphony and the Seattle Symphony, among others. Born to Viennese parents, Schwarz has served on the National Council on the Arts. He has received two Emmy Awards, thirteen GRAMMY® nominations, six ASCAP Awards, and numerous *Stereo*

*Review* and *Ovation* Awards. In addition, he holds the Ditson Conductor's Award from Columbia University, was the first American named Conductor of the Year by *Musical America*, and has received numerous honorary doctorates, including one from his alma mater, The Juilliard School. In 2002, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers honoured Schwarz with its Concert Music Award, and, in 2003, the Pacific Northwest branch of the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences gave Schwarz its first 'IMPACT' lifetime achievement award.

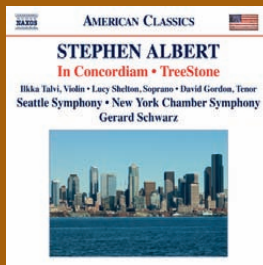
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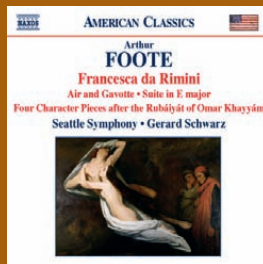
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Playing Time:

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COPLAND: Rodeo • Piano Concerto • Billy the Kid

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Inspired by the spacious landscape of the American prairie, Copland's ballets are amongst the most vibrant and tuneful in the repertoire. *Rodeo*, the second of his cowboy ballets, is about the desperate attempts of a cowgirl to become a ranch cowhand, and quotes a variety of American folk-tunes, including the irrepressible 'Hoe Down'. The orchestral suite of *Billy the Kid* evokes prairie and frontier town in scenes of suspense, violence and fleeting romance, orchestrated with vivid immediacy. The 1926 *Piano Concerto* caused uproar at its premiere. In two movements, it is saturated in jazz and blues effects, rhythmically unorthodox and highly sophisticated – a blistering assertion of New York swagger.



SEATTLE SYMPHONY

## Aaron COPLAND

(1900-1990)

### Rodeo: Four Dance Episodes 19:25

- |                                    |      |
|------------------------------------|------|
| <b>1</b> I. Buckaroo Holiday       | 7:08 |
| <b>2</b> II. Corral Nocturne       | 4:16 |
| <b>3</b> III. Saturday Night Waltz | 4:43 |
| <b>4</b> IV. Hoe Down              | 3:18 |

### Piano Concerto

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| <b>5</b> Andante sostenuto                                | 8:04 |
| <b>6</b> Molto moderato (molto rubato) –<br>Allegro assai | 9:48 |

### 7 Billy the Kid: Suite 20:52



**Lorin Hollander, Piano**  
**Seattle Symphony • Gerard Schwarz**



Recorded on 1-2 October 1990 (*Rodeo & Billy the Kid*); 26 May 1993 (*Piano Concerto*) at the Seattle Center Opera House, USA • Executive Producer: Amelia S. Haygood • Recording Producer: Adam Stern • Recording Engineers: John M. Eargle (*Rodeo & Billy the Kid*); Al Swanson (*Piano Concerto*) • Associate Engineer: Al Swanson (*Rodeo & Billy the Kid*) • Assistant Engineer: Li Teo (*Rodeo & Billy the Kid*) • Editor: Cho Yiu Wong (*Piano Concerto*)

Booklet notes: Keith Anderson, Joseph Horowitz & Peter Quinn

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