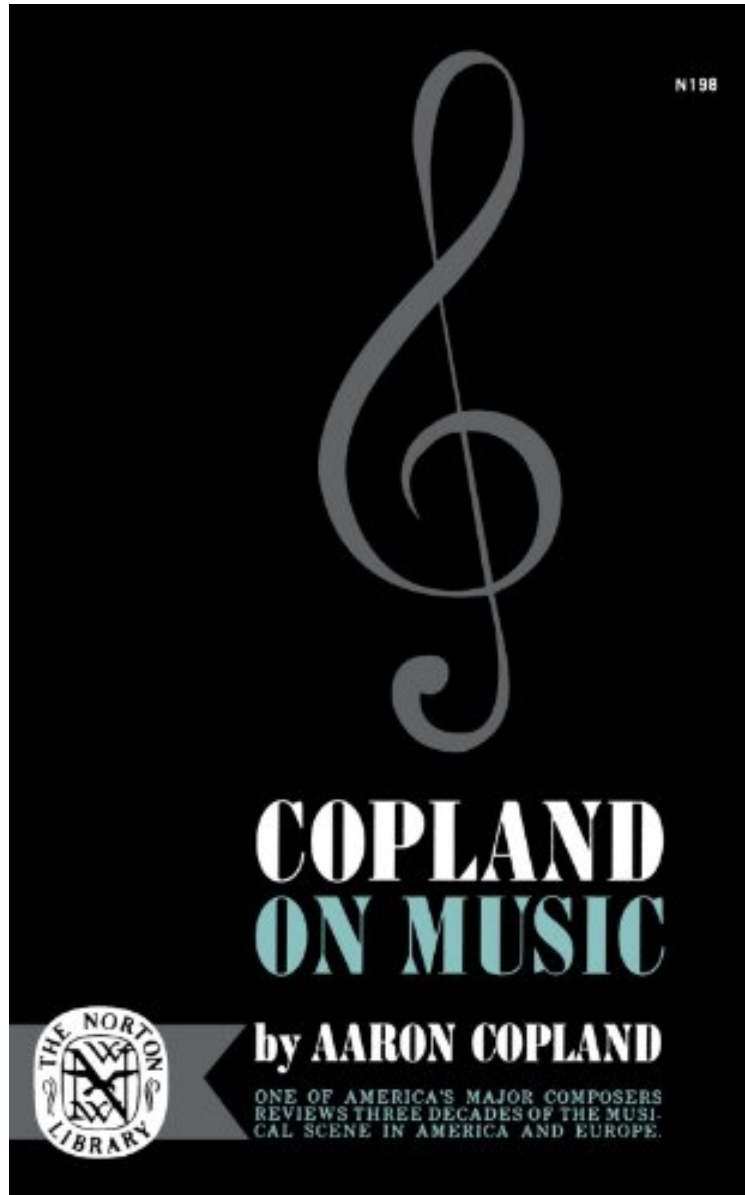


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## Copland on Music

*Aaron Copland*

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**Aaron Copland : Copland on Music** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Copland on Music:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Informative, RevealingBy Dr. R. N. CarrollI have recently been greatly interested in the life, times and music of Aaron Copland, and this small volume reveals much about the composing process of this man. Also compliments the general view that Copland was a kind, generous and likeable man. The material discussed was clearly presented, logically sequenced and very educative for me, a non musician.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Uncle Aaron.By Steve Schwartz, AustinI always find the opinions of good composers on music interesting for their own sake, rather for the justness of their judgments. In some cases -- like Robert Schumann on Berlioz or Virgil Thomson on just about anybody -- their criticisms are especially perspicacious, and their prose is masterful. Copland doesn't quite reach these heights, in either his criticism or his prose, but he is engaging, like a good conversationalist. You do get a sense of what he valued in music and of the kind of music he liked. His essay on Faure is a wonderful fan letter to this under-appreciated master and contains what is to my mind the best impressionistic description of Faure's harmonies. He admires Stravinsky's intellectual rigor and his beautiful workmanship, Mozart's effortless perfection and ultimate mystery, the classically-tinged Romanticism of Berlioz, and the questing, "pioneering spirit" and catholicity of musical taste of Liszt.We also get short aperçus, even bon mots, about such things as opera, proper musical expression, film music, among many other things. Perhaps these were intended as parts of essays that never got written.Finally, we get appreciative surveys of the musical scenes of the United States and Latin America. Sometimes Copland picked winners; sometimes he didn't. But he was always interested in contemporary developments and pushed for wider recognition of many of this lesser-known colleagues, particularly the young ones. Copland's essays here have historical importance.The book is not particularly intellectually rigorous. It's not intended for musical specialists. Copland talks comfortably to the intelligent general reader, and because it's Copland -- one of the finest composers of the century (Stravinsky was a fan) and certainly, with Gershwin, the most influential American composer -- what he says about music carries both interest and weight.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. `Tis a gift to be simple...By John P. Jones III...and during much of his young life, he had to be. He survived on two \$2,500 Guggenheim fellowships in the `20's. I discovered his work during my "coming of age" in the `60's. Fittingly, for someone who grew up in the hills and dales of Western Pennsylvania, there was his most quintessential American work, "Appalachian Spring," subtitled "A Ballet for Martha" (Graham), the dancer. In this work, he expanded the melody of the old Shaker song, "'Tis a gift to be simple," to glorious symphonic scale. I wasn't the only one enthralled: it was coopted by one of the major network news shows during the `60's and `70's. Many of his other works resonated with American themes: "Billy the Kid," "Rodeo," "The Tender Land." Another of my favorites is "Fanfare for the Common Man," with the haunting French horn intro, which is perfect for awaking people at desert encampments. I heard him lecture before conducting symphonic pieces in Atlanta, and he wryly explained that "Fanfare" was given its title since he felt it most likely to resonate with the Boards that rationed paper during the Second World War. His wide-ranging knowledge of the musical world, along with the glint in his eye that reflected the naming of "Fanfare" very much comes through in this book.I purchased this book, and read it just a few years after its publication in 1963. [Note: the current narrative at indicates it was originally published in 1923 (!), which is clearly in error, though the book details do list the publisher and publishing date correctly]. He explains in the introduction that the collection is largely essays that were originally published in a variety of publications, and have simply been collected in book format (with the content unchanged, even the ones written 20 to 30 years earlier), for convenience sake. The first three essays address how music affects our lives, for example, "Music as an Aspect of the Human Spirit." Next there are five essays on various personalities in the music world: the conductor: Serge Koussevitzky; the composer: Igor Stravinsky; the critic: Paul Rosenfeld; the pianist: William Kapell; and the teacher: Nadia Boulanger. In terms of the latter, his experience was a personal one. He traveled to Paris in 1917, and asked permission to be a pupil, which was granted.This is followed by four sketches of the "masters": Mozart, Berlioz, Liszt and Faur. Concerning the first, Copland says: "Paul Valery once wrote; `The definition of beauty is easy; it is that which makes us despair.' On reading that phrase I immediately thought of Mozart. Admittedly despair is an unusual word to couple with the Viennese master's music. And yet, isn't it true that any incommensurable thing sets up within us a kind of despair? There is no way to `seize' the Mozart music." Another section of essays that I found informative involved some of the great European Festivals and Premieres of the interwar years: Zurich, 1926; Baden-Baden, 1927; Paris, 1928; London, 1931; and Berlin, 1932. He explains how each of the events defined and promoted changes in the thinking in the musical world.There are also sections of essays on the younger (North) American composers; the composers of South America, pre-Second World War; and then post-war, there are 10 essays on an assortment of composers. He finishes this collection with four essays on the overall nature of music, of which my favorite is: "'Are My Ears on Wrong?'; A Polemic."My ears are STILL on wrong, meaning I know I don't have a good musically ear. But as the old saw has it, I still know what I like, and the works of Aaron Copland will always be high on the list. For others who love his works, this remains an important book, highly recommended: 5-stars.

Whose fault is it that the artist counts for so little in the public mind? Has it always been thus? Is there something wrong, perhaps, with the nature of the art work being created in America? Is our system of education lacking in its

attitude toward the art product? Should our state and federal governments take a more positive stand toward the cultural development of their citizens? These are some of the provocative questions which Aaron Copland raises and answers in *Copland on Music*.