

THE FANFARE FOR THE COMMON MAN • AARON COPLAND

SCORED FOR: FOUR HORNS, THREE TRUMPETS, THREE TROMBONES, TUBA, TIMPANI,
BASS DRUM AND GONG.

In the first volume of his autobiography, the celebrated Aaron Copland recounts the genesis of his popular *Fanfare for the Common Man* as follows:

Eugene Goosens, 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.

Goosens wrote: "It is my idea to make these fanfares stirring and significant contributions to the war effort, so that I suggest you give your fanfare a title, as for instance, *A Fanfare for Soldiers*, or *for Airmen* or *Sailors*. I am asking this favor in a spirit of friendly comradeship, and I ask you to do it for the cause we all have at heart..." As with *Lincoln Portrait*, I was gratified to participate in a patriotic activity. Goosens, a composer himself, suggested the instrumentation of brass and percussion and a length of about two minutes. He intended to open the concert season in October with my fanfare, so I had no time to lose.

The challenge was to compose a traditional fanfare, direct and powerful, yet with a contemporary sound... The music was not terribly difficult to compose, but working slowly as was my custom, I did not have the fanfare ready to send to Goosens until November. The piece has been *Fanfare for the Common Man* for so long that it is surprising to see on my sketches that other titles were considered: *Fanfare for a Solemn Ceremony*, *for the Day of Victory*, *for Our Heroes*, *for the Rebirth of Lidice*, *for the Spirit of Democracy*, *for the Paratroops*, *for Four Freedoms*.

After I decided on *Fanfare for the Common Man* and sent the score to Goosens, I think he was rather puzzled by the title. He wrote, "Its title is as original as its music, and I think it is so telling that it deserves a special occasion for its performance. If it is agreeable to you, we will premiere it 14 March [sic] 1943 at income tax time." [The income tax deadline was changed to April after the War.] I was all for honoring the common man at income tax time. Since that occasion, *Fanfare* has been played by many and varied ensembles... I confess that I prefer *Fanfare* in the original version, and I later used it in the final movement of my *Third Symphony*.