



Film 4

Aaron Copland: American Populist

Buffeted by social and political currents, Copland can seem unmoored: a cork in a stream. He was politicised by the Depression – and by the example of Mexico, whose artists galvanised national identity and progressive thought. He wrote a prize-winning workers' song and addressed a Communist picnic in Minnesota. Twenty years later, the Red Scare targeted him as a traitor. Can his odyssey be read as a parable illuminating the fate of the American artist? This film features a re-enactment of Copland's grilling by Senator Joseph McCarthy (played by Edward Gero). It also highlights the most consequential Copland score we don't know: his ingenious music for Lewis Mumford's 1939 World's Fair film *The City*, itself a complex product of the Popular Front. We reconsider the valedictory *Piano Fantasy*, in which Copland refreshed his modernist roots – a galvanising performance by Benjamin Pasternack, who also recalls a telling encounter with the composer. Our other commentators include the American historians Michael Kazin and Joseph McCartin, who ponder the tangled legacy of American populism of the left and right. – J.H.

This PostClassical Ensemble 'More than Music' film is part of the Naxos film series, *Dvořák's Prophecy – A New Narrative for American Classical Music*, aligned with Joseph Horowitz's book *Dvořák's Prophecy and the Vexed Fate of Black Classical Music*.

Written and produced by Joseph Horowitz
Visual presentation by Peter Bogdanoff

Music by Aaron Copland performed by pianist Benjamin Pasternack and PostClassical Ensemble conducted by Angel Gil-Ordóñez with Francis Guinan (narrator).

'These six beautiful films reveal a compelling, inclusive musical tradition, deeply interwoven with American culture.'

– J. Peter Burkholder,
author of *A History of Western Music*

Commentary by:
Angel Gil-Ordóñez
Joseph Horowitz
Michael Kazin
Beth Levy
Joseph McCartin

Actors:
Lorenzo Candelaria
Edward Gero
Murray Horwitz

As the *Dvořák's Prophecy* films were undertaken during the pandemic, interviews were conducted virtually and in many cases do not meet normal technical standards.

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Total playing time: 78 minutes • NTSC 16:9 • PCM stereo • Region: 0 (worldwide) • DVD 9
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Composer photo: © Library of Congress

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