



MUS434-571.3

Music of the Modern Era

WWII Exodus to USA – Feb. 19, 2013

Olivier Messiaen – *Quatuor pour la Fin du Temps* (1941)

- Drafted into French Army
- Written while imprisoned in Stalag VII-A at Görlitz prisoner-of-war camp (1940–41)
- Interest in birdsong
- Evasion of meter / rhythmic freedom
- Intense personal experience informs music
- Taught at Paris Conservatoire after being released 1941

Escaping WWII

- Schoenberg – UCLA (1932)
- Stravinsky – LA (1940)
- Bartók – New York (1940)
- Rachmaninov – New York / LA (performing)
- Weill – New York (Broadway)
- Milhaud – Mills College (CA) + Paris Conservatoire
- Hindemith – Yale (1940)
- Krenek + Eisler

Born in the USA

- **Aaron Copland**
 - Among the first class to study with Nadia Boulanger at American Conservatory at Fontainebleu
- **Virgil Thomson**
 - Outspoken music critic, also studied at Fontainebleu
- **Roger Sessions**
 - studied with Schoenberg, more modernist
 - “Composers should obey only an inner creative urge – an ‘essential *innerlich* *notwendig*’ [inwardly necessary] musical impulse” not a political or commercial obligation
- **Roy Harris**
 - From humble roots in OK, also studied at Fontainebleu with help from Aaron Copland
- **Walter Piston**
 - Neoclassicism
- **Samuel Barber**
 - Long melodies, lush orchestration = considered more traditional

League of Composers

- Founded 1923 as alternative to International Composers' Guild, which was more modernist and bigoted (against Jewish folks and others)
- Championed works of composers listed on previous slide
- Organizational attempt to advocate for new music, market it to audiences

Technology and Mass Media

- Recording
 - Jazz “sounds better” on early records
- Radio
 - Live broadcasts
 - Toscanini + NBC/RCA Studio Orchestra
 - Toscanini less interested in contemporary music, more Beethoven and Brahms
 - Stokowski + Philadelphia Orchestra / Koussevitsky + Boston Symphony commission more composers
 - CBS broadcasts music as “public service” to deter government takeover
- Film
 - Talking pictures – at first overrun with sound (fast-talking actors, constant orchestral accompaniment, “Mickey-mousing”)
 - Prominent musicians as movie stars

The New Deal and WPA

- 1929 – stock market crashes, Great Depression
- Works Progress Administration (1935–38)
 - Federal Music Project: \$7 million, 16,000 musicians employed the first year
 - Along with radio, WPA expands reach of musical life to rural areas / lower class folks
 - Interest in American artistic identity
 - More opportunities for minorities (women, Afro-Americans)
 - Political right argues that it was propaganda machine for populist/socialist movement, shut down in 1938

Aaron Copland

- Studied in France = following the path of Stravinsky rather than Germans
- 1925 – *Music for the Theater* and 1926 *Piano Concerto* incorporate jazz influence
- 1930 – *Piano Variations*: modernist influence
- 1938 – *Billy the Kid* ballet – “American sound,” first big hit
- 1944 – *Appalachian Spring*

Aaron Copland – *Appalachian Spring* (1944)

- Martha Graham – choreographer
- Based on Hart Crane’s *The Bridge*
- American myth, archetypal characters
 - Mother, Daughter, Citizen, Fugitive
- Opening diatonicism = pre-industrial world, frontier
- “Fear in the Night” = modernist language to express horrors of Civil War
- “Simple Gifts” Shaker tune, given bluesy inflection in reprise to evoke African-American church
- Finale: Opening material juxtaposed with prayer music, a populist message of coming together

Politics and Music

- American Folk Music
 - Charles Seeger and Ruth Crawford Seeger
 - Alan and John Lomax – American folk recordings
- Idea of American spirit residing in rural rather than urban areas
- Communist Party – Eisler, Copland (less formally), Seegers

Ruth Crawford Seeger – *String Quartet* 1931

- Serialism with clear melodic lines, motives
 - Traditional counterpoint – simplicity and complexity
- Third movement “sound mass”
 - Composite melody emerges from texture
 - Similar in concept to *Klangfarbenmelodie*, but foreshadows sound masses of Ligeti
- Discouraged to compose by husband (ex-teacher), lack of female peers, transcribed folk melodies instead

Hollywood Film Music

- Industry created opportunities for orchestral musicians and composers
- Studios try to get big names
 - Sometimes not willing to pay enough (Schoenberg)
 - Sometimes composer unwilling to work fast enough / relinquish artistic control (Stravinsky)
 - Korngold and Herrmann define style for decades

Bernard Herrmann – *Vertigo* (1958)

- Film music as counterpoint to visual element
 - “...reveal a hidden psychological subtext, to indicate absent figures or forces, to subvert whatever reality the viewer was seeing”
 - Integration of media to heighten cumulative impact of art
 - Development of simple motives / themes to express various characters and events

Summary

- European WWII émigrés arrive in USA
 - Work in Academia, Broadway, Radio, Hollywood, Orchestras
- WPA – new platform for funding arts
 - Populist and Communist influence
- American composers find “American sound”
 - Influence of American folk music, open fifths, neoclassicism, simple textures, atonality and serialism
- Impact of recording, radio, film