

Si Otsedoha (We're Still Here) *uses song-form as an underlying structure, with systems of verses, bridges, introductions, choruses, and codas that are reflective of more modern forms of music. Fresh, new ideas at every turn create a sense of surprise and drama.*

WILLIAM BRITTELLE, COMPOSER

## *Fanfare for the Common Man*

### **AARON COPLAND**

BORN November 14, 1900, in New York City; died December 2, 1990, in Sleepy Hollow, New York

PREMIERE Composed 1942; first performance March 12, 1943, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Eugene Goossens conducting

### **OVERVIEW**

During World War II, many conductors and music presenters commissioned composers to write inspiring works reflecting the spirit of the times. In 1942, Eugene Goossens, conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, commissioned several American composers to write fanfares to commemorate various aspects of the nation at war. Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* was scored for brass and percussion; the composer wrote: "[It] honors the man who did no deeds of heroism on the battlefield, but shared the labors, sorrows and hopes of those who strove for victory."

The work is the only one of the commissioned fanfares that has remained in the repertoire. The music has seen duty for everything from national conventions to TV commercials, although without the funereal opening bass drum and timpani solos. Copland reused the *Fanfare* theme to great effect as the introduction to the finale of his Symphony No. 3.

## **INSTRUMENTATION**

*Four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion*

## *Rhapsody in Blue*

### **GEORGE GERSHWIN**

BORN September 26, 1898, in Brooklyn; died July 11, 1937, in Los Angeles

PREMIERE Composed 1923-1924; first performance February 12, 1924, in New York City, Paul Whiteman conducting, with the composer as soloist

### **OVERVIEW**

George Gershwin was the first American composer to make jazz acceptable to the American classical music audience. The son of poor Jewish immigrants in lower Manhattan, he was a natural-born pianist and left school at 16 to become a pianist with a “Tin Pan Alley” firm, plugging their new songs. He soon commenced writing songs himself, eventually teaming up with his brother Ira as lyricist to become one of the most successful teams of song and musical comedy writers on Broadway. They created a string of immensely successful musicals, from *Lady be Good* in 1924 to *Let ‘em Eat Cake* in 1933.

Gershwin received the commission for an extended jazz composition from a conductor of popular music, Paul Whiteman. Whiteman was the self-styled “King of Jazz” who attempted to make jazz more symphonic and respectable. Whiteman’s commission followed an Aeolian Hall concert in the fall of 1923, at which Gershwin had played piano arrangements of a few of his songs.

Gershwin composed *Rhapsody in Blue* in a mere three weeks, early in 1924, in a two-piano version. Lacking the skills to orchestrate the work, he turned it over for piano and jazz orchestration to Ferde Grofé, a popular composer, pianist, and arranger, who

served as Whiteman's factotum. Grofé practically lived in Gershwin's house, orchestrating the work page-by-page as it came from the composer's pen. He also rescored the piece two years later for full symphony orchestra.

The premiere was a smashing success. Although the critics — true to form — mostly panned it, the audience loved it. Virtually overnight, jazz became respectable. Gershwin himself played the piano part, becoming an instant celebrity. Significant credit for the success must go to Grofé's imaginative orchestration, which has ended up as his most enduring contribution to music, along with his *Grand Canyon Suite*.

### **INSTRUMENTATION**

*Two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, three horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, three saxophones, banjo, strings*

## *Si Otsedoha (We're Still Here)*

### **WILLIAM BRITTELLE**

BORN 1976, in Concord, Massachusetts, and raised in Newton, North Carolina

PREMIERE Composed 2018; the North Carolina Symphony commissioned this work and gives the world premiere in these performances

### **OVERVIEW**

William Britelle describes the fulfillment of his commission from the North Carolina Symphony as a long and illuminating journey. The commission was underwritten in part by the Cherokee Preservation Foundation.

Raised in Catawba County, Britelle knew virtually nothing about the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, his Western North Carolina neighbors, except for the image its people revealed to tourists and casino-goers. Before even beginning the composition, he made extended visits to Cherokee to learn as much as he could about the culture in

order to provide an appropriate and sensitive musical setting for statements of identity by Cherokee middle and high schoolers.

In the fall of 2017, Cherokee student leaders assembled a forum for open discussion on what it means for them to be Cherokee in today's world and how they view their cultural heritage. Brittelle, with the assistance of leaders of the community, selected a series of these statements and assembled them into three songs to be performed by teenage choral students from the community — the Cherokee Chamber Singers — and the North Carolina Symphony. The world-premiere performances of *Si Otsedoha (We're Still Here)*, in Raleigh and throughout Western North Carolina, are the culmination of the North Carolina Symphony's music education residency in Cherokee, which began in the spring of 2016.

Brittelle regards this new work as a marriage of his music and the vision of the Cherokee students in terms of text and overall direction. The students wanted the music to take inspiration from the classical tradition and from the more modern forms of music that they listen to, including pop, rock, hip-hop, and Broadway — all music that has been influential in his musical life as well. Brittelle calls his compositional approach “genre fluid,” reflecting his training as a classical composer, rock musician, and jazz pianist/arranger.

The title, *Si Otsedoha (We're Still Here)*, resonates on multiple levels. Depending on the context, the statement of the song title can be taken as defiant, angry, celebratory, or — as in this instance — as an existential statement that incorporates thousands of years of history. The students wanted to convey the sentiment that the Cherokee have overcome countless challenges and nearly unimaginable threats to their existence. The students have defined their essence within the context of contemporary America and refuse to be ignored.

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

An overture introduces the work, and the three choral songs are interspersed with spoken-word passages written by members of the Cherokee Chamber Singers. Each of the three choral songs expresses a different perspective on Cherokee identity:

**1** *Tsulehisanvhi Alsaldia* (Phoenix Rising) points to a flourishing future through the image of the phoenix rising from the ashes. Brittelle appended a quatrain — a four-line stanza — in English, written at the request of the students, in order to visually capture the song's theme and speak directly to the audience.

**2** *Degansugalv Unesdali Gosvtanv* (Walls of Glass) describes a seemingly impenetrable transparent wall where two cultures can see each other, but only the Cherokee pass through the looking glass to embrace Euro-American culture; the other side has been unwilling or unable to break through to see the Cherokee people as they really are.

**3** *Si Otsedoha* (We're Still Here) is a corollary and response to words of the preceding song: a declaration of permanence and strength. Brittle's English quatrain restates the simple words in straightforward terms, serving as a reminder to the audience of its own incomplete understanding.

## INSTRUMENTATION

*Piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, synthesizer, strings*

## Suite from *Appalachian Spring*

### **AARON COPLAND**

PREMIERE Composed in 1944, revised 1945; first performance October 30, 1944, in the Library of Congress, with Martha Graham dancing the lead role

### **OVERVIEW**

During his long career, Aaron Copland composed in many diverse styles. His output included scores for films (*The Red Pony*, *Our Town*, *The Heiress*), works incorporating jazz (Piano Concerto, *Music for the Theatre*), and works using the 12-tone technique (Piano Quartet, Piano Fantasy). In the mid-1930s, he began to feel “an increasing dissatisfaction with the relation of the music-loving public and the living composer.” In order to reach a wider audience, he simplified his style to make it more accessible. The first work in this more popular vein was *El Salón Mexico*, finished in 1936. This was followed by the works for which he is best known today: his three American ballets *Billy the Kid*, *Rodeo*, and *Appalachian Spring*.

Copland composed *Appalachian Spring* for the great pioneer of modern dance, Martha Graham, to be performed at an evening of modern ballet at the Library of Congress. Copland originally called it “Ballet for Martha,” but Graham gave it its final title after a poem by Hart Crane — although the ballet bears no relation to the text of the poem. The size limitations of the stage at the Library dictated a small ensemble; the original version was scored for 13 instruments (flute, clarinet, bassoon, piano, and strings). Soon after the successful premiere, however, Copland extracted a somewhat shortened suite from the ballet for full orchestra, which is the version most frequently heard today.

In the preface to the score of the suite, Copland summarized the story of the ballet using the words of the *New York Herald Tribune* review by Eric Denby, written after the New York premiere: "... a pioneer celebration in spring around a newly-built farmhouse in the Pennsylvania hills in the early part of the last century. The bride-to-be and the young farmer-husband enact the emotions, joyful and apprehensive, their new domestic partnership invites... A revivalist and his followers remind the new householders of the strange and terrible aspects of human fate. At the end the couple are left quiet and strong in their new house."

### **WHAT TO LISTEN FOR**

The sections of the suite merge into each other without pause, but reflect distinctly different moods and scenarios. The haunting but peaceful opening gives way suddenly to an outburst of excitement comprising several different musical motives, demonstrating the open octaves and fifths that became the hallmark of Copland's "American" style. After building up to a frenzied climax, a solo clarinet interrupts plaintively with the Shaker tune "Simple Gifts." Copland uses the song as the theme for a set of variations, which themselves increase in intensity as more and more instruments are added with each new variation. Then, with another sudden shift in mood, we are transported back to the quiet introduction, and the suite ends as it began. "Simple Gifts" was composed by Shaker Elder Joseph Brackett, Jr. in 1848, for dancing during Shaker worship. Copland's five variations never veer far from the original melody, which he found in a 1940 collection of Shaker songs compiled by Edward D. Andrews. While the tune was certainly perfect for Graham's choreography, it didn't exactly fit the story line, as the Shakers themselves were dedicated to a life of celibacy.

### **INSTRUMENTATION**

*Piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets,  
two trombones, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, strings*

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