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KOUSSEVITZKY conducts Copland

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Preceding the concerto, which brought on a prolonged demonstration of approval, Dr. Koussevitzky gave a resplendent presentation of Mr's Copland's Fourth [*sic*] symphony. The new opus, written on a commission of the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, is in five [*sic*] movements, all of which proved polished in their workmanship. There was a wealth of fascinating orchestration in each of the clearly defined divisions. But many pages, on the contrary, had a bleak and scrawny sound.

Likewise, all of the movements, except the unconvincing *andantino*, had moments of power and communicativeness, offset by others when the content became almost completely cerebral. The first two movements had the most to impart, the second, a scherzo, being quite compelling in its rhythmic strength and in the climactic impact of its closing section. But, on the whole, the symphony was overlong for what it had to say, and was spotty in effect, despite its frequent pages of inspiration.

N. S., New York Times

Concert review, November 17, 1946

Copland's symphonic legacy was secured with the Third Symphony. In the '40s, American composers were searching for The Great American Symphony, and Copland's big four-movement work filled the bill. Composed for Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the jubilant full orchestral forces were a celebration of the end of WWII. Koussevitzky said, "*There is no doubt about it — this is the greatest American symphony. It goes from the heart to the heart.*" The Symphony makes little or no use of folk materials, but Copland borrows from himself by incorporating his triumphant Fanfare for the Common Man in the last movement of this grand work.

Vivian Perlis, Boosey & Hawkes, Programme Note, 1998

Producer's Note

Aaron Copland's *Symphony No. 3*, regarded by many as *the* "Great American Symphony", was commissioned by Serge Koussevitzky and received its first performances with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under his baton. The premiere came in Boston's Symphony Hall on October 18, 1946, and it was repeated there the following night. Thereafter orchestra and conductor took it to New York, with a third performance in Brooklyn's Academy of Music on 15 November, and the following afternoon, this unbroadcast concert in Manhattan's Carnegie Hall (billed on the programme as the works "First performance in New York"). If the New York Times' critic remained to be totally convinced, the audience reaction was ecstatic, with a lengthy ovation lasting many minutes after the final climax.

The existence of the present recording was practically unknown until very recently. Not only is it the earliest recording of this work, it is the only known recording of Koussevitzky performing the masterwork he'd commissioned. A combination of detective work and a certain degree of informed guesswork suggests it was cut live, directly onto a set of acetate 78rpm discs by Carnegie Hall's in-house recording company as a single-copy record of the performance, quite possibly made privately for the composer himself. The discs show variable wear, from relatively clean to quite damaged, and there were a number of times during the lengthy and difficult restoration process where I longed for an alternate copy to work from. In the absence of this option I've done the best possible with the latest and most advanced digital restoration technology available, and beg understanding of the impossibility of achieving a consistently high sound quality throughout. That said, there is much to enjoy here, and long sections remained relatively unscathed.

The companion recordings, both also receiving their first releases, date from the same era of immediate postwar performances at a time when one senses relations between orchestra, conductor and composer were being warmly nurtured. Both again were sourced from acetate discs, in generally better condition and of similar original recording quality. The *Appalachian Spring Suite* hails from a radio broadcast from Hunter College in New York City, whilst *Quiet City* is almost certainly also a live radio broadcast from Boston.

Andrew Rose

Koussevitzky

conducts

COPLAND

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Symphony No. 3
FIRST RECORDING, fourth performance

Appalachian Spring
Quiet City

Boston Symphony Orchestra

Live recordings, 1945-46



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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph
of Koussevitzky with Copland

1 COPLAND *Quiet City* (10:22)

Georges Mager, trumpet

Louis Speyer, English horn

Quiet City

Performed 10 March, 1945
Symphony Hall, Boston

COPLAND *Symphony No. 3*

2 1st mvt. - *Molto moderato, with simple expression* (9:56)

3 2nd mvt. - *Allegro molto* (7:21)

4 3rd mvt. - *Andantino quasi allegretto* (8:30)

5 4th mvt. - *Molto deliberato (Fanfare); Allegro risoluto* (13:41)

Lukas Foss, piano

Symphony No. 3

Fourth concert performance
Performed 16 November, 1946
Carnegie Hall, New York City

Appalachian Spring Suite

Performed 13 April, 1946
Hunter College, New York City

Total duration: 73:09

6 COPLAND *Appalachian Spring Suite* (23:19)

Boston Symphony Orchestra

Serge Koussevitzky, conductor

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