

A MUSICAL AND LITERARY STUDY OF
THE SONGS OF AARON COPLAND

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Aaron Copland is one of the foremost American composers of our century. Julia Smith has called Copland a

. . . simple and great man in our midst, whose powerful personality and spiritual strength projected through a life long devotion and ministration to his chosen art have made him one of the leading composers and musical figures of the contemporary world. (1, p. 7)

Olin Downes, senior music critic of the New York Times, had this to say after Copland's twenty-fifth year of composing:

By the quality of his workmanship, the sincerity and adventurousness of his progress, Copland made himself the spearpoint of the development of the modern American school. And he has done this in an unostentatiousness and a desire for service to his art that will leave their mark on this whole period of native composition and open the way for a greater future to come. (1, p. 8)

Aaron Copland has composed for almost every medium and is best known for his larger orchestral works. However, his seven published vocal works are special representations of Copland's unique musical style, combining his ability to sensitively interweave poetry, vocal line and accompaniment into a total poetic and musical expression of human

feeling. The height of Copland's musical and literary expression is reached in his song cycle, Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson, which is undoubtedly the composer's major vocal achievement.

The purpose of this paper is to study the background and stylistic traits of the composer, Aaron Copland, in order to make a credible musical and literary study of the songs of Aaron Copland. Due to the important contribution of Copland's compositions to contemporary American music, and due to the creative musical challenge involved in the performance of his works, the author feels that a study of Copland's vocal music and the preparation of a selected group of these songs for a recital, is a valid study involving an expansion of musical knowledge and performance experience.

Material for this paper has been compiled from books, periodicals, and vocal scores.

All of the songs of Aaron Copland were compiled and studied to assist the author in preparing a lecture-recital of his songs. The paper will emphasize the literary, as well as the musical content of the songs, leading the author to a better understanding of the unique relationship

between the poetry and the music of Copland's pieces. The study of this music has led the author to a more perceptive recital performance of the chosen works, and it has developed source material for teaching purposes.

The first chapter states the purpose of the paper, and the justification for the study, the procedure used, and the probable values resulting from the study of the songs of Aaron Copland. Chapter II is a brief biography of Aaron Copland which provides information about his musical background and accomplishments. The third chapter provides information about Copland's use of stylistic musical elements as they are divided into characteristic periods of his composition. Also, his general musical composing style and certain major works are discussed in Chapter III. Chapter IV relates the musical and literary study of Copland's vocal works and is sub-divided according to the importance of the work. The first part of the chapter, Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson, is divided into two areas: a biography of Emily Dickinson, followed by a musical and literary study of each of the twelve songs in the cycle. Because this is Copland's major vocal accomplishment, it is a longer and more involved study than the remaining

vocal compositions. The second part of Chapter IV contains a musical and literary study of the two sets of Old American Songs, and the chapter concludes with a brief study of each of the remaining songs of Aaron Copland. Musical scores studied in this chapter are: Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson, Old American Songs - Sets I and II, "Old Poem", "As it Fell Upon a Day", "Vocalise", "Poet's Song", and "Dirge in Woods". Chapter V draws the conclusion to the paper.

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CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY OF AARON COPLAND

Aaron Copland was born on November 14, 1900, in Brooklyn, New York, of Russian - Jewish descent to Mr. and Mrs. Harris Copland. The Lithuanian family name of Kaplan was changed to Copland in 1876 when Harris moved to England. Immigration officials supplied him with an impromptu spelling of his name as it sounded when pronounced, and the family retained that spelling. (5, p. 479)

Aaron was the youngest of five children, having two brothers, Ralph and Leon, and two sisters, Laurine and Josephine. Although the children took violin and piano lessons, and the whole family loved to gather around the piano to sing together, no one in the Copland family except Aaron was seriously interested in music. Aaron's sister, Laurine, began to teach him how to play the piano when he was eleven, and within six months he had accomplished all his sister had learned in four years. At the age of thirteen, after learning all he could on his own, Aaron's parents reluctantly agreed to pay for his piano lessons. As early as the age of fifteen, Aaron decided he wanted to compose.

However, it was not until after his graduation from the Boy's High School in Brooklyn, in 1917, that Copland began his study of harmony and composition with Ruben Goldmark. (5, p. 429)

"It was during his years of study with Goldmark that Copland became intrigued and strongly influenced by the music of Debussy." Copland's attention was attracted by Debussy's style as it broke the conventional rules of harmony he was then learning from Goldmark, and yet, was beautiful to his ear. This awareness of a more modern style of composing led Copland to compose a piano piece in 1920, entitled "Le Chat et la Souris" ("The Cat and the Mouse"). He presented this to Ruben Goldmark who commented, "I have no standards by which to judge such modern experiments." (6, p. 43) Although Goldmark was too conservative to appreciate "Le Chat et la Souris", Copland kept the piece and later performed it in Paris. This became Aaron Copland's first published work.

In 1921 Aaron Copland went to Paris where he became the first student to enroll at the American School, then established for music in the Palace at Fontainebleau. After a summer session there he began to study composition

with Nadia Boulanger, and Copland "was the first of a line of distinguished American composers to benefit from her exceptional musical and pedagogical gifts." (1, p. 420)

Copland expressed his own indebtedness to Nadia Boulanger along with that of other American composers when he wrote: "The influence of this remarkable woman on American creative music will someday be written in full." (1, p. 421) Copland's first major work, Symphony for Organ and Orchestra, was written at the request of Nadia Boulanger for her to play on an American tour in 1925.

On returning to America in 1924, Copland was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, the first ever given to a composer, enabling him to spend two more years in Europe. With the fellowship, Copland was able to relinquish such menial jobs as playing the piano at a summer hotel to support himself and devote all his time to composing. The result was Music for the Theater for Koussevitzky, conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. With its jazz elements, Music for the Theater was to form the basis of his first stylistic period. (1, p. 421) -

Copland was back in America in 1927 and lecturing at the New School for Social Research in New York City. It

was here that he and his composer friend, Roger Sessions, co-founded the Copland-Sessions Concerts in 1928, to support the presentation of "avant garde" concerts for a limited number of people. These programs presented music by new, young composers, and the concert series was financed by interested, wealthy people. Money became scarce after the stock market crash, however, and the concerts were discontinued after 1931. Yet, the effort had not been in vain, because the Copland-Sessions concerts did as much as anything else to help make modern American music better known and understood. (6, p. 76)

In 1932, Aaron Copland created the Yaddo Festivals at a retreat for artists outside Saratoga Springs, New York. Yaddo had formerly been the home of Mr. and Mrs. Spencer Trask who had enjoyed entertaining summertime guests - especially writers, artists, and composers. The estate had been named Yaddo by the Trasks' four year old daughter. After the death of Spencer Trask, his wife made Yaddo a summer place for artists. Through Copland's influence, festivals were begun there to allow young composers to present their new music to the public. (6, p. 78)

In 1937, Aaron Copland founded the American Composers Alliance "to protect composers who do not operate on the grander scale of ASCAP members." (1, p. 422) Also during the 1930's, he brought young people together to organize the Young Composers Group. Aaron Copland continues to be a central figure in the League of Composers.

Along with these contributions to American music, his participation in the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, the Composers Forum, and the United States section of the International Society for Contemporary Music, has made Aaron Copland indispensable in the support of American music and musicians. He has also written books on music, articles for music journals, and has lectured at the New School for Social Research in New York and at Harvard University.

Aaron Copland's important compositions will be discussed in the following chapters; however, it should be mentioned that he received the Pulitzer Prize for his ballet, Appalachian Spring, and the Boston Symphony Award for his Third Symphony. In 1956, he was granted an honorary doctorate from Princeton University. (4, p. 132)

The most recent, and possibly the greatest, honor given to Aaron Copland was the Medal of Freedom. The highest

honor a United States President can bestow was presented to him on September 14, 1964, in the east room of the White House. The President praised Copland for being a "leading force in the development of the modern American school of composition." (6, p. 130)

During the last fifteen years, Copland has been doing more and more conducting, and has directed orchestras all over the world. However, he still feels the most important thing he does is compose. (6, p. 129)

Aaron Copland's personal life and friendships are so integrated with his profession that it is difficult to separate the two. Consequently, very little personal information exists about Aaron Copland. It is evident, however, that Copland made friends easily all of his life. Catherine Peare describes Copland as an even-tempered, happy person bursting with enthusiasm. Aaron Copland has always loved people, and his compositions and performances have been for people. Copland's work has never been for self-glory, but for the satisfaction of sharing the joy of music with others. Even as a young boy Copland found that he could express every emotion he experienced in music. (6, p. 23)

One of the dearest long-time friends of Aaron Copland was Harold Clurman, who became a famous drama critic and Broadway director. Harold and Aaron met in 1921, just before they were both to sail for Paris. They became roommates for the duration of their stay in France, and have remained close friends. (6, p. 52)

Three special friends of Aaron Copland who were important influences on his musical career are Carlos Chavez, Roger Sessions, and Benjamin Britten.

As Aaron Copland achieved success and prominence in his career, his helpful nature caused him to be a leading influence on many younger composers. One of these younger musicians was Leonard Bernstein, whom Copland fondly nicknamed "Lenny". (6, p. 113) These two musicians met quite by accident at a recital in New York on November 14, 1937. As it was Copland's birthday, he invited Leonard Bernstein to the party after the recital. Bernstein describes this meeting as one of the most important events of his life, for the two men struck up an immediate friendship and mutual respect. Copland was an ardent supporter of Bernstein and a constant source of encouragement. Yet, Copland was not always sympathetic to Bernstein's frequent

complaints concerning his musical career, as exemplified in the following incident related by Leonard Bernstein:

Aaron would always giggle first - the infectuous giggle is his most common reaction to anything - then, with an attempt at sternness, glower, 'Stop complaining. You are destined for success. Nobody's worried about you. You are the one person worried about you.', and I would get very angry and insist upon being worried about. (2, p. 54)

There are no women mentioned in connection with Aaron Copland's personal life, with the exceptions of his personal friend and teacher, Nadia Boulanger, and his mother. Aaron Copland has never married.

This year Copland will be seventy-four years old. It is hard to think of him as growing old, for his manner and his interests are those of a younger man. "Throughout his career, he has been driven by an insatiable curiosity about what is going on in his profession. He is always growing - trying new techniques, flirting with new styles." (3, p. 135)

After viewing the life and background of this great American musician, the special qualities of his writing style should become more vivid as they are discussed in Chapter III. The brief sketch of Copland's changing musical styles through the years will be more specifically related to his vocal compositions in Chapter IV.

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CHAPTER III

DISCUSSION OF COPLAND'S MUSICAL STYLE

Most musicians agree that as a composer, teacher, writer on musical topics, and organizer of musical events, Aaron Copland is one of the most important figures of the contemporary American school. "It has been Aaron Copland's preoccupation for the better part of four decades, to express the deepest reactions of the American Consciousness to the American scene." (6, p. 478)

Copland has a uniquely individual style, but this style over a period of forty years has undergone many striking transformations, "partly determined by a rare critical faculty and partly by a sense of responsibility to musical audiences". (1, p. 420) Copland has never been one to justify his compositions by simply saying he "felt that way". He has always tried to look as objectively as possible at his own works, to determine when he has exhausted certain techniques, stylistic traits, and a new approach is necessary. (1, p. 420)

Copland's strongly individualistic music is unmistakably an expression of the United States. "However, it would be doing both him and ourselves an injustice to judge him by the narrow nationalistic criterion so common in this hemisphere." (7, p. 17) Aaron Copland's style emerges from a broad musical outlook which has been formed through years of personal and musical experiences. Copland has said that the composer's character is made of two distinct elements, "the personality with which he was born, and the influences of the time in which he lives". (2, p. 158) With this in mind, after discussing previously Copland's life experiences and personality, we can begin a discussion of Copland's musical style.

All sources researched seemed to agree that Copland has composed in stylistic periods rather than used one stylistic idiom constantly. Perhaps the most detailed and the clearest breakdown of Copland's music from 1924-1955, has been made by Julia Smith in her book, Aaron Copland. (9, p. 118) Therefore, Copland's music during this time will be discussed in view of Miss Smith's three categories. Copland's music after the year 1955, has not been categorized into a specific stylistic period.

The compositions seem to employ a mixture of the stylistic idioms used in his first three composition periods.

The first composition period lasted from 1924-1929, and is titled by Miss Smith as the French-Jazz period. (9, p. 118) As a student of Nadia Boulanger, Copland belongs to a generation of Americans who were nurtured by the Parisian's view of life and art. He found his point of departure in the neo-classicism of Stravinsky. During the French-Jazz period, Copland extensively used jazz rhythms, ragtime bass, and poly-rhythms, as rhythm became more important to the composer than melody. Dissonance became prominent, and Copland began writing without key signatures, though still maintaining a sense of tonality. In 1924, Nadia Boulanger asked Copland to write an organ concerto for her to play on her American tour. He then wrote Symphony for Organ and Orchestra which was later recorded without organ to become his First Symphony. This was his second orchestral work, but his first to reach audiences anywhere. This orchestral work was a reflection of experimental jazz rhythms and strident harmonies which prompted Walter Damrosch after conducting this work to say to the audience: "If a young man at the age of twenty-three can write a

symphony like that, in five years he will be ready to commit murder." (1, p. 421)

In 1925, Copland became eager to write a work that would be above all "American". He had only experimented with the jazz idiom before, but said, ". . . I wanted frankly to adopt the jazz idiom and see what I could do with it in a symphonic way." (6, p. 481) He achieved this dimension in Music for the Theater in which "Jazz was assimilated to the polytonal language of neo-classicism." (6, p. 482) Music for the Theater contained direct allusions to "Tin Pan Alley" which formed the basis of his style until his Symphonic Ode of 1928. The Symphonic Ode was a direct result of the "Concerto for Piano and Orchestra," 1927, which proved to be the last of Copland's experiments with symphonic jazz. Copland said,

With the concerto I felt I had done all I could with the idiom, considering its limited emotional scope. True, it was an easy way to be American in musical terms, but all American music could not possibly be confined to two dominant jazz moods: the 'blues' and the snappy number. (6, p. 481)

The Symphonic Ode was the culmination of this first composition period. The work emphasizes the chief elements of his early style: a rhetorical bigness of gesture, the stylization of jazz polyrhythms, and the polytonal

language he learned in Paris.

The published vocal works during the French-Jazz period were "Old Poem," "As It Fell Upon a Day," "Song," and "Vocalise."

There was one ballet written during this first style period in 1925, first called, Grohg, which reached the public in an excerpt called "Cortege Macabre" and later was changed to the Dance Symphony which received the RCA Victor Company award in 1930. (4, p. 143)

All of the compositions of the French-Jazz period reflect a very definite and original musical personality. The composer has been described as a

clear, logical thinker with a richly endowed musicality; brilliant craftsman; a nonsentimentalist; a man of high-strung, nervous vitality; one who works with direction, fearlessness, honesty, supreme concentration, and with little superfluous detail, development, or decoration. (4, p. 143)

Aaron Copland has always been a man of his time. As the complexity of his early style with the frequent harshness of his dissonance, and the dominant use of jazz idiom reflected the careless, extravagant twenties, the disillusioned-filled depression years of the early thirties were reflected in the music of his second style period

called Abstract, 1929-1935. (9, p. 119) Copland obviously was searching for new direction in 1928, when he composed "Vitebsk" (Study on a Jewish Theme) for violin, cello, and piano, and "Song" for voice and piano. Both of these works were experiments in the "serial" or twelve tone technique, and in "Vitebsk" Copland experimented with some brief quarter-tone passages for a "color" effect. (10, p. 219)

Therefore, the second style period is characterized by leanness of its textures and patterns, and the more sparse sonorities. As Aaron Copland had experimented with jazz elements before, he was now experimenting with different kinds of serial techniques as exemplified in his "Piano Variations", 1930, in which he employs a very closely worked and effective serial technique based on a four-note row. (8, p. 139) He also experimented with compound meter signatures - two meters applying to successive measures - as in the first movement of his "Sextet", a reduced version of the Short Symphony for string quartet, clarinet, and piano. (10, p. 219)

During the Abstract period his melodic lines were characterized by angles, lines, and planes; "sharply defined motifs, and reiteration of short figures of bits

of thematic material." (4, p. 144) There was also a harmonic starkness resulting from melodic and instrumental juxtapositions and frequent percussive, staccato, dry piano tones as exemplified in "Piano Variations", 1930, and "Vitebsk", 1929. Another major symphonic work during this time was Statements, 1935. There was no vocal music composed during the Abstract period.

Copland's music of the Abstract period was difficult for the average listener to grasp, not merely because of the dissonances, but because "its whole conception is what is often regarded as 'esoteric.'" (1, p. 422) His music was not being accepted by the masses, which was a grave disappointment to the composer, and Copland began to feel that he was out of touch with present society. Copland realized that an entirely new society had risen up around him in which the radio and phonograph played an important role. Copland said,

It made no sense to ignore them (radio and phonograph) and to continue writing as if they did not exist. I felt that it was worth the effort to see if I couldn't say what I had to say in the simplest possible terms. (6, p. 482)

From this attitude arose the third stylistic period entitled Folk Song, 1934-1955. (9, p. 21) The title is

derived from Copland's imaginative use of folklore elements - cowboy songs, New England and Quaker hymns, and Latin-American rhythms. During this period, Copland seemed preoccupied with media that could communicate with a large public. It should be stressed that although Copland himself described his musical language of this time "simple", this term would seem to lean more toward the idea of "familiar", for the folk melodies and rhythms he incorporates and embellishes in his music are familiar to the general public and enjoyed by all, but they are certainly not simple to perform. The period from 1934-1955, produced the composer's most fruitful and prolific work.

The music of this new style period reached the public in 1937 with his two-act "play-opera", The Second Hurricane, written for high school performance; and shortly afterward El Salon Mexico, inspired by the memory of his first visit to Mexico in 1932. Copland said it wasn't the music of Mexico which inspired him, but the spirit he felt and hoped to capture in his music. (4, p. 45) El Salon Mexico is representative of Copland's blending of early and later styles with use of obvious popular and simple folk melodies, syncopated dance rhythms and brilliant orchestrations. It

is more consonant than works of the Abstract period, but dissonance is by no means lacking. El Salon Mexico caught on at once and Copland then became well known beyond the restricted circle of composers. (1, p. 424) Another inspiration of Copland's Latin-American travels produced "Danzon Cubano," a two-piano piece based on Cuban dance rhythms.

Following these works were pieces like Music for Radio, and five film scores that brought him to the attention of broad sections of the American public: John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men" (1939), Thornton Wilder's "Our Town" (1940), Lillian Hellman's "The North Star" (1943), Steinbeck's "The Red Pony" (1948), and Henry James' "The Heiress". The score for the latter film won an Academy Award. (6, p. 482)

"The three ballet scores of the period combined vivid rhythms and brilliant orchestral textures with a tender feeling for the rural American scene. (6, p. 482) Billy the Kid (1938) evokes the prairie with the suggestion of nostalgic longing, vastness and loneliness. Rodeo (1942) is written in a lighter vein based on the efforts of an energetic cowgirl to get her man, and Appalachian Spring is undoubtedly one of Copland's best and most renown works.

Appalachian Spring (1943-1944) was a commissioned work from the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation, written for Martha Graham, which brought Copland a Pulitzer Prize. It was first written as a ballet and later Copland arranged a concert suite from the ballet using a larger orchestra. (6, p. 482)

There were several patriotic works during this period reflecting the travail of the war years, such as A Lincoln Portrait (1942) for speaker and orchestra, and Letter from Home (1944), an orchestral work commissioned by the American Broadcasting Company. Copland wrote one opera, The Tender Land (1954), also a commissioned work. The Tender Land proved to be a rather limp work lacking the "dynamic" conflict of personalities, and the projection of human motives in musico-dramatic terms which is the essence in opera. (6, p. 483) During an interview in 1960, Copland remarked, "Opera eats up three years of your time, then everything is decided in one night." (3, p. 93) At this time Copland had no plans for writing another opera.

Aside from this "Americana" aspect of the compositions during this stylistic period, Copland continued to cultivate the more serious aspects of his art with pieces such as

"The Piano Sonata" (1941), "Sonata for Violin and Piano" (1943), "Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra", commissioned by Benny Goodman (1948), "Quartet for Piano and Strings" (1950), and Third Symphony. (6, p. 483)

The only vocal works during the third composition period were the Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson (1948-1950), and the two sets of Old American Songs (1950-1954) which will be discussed further in Chapter IV. These were the first vocal works for Copland since 1928. (9, p. 253)

Aaron Copland's work since 1955 has been on a large scale. Almost everything written has been for large instrumentation. Of his ten symphonic works since 1955, the most important are: Ceremonial Fanfare, Connotations for Orchestra, Dance Panels, Inscape, and Music for a Great City. He has written one piece for string orchestra, two for chamber groups, two band pieces, and only a few works for solo instruments. There has only been one published vocal piece by Copland since 1955, and there has been no choral music from Copland since that time.

It seems that Copland's compositions since 1955 have utilized all the different stylistic idioms employed in his earlier works. With the major portion of his composition

years behind him, one might think he would have developed a final "mature" idiom; however, in recent years his compositions have still proved to be full of new ideas and experimental styles. Connotations, for example, is similar to compositions of his Abstract period, while Emblems for large symphonic band, is full of the hymn tunes and bits of Americana used mostly in his third style period. In the orchestral piece Inscape he uses a pair of twelve-tone rows, wide open harmonies and simple tunes which resemble the Copland of over thirty years ago. (3, p. 135)

In regard to his changing styles in a 1969 interview, Copland remarked,

When you look back over a period of years and judge your own work, you can recognize changes of style which had come about from your feeling that the style you had used previously had been completely explored. But the deliberate attempt to change just because you like to change is too arbitrary and doesn't work. (3, p. 135)

Perhaps Copland's changing styles sometimes seemed rather arbitrary, yet generally worked. "Copland gives the impression of being able to write any kind of music he pleases, and every major trend, from the end of the impressionistic period until now, is reflected in his catalogue." (3, p. 135)

Throughout the stylistic periods of Copland's career some general musical characteristics have been present. His harmonic language is essentially diatonic. "He needs the key center if only because of his assiduous exploration of polytonal relationship." (6, p. 483) Basic to his thinking is the triad, and very characteristic is his wavering between major and minor or his simultaneous use of both. Often one detects an archaic modal flavor, especially in the slow movements of his larger works. Copland's melodies are lyrical, especially in his later compositions. Also, melodies are simple and direct, using stepwise movements along the scale, or sometimes using wide melodic intervals. Melodic forms are built up through the use of motivic fragments which are repeated over and over, each time with slight variations, in a process of cumulative growth. Copland's preoccupation with folk material greatly benefited his melodic sense. He points out that the use of folk melodies should never be a mechanical process. "They can be successfully handled only by a composer who is able to identify himself with and re-express in his own terms, the underlying emotional connotations of the material." (6, p. 484)

Copland also uses the Pandiatonic principle in which all or any notes of the diatonic scale may be regarded as consonant with one another for vertical combinations. For example, in Appalachian Spring the opening chord with its derivations and amplifications serve as a unifying device, a characteristic sonority with divided strings and soft woodwinds that returns from time to time throughout the work. (5, p. 624)

His music has a strong rhythmic impulse which in fast movements thrusts forward with a staccato-like propulsion that generates excitement. He uses ostinato and percussive rhythm especially in the earlier works and frequent changes of meter plus re-arranged accents, resulting in exciting syncopations. (6, p. 484)

Like Stravinsky, Copland's orchestral texture uses as few notes as possible with a careful spacing of chords. This sparse instrumental writing emphasizes high registers, particularly in the trumpets and violins, which helps give his music that clean, transparent sound. Another asset of his instrumental writing is his adeptness at obtaining new sounds from simple chords by instrumental color and spacing. (5, p. 624)

Copland's later works show him receptive to the serial technique of the twelve-tone school, although he never abandons key principle.

Aaron Copland's music stands in the mainstream of contemporary music and for many listeners Copland is the representative composer of the mid-twentieth century.

(6, p. 485)

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CHAPTER IV

MUSICAL AND LITERARY STUDY OF COPLAND'S VOCAL WORKS

Creation and interpretation are indissolubly linked, more so in music than in any of the other arts, with the possible exception of dancing. Creation and interpretation demand an imaginative mind. A serious composer will eventually ask himself, "Why is it important to me to compose music? And, why is that creative impulse never satisfied?" (9, p. 135) The answer is always the same: one must compose for self-expression; and the compulsion to renewed creativity is that "each added work brings with it an element of self-discovery." (9, p. 135) Because of this the artist's work is supremely important to himself.

The musical interpreter, then, is the intermediary that brings the composer's work to life. He must have the same dedication of purpose, the same sense of self-discovering, and the same conviction that something unique is lost when his own understanding of a work of art is lost.

The purpose of this paper is to study the background and stylistic traits of the composer, Aaron Copland, in order to make a credible musical and literary study of

Copland's songs. Because the voice is the most personal of all musical instruments and a constant source of self-expression, the songs of Aaron Copland become particularly expressive when they are studied in regard to the poet, the composer, and the performer.

Aaron Copland is a personality of many aspects; therefore, his songs are an expression of many different moods and feelings. Copland has an adeptness at teaming opposites and could be called "The Practical Poet." (9, p. 132) He is able to portray moods, feelings, and paint pictures in simple, but expansive musical terms. This unique relationship between the poetry and the music in the songs of Aaron Copland will be discussed.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part is devoted to the Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson. Part two discusses the Old American Songs, and part three covers the remaining songs of Copland.

Copland's largest vocal work, in the form of a song cycle, Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson, has been researched in regard to the relationship of the poet and poetry, to the composer and interpreter. It is divided into two sections: Biography of Emily Dickinson and Musical and

Literary study of the songs. The author performed these songs on a Lecture Recital July 8, 1974.

The Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson is a major achievement not only in the career of Aaron Copland, but also in contemporary musical literature. (20, p. 253), and must be placed among Copland's large and important works.

The difficulty many listeners may have in understanding these songs may be attributed to the mysterious personality of the poet, Emily Dickinson, and Copland's response to her emotions with his unique and difficult melodic lines and rhythmic notation.

Therefore, in order to fully analyze the music in terms of its relationship to the poetry, it is necessary to research the life and personality of Emily Dickinson. Copland must have been familiar with the history of Emily Dickinson to achieve such a depth of understanding in this music.

Biography of Emily Dickinson

Most critics seem to agree that Emily Dickinson stands at the top of American achievement in poetry, and that she is one of the greatest women poets. (7, p. 3)

Emily Dickinson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, December 10, 1830, into a distinguished and respected New England family. Emily was the second child, having an older brother, Austin, and a younger sister, Lavenia, who was fondly called "Vinnie". Her father, Edward, was a successful lawyer. However, his political inclinations kept him away from home often, leaving the care of his children to his timid and dependent wife, Emily Norcross Dickinson. (8, p. 16)

Emily's education was somewhat erratic. She first attended Amherst Academy, a local primary school, where she attracted attention with her wit, humor, her scholastic excellence and the originality of her themes. Emily seems to have been popular with her classmates and she impressed her teachers as being very gifted, but physically delicate and nervous. Later, Emily was sent to Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary in South Hadley, a scholastically superior school where the girls were under strict religious auspices. Emily was sometimes enthusiastic about school and sometimes very depressed. Her school career was punctuated with frequent absence, and often she would return home for months at a time. Her formal schooling was finished at

the age of seventeen. (8, p. 18)

The strict religious atmosphere of Holyoke Seminary had a definite influence on the mind and personality of Emily Dickinson. During 1842, Emily experienced a religious conversion that temporarily brought her great peace of mind. (8, p. 20) However, it is reported that she gradually returned to her "old habits" and she cared less for religion than ever. When a great religious revival swept through New England in 1845, Emily avoided going to meetings because she said, "I dare not trust myself." (8, p. 18) She felt that she was only susceptible to the emotionalism generated and feared she would be led again into spiritual self-deception. Emily was pressured mercilessly, humiliated, and threatened by the teachers of Holyoke because she refused to "accept Christ" and join the church. This was a terribly painful experience for sensitive Emily, and it must have had a great deal to do with her constantly changing beliefs in God and eternity as evidenced in her poetry. (8, p. 17)

Emily patterned herself somewhat after her father, for she seemed to love and respect him more than anyone. Although her father was an outgoing and successful man,

Emily wrote that he led a "lonely life and met a lonelier death." (8, p. 17) Emily identified with her father and much of his experience remained in Emily's own life, as she describes in her poetry "the lone effort to live and its bleak reward." (7, p. 24)

Emily's brother, Austin, became a lawyer, and he and his wife lived out their unhappy marriage in a house next door to the Dickinsons. Lavenia and Emily never married and stayed close to home except for a few modest excursions. Gradually, their tendency toward social insecurity and retreat, which had always been discernible beneath the surface of their wry humor and youthful friendliness, asserted itself as a dominant characteristic. Emily became even more withdrawn than her sister, and in the eyes of the neighbors and townspeople she was a strange and morbid personality. As early as age twenty-two Emily was going out of her way to avoid meeting people, running when the doorbell rang at the age of twenty-eight, and at thirty she had ceased to talk with old friends when they came to visit, except through a closed door. When she was thirty-one, Emily began the habit of dressing exclusively in white which she continued to do until her death. Doctors

were permitted to examine her only by passing by her bedroom and looking in through a cracked door at her, fully dressed in her bed. During the funerals of each of her parents, which were held in the home, Emily would not join the friends and relatives, but listened from the bedroom upstairs. "All of these apparent expressions of thwarted and pent-up feelings and signs of irrational fear increased and became more and more incapacitating as she grew older." (8, p. 19)

Emily Dickinson felt she never knew anyone of really great or original intelligence. However, two of Emily's tutors seemed to have made a great impression upon her. The Rev. Charles Wadsworth read her poetry and became her critic and friend from 1854-1862. He made the most impression on her, possessing fervor and eloquence, but no striking intelligence. Some sources believe she actually fell in love with Wadsworth although he was happily married. They only met three times and exchanged letters, but it is said "their meetings were deeply charged with emotion, and beyond this we can say no more about their intimacy." (7, p. 74)

From 1862 until her death, Colonel T. W. Higginson

was her friend and critic. They met only once in 1870, after corresponding for years in letters, and talked through a closed door. Higginson reported later that he was impressed by her profundity but awed by her strangeness. Emily opened their conversation by apologizing for her obvious fearfulness, explaining "I never see strangers and hardly know what to say." (8, p. 21) He wrote, "I was never with anyone who drained my nerve power so much; without touching her, she drew from me. I am glad not to live near her." (8, p. 21) Higginson seems to have been exhausted by the sense of her voracious need. "The same craving for affection which smolders throughout the poetry and letters of Emily Dickinson seems to have driven Higginson from her presence, relieved that he lived a safe hundred miles distance." (8, p. 21) In a letter to Higginson in 1862, Emily Dickinson said, "I had no monarch in my life and cannot rule myself and when I try to organize, my little force explodes and leaves me bare and charred." (7, p. 67) She never found a writer or teacher who could exercise the kind of definitive influence upon her which she felt she needed.

Granted, Emily Dickinson's behavior seems strange and

mysterious. Some even described her as "partially cracked." (8, p. 21) However, the idea of seclusion will always fascinate the minds of those who live in a culture which professes a public, or at least a non-private ideal of existence. Emily's way of life was not that unusual for nineteenth century spinsters or widows. Retirement from the world had always been a possible life style for this group when they had no one but themselves and few single friends. Many of these spinsters stayed close to home and developed little idiosyncrasies such as always dressing the same and not being very sociable. (7, p. 8) The only difference between these spinsters and Miss Dickinson is that she had her poetry as her emotional outlet and communication and felt that she needed no one else.

While some critics feel that Emily Dickinson was an emotionally disturbed woman, and that the desolation, frustration, and hopelessness of so much of her poetry is a direct result of her disturbed and depressed life, another group feels that the gloom and desolation in her poetry is not necessarily a reflection of her own experiences. One writer has said, "she found encouragement

from identifying herself with the Martyr Poets who wrought their pain in syllable, and she knew that suffering and despair were the mainsprings of her art." (17, p. 95)

We tend to think of Emily Dickinson's poetry as the "last fine utterance of New England Puritanism, or the New England Renaissance, or as the subtle poetic expression of a grandly energetic civilization-building American."

(7, p. 23) However, we should examine the negative side of the cultural life in which Emily lived, the slackness, the mediocrity, the softness and bluntness of moral and intellectual experience, the anxious isolation and the monotony of both private and public life. Miss Dickinson was ahead of her time and above her civilization in her thought processes. Everything in her poetry is a tendency away from the slackness and mediocrity of her society. Emily Dickinson had tried society and the world and found them lacking, thus, the creatures and forces of nature became sufficient companionship.

If the impetus of her society was to level emotion and intelligence out into a uniformity neither limited nor deep, the intention of her poetry was to affirm a universe in depth, a universe in which dramatic distinction must be made between society, man, nature, and God. (7, p. 23)

Verses of Emily Dickinson were something produced absolutely without thought of publication and solely by way of expression of the writer's own mind. They are flashes of wholly original and profound insight into nature and life. (4, p. 10)

The question of Emily Dickinson's sanity has been a subject of debate among literary critics for years. However, the author of this paper feels that Miss Dickinson was not insane, neither was she as emotionally disturbed as some tend to think. It is true that in addition to her strangely reclusive life she also was erratic in her thinking--as evidenced by her changes in religious beliefs. She sometimes believed there was no eternity and yet her poetry often expresses a desire to want to believe that Heaven is real, if for no other reason than to again be with her loved ones. Because her thinking is often disorganized, so is her poetry. However, many poems are very ordered and develop thoughts clearly such as, "Heart We Will Forget Him".

The depth and thoroughness of her thinking, along with the obvious deep sensitivity to every phase of life as evidenced in the writing of Emily Dickinson reveals to this

author a woman with mental and emotional capacities far surpassing the mundane existence of humanity in her century. This author feels that Emily Dickinson retreated to a life of solitude because she could not cope with being misunderstood. Certainly her total seclusion was not understood by people who knew of her, but perhaps Emily Dickinson felt that had she lived as she wished and expressed her thoughts and philosophies openly, her public life would have met with less acceptance than her seclusion. The poet once wrote that her life had been "too simple and stern to embarrass any." (7, p. 7)

The profoundly disordered undercurrent one senses in the life of Emily Dickinson also moves through her poetry. Desolation, hopelessness, and a fierce and frustrated longing arise from nearly every page. Emily Dickinson had a great need to communicate with the world, and her poetry became her only vehicle for communicating her feelings about love and affection, concern and consolation, and reproach and irony. (13, p. 15)

Her style of writing was unconventional and often hard to follow, and her verse contained many technical imperfections. A contemporary of Emily Dickinson commented, "absence

of conventional form challenges attention." (4, p. 44)

Conrad Aiken stated that her genius was as erratic as it was brilliant. Grammar, rhyme, and meter were completely disregarded as they stood in the way of thought and freedom of utterance. She little cared for variety as practically all her six hundred plus poems are in octosyllabic quatrain or couplets, sometimes with rhyme, sometimes with assonance, sometimes neither. Such resulted in singular perversity becoming a positive charm. They satisfied her; therefore, they satisfy the reader. (4, p. 44)

Miss Dickinson wrote practically no free verse, using rhyme and meter in the overwhelming majority of her poems. She used meter derived from the hymn books to which she was exposed as a child, and varied these meters by substituting an occasional trochaic foot in place of the expected iambic, or introducing an extra final syllable or dropping a final syllable. Sometime she used several types of meter in the same poem. (10, p. 62)

Her irregularities in rhyme did defy the common practice of her day, as she made intentional use of approximate rhyme as well as exact rhyme. Other characteristics of her verse include compactness, concession, and idiosyncrasies

in grammar and syntax. Her fondness for condensation caused her to omit articles, prepositions, conjunctions, and auxiliary verbs. "Such omissions, and her fondness for the subjunctive, account for most of Emily Dickinson's so-called evasion of rules of grammar." (10, p. 62)

Emily Dickinson strived for immortality as a poet in the only way left open to her.

She practiced her craft with scrupulous commitment, seeking out the exact word, creating the precise metaphor, experimenting with meter and rhyme and syntax and line length. She refined her thoughts and feelings about herself in a transient world, experimenting with ideas and attitudes, speculating about Nature and Time and Heaven, until she arrived at a synthesis of belief that could not have comforted the heart or illuminated the mind of her contemporaries. (15, p. 4)

Emily Dickinson wrote poems on scraps of grocery lists, recipes, envelopes, bills, programs, flyers, and old letters as the verses came to her. Her poems were hidden by the hundreds in neat packets in her dresser drawers and they were not found until after her death. (8, p. 23)

In June, 1884, Emily Dickinson suffered a nervous breakdown and became a semi-invalid. In May, 1886, Emily Dickinson died of complications of a chronic renal disorder designated in the Amherst death records as "Bright's Disease." (8, p. 23)

This, then, is a sketch of the life and personality of one of the greatest American women poets. It is easy to understand why the great American composer, Aaron Copland, would choose the poetry of this intriguing leader of the American literary scene to become the text of his major vocal work, Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson.

Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson

During 1949, Aaron Copland wrote his major vocal composition, Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson. This song cycle was his first solo work for voice and piano in twenty years. Leonard Bernstein said, "This is one of the great vocal works by an American composer." (3, p. 72)

The songs are almost completely homophonic in texture (voice with piano accompaniment), and the accompaniments are exceedingly expressive "having captured the mood and introspective quality of the poems." (20, p. 254) The performance time of the whole cycle is approximately twenty-seven and one-half minutes. The wide vocal range required for its performance is certainly a limiting factor to many singers.

The melodic line is often in diatonic steps and wide angular skips; the piano parts are full of ingenious textural invention, and the formal solutions to the problem posed by the somewhat elliptical text are most subtle. (3, p. 72)

In an introduction to the vocal score Copland has supplied this information about the cycle:

These twelve songs were composed at Sneden's Landing, New York, at various times during the period from March 1949 to March 1950. The poems center about no single theme, but they treat of subject matter particularly close to Miss Dickinson: nature, death,

life, eternity. Only two of the songs are related thematically, the seventh and the twelfth. Nevertheless, the composer hopes that in seeking a musical counterpart for the unique personality of the poet, he has given the songs, taken together, the aspect of a song cycle. (Composer's note)

We find in these songs that the composer reverted to his more abstract and objective manner of writing which he had crystallized in the late 1920's. (9, p. 172) Each of the twelve songs will be discussed in this chapter in view of their literary and musical relationship.

"Nature, the Gentlest Mother"

This poem belongs to the group on Nature of which there are four in the cycle. It is instructed to be sung "quite slow" and begins in 4/4 meter. The nine-bar introduction, containing florid thirty-second note flutterings and repeated grace notes, is suggestive of woodland stirrings and bird warblings, beautifully setting the pastoral mood of the song.

Emily Dickinson held nature to be treacherous and unpredictable. In her poetry, nature is capable of conferring moments of great ecstasy lulling into feelings of false security. (11, p. 282) Copland has adequately accompanied these feelings about nature with the piano

resembling sounds of the little animals mentioned in the poem; the frequent changing of meters helps the mood of unpredictability. Nature to Miss Dickinson is animated. Even inanimate nature is animate like animal or person, or ghostly presence. What moves is living, but death is immobile. (19, p. 136) The animation of nature is present in the music with frequent patterns of sixteenth, thirty-second, and eighth notes. As the music has been reflecting the scampering of squirrels and murmuring of birds in the introduction, the movement suddenly pauses one measure before the voice enters with a single whole note. As the vocal line eases in with major third intervals on the first words, "Nature, the Gentlest Mother. . .", the accompaniment gently echoes with the same melodic pattern on alternate beats with the vocal line. Then, as the vocal line branches out into different intervallic relationships, the accompaniment begins to pick up animation again with eighth note patterns on the word "child." As the words move upward toward "hill," the accompaniment moves to a higher octave with the eighth note patterns, and the vocal line leaps up a major third on "hill" to emphasize height. Gradually the accompaniment

begins to take on more movement with the word "traveler" on a pattern of sixteenths, returning immediately to eighth notes. Then as the listener was forewarned by the brief sixteenths, the text begins to describe the "rampant" squirrels which are personified with a dotted eighth leaping to two thirty-second notes, a fourth a part, going up a major third on an eighth note, then dropping an octave and a third to the original pitch. This pattern is repeated in different octaves throughout the two measures describing the squirrel; the erratic rhyme and melodic pattern cleverly fitting the jumping and romping of the small animal. The "impetuous" bird is musically described in the accompaniment with recurring patterns of thirty-second notes. The vocal line rests for three measures while the accompaniment calms down to eighth notes and intermittent sixteenths with slight syncopation in the $2/4$ measure, moving on to sixteenth note patterns as the vocal line enters on descending eighth notes, "How fair her conversation". The key signature is different, one flat, only briefly resembling F major as many accidentals begin to enter in both accompaniment and vocal line. Subtle musical innuendoes are heard throughout the vocal

line such as the leap down a third on the word "down" as the poem describes the setting sun.

To accompany the "minutest cricket" and the "most unworthy flower", Copland has written patterns of sixteenths and triplets moving into a full measure of thirty-second notes in melodic patterns of thirds and seconds in both treble and bass clefs, ending in a trill with the fermata. The chirping of the cricket and quivering flower gradually die away into a pianissimo, then silence. The piece is again calm as at the beginning with a sustained B flat in the accompaniment and quarter notes in the vocal line. The melodic intervals are different, but rhythmic patterns are so similar that it can easily be labeled ABA form. The poem obviously calls for a calm here with the words, "When all the children sleep she turns long away as will suffice to light her lamp". The phrase "to light" is emphasized by a fifth leap up to the word "light". "Then bending from the sky" gives the sound of bending as the vocal line descends in leaps, and the height of "sky" with a jump up a major sixth to "sky". The tempo gradually slows as we hear, "Her golden finger on her lip", and volume decreases on "wills silence everywhere". The last phrase is re-emphasized in

its repetition with a pianissimo marking.

This is the longest song in the cycle lasting approximately three minutes and fifty seconds, as it elegantly describes the atmosphere of the countryside where Emily Dickinson lived. (19, p. 140)

"There Came a Wind"

Nature poems promoted Emily Dickinson's tenacious lines of physical perceptions. Her life must have been an acuteness of sensations accompanying or creating a newness of thought as evidenced in the vivid description of a storm. Miss Dickinson's sense is delicate and makes its statements of elemental recognition with the aid of an independent fancy. She is content at times to regard Nature's qualities and is happy to have given them their eulogy in their reflections. (19, p. 136) This was one of Emily Dickinson's late poems intended to imitate a natural phenomenon.

Copland has properly matched the poem with a very fast piece in 3/4 beginning in the key of A major. The listener immediately hears an ominous sound with an A major scale being played in parallel ninths on sixteenth notes in the first measure, ending with an A major chord. The voice

enunciates a bugle-like melody on the opening phrase, in eighth notes over the sustained chord in the accompaniment. Then, as the voice sustains "bugle", the accompaniment begins to move in rapid sixteenth note patterns in the right hand while the left hand plays melodic tenth jumps in the treble clef. The tenths eventually become changing octaves with frequent accidentals creating dissonance. The rhythm of the vocal line remains primarily in eighth notes except when sixteenths are thrown in for emphasis on words such as "quivered" and "ominous". In measure sixteen, the accompaniment strikes an A major chord sforzando, followed by open fifth chords which end in measure seventeen on a harmonic minor second with a fermata, as the voice begins a different thought, somewhat slower; "We barred the windows and the doors. . ." Two accented chords in the accompaniment signify the barring on the phrase, "as from an emerald ghost", the accompaniment is marked in fortissimo, descending sixteenths ending in a dissonant major second chord. "The doom's electric moccasin" is accompanied by a bass trill marked forte, and the vocal line accents the feeling of lightning with erratic melodic intervals and choppy rhythms. As the lightning passes, the piano again picks up rapid,

even sounds of the storm with rhythmic patterns of sixteenths in the treble clef, and with melodic intervals of ninths and octaves in eighth notes in the bass clef. This continues through the lines "On a strange mob of panting trees and fences fled away". Then in measure thirty-four the scene changes slightly to the rapids of the rivers that carried away homes and bodies. The accompaniment warns the listener of the rapids with a chord followed by sixteenth notes in duplet patterns played against the rhythm of eighth note chords. In measure thirty-six the voice describes the scene, and the change of mood is helped by a change of meter to 6/8. The duplet pattern evolves to a duplet followed by four sixteenths on the word "day", sung fortissimo on high F in the vocal line. This pattern continues to give a clangorous bell sound as the voice sings, "The bell within the steeple. . ." in monotonous melodic and rhythmic patterns like the monotonous clanging of a bell. An open fifth chord in measure forty-five ends the bell sound and brings back the beginning scale pattern of the song in measure forty-six, this time on an E major scale in parallel ninths. The voice enters for the last lines of the poem in measure forty-eight with

a major ninth jump, "How much can come, and much can go, and yet abide the world". The accompaniment finished the song with open, dissonant chords all accented and ending with a fortissimo marking to emphasize the strength and meaning of these last lines. "There Came a Wind Like a Bugle" is the shortest song in the cycle lasting approximately one minute and thirty seconds.

"Why Do They Shut Me Out of Heaven?"

This poem is one of the two in the cycle about eternity. It belongs to a group of Emily Dickinson's poems about death and the transition from life to death, and it is considered to be a lamentation on Emily's own rejection as a poet. (15, p. 93) In contrast to the seriousness of most of the songs in Copland's cycle, this one is naive and child-like in the Dorian simplicity of its opening phrase. (20, p. 256) The text brings out the wry humor in Emily Dickinson's personality, as one can almost visualize a pouting child saying the first lines, "Why do they shut me out of Heaven? . . . Did I sing too Loud?"

Aaron Copland has matched perfectly the simplicity of the words with an equally simple musical score. The accompaniment begins with a single fortissimo C octave chord

preceded by a grace note (also a C) which could give the feel of the emphatic slamming of a door. This is held for two measures while the vocal line asks the question, "Why do they shut me out of Heaven?" in a primarily descending melody of eighth notes. Another chord is struck fortissimo, this time with slight dissonance as if it were a "sour" note. The voice sings, "Did I sing too loud?", ascending to a high G flat on "loud". The same chord is again struck an octave lower and held as the voice begins a minor scale-wise ascent to the word "minor". "Timid as a bird" is cleverly the only place in the entire piece where sixteenth notes are used to emphasize the character of the bird. The vocal line descends on sixteenths to low B flat while the piano ascends on sixteenths to high B flat.

From a beginning key of C, there is a change in measure eight to four flats, giving the feel of A flat major in the accompaniment. The text changes the mood somewhat to a little more serious question about the angels. It is marked "slower," although the accompaniment enjoys a little more rhythmic movement here with a steady pattern of chords followed by two single eighth notes in descending melodic intervals of fourths and fifths; this pattern being

repeated over and over until a final forte chord is struck in measure twelve with the emphatic line "don't shut the door". Measure fourteen, marked "somewhat faster", finds the piano entering with open minor seventh chord sounds, moving from quarter note rhythm to half notes, to herald the thoughtful utterance of the voice in measure seventeen, "Oh, if I were the gentlemen in the white robes and they were the little hand that knocked", Copland has cleverly caught the graceful sound of the "little hand" with grace notes in the treble line of the accompaniment in measure twenty-one, and the sound of knocking in measure twenty-three with lower grace notes and open seventh chords. Again the accompaniment pauses with only a sustained chord in measure twenty-four as the voice contemplates melodic jumps, "Could I forbid". In measure twenty-seven the melody and accompaniment return exactly as the beginning line, "Why do they shut me out of Heaven?" with the exception of one note in measure thirty. The vocal line ends on the word "loud" a full step higher on high A flat, this time marked triple forte. This slight musical change enhances the exuberance of this child-like poem, leaving the listener with a triumphant note of defiance. The piano continues to play

a series of open sounding chords, gradually decreasing in number and volume to a final F minor chord marked piano. The duration of this piece is one minute and fifty seconds.

"The World Feels Dusty"

This poem belongs to the class of poems about Death, a subject which obviously intrigued and sometimes disturbed Emily Dickinson. Most of her poems about death are very serious and contemplative as this one is quite representative. Miss Dickinson's most creative period coincided with the carnage of the Civil War. The war heightened her awareness of death, and her creative skill also reached its height during this period. (10, p. 97) The poetry of Emily Dickinson reveals that she tried to become as familiar as possible with death in all its aspects, in the hope that when she did come face to face with it, the experience would not be wholly unfamiliar. "In this sense it might be said that life for her was a preparation for death." (10, p. 32)

Copland has accompanied this feeling of awe and respect for death with the very slow, dirge-like rhythm of the piano in this piece. The open minor chords give a hollow, dry sound, emphasizing the "dusty" aspect of death described in the poem. The first phrase in the vocal line spans the

D octave by rising from the tonic, to the fifth, to the seventh, then pushing upward to high D as if the soul is rising, and presenting the aspects of a "typically Copland melodic line." (20, p. 255) The vocal line drops back to the low D to ascend to the octave E, "We want the dew then", the ascending line representing the hope of the word "dew" as compared to the descending following phrase "honors taste dry" which ends on a low B. Measure eleven brings about more movement and more volume as the voice emphasizes the futility of honors with a fortissimo high G on "flags", descending in thirds "vex a dying face". Relief comes with the thought in the next phrase, "But the least fan stirred by a friend's hand", as the volume is reduced to pianissimo and the monotonous dirge-like motion in the piano temporarily ceases. The pleasant word "cools" is emphasized by a leap up, then drops gently down an octave "like the rain". In measure seventeen the dirge begins in the accompaniment again, but with a gentler sound using three note chord structures as compared to the six-note chords at the beginning. A descending vocal line on "mine be the ministry" helps to emphasize the importance of the phrase "dews of thyself" which ascends to a high E on "thyself" ending

with a descent to a low A sharp on "balms". The piano continues the steady dirge sound for three measures, gradually ascending in the treble clef to end on an upward motion from G to A in a last search for hope. The approximate duration of "The World Feels Dusty" is one minute and forty-five seconds.

"Heart, We Will Forget Him"

"Heart, We Will Forget Him" is the most romantic of the poems in the group and belongs to the class of poems about life. It is not known whether this poem was written as a direct result of an actual experience of Emily Dickinson or just an expression of emotions with which Miss Dickinson was trying to identify. Perhaps it was the result of an experience with Charles Wadsworth with whom she supposedly fell in love. (7, p. 39) Whatever the inspiration, it remains a lovely expression of a lonely heart trying desperately to recover from a lost love.

This song bears the imprint of Mahler and other late nineteenth century German romanticists.

In order to capture the romantic intensity and deep yearning expressed in the poem, Copland adapted the essence of that chromatic reservoir to his own needs just as he had delved into other sources, i.e., folk or even twelve-tone materials for the purpose at hand. (20, p. 256)

The contrapuntal texture of this song leads directly to the "tone row" which provided the basis for the composer's notable "Piano Quartet." (20, p. 256) The beginnings of a tone row can be heard in the first four measures of the piano accompaniment.

The song is to be performed "very slowly (dragging)", and it is one of the two songs out of the twelve to keep the same meter (4/4) throughout. The other is "I Felt a Funeral". The rhythm in the accompaniment of this song is almost completely composed of straight quarter notes in each measure, projecting the idea of time moving constantly onward in spite of the heartbreaks of individuals. The combination of pitches forming consonances and dissonances support the ideas expressed in the vocal line. In the third measure the voice enters with a dotted half on the second beat of the measure with the word "Heart". The phrase "we will forget him" continues in measure four on the second, third, and fourth beats, ascending in steps as if reaching for confidence and assurance that forgetting is possible, and briefly moving with the steady beats of the accompaniment as if trying to move on with time. As the melodic line of the accompaniment moves in steady

rhythm from the beginning, it is also steadily ascending in pitch through a series of small ascents and descents first in step-wise motion upward from D4*, then dropping a fifth and moving upward again in small jumps of thirds and fourths, again descending to start upward. Each time the melodic intervals are increased until finally in measure nine a peak is reached with a sustained F sharp 6 on the word "tonight". Measure eleven finds the accompaniment beginning anew with the same pitch and melodic pattern as in the first measure. Copland has established a recurring rhythmic pattern in the vocal line from the first measure through measure twenty-one which should also be mentioned. The voice enters with each new phrase on the second beat of the measure, through measure twenty-one, and only two measures in the entire song find the vocal line beginning on the first beat, measures twenty-nine and thirty-four.

The constancy of the up and down motion of this song in both accompaniment and vocal line helps to project the emotional insecurity and intensity of the poem. The highest

*Throughout this discussion, the author refers to a system of octave numbers beginning with the lowest C on the keyboards as C1, moving upward to middle C which is C4 and so on.

point of the vocal line is reached in measure twenty-five as the poet declares fortissimo, "I my thoughts may dim". This phrase descends from high G on "I" to F4 on the word "dim", re-emphasizing the importance of the word. The first place in the song where the voice enters on the first beat of the measure is found in measure twenty-nine on the word "Haste". This is also the only time sixteenth notes are found in this song, obviously to imitate the motion of the word. Another word and musical imitation is found in the next measure on the word "lagging", with a dotted quarter followed by an eighth, tied to a half note, creating a slight syncopation as if to have been "lagging" or late on the beat. The voice has a final admittance of truth beginning in measure thirty-one with "I may remember him", ending with a step-wise ascent to "him". "Heart, We Will Forget Him" has a duration of two minutes and ten seconds.

"Dear March"

"Dear March" belongs to the Nature poems and is an illustration of Emily Dickinson's use of "approximate rhymes (plus a few exact rhymes) in an irregular scheme to accompany and enhance a colloquial diction syntax and meter." (13, p. 169) It is a light-hearted poem joyously

welcoming the coming of March, and a fine example of the personification and animation of nature so characteristic of Emily Dickinson.

Copland has set this poem in the beginning tonality of F sharp major, with a 6/8 meter marking. A steady eighth note ostinato in the accompaniment of broken ninth and tenth intervals sets a pace of movement and animation, perhaps symbolizing the constant movement and changing of seasons. The difficulty of correlating the rhythmic patterns of the vocal line with the rhythmic patterns of the piano in this piece offers a unique challenge for any performer. While the vocal line is based primarily on duplet and dotted quarter patterns, the accompaniment is based on triplet patterns giving the feel of "two against three." The speed of the piece also complicates the rhythm problem.

The vocal line is full of large skips as exemplified in measure six as the voice jumps a major ninth on the words "How glad". In measure nine the singer must jump a tri-tone from D4 to G flat 4, then up an augmented sixth. The many accidentals in both parts, and the wide and unusual intervals in the vocal line seem almost to be working against any feel for a key center. Yet when listening to the work

as a whole, one does find a sense of tonality. The conglomeration of pitches plus the exuberance of the tempo create an atmosphere of rushing winds and changing seasons, very befitting of the poem. The listener is convinced of the truth of the phrase in measures eighteen through twenty, "How out of breath you are". In measure twenty-five the meter changes to 9/8 causing a slightly longer pause between the previous line, "Dear March, How are you?", and the next phrase, "and the rest", as if the latter were an afterthought. The meter change lasts for only one measure then back to 6/8. As the poet invites March upstairs in measure thirty-two, the vocal line ascends in an obvious stepwise motion to reach the peak of excitement with a fortissimo high F on the word "tell". The key signature changes to two sharps, and the tempo slows slightly, but the steady ostinato never ceases. The vocal line has calmed down as it re-enters in measure forty-four to tell the news, "I got your letter. . .". Excitement enters the voice again with a pitch jump of a fifth on the phrase, "I declare. . ." The ostinato pauses briefly as the voice asks forgiveness in measures fifty-eight and fifty-nine, and continues in sixty and sixty-one. Again the ostinato

pauses as the vocal line ascends in skips "and all those hills", then descends on "you left for me to hue". The accompaniment picks up one measure of the ostinato in measure sixty-five, then with a sustained chord in sixty-six, the accompaniment pauses for the next three measures as the voice sings "There was no purple suitable", in a sort of recitative quality.

Another key signature is present in measure sixty-eight putting the tonal center at F minor. The accompaniment eighth note ostinato pattern begins once more and continues without a vocal part until measure seventy-six. Here the accompaniment rests while the voice sings in recitative style, "Who knocks. . ." "That April. . .". Then a fortissimo two-note D flat, E flat chord in the accompaniment begins the same ostinato pattern as before, with the voice emphatically singing, "Lock the door. . .". Measure eighty-seven brings the piece back to F sharp major, the last key change of the piece. The accompaniment marking in measure one hundred and six is "indifferent" as the piano intermittently sounds F sharp, A sharp, G sharp chords in extreme octaves of the keyboard, which helps emphasize the indifference of the last phrase of poetry, "And blame is

just as dear as praise and praise as mere as blame". One final "delicate" rolled chord ends the piece, which has a duration of two minutes and fifteen seconds. From the viewpoint of musical difficulty to the performer, "Dear March" is one of the most challenging pieces in the cycle.

"Sleep is Supposed to Be"

"Sleep is Supposed to Be" and the last song of the cycle, "The Chariot" are the only songs related thematically, and only then in the introduction. The introduction of "Sleep is Supposed to Be" begins on G natural (written in 5 flats) while the introduction of "The Chariot," written in three sharps, begins on G sharp. The first two measures of each piece relate exactly in melody and rhythm with only a half step difference in the tonality. "Sleep is Supposed to Be" is written in 4/4 marked "moderately slow - with dignity". The accompaniment begins fortissimo and is marked "deliberately" to summons the atmosphere of contemplative dignity projected by the text. The vocal line enters in measure five beginning on D5 descending melodically in a choppy pattern of $\downarrow \dots \uparrow \downarrow \uparrow \downarrow$ on the words "Sleep is supposed to be". The vocal instruction is "with great calm". The choppy rhythmic pattern which recurs in

measures twenty and twenty-one with words "Morn is supposed to be", emphasizes the precise declamation of the statement, "supposed to be". The rhythm smoothes out with quarter note and eighth note patterns in the next few measures indicating the lesser importance of the lines "By souls of sanity". The accompaniment picks up the rhythmic declamation again in measures twelve and thirteen beginning on C6 in the treble to further emphasize the repeated pattern, and to build anticipation for the voice entering on F5 in measure fourteen, the highest vocal pitch so far. The word "sleep" on the high F is further emphasized by the intervallic jump down of a tenth on the next note: "Sleep is the station grand down which on either hand, the hosts of witness stand". In measures twenty and twenty-one, there is a return to the beginning melody and rhythm to state the second main idea, "Morn is supposed to be". The following lines are set in similar melodic and rhythm patterns as their comparative statements in measures eight through twelve. The slight variation in the rhythm and melody fit the pattern set by Miss Dickinson in the grammatic pattern.

This section in the poem is a graphic example of Emily Dickinson's use of imagery. The word "Morn" which

was originally written as "dawn" obviously stands for nature's re-enactment of the resurrection. The point is made clearer in the last nine lines of the poem. One critic believes that in this particular poem Emily Dickinson seemed to be appeasing the conventional mind of her critic, Higginson, as she consciously strived for a rhyme scheme. (17, p. 95)

To musically bring out the symbolism of these last lines, Copland uses the tools of vocal register, rhythm, volume, and pitch combinations. The voice enters fortissimo on the second beat of measure twenty on a high accented G with the word "Morning". The accompaniment here precedes the vocal entrance with a single fortissimo accented E flat, C, E flat chord in the bass and A flat, C flat, E flat chord in treble. The vocal line descends from the high G in skips to middle C on the words, "has not occurred", only to jump an octave and a fifth back to G on the line, "That shall aurora be". This erratic pitch jumping, plus the accents and changes in meter, prepare the listener for the climax of the poem and the music in measure thirty-one as the voice triumphantly sings, "East of Eternity" on a high B flat, accented and marked triple forte. The

accompaniment, also marked triple forte, supports the voice with the striking of an E flat, C, A flat, B flat chord followed by dissonant open chord sounds in eighth notes, marked "clangorous". The mood begins to descend slightly in measure thirty-three with decreased volume in both voice and piano. A descending vocal melody against the accompaniment of gradually ascending bell-like chord sounds, obviously symbolizes a reaching toward heaven, the "eternal morn". The last line of the poem which begins on D sharp, is sung over a sustained E7 in the accompaniment. The words, "That is the break", descend melodically to emphasize the last triumphant octave jump to "day" which is marked fortissimo with a long fermata. The duration is two minutes and forty-five seconds.

Although "Sleep is Supposed to Be" is the seventh song, it marks the end of the first half of the cycle. The composer has instructed the performer to include a long pause before beginning the next song, and it seems natural here after the peak of excited hope created by this piece.

"When They Come Back"

"When They Come Back" belongs to the group of poems about Nature and is "one of the simplest and most nostalgic

of the poems". (20, p. 255) Miss Dickinson viewed Nature as being capable of conferring moments of great ecstasy lulling into feelings of false security. Suddenly though, these moments are followed by periods when Nature glares back with chilling hostility. The symbolic gestures in Nature point to the animosity of God; for to the extent that Nature reveals God to Miss Dickinson she reveals a creator who harbors resentment and ill will. (11, p. 282) Some of this hostility is revealed in this poem, although in a more flippant and light-hearted manner than some other poems. The poem possibly symbolizes her doubts about a God who can take life and give life, as she questions the rebirth of blossoms and buds, and speaks of the uncertainty of seeing another May. In the last line she reveals a wry hint of her frustration over the uncertainties of life.

Copland has based the musical expression of this poem on broken triads throughout the moderate 2/4 piece, in mostly straight eighth note patterns. The simplicity of the poem is enhanced by the limited notation in the accompaniment. The treble staff is basically a one-note melody line throughout, and the bass line which begins a single countermelody is only occasionally embellished with two-

note and three-note chords. This piece is another example of constant motion, symbolizing the constancy of time's movement. It is similar in that respect to "Heart, We Will Forget Him." The vocal line in "When They Come Back" is likewise based on straight eighth note patterns and imitates the melodic pattern of the accompaniment in the triad variation.

The voice enters in measure four after the accompaniment has set the piece in motion. However, when the voice enters its imitation eighth note motion on a broken F major chord, the accompaniment respectfully pauses with a sustained F major chord, "When they come back if blossoms do". Then in measures seven through eleven the accompaniment and voice move together rhythmically, but in contrary motion melodically, creating some conventional harmonics which have not been too characteristic of Copland in the other songs of the cycle. A piano interlude in measures fourteen through twenty-one contains some slightly different patterns for interest, such as begins in measure sixteen where the melody is constant but there are rhythmic variations in each repetition.

The vocal entrance in measure twenty-one begins a

third lower than the beginning of the piece but keeps the same melodic and rhythmic pattern throughout the phrase. The phrase "I always had a fear I did not tell" reveals musically the fearful and apprehensive feeling, through the increasing dissonant sounds created by the combination of numerous accidentals in the vocal and piano scores. The next phrase "it was their last experiment last year" grows more intense with a crescendo to fortissimo and a descending vocal line to emphasize the ninth jump up to the word "year", fortissimo. Here in measure thirty-one the accompaniment uses patterns of sixteenth notes for the first time to sustain the intensity of the last phrase. A sixteenth note pattern is again used in the accompaniment in measure thirty-four at the beginning of the next verse. The vocal line enters a third above the beginning of the piece yet with the same melodic and rhythmic pattern as the beginning phrase. Copland exhausts his use of sixteenth notes in this accompaniment at the end of thirty-six, and returns finally to the basic steady eighth note patterns so fitting to the song. Measure forty brings back a return in the contrary melodic motion between accompaniment and voice on the lines "Has nobody a pang. . .". Bits of

melodic and rhythmic motifs heard previously can be detected in the accompaniment interlude, measure forty-eight through fifty-two, ending on a G major chord in fifty-three where the voice re-enters. This time to dignify the statement "I am here", the pattern is quarter notes, over an accompaniment of chords. The contrary melodic motion returns in measure sixty, "What party one may be tomorrow", and the last two phrases are sung practically a cappella. "But if I am there" descends piano upward to a high G on the important word "am" and is marked "hold back". Tempo I returns on the flippant ending "I take back all I say", a descending melodic line ending the vocal part. The accompaniment echoes the characteristic rhythmic and melodic motifs in the last four measures, ending the entire piece on an F major chord. The duration is one minute and forty seconds.

"I Felt a Funeral"

This song belongs to the "Death" poems, and is one of the most dramatic songs in the cycle. Some feel that the funeral poems of Emily Dickinson are her conception of her living death and others feel that "Emily Dickinson regarded poetry as one of the strategem by which she was empowered to endure life until the time came to assume the 'estate'

of immortality." (7, p. 120) In this poem the "body lies inert except for the sense of hearing, and the sounds are gruesome, treading, beating, creaking, tolling". (15, p. 281)

To heighten the sense of painful sound grating on an oversensitive ear, the poet employs the device of repetition of single words, "treading, treading", "beating, beating". The most successful device here is her juxtaposition of the sense of mystery of death with the sense of particular material extremes, weights, motions, and sounds that each clarify and intensify the other. (7, p. 246)

The original poem had one last verse added which further revealed the helpless feeling of the poet toward death.

And then a Plank in Reason, broke
 And I dropped down and down
 And hit a world, at every plunge,
 And finished knowing then (15, p. 280)

The initial "and" appearing once in each line of the first two stanzas, and twice in the third and fourth stanzas indicates the climatic lack of control of self, and the added verse shows the poet watching her own descent, reaching no bottom, for the mortal mind can go no further, reason is useless, and knowing is finished. (15, p. 281)

Copland has set this dramatic poem in fast 2/4 setting, opening with a macabre chromatic ostinato in the bass line of

the accompaniment and repetitious pattern of chords in the treble. Over the foreboding sounds of the accompaniment the voice enters on an eighth note ascending-descending melodic pattern in fourths, "I felt a funeral in my brain". The next phrase, "and mourners to and fro", remains within the basic fourth intervallic pattern which changes to a melody based on thirds in the phrase, "kept treading, treading, treading till it seemed". Then, it gradually moves higher to climax on a high pitch fortissimo in measure sixteen. This pitch ascent increases the emotional intensity of the poem giving a vivid image of "sense breaking through". Also in measure sixteen the ostinato sixteenth-note pattern changes in the ascent to a slower thud of drum beats in the bass clef, marked "thud-like", with the instruction "exaggerate the first beat of each measure". The voice re-enters in a descending stepwise melody to the words, "And when they all were seated", jumping back up to descend again "a service like a drum". To further emphasize the repetitious "beating, beating" the vocal line moves repeatedly from D5 to C5 over the same ominous drum-like ostinato in accompaniment. In measure twenty-six the vocal line descends chromatically "till I

thought my mind was going numb", a characteristic device in this piece to create an ominous musical sound. The four flats in the key signature are canceled in measure twenty-nine to predict a change in the poem, "And then I heard them lift a box" and "creak across my soul". During these phrases the bass line of the accompaniment is sounding a steady pattern of two-note chords--the second chord in each measure being sounded an octave lower. This prepares the listener's senses for the phrase "boots of lead", when suddenly a high pitched bell-like chord is played in measure thirty-nine beginning a series of high open fifth treble chords as the poetry described the tolling of space "as all the heavens were a bell". On the word "bell" the voice sings G5, the highest vocal pitch in the song. Then dropping an octave, the frenzied soul breaks into a calm "and being but an ear". The accompaniment drops in dynamics from fortissimo to piano in measure forty-eight and establishes the final accompaniment pattern of the song of half-note triads in the right hand over single eighth note pitches in the left hand. The final vocal statements begin in measure fifty-one in straight quarter notes at a piano level, "And I and silence some strange race". In fifty-six,

the word "wrecked" does "wreck" the rhythmic pattern by entering on beat two. The piano dynamic level is disturbed by a mezzo-forte marking on a higher pitch level which is an augmented fifth jump from the previous measure. A descending melodic line expresses the words "solitary", ending the text in measure sixty with the word "here", entering on the off-beat. The accompaniment ends the piece with a sustained D flat chord in the treble over a low D flat-G chord in the bass, which is played on beats one and two in measure sixty-one, then once in measure sixty-two on beat two, and one final utterance on beat two in the last measure of the song. Julia Smith points out two main aspects of this piano accompaniment, "the thud of drum beats which serves as an ominous ostinato to the frenzied cries of the text, and the toll of bells which mark the reality of solitary silence." (20, p. 255) The duration of this song is two minutes and ten seconds.

"I've Heard an Organ Talk Sometime"

The personification of inanimate objects so characteristic of Miss Dickinson is again readily apparent in this poem as she depicts the "talking" of the organ giving her strength and inspiration beyond her understanding. Perhaps

this poem is symbolic of some of the spiritual awakenings during her early life, when she felt great emotional upheavals and yet could not understand or "trust" her emotions.

Copland has elegantly provided a musical setting which is a "gentle, hymnlike mood so characteristic of the composer's mature thought". (20, p. 256)

Beginning in 3/4 time, the broad legato chords depict the sounds of an organ and establish a rhythmic pattern which is characteristic of the whole song. Only five measures out of the thirty in the song do not begin with a half note chord followed by a quarter or two quarters--one acting as an auxiliary tone or passing tone. The key signature indicates the key of B flat major, although the first chord is A flat major moving in a modulating sequence of secondary dominants to F major in measure two. The same secondary dominant sequence is captured in the next two measures moving from E flat major to G major and again in five and six, moving from D flat major chord to B flat chord, and back to D flat, as the voice enters in measure seven on the second half of beat two. This is the beginning of a rhythmic characteristic in the vocal line, which never enters on the first beat of a measure; the voice enters

after a piano chord on each new phrase, emphasizing the power of the "organ" in the text. The simple melodic line, ranging only the interval of fifth in the first phrase of the vocal part, "I've heard an organ talk sometime", plus the dynamic marking of mezzo-forte, "simple", establishes the subordination of the human feeling to the powerful sounds of the organ. The vocal line responds to the height and majesty of the "cathedral" in eleven and twelve with a forte marking in ascending jumps from E flat 4, to B flat 4, to D flat 5, on the phrase "in a cathedral aisle". Returning to D flat 4 in fifteen, the voice ascends the D flat triad ending on B flat, "and understood", then jumps down to D natural 4 to ascend the pitches of the B flat chord ending on D5, "no word it said". The dynamic level drops to piano as the vocal line drops an octave only to make a tenth jump up to the remainder of the phrase. The sensitive musical writing of this whole phrase creates the feeling of awe, especially as the voice sings, "Yet held", over rests in the piano accompaniment as if everything stops for a moment--including the organ and the breathing.

A common characteristic of Copland's writing with poetry is seen again in measures twenty-three and twenty-four as

the vocal line descends along an ascending poetic phrase "and risen up" and descends on "and gone away". Measures twenty-six and twenty-seven mark a return to the inadequate human feeling "a more Bernardine Girl", within the limited range of a perfect fifth in the vocal melody. A slightly repetitious melodic form in measure twenty-eight, "And know not what was", ascends in jumps in measure twenty-nine "done to me", and emphasizes the poet's feeling of some emotional changes taking place. The last phrase is marked fortissimo, then descending in a high register outlining a B flat major chord. The broad ending accompanies the one last emotional surge, as the poet finally recalls a spiritual awakening.

Besides the broad chords throughout the accompaniment, occasionally dissonant pitches in octaves give the listener a sense of overtones as one hears from an organ. An example of this would be measure twenty-nine. After the B flat major chord, appear octaves of D flat, A flat, and F in the next measure. This poem, belonging to the group about Life, lasts one minute and fifty seconds.

"Going to Heaven"

"Going to Heaven" is the second of the two songs about eternity. Unlike the naive, child-like mood of "Why do they

Shut Me out of Heaven?", "Going to Heaven" has the quality of joyous fervent Negro spiritual. Yet, this poem views Heaven in a lighter vein than some of Dickinson's poems, for instance, "How dim it sounds, and yet will be done. . . Perhaps you're going too. . .who knows?" However, the poem with its positive beginning bears the imprint of the unstable views of the poet on death and immortality in the last verse, "I'm glad I don't believe it", and. . ."I am glad they did believe it. . .".

"Because Emily Dickinson was not a consistent or systematic thinker, many of her expressed attitudes probably reflected no more than her mood at the time of writing." (10, p. 100) She saw the world as not being a very well-ordered place, and she couldn't find any philosophy or doctrine which satisfactorily explained death. After she decided that a whole life is not found "below" she decided the best she could do was believe that in some hypothetical life after death "the pieces of the puzzle would fall into place." (10, p. 101) This seems to be the view reflected in "Going to Heaven."

Copland has created the musical setting in a fast 6/8 meter, beginning in B flat major. The accompaniment

begins simply with a grace note G5, jumping down to a sustained F4, over which the voice sings "Going to Heaven" on a step-wise ascending melody occurring twice. As the voice then sustains the last note in this pattern, the accompaniment begins to move in ascending eighth note motion on a melodic five-note pattern, played in three consecutive octaves. At this point the voice re-enters where the accompaniment leaves off, in the same melodic and rhythmic pattern as at the beginning, but ending a third higher to sustain an F5. The accompaniment picks up this alternating motion between voice and piano in measure nine, this time overlapping the same pattern using both hands. A change of melodic direction occurs in twelve and thirteen as the vocal line descends and the mood descends, "I don't know when". The accompaniment begins a new pattern, moving irregularly back and forth between F5 and G5 in the right hand in eighth notes, giving a triplet feel to the rhythm while the left hand plays quarter notes, creating slight syncopations. To complicate the syncopation of the music the voice enters again in measure sixteen with duplet patterns, on a gradually ascending melody, "Pray do not ask me how. Indeed I'm too astonished". In measure twenty the

syncopating ceases as the accompaniment descends in parallel motion, heralding the melodic descent of the vocal line in twenty-one and twenty-two, "to think of answering you". The descent turns around with the accompaniment in twenty-one recalling bits of the vocal line and accompaniment line at the beginning of the piece, and the vocal line enters with the same melodic and rhythmic pattern as before in measure twenty-seven. Descending parallel motion occurs in measures thirty through thirty-two in the accompaniment over a sustained F in the voice, and the voice falls with the poet's spirit on the lines "How dim it sounds".

The established basic rhythmic patterns of moving eighth notes continue throughout the piece, sometimes with piano parts ascending and descending together, sometimes in contrary motion as in measure thirty-five through thirty-seven. The voice moves over these patterns in varied rhythms, but one basic pattern is quarter, eighth, quarter, eighth, as in measures thirty-nine through forty-four. A slight pause in motion begins in measure forty-eight with a key change to G major and a sustained B flat in the accompaniment. The section is marked "slower" to fit the more recitative-like text "Perhaps you're going, too, who knows". Measures

fifty-five through fifty-eight find the rhythm returning to a previous pattern - duplets in the voice over an eighth note triplet feel in the accompaniment. The constant motion of the running eighth note accompaniment is interrupted with whole-measure rests in sixty through sixty-eight as the vocal line changes to dotted half notes with slight variations, to emphasize the more serious contemplative mood suddenly arising from the text "close to the two I lost. . .". However, just as quickly as the thought arose, it is pushed aside to resume the previously constant motion, "The smallest robe. . .".

Measure eighty-five marks the key change back to B flat and a return to the first melodic sequence in both vocal and accompaniment lines. A broad unaccompanied recitative section makes the emphatic statement, "I'm glad I don't believe for it would stop my breath". And suddenly the accompaniment motion picks up the lighter thought "I'd like to look a little more at such a curious earth". Finally the motion in both the accompaniment and voice ceases as the poet gives way to the nostalgic longing of her heart "I am glad they did believe it, whom I have never found". Copland portrays the seriousness of the

final thought with sustained chords in the accompaniment and wide leaps up and down in the melodic line in dotted quarter notes. The phrase "Since the mighty autumn afternoon" is marked "poco accel.", as if trying to pass quickly over the sad remembrance. The final utterance "I left them in the ground" is marked "with subdued emphasis". As the voice sustains this last note, the accompaniment makes a vague reflection to the lighthearted melody of "Going to Heaven" in a high register of the piano marked pianissimo, but ends with the sustained E major chord. The duration of this dramatic piece is two minutes and forty seconds.

"The Chariot"

One of the perfect poems in English literature is "The Chariot" which illustrates better than anything Emily Dickinson wrote, the special quality of her mind. Every image is precise, and not merely beautiful, but fused with the central idea. Every image extends and intensifies every other. Death is a gentleman taking a lady out for a drive, and the rhythm of the poem brings the picture to life. (4, p. 160) The poet rejoices over death by accepting it calmly, civilly, as befits a gentle woman receiving the attention of a gentleman.

The last two stanzas are hardly surpassed in the whole range of lyric poetry. The visual images are handled with perfect economy; all the poem needs is one or two concrete images - roof, cornice - to awake in our minds the appalling identification of houses with graves. Even more compelling is the sense of pausing, and the sense of over-powering action and weight in 'swelling' and 'mound'. (7, p. 250)

There is but one visual image in the last stanza - "the horse's heads". All other visual objects are gradually snuffed out as the seen world must be made gradually to sink into the nervously sensed world. (7, p. 250)

"The Chariot" is one of the most abstract songs in content. However, the composer has assisted the less acute ear of the audience to a greater comprehension of the song's meaning by recalling the opening material of "Sleep is Supposed to Be" which is about sleep, a quality of life. (20, p. 257) The first two measures of "The Chariot" are almost identically the same as the first two measures of "Sleep is Supposed to Be", with the exception of "The Chariot" being pitched one half step higher. Measures three and five contain variations of this theme. The composer's note at the beginning "with quiet grace" sets the atmosphere for this beautiful musical and poetic expression of the coming of Death. The vocal line enters in measure six with

the characteristic dotted rhythmic pattern of the piece. The accompaniment enters in measure seven in canon with the same rhythmic and melodic pattern in the bass, and later in the same measure, the third canonic entrance appears in the treble clef of the accompaniment. The phrase "He kindly stopped for me" begins on E5 which is the highest pitch so far in the piece, bringing out the importance of "He" as compared to the unimportance of the mortal, "me" on low B3. Again a short canonic passage appears in the accompaniment in measures ten and eleven the choppy dotted rhythm lending a sense of steadily traveling horses' hooves throughout the song.

Measure fourteen marked "more slowly" alternates the accompaniment rhythm as if there is a slowing down of the hooves, and the vocal line slows to quarter notes "we slowly drove. . . .". The rhythm and tempo of the beginning return in measures twenty-three and twenty-four, and in twenty-five the listener hears another short canonic sequence between bass and treble clef of accompaniment. As the carriage passes the "school where children played", the tempo speeds up slightly as if to pass quickly by young life.

An octave jump in the vocal line in thirty-one and thirty-two "We passed", marked fortissimo, illuminates the realization of passing the "setting sun". A sudden landing on A sharp in measure thirty-five marked "Tempo I", combined with the sudden ceasing of rhythmic motion, give an aural impression of stopping momentarily. The movement starts again in measure thirty-six, but a little slower than before as the voice sings, "We paused before a house". Wide leaps in the vocal line are characteristic throughout the piece as in measures thirty-seven, forty and forty-one.

Measure forty-six marked "a trifle broader" reveals a stopping of the trotting rhythm with a sustained chord in the accompaniment as the voice ascends on "Since then 'tis centuries", reaching its height on the word "centuries". Then the voice drops again to ascend, "but each feels shorter than the day", the height of this phrase is the word "shorter". The song ends delicately with a single treble line accompaniment to the words "I first surmised, the horses' heads were toward eternity". Echoes of horses' hooves can be heard closing out the song which finally ends on a B major chord. The duration of the piece is two minutes and fifty-five seconds.

Most critics agree that this poem is one of the greatest in the English language and a personal triumph of Miss Dickinson. (4, p. 160) In this poem she abandons the world which had abandoned her and with it the labors that are always part of public life. Her fears of setting sun are transcended and she leaves leisure behind to devote herself to her poetry. "What was 'Death-in-Life' came in the guise of that crucial encounter, but it tempted her soul and she survived as a poet". (15, p. 194) "The Chariot" eloquently closes the song cycle combining thoughts of life, death, and eternity.

The Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson is undoubtedly the greatest vocal achievement of Aaron Copland, and it is one of the most challenging musical and dramatic works of all contemporary vocal literature. However, in the vast amount of literature on Aaron Copland and contemporary vocal music reviewed for this paper, the Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson is rarely mentioned. It is certainly regrettable that this song cycle has been so often overshadowed by musicians and critics in favor of the prolific output of orchestral and instrumental works by this composer.

Old American Songs

As was his custom, Copland relaxed between composing the "serious" song cycle and "Piano Quartet" by arranging in 1950, a first set of five Old American Songs, thereby presenting new settings of "early Americana". (20, p. 257) In 1954 a second set of Old American Songs was published, also containing five songs.

As is evident in Copland's earlier use of folk material in words such as Billy the Kid and Rodeo, it would seem that Copland "brought more of the indigenous to folk music than it brought to him". (1, p. 441) Traditional tunes provided extra material to work with, but the materials themselves were merely specific manifestations of qualities that already had been present in Copland's music.

It has been observed that the same methods of abstraction applied by Copland to his themes of the early "thirties", when more recently applied to folk tunes, curiously bring out in the melodic pattern a broader essence of Americanism than the tunes originally convey. (1, p. 442)

As was true in his earlier works, Copland is not satisfied with accepting actual traditional tunes at face value. He sometimes alters notes, leaves out unwanted

elements, separates phrases for better spacing, and "he elicits unexpected eloquences from frivolous ditties by softening them and slowing them up" (1. p. 442) in the Revolutionary song, "Springfield Mountain", which becomes the dignified main theme of A Lincoln Portrait.

Some of these altering devices are present in the two sets of Old American Songs with the added element of rhythmic alterations. However, because Copland is dealing directly with original folk songs, most of the melodies are only changed slightly, deriving much of their charm from the original piano accompaniments created by Copland.

Each set forms a kind of vocal suite offering varying moods such as nostalgic, sentimental, devotional, humorous, and energetic.

The Old American Songs were originally written for solo voice and piano, having been later arranged for chorus and piano, voice and orchestra, and chorus and orchestra. "These delightful arrangements need no other justification than the charm of their presentation " (3, p. 72)

"The Boatman's Dance"

The composer's note explains that this song was

published in 1843 as an "original banjo melody" written by old Dan D. Emmett, who later composed the famous "Dixie". "Uncle" Dan, as he was affectionately called, "toured the South with Al G. Field's Minstrels when he was past eighty, and Southerners took him to their hearts in gratitude for his great old songs of the Southland." (14, p. 169) Dan D. Emmett also wrote "The Blue Tail Fly," "Early in the Morning," and "Old Dan Tucker."

As is true of many folk songs, after having been passed down from generation to generation, there exist several versions of "Boatman's Dance". However, the melody seems to remain constant with slight variations in rhythm and text. The minstrel song consists of two sections of about equal length, the second being the refrain, usually sung in chorus. (12, p. 181) The original key possibly was F major, but Copland has set the tune and accompaniment in E major with a snappy rhythmic combination of eighth notes and sixteenth notes in the accompaniment to enhance the first eighth-note rhythm of the verses. Each verse returns to the "Quite Slow" section, "High row the Boatmen row". This slow tempo which emphasizes the chorus is not present in any version

of the original folk song. The separate sections, contrasting dynamic markings, accents and varied accompaniment rhythms lend a new charm and variety to the old tune.

"The Dodger"

This old song was supposedly used in the Cleveland-Blaine presidential campaign, and was sung by Mrs. Emma Dusenberry of Mena, Arkansas, who learned it in the 1880's. The composer of "The Dodger" is unknown, but it is possible that the song was written, or re-arranged for the campaign by C. A. White, who wrote "President Cleveland's Victory March" in 1884. (21, p. 215)

Copland has set this "fast patter type" song with a simple banjo-style accompaniment. The single note, chord, note, pattern with off-beat accents gives the impression of a strumming, plucking, banjo, and the composer instructs, "heavy staccato banjo style" further crystallizing the manner in which it is to be played. The form of this song reveals the influence of the minstrel as it has two sections, the refrain probably having been sung in chorus. . . "Yes, we're all dodgin. . .". The steady strumming banjo sounds continue in an obvious G major tonality along with the voice, throughout. However, Copland throws in a different

accompaniment style in verse two, using chords in quarter note rhythm. This change keeps the melody from getting monotonous and helps emphasize the change in personalities from candidate to preacher, especially as the tempo slows for the hymn-like sound on "He'll preach you a gospel". A still different personality is portrayed in the third verse with syncopated chordal accompaniment like the "lover" one can't trust. Each time the verse returns to the fast rhythm of the chorus.

"Long Time Ago"

"Long Time Ago" was issued in 1837 by George Pope Morris, who adapted the words, and Charles Edward Horn, who arranged the music from an anonymous, original 'black-face' tune. This delicate little song was the song of the year in 1858, and was popular with millions of Americans for twenty years. (14, p. 169)

Copland has set this lovely ballad-like tune in its original key, B flat major, and its original meter of 2/4. Although there is no tempo marking on the original, it is marked "sentimentally" and more than likely was sung much faster than Copland's setting. The slow tempo of this new arrangement is unusually charming if sung after the

first two songs in the set, lending quite a welcome contrast to their fast tempos.

A simple accompaniment, consisting of single moving melodic lines in the treble and bass of the accompaniment without any chordal sections, enhances the delicate simplicity of the melody and text.

Copland has added occasional grace notes to sections of the vocal lines and accompaniment to give a sense of ballad style, and as was evident in "The Dodger", each of the four verses is varied slightly in the vocal line and accompaniment. The variations are mostly different rhythmic patterns to avoid the monotony of hearing the same thing four times. Julia Smith describes this song as "a sentimental English or Irish-type ballad". (20, p. 257)

"Simple Gifts"

This was a favorite song of the Shaker sect, from 1837-1847. The melody and words were quoted by Edward D. Andrews in his book of Shaker rituals, songs and dances, entitled The Gift to Be Simple. The Shakers, a religious group also called the "Shaking Quakers", were simple, pious people who lived according to strict rules. They acquired their name from their custom of dramatizing

their songs through dance. (5, p. 50) The "simplicity" this song describes was one of the most important Shaker virtues. (2, p. 203)

"Simple Gifts" has been heard before in the music of Aaron Copland, in his ballet Appalachian Spring. Besides reviving the tune in the Old American Songs, Copland used it as a basis for his "Variations on a Shaker Melody" for concert band. (17, p. 483)

Written in 2/4 meter in the key of A flat major, the simple, chordal accompaniment accents the constant, yet simple movement of the vocal line. The song has two sections although the second section is very similar in melodic and rhythmic patterns to the first part. Therefore, Copland has kept the accompaniment similar in both sections with the one major change to octave jumps in eighth notes to accompany the idea of "turning, turning."

"I Bought Me a Cat"

This version of the song was sung to Aaron Copland by the American playwright Lynn Riggs, who learned the song during his childhood in Oklahoma. The song is a children's nonsense song originating possibly in Arkansas, but with no known composer. (18, p. 178)

The musical setting by Copland is 2/4 meter, key of F major, and begins with one single F pitch on the piano preceded by a grace note. The voice enters with a melody based on the F major triad in an "easy going" eighth note rhythm. This simple melody is repeated for each of the six animals represented in the song, which could be quite boring, were it not for Copland's clever variations in the accompaniment and vocal lines. Unexpected meter changes and slight changes in single note rhythms from an eighth one time to a sixteenth the next time, plus unexpected accidentals throughout the piece keep the song alive and interesting. The basic accompaniment pattern has an "oom pah" effect at the beginning with a bass note answered by a chord in repeated sequences. Each animal verse brings an added rhythmic variation in this pattern until a fast frenzied succession of sixteenth note pitches and chords in the treble clef accompany the rapid restating of all the animals and their sounds at the end of the piece.

This completes the first set of Old American Songs which was initially performed on June 17, 1950, by Peter Pears and Benjamin Britten, at the Aldeburgh Festival, Suffolk, England. These songs have been performed

successfully in America by William Warfield. (20, p. 257)

Old American Songs Set II

The second set of folk songs was completed in 1952 and was performed at the Castle Hill Concert that year.

"The Little Horses"

The date of this song is unknown, but it is a children's lullaby song originating in the Southern states. Copland's note in the score reveals that this adaptation is founded in part in John A. and Alan Lomax's version in Folk Song, U.S.A.

Another source claims that the folk song originated in South Carolina and was originally a Negro folk song. (2, p. 72)

The simple, swaying minor melody is sung over steady beats of eighth notes in the accompaniment, aiding the listener to imagine the gentle trotting of horses to the words describing "All the little horses". The slower pianissimo "hush you by" which begins and ends the piece, is totally un-cluttered with pitches, using only two or three tones sounded together at the same time in open harmonies. An interesting feature of this song is the

use of treble clef accompaniment only, to fit the small, child-like lullaby. The lowest pitch heard in the entire song is B3.

"Zion's Walls"

"Zion's Walls" is an old revivalist song, the original melody and words being credited to John G. McCurry, compiler of "Social Harp." It was published by George P. Jackson in Down East Spirituals in 1942 and included in a group of religious songs which had their origin some two hundred years ago. (12, p. 607)

Written in 9/8 meter in the key of F major, the accompaniment to "Zion's Walls" begins with both hands in the treble clef, the left hand playing the beginning melody of the vocal line against the right hand's slow imitation of the melody heard later in the piece. Imitative passages recalling these same two themes are heard in counterpoint as the voice enters, and later, the accompaniment joins the rhythm and melody of the vocal line to play in unison. The frequent alternating between 6/8 and 9/8 meter guards against monotony and adds a little more interest to the simplicity of the song.

The original melody contains its own musical variation

with a definite division in the song, although words remain the same. The change is from the constantly moving eighth note rhythm of the first section to the same words sung in legato dotted quarter note rhythm, while the piano continues the two counter melodies. The piece ends majestically with fast moving octaves in the accompaniment.

"The Golden Willow Tree"

The composer's note in the vocal score provides information about "The Golden Willow Tree". It is a variant of the well-known Anglo ballad, usually called "The Golden Vanity". This version is based on a recording issued by the Library of Congress Music Division from the collection of the Archives of American Folk Song. In 1937, Justus Begley recorded it with banjo accompaniment for Alan and Elizabeth Lomax.

"The Golden Vanity" is an English folk song originally sung as "forcastle shanty" (6, p. 172), and was brought to many parts of America by the early settlers. It is still sung in many different versions each one reflecting the part of the country from which it stems. (16, p. 93) Each version tells the same story of a ship in danger of the enemy, and the young boy who

sinks the enemy ship for the promised gold and the pretty maid. The story ends as the boy dies because the Captain didn't keep his promise. The details of the story are changed slightly to fit the part of the country where it was sung. In this case the name of the ship is changed to "Golden Willow Tree".

The setting of the song here is in G major, in 4/4, and marked "with gusto". The introduction is simply a section of the vocal melody to come.

The accompaniment for the first verse provides an eighth note ostinato pattern in a repeated pitch sequence that is unchanging, except for a variation in the bass line toward the end of the verse. Another ostinato pattern is established in the accompaniment for the next verse, this time using an eighth note, quarter, eighth, quarter rhythm. Each verse has a new accompaniment sequence which accomplishes what Copland obviously had in mind: to vary each verse somewhat, but not to overshadow the story being told by the singer. An interesting feature of the song is the change of keys when the speakers in the story change. The narrator and carpenter boy speak in the key of G, but the Captain, a higher ranking man, speaks a half step higher

in A flat major. As the mood of the carpenter boy drops, his characteristic key drops a half step to G flat major. The Captain speaks again, this time still written in G flat, but the canceled G flat and C flat throughout his section mark a brief transition back to A flat, his characteristic key. The song ends as it began in the key of G, and the last verse recalls bits of each rhythmic ostinato pattern heard in previous verses. One variation of the melody that Copland has added is the dropping of the last note on the word "low" an octave to give the last verse more finality.

"At the River"

This is an old hymn tune written by Rev. Robert Lowry in 1865. Rev. Lowry also wrote "Where is my Wandering Boy Tonight?" which was the sacred song of the year 1877, and "I Need Thee Every Hour" which was the sacred song of the year 1868. (14, p. 226) Another source provided this information:

In the Nineteenth Century a revival movement under Dwight E. Moody and Ira G. Sankey swept over the United States. The gospel songs which resulted were of a new type, an answer to a 'search for an utterance more to the popular liking'. The Methodist hymn was one of the most famous of the period. (6, p. 297)

Copland has rearranged the traditional chorded I, IV,

V, I, Accompaniment of this melody into other sequences using the traditional chords in unexpected places and positions. Also, he has added sevenths and ninths to the old chords creating sounds that seem almost dissonant to the ear so accustomed to hearing the old traditional hymn. As is characteristic of Copland, the rhythm of the accompaniment is a major change from the simple chorded texture of the old hymn. The song remains homophonic, but the accompaniment has independent movement, often playing bits of the melody during piano interludes, and there is frequent use of dotted rhythms to match similar patterns in the vocal line. One change occurring in the vocal line, which was not present in the original melody, is the ending of the first verse on the third of the scale. Copland uses this idea once more in the last line of the song, to allow the singer to repeat the phrase for a more majestic and triumphant fortissimo ending on the tonic.

"Ching a Ring Chaw"

The last song in the suite is an old minstrel song, "Ching a Ring Chaw", flourishing around the 1850's. (12, p. 184) As previously mentioned, a minstrel song usually contained two sections, the second sung in chorus. In the

original song the chorus was probably "Ching a Ring", which begins the song in Copland's arrangement. The setting is D major in a "lively" 2/4 tempo. The banjo type accompaniment sound is achieved successfully on the piano with a repeated one note bass line answered in fast tempo with triads in the treble clef. This type of accompaniment continues throughout the piece, varied sometimes with sixteenth rhythms and sometimes with both hands playing together, but entering off the beat or playing in dotted rhythms. A challenge for the vocalist with this piece is to remember the number of measure rests between each section, as it is never the same, and the accompaniment has no set melodic pattern to follow.

The song ends with rapid repeated "Ching a Ring Ching, Ching" building excitement until the final jubilantly shouted "Chaw!"

This delightfully energetic song seems a perfect ending for a charming presentation of American history in song.

Remaining Songs of Aaron Copland

The remaining songs of Aaron Copland are certainly not major works of the composer, and do not merit the acclaim of the Dickinson cycle, or possibly the Old American Songs, but they are fine contributions to vocal literature and should be briefly discussed.

The very first published vocal composition for Aaron Copland was "Old Poem", completed in June, 1920, and published by Maurice Senart. (1, p. 443)

"Old Poem"

The first name chosen for this song was "Melodie Chinoise", and it was first performed under this title by a soprano called Miss MacAlister accompanied by the composer, at the Salle Gaveau in Paris, on September 23, 1921. The name was later changed to "Old Poem". The work was performed under this new title on January 10, 1922, by Charles Hubbard, at the Salle des Agriculteurs in Paris. (20, p. 48)

Being a composition of the young Copland, who was still studying in Paris, this song reflects the French impressionistic style, with an indication of Copland's emerging

interest in frequent changes of meter. The marking is "very slowly" in a beginning meter of 3/4 and a key of E minor. The sadness of the poem (words from the Chinese by Arthur Waley) is heralded by a chorded introduction composed of harmonic major seventh intervals combined with harmonic minor sixths, or fifths, giving a mysterious nocturnal sound. The meter changes just before the voice enters to 4/4 with a series of open harmonic major sevenths on the off-beats in the accompaniment. The range of the vocal line remains within the limits of a fifth or sixth throughout most of the piece, not jumping in such wide, angular skips as is characteristic in Copland's later works. The combination of a "bolero" type rhythm with a "blues" sounding melody in the second section of the song, reveal the composer's beginning ideas toward incorporating a jazz element into his music.

This is a lovely song, although it doesn't have the refinement of vocal compositions later reached by Copland.

"Pastorale"

"Pastorale" was the next song composed by Copland bearing a date of April 4-12, 1921. However, it was an unpublished work; therefore, little is known about its

content or its worth except from the response it received at its performance. The text was from Kafiristan, translated by Edward Powys Mathers. The first performance was by Charles Hubbard, an American tenor, accompanied by Aaron Copland, at the Salle des Agriculteurs in Paris, January 10, 1922. After Charles Hubbard's performance, the "Herald" reported that the avant garde concert brought "honors" to composer and singer of "Pastorale", and both received an ovation at the end of the song. It was later performed by Marjorie Nash at Town Hall in New York, on May 1, 1928. (20, p. 49) "Pastorale" is the only unpublished vocal work by Copland which has a record of being publicly performed.

"As it Fell Upon a Day"

In 1923, Copland wrote a piece for his orchestration class under Nadia Boulanger, entitled "As it Fell Upon a Day". The assignment was to write a piece for flute and clarinet, but later Copland decided to write in a soprano voice part. (20, p. 58) Having been primarily an exercise in orchestration, the piece is classified in most sources as a "chamber work" rather than vocal work.

The poem is by the seventeenth century English poet,

Richard Barnefield, and Copland has set it in the style of a madrigal. "Through its text and its use of modal intervals and harmonies, it invokes a sixteenth or seventeenth century English flavor." (20, p. 58) The form of the song is roughly: introduction, A B C B C using the introduction material again as a coda. The first part of the song, written in Mixolydian mode, is interrupted every four bars by an instrumental interlude, and in the middle section the voice imitates the nightingale, which in turn, is imitated by the flute. Copland's use of polytonality which was limited at this time is present in this piece as the voice and flute are written in E major while the clarinet answers in B flat major. "The final cadence contains the polyharmonies of B flat and E flat." (20, p. 58)

Although Copland used the Mixolydian mode in this piece, as he had done in a few previous compositions, he has said, "My generation didn't learn about modes. All of this is a recent development. I have never consciously written in a mode." (20, p. 59) Aaron Copland has simply adapted the use of modes and polytonalities to develop a type of sound and mood he wants to portray.

The first performance of "As it Fell Upon a Day" was

on February 6, 1924, by Ada MacLeish, soprano, at the Societe Musicale Independante in Paris. The work was received well, and the comment from the press was this:

It is sufficiently rare to be worthy of remark, the care of the young American musician, who, at an age when his compatriots are still imbued with the Brahmsian religion, deliberately gets away from it and writes in the neo-classic style which seems to attract the best part of the young French generation. Written with a clever, firm, and bold pen, this song is full of ingenious and charming details: it, alone, permits us to hope for great things from the author. (20, p. 61)

"Song"

Toward the end of his first style period, Copland was experimenting with new ideas and techniques. He felt he had exhausted his use of "jazz" elements, and he was moving on to newer things. One of his new experiments was the twelve-tone or serial technique, which is the basis for "Song", later named "Poet's Song". (20, p. 96)

"Song" was composed during the month of August, 1927, and is based on a text by E. E. Cummings. The piece introduces experimental techniques such as a contrapuntal technique with no trace of jazz, and a tone row which actually doesn't destroy all sense of tonality. "The movements of the several lines form chords which somehow

relate to harmonies." (20, p. 99)

The "row" seems to have been planned on this succession of notes: B D F G C C sharp, A flat, F sharp, B flat, A natural, E, E flat.

The song was not performed until October 11, 1935, when Ethel Luening, soprano, accompanied by Copland, performed it in an all-Copland program at the New School for Social Research.

Lacking the spontaneity and exuberance characteristic of the songs composed prior to this time, the 'Song' appears forced, contrived, and in relation to the composer's total output, deserves recognition simply as an 'atonal' experiment.
(20, p. 100)

However, "Song" contains important "abstract" implications for works which followed during his abstract stylistic period.

"Vocalise"

Copland's "Vocalise" was composed in June, 1928, as an "etude" for voice and piano, also during the transition between the composer's jazz era and his abstract period. The "Vocalise" was written at the request of the French publisher, Leduc, and Professor Hettich of the Paris conservatory, who maintained that "vocalises written by contemporary composers could provide the means by which young students might solve

technical and interpretive problems of the newest music." (20, p. 104)

Although it is written for voice and piano, the "Vocalise" ignores the pianistic aspects of the usual accompaniment by limiting the accompaniment texture to one line for each hand, which freely imitates the vocal line. This creates a certain bareness of sound which is characteristic of Copland's works of the Abstract period. Other new tendencies of the composer in this work are: frequent changes of meter, an element present in his first published vocal work, "Old Poem", but an addition of writing a 3/4 measure in the voice over a 4/4 measure in the piano is evident in "Vocalise"; further use of the modal sonorities in the piano introduction; "polytonal, Ravel-like harmonies" (20, p. 104), and the cumulative type of cadenza where each little motivic fragment is repeated over and over, each time adding a new pitch or a new rhythmic element until it reaches a peak. The "Vocalise" was first performed along with "Song" at the School for Social Research, in October, 1935. (20, p. 302)

"Vocalise" was the last vocal composition of Aaron Copland published or unpublished from 1928 until 1950 when the major song cycle, Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson,

was completed.

"Dirge in Woods"

"Dirge in Woods" is the only vocal work which has been published by Copland since the completion of the Old American Songs in 1954. "Dirge in Woods" was composed in June of 1954, in honor of Nadia Boulanger's fiftieth year of teaching, and was first performed at the Fontainebleau School of Music that same summer. The first New York hearing was given by Adele Addison, in Carnegie Recital Hall, March 28, 1955. (20, p. 262) The song is based on a text by George Meredith and is set in a moderate 4/4 with a basic key center of E flat major, although with the presence of numerous accidentals there is only vague reference to E flat.

The mature Copland one heard in the Dickinson cycle comes to life in this piece also, with his skillful interweaving of accompaniment and vocal line to fit the thought-provoking text. Much of the dramatic musical sensitivity heard in the Dickinson songs is captured in "Dirge in Woods".

Although the word "Dirge" is used in the title, the song's mood is not really sad. Ross Parmenter has said, "The feeling is one of serene acceptance that all living things must drop and die, like the needles and cones from

the pines in the forests." (20, p. 262) He further labels the work as a "Beautiful new song", and notes that "The vocal line is long and floating and the piano accompaniment ripples gently under it." (20, p. 262)

Aaron Copland wrote several unpublished songs which were never publicly performed. Three songs for voice and piano were written during 1917. "Melancholy", with a text by Jeffrey Farnol, was the first during that year, and was written in the style of Debussy. The next composition was titled "Spurned Love", with a text by Thomas B Aldrich, and the third song during 1917, was "After Antwerp", using words of Wmille Cammaerts. "Three Songs" to lyrics of Aaron Schaffer were written in 1918, for high voice and piano, and only one song was composed in the following year. The title was "Simone", using a text by Remy de Gourment. Aaron Copland's last known unpublished vocal work is "Music I Heard", written to lyrics of Conrad Aiken, in April, 1920. (20, p. 299)

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The vocal works of Aaron Copland are unfortunately not as memorable a representation of his compositions as the large symphonic works. Simply by their limited number, the vocal works are far overshadowed when one considers the total output of the composer. However, it is extremely regrettable that such an artistic, and skillfully created song cycle as Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson, which is undoubtedly one of the finest contributions to all twentieth century vocal literature, is given so little recognition in music texts and references. The Old American Songs, although better known than the remaining single song compositions of Copland, should be more highly acclaimed, if for no other reason than their authentic American origin.

One of the foremost composers of our century, Aaron Copland displayed his musical ability and interest in composing at an early age. During his years of study with Nadia Boulanger, Copland's original and contemporary musical ideas began to materialize into his first well-known composition, Symphony for Organ and Orchestra, later

becoming his First Symphony.

Because of his musical genius and his winning personality, the gradual success and respect Copland gained, not only brought him to the fore-front of American musical circles, but it caused him to be a leading influence in establishing and supporting musical organizations. A few of these were the Copland-Sessions Concerts, Yaddo Festivals, American Composers Alliance, and the Young Composers Group. The contributions of Copland have not been overlooked by America, for he received the Pulitzer Prize for Appalachian Spring, the Boston Symphony Award for Third Symphony, and the Medal of Freedom.

The music of Aaron Copland is divided into three periods: French-Jazz (1924-1929), Abstract (1929-1935), and the Folk Song (1934-1955). Different stylistic traits are predominant in each of these three groups resulting in a combination of these elements in his compositions since 1955. The two largest and most renown vocal works of Copland were written during the years 1949-1954. Four other published songs of Aaron Copland were written before 1928, and the composer has had only one song published in the last twenty years.

It is an interesting fact that the bulk of Copland's composition has been designed on a large scale - for symphony orchestra, chorus and band. His two most successful vocal works are not single songs unrelated to anything else, but in a song cycle Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson, and a vocal suite, Old American Songs - making them "large" works in the realm of vocal literature. Other songs of Aaron Copland previously mentioned, either represent experiments with new techniques before the composer tried them out on the larger symphonic forms, or they represent songs composed for specific purposes, such as the "Vocalise" and "Dirge in Woods". The Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson is really the only vocal work of Aaron Copland which can honestly be classified as simply an "Absolute" work, seeking no other purpose than to satisfy the artistic expression of the composer. Even the Old American Songs were composed in an attempt to "reach more American people with music." (2, p. 161)

Whatever the reason for their creation, all the songs of Copland have musical value, and certainly should not be overlooked when studying vocal literature.

The author selected the Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson

and several songs from the two sets of Old American Songs to perform on an all-Copland lecture-recital, on July 8, 1974, at Texas Woman's University. These particular songs were chosen on the basis of musical value, the challenge which they offer the performer, the combination of songs providing the greatest audience appeal, and the length of time required for the total performance of the recital.

Aaron Copland has possibly contributed more to American contemporary music than any other composer. Julia Smith has said, "In the work of Aaron Copland, America has produced her first great composer." (2, p. 294) Every serious student of music, especially in our own United States, should be familiar with the works of this great musician. And, certainly every serious student of the art of singing should be at least knowledgeable about the songs of Aaron Copland.

At the time of Copland's sixtieth birthday, Richard Franko Goldman paid this tribute to Aaron Copland:

The historian of American music may run through his list of the other good and respectable composers, but none of these men of earlier generations comes up to our expectations of what a major composer really is. Copland does. We can now see what his contribution to this date has been, and can recognize that he stands almost alone in this

generation, as Ives stood completely alone in his. A decade or so ago, one thought of Copland and perhaps a quartet of others as our 'representative' of 'Leading' composers, but the last ten or fifteen years have separated this group in more ways than one. And, it is Copland's music that has most effectively remained with us. (1, p. 486)

The portion of Goldman's statement regarding other American composers, especially Charles Ives, is no longer valid as one realizes the importance and prominence Ives' music has obtained in recent years. However, Franko Goldman certainly supports the conclusion of this author that Aaron Copland is one of the most important American composers of our generation.

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APPENDIX

Texas Woman's University

College of Fine Arts
Department of Music

Presents

SUE PARKER

In A Lecture-Recital

SONGS OF AARON COPLAND
DELIA BENTON, Accompanist



July 8, 1974

Redbud Auditorium

8:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

I

Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson (1950)

Nature, the gentlest mother
There came a wind like a bugle
Why do they shut me out of Heaven?
The world feels dusty
Heart, we will forget him
Dear March, come in!
Sleep is supposed to be
When they come back
I've heard an organ talk sometimes
Going to Heaven!
The Chariot

II

Old American Songs – Set I (1950)

The Boatmen's Dance

The Dodger

Long Time Ago

I Bought Me A Cat

Old American Songs – Set II (1952)

At the River

Ching-a-ring Chaw

EMILY DICKINSON / AARON COPLAND

I

Nature, the gentlest mother,
Impatient of no child,
The feeblest or the waywardest,
Her admonition mild

In forest and the hill
By traveller is heard,
Restraining rampant squirrel
Or too impetuous bird.

How fair her conversation,
A summer afternoon,
Her household, her assembly;
And when the sun goes down

Her voice among the aisles
Incites the timid prayer
Of the minutest cricket,
The most unworthy flower.

When all the children sleep
She turns as long away
As will suffice to light her lamps;
Then, bending from the sky,

With infinite affection
And infiniter care,
Her golden finger on her lip,
Wills silence everywhere.

III

Why do they shut me out of Heaven?
Did I sing too loud?
But I can sing a little minor,
Timid as a bird.

Wouldn't the angels try me
Just once more?
Just see if I troubled them
But don't shut the door!

Oh, if I were the gentlemen
In the white robes,
And they were the little hand that knocked
Could I forbid?

II

There came a wind like a bugle;
It quivered through the grass,
And a green chill upon the heat
So ominous did pass
We barred the windows and the doors

As from an emerald ghost;
The doom's electric moccasin
That very instant passed.
On a strange mob of panting trees,
And fences fled away,

And rivers where the houses ran
The living looked that day.
The bell within the steeple wild
The flying tidings whirled.
How much can come
And much can go,
And yet abide the world!

IV

The world feels dusty
When we stop to die;
We want the dew then,
Honors taste dry.

Flags vex a dying face,
But the least fan
Stirred by a friend's hand
Cools like the rain.

Hine be the ministry
When thy thirst comes,
Dews of thyself to fetch
And holy balms.

V

Heart, we will forget him!
You and I, tonight!
You may forget the warmth he gave,
I will forget the light.

When you have done, pray tell me,
That I my thoughts may dim;
Haste! lest while you're lagging,
I may remember him!

VI

Dear March, come in!
 How glad I am!
 I looked for you before.
 Put down your hat -
 You must have walked -
 How out of breath you are!
 Dear March, how are you?
 And the rest?
 Did you leave Nature well?
 Oh, March, come right upstairs with me,
 I have so much to tell!

I got your letter, and the bird's;
 The maples never knew
 That you were coming, - I declare,
 How red their faces grew!
 But, March, forgive me -
 And all those hills
 You left for me to hue;
 There was no purple suitable,
 You took it all with you.

Who knocks? That April!
 Lock the door!
 I will not be pursued!
 He stayed away a year, to call
 When I am occupied.
 But trifles look so trivial
 As soon as you have come,
 That blame is just as dear as praise
 And praise as mere as blame.

VII

Sleep is supposed to be,
 By souls of sanity,
 The shutting of the eye.

Sleep is the station grand
 Down which on either hand
 The hosts of witness stand!

Morn is supposed to be,
 By people of degree,
 The breaking of the day.

Morning has not occurred!
 That shall aurora be
 East of eternity;

One with the banner gay,
 One in the red array, -
 That is the break of day.

VIII

When they come back,
 If blossoms do -
 I always feel a doubt
 If blossoms can be born again
 When once the art is out.

When they begin,
 If Robins do -
 I always had a fear
 I did not tell, it was their last
 Experiment last year.

When it is May,
 If May return -
 Has nobody a pang
 That on a face so beautiful
 We might not look again?

If I am there -
 One does not know
 What party one may be
 Tomorrow, - but if I am there
 I take back all I say!

IX

I felt a funeral in my brain,
 And mourners, to and fro,
 Kept treading, treading, till it seemed
 That sense was breaking through.

And when they all were seated,
 A service like a drum
 Kept beating, beating, till I thought
 My mind was going numb.

And they I heard them lift a box,
 And creak across my soul
 With those same boots of lead, again.
 Then space began to toll!

As all the heavens were a bell,
 And Being but an ear,
 And I and silence some strange race,
 Wrecked, solitary, here.

X

I've heard an organ talk sometimes
 In a cathedral aisle
 And understood no word it said,
 Yet held my breath the while

And risen up and gone away
 A more Bernardine girl,
 Yet knew not what was done to me
 In that old hallowed aisle.

XI

Going to heaven!
 I don't know when,
 Pray do not ask me how, -
 Indeed, I'm too astonished
 To think of answering you!
 Going to heaven!
 How dim it sounds!
 And yet it will be done
 As sure as flocks go home at night
 Unto the shepherd's arm!

Perhaps you're going too! Who knows?
 If you should get there first,
 Save just a little place for me
 Close to the two I lost!

The smallest "robe" will fit me,
 And just a bit of "crown";
 For you know we do not mind our dress
 When we are going home.

I am glad I don't believe it,
 For it would stop my breath,
 And I'd like to look a little more
 At such a curious earth!

I am glad they did believe it
 Whom I have never found
 Since the mighty autumn afternoon
 I left them in the ground.

XII

Because I could not stop for Death,
 He kindly stopped for me;
 The carriage held but just ourselves
 And immortality.

We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
 And I had put away
 My labor, and my leisure too,
 For his civility.

We passed the school where children played
 Their lessons scarcely done;
 We passed the fields of gazing grain,
 We passed the setting sun.

We paused before a house that seemed
 A swelling of the ground;
 The roof was scarcely visible,
 The cornice but a mound.

Since then 'tis centuries; but each
 Feels shorter than the day
 I first surmised the horses' heads
 Were toward eternity.

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