

The Redimere Hall of Music



Aaron Copland

(1900–1990)

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Aaron Copland is often called "America's Composer." Born in Brooklyn, New York, to immigrant parents, he grew up far from the ranches and mountains that many people associate with his music. Yet through his compositions, Copland captured the spirit of wide-open spaces, pioneers, and ordinary Americans.

During the twentieth century, he sought to write music that ordinary people could enjoy and understand. He drew inspiration from folk songs, hymns, and American traditions. His music was used in ballets, films, and patriotic celebrations, and many of his melodies have become part of America's musical heritage.

Today, his music helps listeners imagine prairies, mountains, cowboys, and the beauty of the American landscape.



RESOURCES:

Biography to read:

- Aaron Copland (Getting to Know the World's Greatest Composers) by Mike Venezia

Music to listen to:

- Fanfare for the Common Man
- Appalachian Spring
- Rodeo

BEFORE YOU LISTEN:

Aaron Copland's music is often called "open" or "spacious." Before listening, imagine:

- A sunrise over rolling hills.
- A pioneer family traveling west.
- A quiet meadow in spring.
- A small church in rural America.

Talk about it:

- What do you think music about America might sound like?
- Would it be loud or quiet?
- Fast or slow?
- What instruments do you expect to hear?



LISTENING SESSIONS:

Mini-Lesson 1:

BRASS INSTRUMENTS

Music Piece: *Fanfare for the Common Man*

Copland wanted to honor ordinary people, not kings or presidents. To give the music dignity and strength, he chose the **brass family**—trumpets, horns, trombones, and tuba.

Listen For

Can you tell when the trumpets enter?

Notice how the timpani (large kettle drums) answer the brass.

Questions

- Which sound catches your ear first—the drums or the trumpets?
 - Does the music remind you of a parade? A mountain? A church? Something else?
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Mini-Lesson 2:

DYNAMICS

Music Piece: *Fanfare for the Common Man*

New Musical Term: *Dynamics*

Dynamics are how loudly or softly music is played.

Listen For

Notice how Copland begins with a few powerful notes and then allows the sound to fade away. The quiet moments are just as important as the loud ones.

Questions

- Which instruments make the opening sound so grand?
- Is the music mostly loud or mostly quiet?
- Why do you think Copland left so much space between the notes?