Fanfare for the Common Man (1942)

AARON COPLAND

(1900-1990)

4 minutes; four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum and gong.

Copland wrote of the genesis of his popular *Fanfare for the Common Man*: "Eugene Goossens, conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, had written to me at the end of August [1942] about an idea he wanted to put into action for the 1942-43 concert season. During World War I, he had asked British composers for a fanfare to begin each orchestral concert. It had been so successful that he thought to repeat the procedure in World War II with American composers. As with *Lincoln Portrait*, I was gratified to participate in this patriotic activity."

"The Passion of John Brown" for Narrator and Orchestra (2009)

WORLD PREMIERE

JESSE AYERS

(BORN IN 1951)

17 minutes; piccolo, three flutes, three oboes, English horn, three clarinets, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano and strings.

American composer and pedagogue Jesse Ayers, born in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1951, began composing when he was fourteen, and just two years later conducted one of his own works with the University of Tennessee Symphonic Band. Ayers earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in composition from the University of Tennessee and his Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Kentucky. Since 1997, Ayers has taught at Malone University in Canton, Ohio, where he has received the school's Distinguished Faculty Award; his other honors include the 2007 Individual Creativity Excellence Award from the Ohio Arts Council, sixteen awards from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), grants from Meet the Composer and the American Music Center, and guest composer residencies at universities in California, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, North Carolina, New Mexico, Virginia, Florida and Tennessee.

Ayers composed *The Passion of John Brown* for the Akron Symphony Orchestra's concert of October 17, 2009, the 150th anniversary of the famed abolitionist's raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry. (Brown lived mostly in Hudson and Kent, Ohio between 1805 and 1837.) Of his work, the composer wrote, "*The Passion of John Brown* attempts to tell Brown's fascinating story, both the good and the bad, as much as can be told within the confines of a narrated orchestral work. In it, you will hear quoted Brown's favorite hymn, *Blow Ye the Trumpet, Blow.* The refrain of this hymn declares that 'the Year of Jubilee is come.' I have used melodic fragments from this refrain as haunting bugle figures echoed by the surround-sound trumpets. These figures contain much symbolism that will be better understood with the following explanation of a little known, but significant, Old Testament concept.

"Most of us are familiar with the Sabbath rest on the seventh day. In Leviticus 25, God provided that after seven cycles of seven years, the fiftieth year was to be a Year of Jubilee, a Sabbath rest from cycles of poverty, so to speak. All debt was cancelled; all land was returned to the original owning families, and, most importantly to John Brown, all slaves were to be set free. It was to be a year of fresh starts and second chances.

"Jubilee began on the Day of Atonement and was to be announced by the blowing of ram's horns trumpets throughout the land. The hymn's title, *Blow Ye the Trumpet, Blow*, refers to these Jubilee trumpets. Brown would have been familiar with the Old Testament Jubilee principle, and would have understood hymn author Charles Wesley's intent to draw a spiritual analogy between Old Testament Jubilee and the New Testament proclamation of Divine forgiveness of the debt of sin. But with Brown's passion for seeing an end to slavery, he no doubt sang the hymn also hoping for a literal, earthly Jubilee when the slaves would finally be set free.

"So when the surround-sound bugles are heard, there is a double meaning. First, they represent the Jubilee trumpets sounding in the mind of John Brown, announcing freedom for the slaves. Second, they remind the listener, as a pre-echo, if you will, of the Civil War battle bugles that would soon be blowing throughout the land instead, because America had refused to sound the Jubilee trumpets when it might have. (Lincoln expressed a similar idea in the latter part of his second inaugural address, '… that [God] gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came.')

"In addition to thanking Maestro Christopher Wilkins for the invitation to write for the Akron Symphony, I also wish to thank my colleague Dr. Jay Case of the history department at Malone University, as well as my son Matt, a Malone history graduate, for their assistance in helping me understand the times in which John Brown lived. The score carries the dedication, 'To Jerry McFadden, a friend to the arts and a friend to me.'"

Adagio for Strings (1936)

SAMUEL BARBER

(1910-1981)

8 minutes.

Samuel Barber spent much time overseas after 1928, thanks to such emoluments as the American Prix de Rome and the Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship. In Rome, he wrote a *Symphony in One Movement*, which was premiered there in 1936 and given its first American performance in Cleveland by Artur Rodzinski early the next year. Rodzinski

also played the *Symphony* at the Salzburg Festival in 1937, making it the first American work to be heard at that prestigious event. The chief conductor of the Salzburg Festival at that time was Arturo Toscanini, who was to begin his tenure with the NBC Symphony later that year. Toscanini asked Rodzinski if he could suggest an American composer whose work he might program during the coming season, and Rodzinski advised that his Italian colleague investigate the music of the 27-year-old Samuel Barber. By October, Barber had completed and submitted to Toscanini the *Essay No. 1 for Orchestra* and an arrangement for string orchestra of the slow movement from the Quartet (Op. 11, in B minor) that he had written in Rome in 1936 – the *Adagio for Strings*. Toscanini accepted the pieces for performance, and broadcast them on November 5, 1938 with the NBC Symphony. The *Adagio*, with its plaintive melody, rich modalism, austere texture and mood of reflective introspection, was an instant and enduring success.

"John Brown's Body," Orchestral Fantasy with Narrator (2001)

KEVIN PUTS

(BORN IN 1972)

14 minutes; three flutes, three oboes, three clarinets, three bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano and strings.

Kevin Puts, born in 1972 in St. Louis, received his bachelor's degree from the Eastman School of Music (1994), his master's degree from Yale (1996), and his doctorate from Eastman (1999). He taught at the University of Texas at Austin from 1999 until the fall of 2006, when he joined the faculty of the Peabody Institute in Baltimore.

Puts wrote of his *John Brown's Body* (2001), "America seems to have almost forgotten one of its epic poems, *John Brown's Body,* the 400-page poem about the Civil War by Stephen Vincent Benét. A 1929 Pulitzer Prize winner, the work became very popular in the years that followed. Benét takes both simple and complex characters and weaves them together in a story of incredible intellectual depth and honesty. Moreover, he writes with words that speak directly to the heart in a way that few prose writers can match. Although it may be one of the most under-appreciated works in American literary history, *John Brown's Body* nonetheless stands as a milestone in our literary evolution and it is still worthy of our attention.

"The main players in the drama are Jack Ellyat, from a small town in Connecticut; Clay Wingate, wealthy scion of a plantation-owning family in Georgia; Abraham Lincoln; and the martyred abolitionist John Brown.

"As composer, I decided the best way of approaching the fourteen-minute limit of the commission was to introduce the primary characters and their conflicts, providing for the audience a taste of Benét's complex work. After an orchestral introduction, we meet Jack Ellyat, the hero from the North, whose music is lush and rhapsodic, as he dreams about the land around him. Then we meet Clay Wingate, Ellyat's Southern counterpart, whose contrasting music is quick and fleeting as he rides home to his estate. Both introductions close with an ominous premonition of the darkness and calamity ahead. A brief description of the Battle of Bull Run leads into music of Lincoln, as he wrestles with the problem of uniting a torn nation. Out of his despair, we hear a suggestion of the introductory music – optimistic and bright – which we now understand to be John Brown's theme. Brown prays for courage and defends himself in his own trial hearing, welcoming his inevitable demise: '*I am worth now infinitely more to die than to live ... there is a song in my bones ... it will grow stronger*.'"

Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, Op. 55, "Eroica" (1804)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

(1770-1827)

50 minutes; woodwinds and trumpets in pairs, three horns, timpani and strings.

The "Eroica" ("Heroic") is a work that changed the course of musical history. There was much sentiment at the turn of the 19th century that the expressive and technical possibilities of the symphonic genre had been exhausted by Haydn, Mozart, C.P.E. Bach and their contemporaries. It was Beethoven, and specifically this majestic Symphony, that threw wide the gates on the unprecedented artistic vistas that were to be explored for the rest of the century. In a single giant leap, he invested the genre with the breadth and richness of emotional and architectonic expression that established the grand sweep that the word "symphonic" now connotes. For the first time, with this music, the master composer was recognized as an individual responding to a higher calling. No longer could the creative musician be considered a mere artisan in tones, producing pieces within the confines of the court or the church for specific occasions, much as a talented chef would dispense a hearty roast or a succulent torte. After Beethoven, the composer was regarded as a visionary – a special being lifted above mundane experience – who could guide benighted listeners to loftier planes of existence through his valued gifts. The modern conception of an artist – what he is, his place in society, what he can do for those who experience his work – stems from Beethoven. Romanticism began with the "Eroica."

The first movement opens with a brief summons of two mighty chords. At least four thematic ideas are presented in the exposition. The development is a massive essay progressing through many moods all united by an almost titanic sense of struggle. It is in this central portion of the movement and in the lengthy coda that Beethoven broke through the boundaries of the 18th-century symphony to create a work not only longer in duration but also more profound in meaning. The composer's words are reflected in this awesome movement: "Music is the electric soil in which the spirit lives, thinks and invents."

The beginning of the second movement – "Marcia funebre" ("*Funeral March*") – with its plaintive, simple themes intoned over a mock drum-roll in the basses, is the touchstone for the expression of tragedy in instrumental

music. The mournful C minor of the opening gives way to the brighter C major of the oboe’s melody. A development-like section, full of remarkable contrapuntal complexities, is followed by a return of the simple opening threnody, which itself eventually expires amid sobs and silences at the close of this eloquent movement. The third movement is a scherzo, the lusty successor to the graceful minuet, with a rousing central section featuring a trio of horns. The finale is a large set of variations on two themes, one of which (the first one heard) forms the bass line to the other.