

**“Quiet City”**  
**Aaron Copland (1900-1990)**

If there was instantly a music that conjured up the American spirit, the American Saga and the American landscape – all at once, it would be that of Aaron Copland. Born in Brooklyn, New York, the fifth child to Russian-Jewish immigrants, he did not look to music until his teen years.

On graduating high school, Copland studied harmony and counterpoint through a correspondence course, after which he studied harmony with Rubin Goldmark. However, he always had wished to study in France, which he finally did in the early 1920’s becoming the first American pupil of the famed Nadia Boulanger. His early work, a symphony for Organ and Orchestra was written for her American tour. The next phase of his music was influenced by jazz and produced ‘Music for the Theater’ and his ‘Piano Concerto’. It was in this period that he received the Guggenheim Grant that allowed him to continue his work. The following phase was a more abstract style from which Copland made yet another abrupt change in the mid 1930’s. It is to this new style that we are grateful, as he set out to write music that was accessible to large audiences.

The next ten years saw *El Salon Mexico*, *An Outdoor Overture*, *Billy the Kid*, *Quiet City*, *Piano Sonata*, *Danzon Cubano*, *Rodeo*, *A Lincoln Portrait*, *Violin Sonata*, *Appalachian Spring*, and *Symphony No. 3*. If one were to make a defining list of music for which Copland is famous it would contain all of these works between 1936-1946. *Quiet City* is from 1940, in the middle of this prolific period which was rewarded at its end in 1945 with the Pulitzer Prize for Music.

A close friend and mentor to some legendary musical figures - Leonard Bernstein, Lukas Foss, Seiji Ozawa, his impact on American music making can never be over estimated. Influential as a promoter of new composers and their work he was a distinguished teacher at the Berkshire Music Festival in Tanglewood. He was the recipient of over 30 honorary degrees and countless awards that have yet to match the esteem and love with which he is held by ‘the common man’.