

Notes on the Program

By James M. Keller, Program Annotator, The Leni and Peter May Chair

Aaron Copland composed *Rodeo* in 1942 as a ballet to be choreographed by Agnes de Mille for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. She initially described it to him as “the story of *The Taming of the Shrew* — cowboy style.” She continued:

It is not an epic, or the story of pioneer conquest. It builds no empires. It is a pastorella, a lyric joke ... There are never more than a very few people on the stage at a time ... one must be always conscious of the enormous land on which these people live and of their proud loneliness.

To capture the national spirit of the subject, Copland drew directly from the well of American folk song, which was an obsession of American musicians at the time. Folk tunes (or melodies that mimic them) appear in quite a few Copland scores, but here they play a role almost constantly (except in the *Corral Nocturne* movement), drawn largely from the collections *Our Singing Country* (by John A. and Alan Lomax) and *Traditional Music of America* (by Ira Ford). *Buckaroo Holiday* incorporates the tunes “Sis Joe” and “If He’d Be a Buckaroo”; *Saturday Night Waltz* introduces the famous tune “I Ride an Old Paint”; and *Hoe-Down* makes use of several traditional fiddle tunes. Curious music lovers may enjoy seeking out Four Scottish Dances (Op. 59), an orchestral suite composed in 1957 by the Englishman Malcolm Arnold. Its concluding movement is a reel (or a Highland fling, perhaps) that seems a sibling to Copland’s *Hoe-Down*. Copland acknowledged that his piece included “a few measures of ‘McLeod’s Reel’ played in folk fiddle style” — so probably it qualifies as an interesting coincidence of shared musical ancestry.

Rodeo — which, by the way, Copland always pronounced “RO-dee-o,” although many people seem to call this piece “Ro-DAY-o” — was a smash hit at its premiere in October 1942. Its folk song-infused score was perfectly in sync with wartime nationalism, but it has stood the test of time without fading. The following year Copland extracted an orchestral suite, which he titled **Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo**. This suite includes practically everything from the original score; in arranging the suite, Copland eliminated only about five minutes of music.

For a year beginning in March 1949, Copland labored on *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson*, his longest work in the field of art song. He told the music historian Vivian Perlis:

By the end of the year, I was finally up to number eleven, and I felt myself bogged down. As a break I arranged five American Folk Songs. I wrote to Irving [Fine, his friend and fellow composer], “No one else may like them, but Hawkes [Copland’s publisher] is delighted!”

The five-song collection proved to be a cash cow in Copland’s catalogue. Everyone seemed to enjoy singing and hearing **Old American Songs** so much, he told Perlis, “that I decided to arrange a second set in 1952.” That group would also comprise five songs from disparate traditions, and it was similarly well received. Neither set received much attention from critics, who apparently wrote them off as trivial. During the 1930s and ’40s American classical composers had shown considerable enthusiasm for employing folk inspiration in their concert works, but by the time Copland produced these two sets the practice was perhaps over-familiar. Certainly they are among his

less groundbreaking achievements, but they are nonetheless adept. In her outstanding 1953 study of Copland, the composer and author Julia Smith accurately observed of the voice-and-piano settings that “the accompaniments, practical but exceedingly attractive, offer moods by turns nostalgic, energetic, sentimental, devotional, and humorous.” Their character is intensified in Copland’s orchestrated versions, which add variety of sonic color to underscore the detail and character of the texts. These remain among Copland’s

most frequently performed works, whether in their original versions for voice and piano, in Copland’s subsequent arrangements for voice and orchestra, in the choral arrangements by Irving Fine, or in other transcriptions that have entered circulation.

This concert includes two songs from the First Set. Copland told Perlis:

“Simple Gifts” is the Shaker song used in *Appalachian Spring*, arranged in a style closer to the original, with a direct and

Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo Selections from Old American Songs, Set I

Aaron Copland

Born: November 14, 1900, in Brooklyn, New York

Died: December 2, 1990, in Peekskill, New York

Works composed and premiered: the ballet *Rodeo* composed June–September 1942, commissioned by Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo; premiered October 16, 1942, at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, Franz Allers, conductor; Four Dance Episodes extracted from the ballet score the following year; *Buckaroo Holiday*, *Saturday Night Waltz*, and *Hoe-Down* premiered May 28, 1943, by the Boston Pops Orchestra, Arthur Fiedler, conductor; complete Four Dance Episodes premiered June 22, 1943, by the New York Philharmonic, Alexander Smallens, conductor. These two *Old American Songs* composed in 1950, orchestrated in 1954; voice and piano settings premiered June 17, 1950, in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, England, by tenor Peter Pears, with Benjamin Britten as pianist; orchestral settings premiered January 7, 1955, by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Alfred Wallenstein, conductor, William Warfield, soloist

New York Philharmonic premieres and most recent performances: Four Dance Episodes from *Rodeo* most recently performed July 25, 2013, at Bravo! Vail in Colorado, Bramwell Tovey, conductor. “Simple Gifts,” from *Old American Songs* premiered December 1, 1956, Wilfrid Pelletier, conductor, John Langstaff, baritone; most recently performed October 15, 2015, Thomas Wilkins, conductor, Eric Owens, bass-baritone, Janai Brugger and Laquita Mitchell, sopranos, Marietta Simpson, mezzo-soprano, Russell Thomas, tenor, Dorothy Maynor Singers of the Harlem School for the Arts. “I Bought Me a Cat,” from *Old American Songs* premiered October 9, 1954, Wilfrid Pelletier, conductor, John Langstaff, baritone; most recently performed November 9, 2002, Rumon Gamba, conductor, Gregory Emanuel Rahming, baritone

Estimated durations: Four Dance Episodes from *Rodeo*, ca. 19 minutes; these two *Old American Songs*, ca. 6 minutes

Agnes de Mille as the Cowgirl in the premiere
of the ballet *Rodeo*, 1942



straightforward melodic line and simple hymn-like harmonies. The last of the five songs, “I Bought Me a Cat,” is a children’s nonsense song resembling “Old MacDonald’s Farm.” I learned it from the playwright Lynn Riggs, who had sung it as a boy in Oklahoma. ... The accompaniment imitates barnyard sounds in the choices of harmony and figurations.

Recognized in posterity as the pre-eminent creative Broadway partnership of the 1940s and ’50s, the collaboration of “Rodgers & Hammerstein” was in no way inevitable. By the time they first worked together, in 1943, **Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II** had both reached middle age and were well established in their non-intersecting careers.

They had first met in 1917, introduced by Rodgers’s older brother, who was a fraternity brother of Hammerstein’s at Columbia University. In a few years Richard Rodgers enrolled at Columbia himself, but by that time he was already swept up in the world of songwriting and found his liberal arts studies less captivating than his musical pursuits. He withdrew and spent the next two years at the Institute of Musical Art (later transformed into The Juilliard School) engrossed in the disciplines of harmony, ear training, and the like. In his memoirs, *Musical Stages*, he recalled, “Because I was the only pupil there whose goal was to write for the musical stage, I felt a bit self-conscious at first in being among people whose aims in life were, at least by tradition, considered loftier.”

Rodgers found a hand-in-glove songwriting partner in Lorenz Hart, with whom he collaborated for a quarter of a century beginning in 1918. During the 1920s and ’30s they co-wrote more than 500 popular songs, most of them for musical comedies that displayed increasing sophistication as the years passed: *On Your Toes* (with Rodgers’s famous “Slaughter on Tenth

Avenue” ballet, choreographed by George Balanchine), *Babes in Arms*, and *Pal Joey*. But the relationship eventually frayed, in no small part due to Hart’s drinking and depression, and the two called it quits in 1943, after which Hart lived for only a few more months.

They had already been thinking about a show set in the American West, based on the play *Green Grow the Lilacs*. As their partnership crumbled, Rodgers realized that if he was going to develop the idea, it would be with a different lyricist. He sounded out Hammerstein, who was intrigued; thus was born *Oklahoma!*, one of the benchmarks of American musical theater. The grandson and namesake of an eminent theatrical and operatic impresario from the turn of the century, Hammerstein had moved up in the entertainment world since the days when he was writing songs for student revues at Columbia. For 20 years he collaborated with the Broadway lyricist Otto Harbach, and on his own he teamed up with a succession of leading Broadway and operetta composers: Rudolf Friml (*Rose-Marie*), Sigmund Romberg (*The Desert Song* and *The New Moon*), and Jerome Kern, with whom he changed the course of Broadway history with *Show Boat*, a breakthrough in the development of the book musical.

Oklahoma! launched Rodgers & Hammerstein on a path that would produce nine offspring by the time Hammerstein died and lights were dimmed in his honor, both on Broadway and in London’s West End. Five of their nine collaborations found enduring acclaim — *Oklahoma!* (1943), *Carousel* (1945), *South Pacific* (1949), *The King and I* (1951), and *The Sound of Music* (1959). Two of those (*Oklahoma!* and *South Pacific*) were honored with Pulitzer Prizes. ***Carousel*** was derived from a 1909 drama named *Liliom* by the Hungarian Ferenc Molnár, who had previously turned down offers from Puccini and Gershwin to turn his play into a musical stage work. This time he relented, and enthusiastically

endorsed the plot's relocation to a New England village where Billy Bigelow, a carousel barker, marries the mill worker Julie Jordan. In his Act I *Soliloquy*, Billy muses about the happiness he will have with the child they are going to have. Instead, he travels a downward spiral that leads to his death — and then he gets a second chance, posthumously, to show a more noble spirit than he had while living.

The Sound of Music was the last Rodgers & Hammerstein collaboration. The tale, set in the region of scenic Salzburg in the late 1930s, focuses on Maria, a governess considering entering a convent, and Baron Georg von Trapp, the widowed father of her seven musically talented pupils. They fall in love, she decides not to take the veil, he resists the Nazis, and they all flee the country. (The real-life personalities

Billy's Soliloquy*, from *Carousel **Selections from *The Sound of Music*** ***Carousel Waltz*, from *Carousel***

Richard Rodgers

Born: June 28, 1902, in Hammels Station, Long Island, New York

Died: December 30, 1979, in New York City

Oscar Hammerstein II

Born: July 12, 1895, in New York City

Died: August 23, 1960, in Doylestown, Pennsylvania

Works composed and premiered: *Carousel*, composed in 1944–45; premiered April 19, 1945, at the Majestic Theatre in New York City, with John Raitt as Billy Bigelow. "Climb Ev'ry Mountain," composed for the Broadway show *The Sound of Music* in 1959, premiered November 16, 1959, at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre in New York City, with Patricia Neway as the Mother Abbess. "I Have Confidence," written in 1965 [by Rodgers without Hammerstein] for the film version of the musical, sung by Julie Andrews (as Maria); released on March 2, 1965

New York Philharmonic premieres and most recent performances: *Billy's Soliloquy*, from *Carousel*, premiered May 10, 1946, David Broekman, conductor, Robert Weede, baritone; most recent performance, March 2, 2013, as part of a complete performance of the musical, Rob Fisher, conductor, Nathan Gunn, baritone. "I Have Confidence," from *The Sound of Music*, performed only once, December 31, 2006, Ted Sperling, conductor, Audra McDonald, soprano. "Climb Ev'ry Mountain," premiered August 5, 1960, Salvatore Dell'Isola, conductor, Jack Russell, baritone; most recently performed, August 8, 1964, Salvatore Dell'Isola, conductor, William Tabbert, tenor. *Carousel Waltz*, premiered May 10, 1946, David Broekman, conductor; most recently played August 3, 2015, in Santa Barbara, California, Alan Gilbert, conductor

Estimated durations: *Billy's Soliloquy*, from *Carousel*, ca. 9 minutes; Selections from *The Sound of Music*, ca. 6 minutes; *Carousel Waltz*, from *Carousel*, ca. 8 minutes

Nathan Gunn as Billy Bigelow in the Philharmonic's 2013 production of *Carousel*



on which the musical was based found fame in America as The Trapp Family Singers.) The show's sentimentality was widely decried by critics, but during the second performance Hammerstein declared to his colleagues, "Make no mistake, this is a smash hit." It won five Tony awards and had an initial Broadway run of 1,443 performances. The 1965 film version, starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer, became the stuff of legend; a new generation has embraced it as a cult classic, infusing sing-along screenings with a mixture of admiration and irony. Many of its songs are iconic, including "Climb Ev'ry Mountain," which the Mother Abbess sings as an anthem encouraging Maria to discover the life she was meant to live. Maria's "I Have Confidence" was one of two songs added to the score for the movie version in 1965. Hammerstein had passed away nine months after the Broadway opening, so Rodgers penned both the words and music. He had previously taken on this dual responsibility for five songs he wrote for the 1962 movie version of *State Fair*.

Johann Strauss II — a longtime feature on New Year's Eve concerts — was greatly admired by many "serious" musicians of his time. Richard Strauss (no relation) remarked that in an era "when everything surrounding him had already evolved toward the complex and the premeditated, [he] was one of the last to have primary inspiration." Gustav Mahler complimented Strauss's waltzes for "their uniqueness and delightful inventiveness." Jules Massenet observed, "Brahms is the spirit of Vienna, but Strauss is the perfume."

He began achieving success as an orchestra leader at the age of 19 and quickly gained such popularity as to emerge as something of a rival to his more established father. Initial uneasiness over this situation was overcome, and when Johann Sr. died in 1848, Johann Jr. merged his late father's orchestra into his own. From 1863 to 1871 he served as director of Vi-

ennese court balls, just as his father had, and when he relinquished the position he merely handed the reins off to his brother, Eduard.

Johann II published almost 500 pieces of dance music, and many of his waltzes have now been classics for almost a century and a half. None can rival the popularity of ***An der schönen blauen Donau (On the Beautiful Blue Danube)***, which has come to stand as a near universal anthem of carefree elegance. Its original intent was strikingly different. The work's genealogy can be traced to early July 1865, when the prestigious Wiener Männergesangverein (Viennese Men's Choral Society) asked the composer to write a waltz for a concert the group would give a couple of weeks later. Other obligations and personal concerns prevented Strauss from participating, but in a letter to the group's management committee he pledged,

I hereby commit myself next summer, if I am still alive, to make up for what I am now hindered from doing, and with pleasure I offer the esteemed Committee a new composition — written especially for the purpose, as well as my personal participation.

Good intentions notwithstanding, Strauss's promise remained unfulfilled as 1866 came and went. In the course of that year the Austrian army suffered a defeat from Prussia and the mood of the formerly buoyant Habsburg Empire turned grim. The social balance became so unstable that the Wiener Männergesangverein decided to tone down its traditionally rowdy Carnival concert for February 1867, substituting a more sedate program than usual. Finally, Strauss was able to make good on his commitment, pulling together ideas for a waltz suite during the final months of 1866 and delivering most of his new waltz to the Society in January. By the time of the concert, a month later, he had expanded the piece from four waltz sections to five,

which were surrounded by an introduction and a coda. Text was provided by Josef Weyl, a police official who served avocationally as a sort of “special-material” poet for the Society. His words have often been dismissed as cliché-ridden doggerel — “Wiener seid froh! / Oho, wie so?” (“Rejoice, Viennese! / Oh, yeah? How so?”) — but a closer reading suggests that their frolicsome inanities are rich in ironic content that would not have been lost on Viennese listeners in the throes of societal and economic upheaval.

Filled as it is with barbs aimed at Vienna’s politicians, landlords, and dancing citizenry, Weyl’s text nowhere makes mention of the Danube — which, in any case, no Viennese of that time, and few today, would likely describe as being a color resembling blue. The phrase apparently was lifted from a poem by Carl Isidor Beck, and when Strauss appropriated it as his title he may have intended it to announce the sense of unlikely parody that inhabits Weyl’s poem. *An der schönen blauen Donau* is very occasionally heard in its choral setting, but it is more likely to be

encountered as an orchestral piece. Both are entirely authentic readings: Strauss basically wrote this as a string of orchestral waltzes and seems to have had no particular involvement in selecting the text — which, in fact, had to be adapted to the music, as Strauss effected some changes to his waltz shortly before the premiere.

Although distantly rooted in Greek antiquity, the story of Pygmalion reached its classic recounting in the *Metamorphoses* of Publius Ovidius Naso (43 B.C.E.–17 or 18 C.E.), known to his friends and to us as just Ovid. Book Ten of the *Metamorphoses* reads:

Pygmalion, loathing their lascivious life,
Abhorr’d all womankind, but most a wife:
So single chose to live, and shunn’d to wed,
Well pleas’d to want a consort of his bed.

This translation — done in 1713 by the impressive team of John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, and William Congreve, all coordinated by Sir Samuel Garth — goes on

***An der schönen blauen Donau* (On the Beautiful Blue Danube), Op. 314**

Johann Strauss II

Born: October 25, 1825, in Vienna, Austria

Died: June 3, 1899, in Vienna

Work composed and premiered: composed 1866–67; original version with chorus and orchestra, to a text by Josef Weyl, premiered on February 18, 1867, in Vienna, on a concert of the Wiener Männergesangverein (Vienna Men’s Choral Society, to which the piece is dedicated), Rudolf Weinwurm, conductor, with singers and the orchestra of the “George V, King of Hannover” Forty-second Infantry Regiment

New York Philharmonic premiere and most recent

performance: premiered June 29, 1902, by the New York Symphony (which merged with the New York Philharmonic in 1928), Walter Damrosch, conductor; most recently played May 9, 2015, Alan Gilbert, conductor

Estimated duration: ca. 9 minutes



Detail from *The Ball*, by Victor Gabriel Gilbert (1847–1933)

to relate how Pygmalion carved an ivory statue of a beautiful woman. It “caught the carver with his own deceit,” so greatly commanding his admiration that he fell in love with it, at which Venus (the goddess of love) brought the statue to life to be Pygmalion’s bride.

Beginning in the 18th century the story became widely popular, inspiring numerous paintings (Boucher, Goya, Burne-Jones), sculptures (including by Rodin), and musical stage works (such as Rameau’s “acte de ballet” *Pygmalion* of 1748 and Donizetti’s very first opera, *Il Pigmalione*, of 1816). In the course of the 19th century the humanized statue (often called Galatea in the post-Classical era) took on the interesting attribute of rejecting her sculptor-creator. That’s an undercurrent that runs through George Bernard Shaw’s play *Pygmalion*, written in 1912 and premiered the following year, a comedy in which Pygmalion is personified by the London language tutor

Henry Higgins and the statue he creates takes the form of Eliza Doolittle, a poor flower girl with an atrocious Cockney accent and manners to match — that is, until Higgins (spurred by a wager) takes on the challenge of transforming her into someone who could be mistaken for a high-bred duchess.

In 1938 Shaw’s *Pygmalion* was released as a motion picture featuring Leslie Howard and Wendy Hiller and produced by the Transylvanian filmmaker Gabriel Pascal, who then began pestering Shaw with the idea of adapting the play into a Broadway musical. Shaw would “forbid such outrage” (as he put it) until he died, in 1950, but once he was gone Pascal approached a succession of luminaries whom he hoped might sign on to the plan, including Noel Coward, Cole Porter, and the teams of Schwartz & Dietz and Rodgers & Hammerstein. He found no takers until he spoke with **Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe**. Lerner, the lyricist of the team, was the scion

Selections from *My Fair Lady*

Alan Jay Lerner

Born: August 31, 1918, in New York City

Died: June 14, 1986, in New York City

Frederick Loewe

Born: June 10, 1901, in Berlin, Germany (or maybe Vienna, Austria)

Died: February 14, 1988, in Palm Springs, California

Work composed and premiered: composed 1955–56; premiered March 15, 1956, at the Mark Hellinger Theatre in New York City

New York Philharmonic premiere and most recent performance: selections from *My Fair Lady* premiered July 27, 1957, Franz Allers, conductor, Laurel Hurley, soprano, Martial Singher, baritone, Frank Poretta, tenor; most recently played March 10, 2007, in a concert performance of the complete musical, Kelli O’Hara, Kelsey Grammar, Charles Kimbrough, soloists

Estimated duration: ca. 10 minutes



Julie Andrews as Eliza Doolittle in the original Broadway production of *My Fair Lady*

of a wealthy New York family (his father owned Lerner Stores, the clothing chain), and he had enjoyed an Ivy League education before settling down to pen radio scripts. Frederick Loewe, the son of a European operetta star and the product of conservatory training in Berlin, had moved to America in 1925, hoping to make his mark on Broadway, but instead he found himself playing piano at German clubs in Yorkville, delivering mail in rural Montana, and even appearing as a prizefighter.

In 1942 Loewe introduced himself to Lerner at the Lambs Club, a New York haunt for theater types, and they promptly set out to collaborate on their first shows, which were not particularly successful but weren't abject failures either. In 1947 they scored a

palpable hit with *Brigadoon*, and another success, *Paint Your Wagon*, followed in 1951. They were at the top of their game when they started puttering around with their take on Shaw's *Pygmalion*, enlarging the plot by staging scenes that Shaw had allowed to be imagined offstage. What was envisioned as *My Fair Liza* became **My Fair Lady** by the time the show opened on Broadway with Rex Harrison and Julie Andrews as the leads and Moss Hart directing. It was instantly praised by critics as a classic, and audiences responded just as enthusiastically. *My Fair Lady* ran uninterrupted on Broadway for 2,717 performances — almost seven years — and it remains one of the keystones of Broadway at its best.

In Translation

Inasmuch as the plot of *My Fair Lady* hinges on subtleties of language — and specifically of English — it's surprising how popular it has proven on the international stage. In this regard the show mirrors Shaw's *Pygmalion*, which was actually premiered in Berlin — in German — a year before London audiences experienced it in the original English.

That doesn't make it less of a nightmare for translators who need to summon up clever equivalents that convey appropriate implications of language and class. What to do with a line like "The rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain?" A production in Quebec has Eliza triumph over her *joual* slang to speak like a proper Parisian (though the action still takes place in London — go figure), mastering the phrase "La plaine madrilène plaît à la reine" ("The plain near Madrid pleases the queen"). In German-language productions she purses her lips to enunciate "Es grünt so grün, wenn Spaniens Blüten blühen" ("It turns so greenly green when Spain's blossoms bloom").

My Fair Lady received its Israeli premiere in 1964 at the Habimah Theater in Tel Aviv, where, Henry Higgins muses in the original, "The Hebrews learn it backwards which is absolutely frightening." In a 1997 article in *The Israel Review of Arts and Letters*, the production's translator, Dan Amalgor, revealed how he bantered with a friend to come up with "Barad yarad bidrom sfarad haerev" ("Hail fell this evening in southern Spain"). "The Hebrew-speaking Eliza," he explained, "at first pronounced the letter r like the guttural Hebrew letter *khaf* rather like the letter j or g in South America. ... Only after tough, intensive training from Professor Higgins ... did Eliza succeed in pronouncing correctly the consonant r."

Which leaves the burning question: How does the rain in Spain rain in Spain? The standard Spanish version runs "La lluvia en Sevilla es una pura maravilla" ("The rain in Seville is a real wonder"), an exercise in pronouncing the series of double letters. Still, no Argentine is likely to render that line in a way that would make a traditional Castilian happy, the Castilians pronouncing "ll" as "y" and the Argentines articulating it instead as "sh" or "zh."

Julia Andrews as Eliza, Rex Harrison as Henry Higgins, and Robert Coote as Colonel Pickering celebrating Eliza's mastery of the tongue twister

