

## **American Classics**

### **Fanfare for the Common Man**

**Aaron Copland**

**b. Brooklyn, New York, USA / November 14, 1900 d. Peekskill, New York, USA / December 2, 1990**

After the United States entered the Second World War, Eugene Goossens, the British-born conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, commissioned appropriately patriotic fanfares from American composers to open his orchestra's concerts. Most fanfares are fast and exhilarating. Copland's is quite moderate in tempo, and it takes its time building to its loudest, grandest point. This approach reflects the depth and nobility, the visionary quality of its purpose.

### **The Unanswered Question**

**Charles Ives**

**b. Danbury, Connecticut, USA / October 20, 1874 d. New York, New York, USA / May 19, 1954**

It has only been since Ives' death that this full-time, millionaire insurance executive/ part-time composer has been widely recognized as the founder of a distinctively American school of music. His view, fostered by his bandmaster father, was that the hymn tunes and marches he heard during his youth were all the inspiration an American composer needed to create music of equal importance to what was being written in Europe. He sketched *The Unanswered Question* in 1906. Its relative simplicity has made it one of his most widely-heard creations. Scored for trumpet, four flutes (sometimes replaced by clarinets) and muted strings, it contrasts three separate musical lines and combines them into a quiet, thought-provoking whole that considers, according to the composer, "the perennial question of existence."

### **Suite from The Red Violin**

**John Corigliano**

**b. New York, New York, USA / February 16, 1938**

John Corigliano is one of the finest and most widely recognized American composers. Among the dozens of honours he has received are all of the most important music awards: several Grammy's, a Pulitzer Prize for *Symphony No. 2* (2001), and a Grawemeyer for *Symphony No. 1* (1991). He won an Academy Award for his score to director François Girard's 1997 film, *The Red Violin*. The film follows a magnificent but haunted violin from owner to owner over a 400-year period. Corigliano has created three concert works based on the score: a chaconne and a concerto, both scored for solo violin and full orchestra, and the suite for solo violin and string orchestra that you will hear at this concert. "The suite is drawn directly from the original film score," the composer has written. "It presents the main themes, then proceeds through the journey of the film, offering the soloist a series of bristling solo etudes that wind their way through the plot."

### **Too Hot Toccata**

**Aaron Jay Kernis**

**b. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA / January 15, 1960**

Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Aaron Jay Kernis studied composition in San Francisco, Manhattan and at Yale. He employed rigorous compositional processes until the early 1980s. From 1990, his style took on a new transparency and emotional eloquence. His is a truly eclectic musical language and he is as happy incorporating Latin rhythms and rap into his music as he is paying harmonic tribute to the Romantic masters and Hildegard von Bingen. The composer writes: *I considered Too Hot Toccata* (1996) to be a kind of farewell to my [St. Paul Chamber Orchestra] residency, but not as a farewell to the orchestra. This work features just about all of the principal players, and treats all of the various orchestra sections as soloists. There is also a horribly difficult honky-tonk piano solo, as well as a fiendish clarinet solo, and a big part for the piccolo trumpet, in addition to a lot of virtuoso percussion writing. The music is a little hyperactive – very high-energy and quite out-of-control, but with a slower middle section for balance.

**Clarinet Concerto**  
**Aaron Copland**

Copland's interest in American music extended beyond folk tunes and cowboy songs to jazz. His interest lay dormant for 20 years, until jazz clarinetist Benny Goodman , commissioned this concerto from him in 1947. Goodman and conductor Fritz Reiner gave the first performance on a radio broadcast from New York featuring the NBC Symphony Orchestra, on November 6, 1950. The concerto consists of one continuous movement, with a solo cadenza linking the two main sections. The opening portion is slow and lyrical, almost like a lullaby. The solo cadenza begins in the same mood, but gradually the rhythms of jazz and South American dances make their way into the music, ushering in the bouncy, virtuosic second half.

**Three Dance Episodes from On the Town**  
**Leonard Bernstein**

**b. Lawrence, Massachusetts, USA / August 25, 1918 d. New York, New York, USA / October 14, 1990**

Following the success of Bernstein's ballet Fancy Free (1944), he decided to adapt its story of three sailors finding romance during a 24-hour shore leave in New York into a musical. On the Town made its successful debut on Broadway before the year was out. Bernstein adapted three dance sequences from the show into this concert suite. In The Great Lover, one of the sailors falls asleep and dreams of winning his lady-love with his irresistible charm. In the lyrical Pas de deux: Lonely Town, the sailors watch as another seaman flirts with, but then abandons an innocent young girl. In the exuberant final number, the guys and their girlfriends take in the bustling sights and sounds of Times Square.

Program Notes by Don Anderson © 2012