



10.

**Name:** Aaron Copland

**Years:** November 14, 1900 – December 2, 1990

**Residence:** North Tarrytown, New York (now Sleepy Hollow)

**Brief Biography:** Aaron Copland was born to a family of Jewish Lithuanian descent in Brooklyn, New York. He learned piano from his older sister and at the age of six, took private music lessons in Manhattan where he learned counterpoint and composition. Though his father was not interested in music, the rest of his family was, and during his childhood he attended the New York Symphony and Brooklyn Academy of Music where he learned about classical music. When he was twenty, he went on to study music at the Summer School of Music for American Students in Fontainebleau, France. While in France he composed and sold his first composition to the most esteemed music publisher in France. While there, Copland met several prominent names in music including Serge Koussevitsky who hired him to write a piece for the Boston Symphony

Orchestra, Copland's first foray into the professional American musical world. Copland was influenced by jazz because he felt it was the first genuine American musical movement separating its self from Europe. He eventually moved away from this influence to return to classical music, which he believed could be as popular in America as jazz. Copland and a friend, Roger Sessions, created the Copland-Sessions concerts that presented young composers' work. At about the same time Copland's plans to create an American musical festival, the Yaddo Festival of American Music came together. In 1935 with "El Salón México," Copland started including Mexican folk music influence in his composition. He thought this sound might become the most popular classical music, this being his goal. In attempting to get his music noticed he composed for movies and ballet for which he received many awards. The 1950s combined his work as a composer and organizer when he switched his main focus to conducting. Through the 1950s and 1960s he traveled the world performing live and recording. By the 1970s Copland had stopped writing music completely and in 1983 conducted for the last time. After, he taught at Tanglewood, Harvard, and the New School for Social Research while simultaneously writing articles and papers on music. He continued to travel the world evaluating American music abroad until his death in North Tarrytown.

**Major Achievements:** University of Pennsylvania Glee Club Award of Merit, New York Music Critics' Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize in composition for *Appalachian Spring*, "The Heiress" Best Music in 1950, Yale University's Sanford Medal, and Congressional Gold Medal by the United States Congress in 1987.

**More information:** Copland, Aaron (1939; Revised 1957), *What to Listen For in Music*, Copland, Aaron (2006). *Music and Imagination*

**References:** <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/aaron-copland/about-the-composer/475/>, <http://www.bard.edu/bmf/2005/copland/>,  
<http://www.chrisbsmusic.com/aaroncopland.html>,