



# COPLAND

## *Fanfare for the Common Man*

**Aaron Copland** (November 14, 1900 – December 2, 1990) was an American composer, teacher, writer, and later conductor of his own and other American music. He studied with the famed pedagogue Nadia Boulanger in Paris, whose overarching grasp of Western art music greatly influenced Copland's own thinking. Referred to as the "Dean of American Composers" in his later years, Copland was instrumental in forging a distinctly American style of composition: the open, slowly changing harmonies of many of his works are archetypal of what many people consider to be the sound of American music, evoking the vast American landscape and pioneer spirit. He is best known to the public for the works he wrote in the 1930s and 1940s in a deliberately accessible style often referred to as "populist" and which the composer labeled his "vernacular" style. This body of works, within which include the *Fanfare for the Common Man*, were written in opposition to the more experimental music of the time, music that sometimes neglected the lay listener in favour of more abstract compositional language. In the late 1940s, however, Copland became aware that many composers, including his "hero" Stravinsky, had begun to study Arnold Schoenberg's use of twelve-tone techniques, and began to incorporate it into his own personal style. From the 1960s onward, Copland's activities turned more from composing to conducting. Though not enamored with the prospect, he found himself without new ideas for composition, saying: "It was exactly as if someone had simply turned off a faucet." He was, however, a frequent guest conductor for orchestras in both the US and UK, and made many recordings for Columbia Records.

The ***Fanfare for the Common Man*** was written in 1942. It was inspired in part by a famous speech made earlier in the same year, where the Vice President of the United States Henry A. Wallace proclaimed the dawning of the "Century of the Common Man." The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra's conductor, Eugene Goossens, had commissioned a total of eighteen patriotic fanfares by various composers to begin each orchestral concert – although Copland's is the only to remain in the repertory. Written for brass and percussion, these fanfares were meant to boost morale and shore up patriotic fervour in support of the United States' entry into World War II. Goossens had suggested titles such as *Fanfare for Soldiers*, and wrote that "it is my idea to make these fanfares stirring and significant contributions to the war effort...." Copland likewise considered several titles, but to Goossens' surprise, he titled the piece *Fanfare for the Common Man*. Goossens wrote, "its title is as original as its music, and I think it is so telling that it deserves a special occasion for its performance. If it is agreeable to you, we will premiere it 12 March 1943 at income tax time." Copland's reply was "I [am] all for honoring the common man at income tax time." An immensely popular piece, Copland would later use the fanfare as the main theme of the fourth movement of his *Third Symphony* (composed between 1944 - 1946). It would also open many Democratic National Conventions, or simply to add dignity to a wide range of other events.