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Hildegard von Bingen was born in 1098 in County Palatine of the Rhine, Holy Roman Empire, and died in 1179 at the age of 81. She was a German Benedictine abbess, a writer, a composer, and a philosopher.

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Attention in recent decades to women of the medieval church has led to a great deal of popular interest in Hildegard's music. In addition to the Ordo Virtutum, sixty-nine musical compositions, each with its own original poetic text, survive, and at least four other texts are known, though their musical notation has been lost. This is one of the largest repertoires among medieval composers.

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Hildegard's music is described as monophonic, that is, consisting of exactly one melodic line. Her compositional style is characterized by soaring melodies that push the boundaries of the more steady, conventional ranges of traditional Gregorian chant.

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Hildegard composed many liturgical songs that were collected into a cycle called the *Symphonia armoniae celestium revelationum*. The songs from the *Symphonia* are set to Hildegard's own text.

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Fanny Mendelssohn (November 14, 1805 – May 14, 1847), was a German pianist and composer, the sister of the composer Felix Mendelssohn and granddaughter of the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. The siblings shared a great passion for music. Like Felix (who was born in 1809), Fanny showed prodigious musical ability as a child and began to write music.

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In 1829, after a courtship of several years, Fanny married the painter Wilhelm Hensel and the following year she had her only child, Sebastian Ludwig Felix Hensel. Her husband was supportive of her composing. Subsequently, her works were often played alongside her brother's at the family home in Berlin in a Sunday concert series originally organized by Fanny's father, and after 1831 carried on by Fanny herself.

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Fanny Mendelssohn composed over 460 pieces of music. Her compositions include a piano trio and several books of solo piano pieces and songs.

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In recent years, Fanny Mendelssohn's music has become better known thanks to concert performances and a number of CDs being released. She is one of the relatively few well-documented exemplars of female creativity in the early 19th century.

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Clara Schumann was born in 1819 in Leipzig, Germany. She was considered one of the most distinguished pianists of the Romantic era. She left behind a catalogue of works, much for solo piano, as well as chamber pieces and lieder that are regularly performed.

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From an early age, Clara's career and life was planned down to the smallest detail by her father. Everyday, she received a one-hour lesson (in piano, violin, singing, theory, harmony, composition, and counterpoint) and two hours of practice, using the teaching methods he had developed on his own.

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Robert Schumann was a little more than 9 years older than Clara and moved into the Wieck household as a piano student of Clara's father by the end of 1830 when she was only 11 and he was 20. In 1837 when she was 18, he proposed to her and she accepted.

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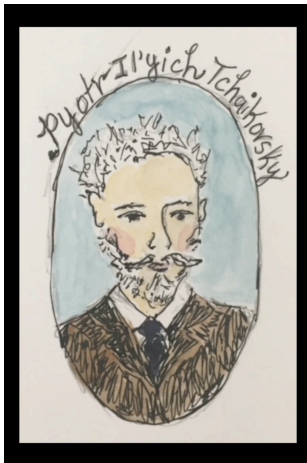


As part of the broad musical education given her by her father, Clara Wieck learned to compose, and from childhood to middle age she produced a good body of work. Clara wrote that "composing gives me great pleasure... there is nothing that surpasses the joy of creation, if only because through it one wins hours of self-forgetfulness, when one lives in a world of sound". At age fourteen she wrote her piano concerto, with some help from Robert Schumann, and performed it at age sixteen at the Leipzig Gewandhaus with Mendelssohn conducting.

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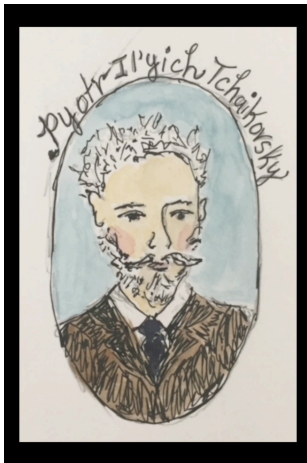


Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky - (May 7, 1840 – November 6, 1893), was a Russian composer of the romantic period. Some of his works are among the most popular music in the classical repertoire. Tchaikovsky's music made a lasting impression internationally. He also made many appearances as a guest conductor in Europe and the United States.

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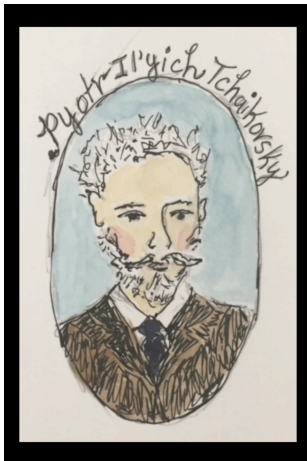


Tchaikovsky began piano lessons at age five. Within three years he had become as adept at reading sheet music as his teacher. His parents, initially supportive, hired a tutor, and encouraged his piano study. Although musically precocious, Tchaikovsky was educated for a career as a civil servant. There was very little opportunity for a musical career in Russia at that time and no system of public music education. When an opportunity for such an education arose, he entered the Saint Petersburg Conservatory from which he graduated in 1865.

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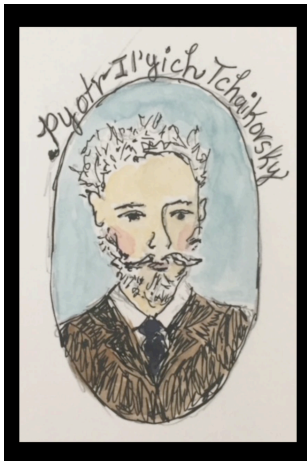


The Conservatory transformed Tchaikovsky into a musical professional, with tools to help him grow as a composer. Tchaikovsky's works were performed frequently, with few delays between their composition and first performances; the publication from 1867 onward of his songs and great piano music for the home market also helped boost his popularity.

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Tchaikovsky wrote many works that are popular with the classical music public, including his Romeo and Juliet, the 1812 Overture, and his three ballets (The Nutcracker, Swan lake, The Sleeping Beauty). These, along with his First Piano Concerto and his Violin Concerto, six symphonies and his operas (The queen of Spades and Eugene Onegin) are among his most familiar works.

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Cécile Chaminade (August 8, 1857- April 13, 1944) was a French composer and pianist. Born in Paris, she studied at first with her mother, then with Félix Le Couppey on piano, Marie Gabriel Augustin Savard, and Martin Pierre Marsick on violin, and Benjamin Godard in music composition.

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Cécile Chaminade: Her first experiments in composition took place in very early days, and in her eighth year she played some of her sacred music to Georges Bizet, who was much impressed with her talents. She gave her first concert when she was eighteen, and from that time on her work as a composer gained steadily in favor. She wrote mostly character pieces for piano, and salon songs, almost all of which were published.!

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Chaminade married a music publisher from Marseilles, Louis-Mathieu Carbonel, in 1901. Her husband was much older than she was, and he passed away in 1907. Chaminade did not remarry.

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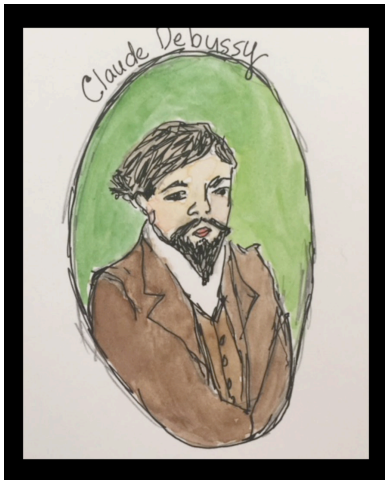


Chaminade's music has been described as tuneful, highly accessible and mildly chromatic, and typically follows most aspects of late-Romantic French music. Most of her compositions were published during her lifetime and were financially successful.

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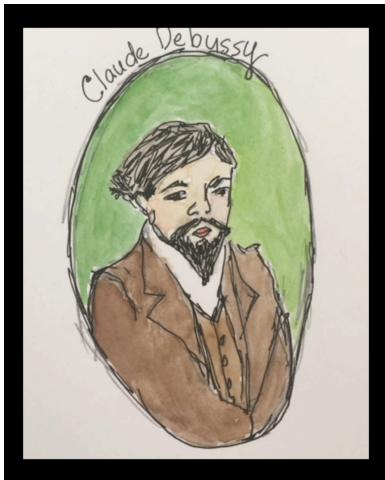


Claude Debussy (August 22, 1862 – March 25 1918) was a French composer. He is sometimes seen as the first Impressionist composer, although he rejected the term. He was among the most influential composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

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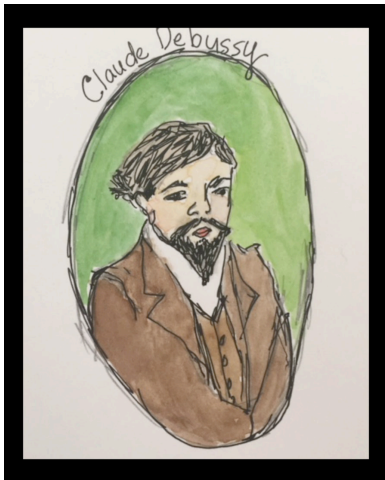


Born to a family of modest means, Debussy showed enough musical talent to be admitted at the age of ten to France's leading music college, the Conservatoire de Paris. Debussy remained a student there for the next eleven years. He originally studied the piano, but found his vocation in innovative composition, despite the disapproval of the Conservatoire's conservative professors. He took many years to develop his mature style, and was nearly 40 before achieving international fame in 1902 with the only opera he completed, *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

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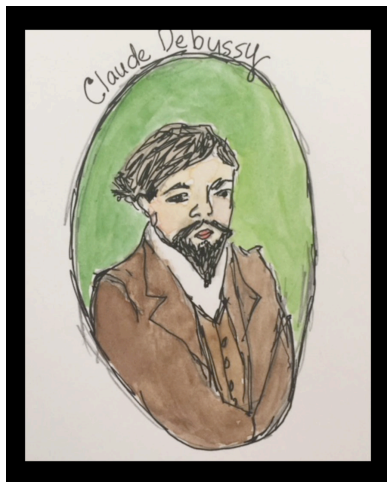


At the Conservatoire, Debussy incurred the disapproval of the faculty, particularly his composition teacher, Guiraud, for his failure to follow the orthodox rules of composition then prevailing. Nevertheless, in 1884 Debussy won France's most prestigious musical award, the Prix de Rome, with his cantata L'enfant prodigue.

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Debussy wrote:

"We must agree that the beauty of a work of art will always remain a mystery [...] we can never be absolutely sure how it's made. We must at all costs preserve this magic which is peculiar to music and to which music, by its nature, is of all the arts the most receptive."

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Amy Marcy Cheney Beach
(September 5, 1867 – December 27, 1944) was an American composer and pianist. She was the first successful American female composer of large-scale art music.

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Amy Beach was born in New Hampshire. A child prodigy, she was able to sing forty tunes accurately by age one; by age two she could improvise a counter-melody to any melody her mother sang. She taught herself to read at only four years old, and began composing simple waltzes at five years old. She began formal piano lessons with her mother at the age of six, and a year later started giving public recitals, playing works by Handel, Beethoven, Chopin, and her own pieces.

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At age fourteen, Amy received her only formal training in composition with Junius W. Hill, with whom she studied harmony and counterpoint for a year. Other than this year of training, as a composer Amy was self-taught; she often learned by studying much earlier works, such as Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

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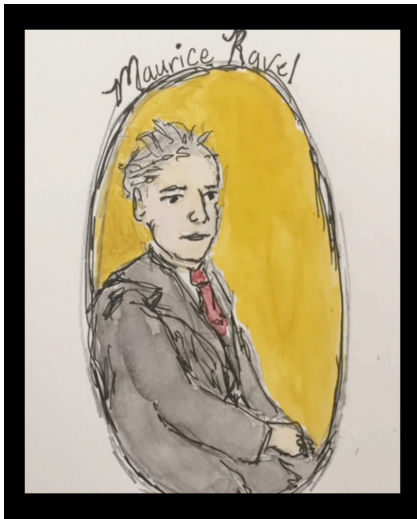


Following her marriage in 1885 to Dr. Henry Harris Aubrey Beach – a Boston surgeon 24 years older than she – she agreed to limit performances to two public recitals a year, with profits donated to charity. Following her husband's wishes, she devoted herself to composition. She used her status as the top female American composer to further the careers of young musicians. She served as leader of several organizations, including the Society of American Women Composers as its first president.

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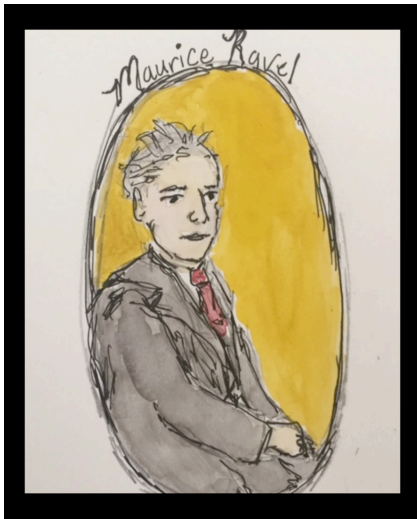


Maurice Ravel (March 7, 1875 – December 28 1937) was a French composer, pianist and conductor. He is often associated with impressionism along with his elder contemporary Claude Debussy, although both composers rejected the term. In the 1920s and 1930s Ravel was internationally regarded as France's greatest living composer.

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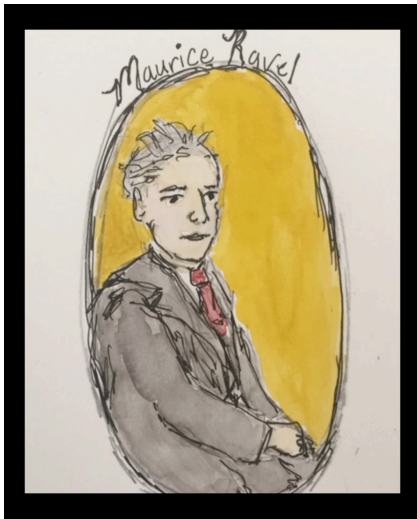


Born to a music-loving family, Ravel attended France's premier music college, the Paris Conservatoire. He was not well regarded by its conservative establishment when he was there. After leaving the conservatoire, Ravel found his own way as a composer, developing his own style, incorporating elements of baroque, neoclassicism, and in his later works, elements of jazz. He liked to experiment with musical form, as in his best-known work, *Boléro* (1928), in which repetition takes the place of development.

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As a slow and painstaking worker, Ravel composed fewer pieces than many of his contemporaries. Among his works to enter the repertoire are pieces for piano, chamber music, two piano concertos, ballet music, two operas and eight song cycles; he wrote no symphonies or church music. Many of his works exist in two versions: first, a piano score, and later, an orchestration.

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In 1899 Ravel composed his first piece to become widely known, though at first, it made little impact: Pavane pour un infante défunte ("Pavane for a dead princess"). In 1897 he conducted the first performance of the Shéhérazade overture, which had a mixed reception, with boos mingling with applause from the audience, and unflattering reviews from the critics. From the start of his career, Ravel appeared very indifferent to blame or to praise. The only opinion of his music that he truly valued was his own, perfectionist and extremely self-critical.

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Sergei Prokofiev (April 27, 1891 – March 5, 1953) was a Russian composer, pianist and conductor. He was the creator of acknowledged masterpieces across numerous musical genres and is regarded as one of the major composers of the 20th century.

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Sergei Prokofiev was inspired by hearing his mother practicing the piano in the evenings, mostly works by Chopin and Beethoven. He wrote his first piano composition at the age of five, an "Indian Gallop", which was written down by his mother.

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Prokofiev was a graduate of the St Petersburg Conservatory and first made his name as a composer-pianist. He achieved notoriety with a series of powerfully dissonant and virtuosic works for his instrument, including his first two piano concertos.

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Prokofiev's works include the March from The Love for Three Oranges, the suite Lieutenant Kijé, the ballet Romeo and Juliet, and Peter and the Wolf. He composed seven completed operas, seven symphonies, eight ballets, five piano concertos, two violin concertos, a cello concerto, a symphony-concerto for cello and orchestra, and nine piano sonatas. Today Prokofiev is one of the most popular composers of 20th century music.

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Lili Boulanger (August 21, 1893 – March 15, 1918) Lili was the first woman to win the Prix de Rome, the most prestigious award for composition in her native France for her cantata Faust et Helene when she was only 20 years old. Her older sister was the noted composer and composition teacher Nadia Boulanger.

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Lili was a child prodigy and her talent was apparent at the age of two, when Gabriel Fauré, a friend of the family and later one of Boulanger's teachers, discovered she had perfect pitch. Her parents, both of whom were musicians, encouraged their daughter's musical education.

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Lili's mother, Raissa Myshetskaya (Mischetzky), was a Russian princess who married her Paris Conservatoire teacher, Ernest Boulanger (who won the Prix de Rome in 1835). Her father was 77 years old when Lili was born and she became very attached to him. Her grandfather Frédéric Boulanger had been a noted cellist and her grandmother Juliette a singer.

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Lili Boulanger accompanied her ten year old sister Nadia to classes at the Paris Conservatoire before she was five, shortly thereafter sitting in on classes on music theory and studying organ as well. She also sang and played piano, violin, cello and harp.

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George Gershwin (September 26, 1898 – July 11, 1937) was an American composer and pianist. Gershwin's compositions spanned both popular and classical genres, and his most popular melodies are widely known. Among his best-known works are the orchestral compositions *Rhapsody in Blue* and *An American in Paris*, as well as the contemporary opera, *Porgy and Bess*.

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George lived a normal childhood in New York, playing with his boyhood friends outside in the streets. Until he was 10, he was not involved with music at all. Then, he became intrigued when he had the chance to attend a friend's violin recital. The sound, and the way his friend played, struck him. At around the same time, George's parents had purchased a piano for lessons for his older brother Ira, but to his parents' surprise, it was George who spent time playing it.

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Gershwin left school at the age of 15 and found his first job as a "song plugger." He worked for a Detroit-based publishing firm with a branch office on New York City's Tin Pan Alley, earning \$15 a week. His first published song was "When You Want 'Em, You Can't Get 'Em, When You've Got 'Em, You Don't Want 'Em" in 1916 when Gershwin was only 17 years old. It earned him 50 cents.

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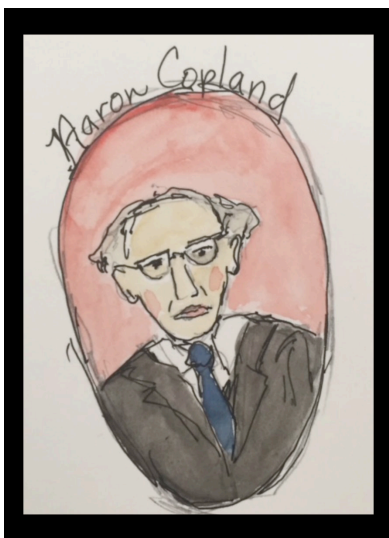


Gershwin was unique in his ability to manipulate forms of music into his own original voice. He made the jazz he discovered on Tin Pan Alley popular by combining its rhythms and tonality with that of the well-known songs of his time. George said that he believed that "true music must reflect the thought and aspirations of the people and time. My people are Americans. My time is today."

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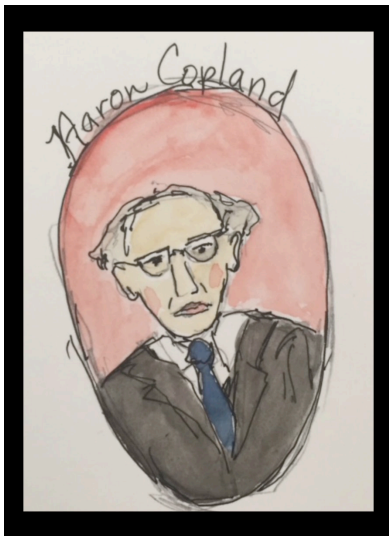


Aaron Copland was born in Brooklyn, New York on November 14, 1900 and died on December 2, 1990. He was an American composer, pianist, conductor, and teacher.

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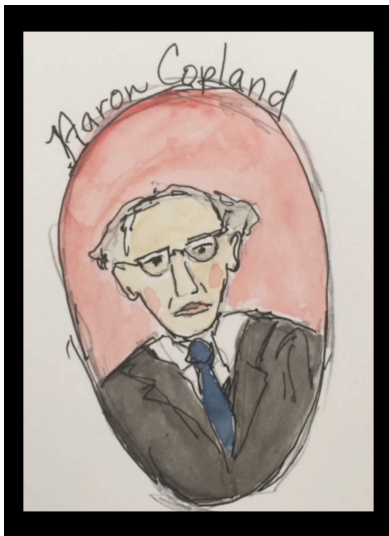


The open, slowly changing harmonies in much of Copland's music are typical of what many people consider to be the sound of American music, calling to mind the American landscape and pioneer spirit. Copland is well known for the works he wrote in the 1930s and 1940s in an accessible style often referred to as "populist" and which the composer called his "vernacular" style. These works include the ballets *Appalachian Spring*, *Billy the Kid*, and *Rodeo*, his *Fanfare for the Common Man*, and *Third Symphony*. In addition to his ballets and orchestral works, he produced music in many other genres including chamber music, vocal works, opera and film scores.

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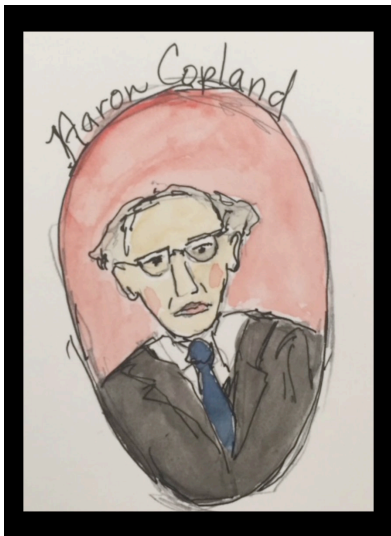
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Aaron Copland's father had no musical interest. His mother, Sarah Mittenthal Copland, sang, played the piano, and arranged for music lessons for her children. Copland began writing songs at the age of eight and a half. His earliest notated music was about seven measures long. He wrote this music when he was 11 years old, and it was for an opera scenario he created and called Zenatello.

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Vivian Perlis, who collaborated with Copland on his autobiography, wrote, "Copland's method of composing was to write down fragments of musical ideas as they came to him. When he needed a piece, he would turn to these ideas (his "gold nuggets"). If one or more of these nuggets looked promising, he would then write a piano sketch and eventually work on them at the keyboard." Copland would not consider the specific instrumentation for a piece until it was complete and notated. Many times he included material he had written years earlier. Copland said, "I don't compose. I assemble materials."