Friday, July 12, 8pm

THE CYNTHIA AND OLIVER CURME CONCERT

ANDRIS NELSONS conducting

COPLAND

“Quiet City”

THOMAS ROLFS, trumpet

ROBERT SHEENA, English horn

GRIEG

Piano Concerto in A minor, Opus 16

Allegro molto moderato

Adagio

Allegro moderato molto e marcato

JAN LISIECKI

{ I n t e r m i s s i o n }

COPLAND

Third Symphony

Molto moderato, with simple expression

Allegro molto

Andantino quasi allegretto

Molto deliberato (Fanfare)—Allegro risoluto

The performance of Copland’s Third Symphony is supported by a gift from Debby and Scott Butler.

Piano by Steinway & Sons – the Artistic Choice of Tanglewood.

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In consideration of the artists and those around you, please turn off all electronic equipment during the performance, including tablets, cellular phones, pagers, watch alarms, messaging devices of any kind, anything that emits an audible signal, and anything that glows. Thank you for your cooperation.

Please note that the use of audio or video recording devices, or taking pictures of the artists—whether photographs or videos—is prohibited during concerts.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

“Quiet City,” for trumpet, English horn, and strings

During his lifetime, Aaron Copland was well-known as composer, writer on music, lecturer, pianist, conductor, and teacher. His music is distinctively American, drawing frequently upon cowboy songs, Mexican tunes, Shaker hymns, and jazz. Among his most popular scores are the ballets *Appalachian Spring*, *Rodeo*, and *Billy the Kid*, *Lincoln Portrait*, which provides evocative musical background to a reading of Lincoln texts culminating with words from the Gettysburg Address; and of course the *Fanfare for the Common Man*, composed in 1942 as one of ten patriotic fanfares (by various composers) written at the request of the conductor Eugene Goosens for the Cincinnati Symphony, and which The New Grove Dictionary of American Music describes as being “better known than [Copland’s] name.”

Composed in 1940, *Quiet City* is very different music from Copland’s rousing, brassy *Fanfare*. The *Fanfare*’s brief span is filled with a patriotic assurance capturing the expanse not only of the American landscape, but of the American dream. *Quiet City*, befitting its basis in a play conceived in the disquieting period just before World War II, is reflective in attitude, the plangency of the two solo instruments serving to heighten, personalize, and individualize the prevailing mood.

*Quiet City* originated in a score of incidental music composed by Copland for a socially conscious play of that name written by the novelist Irwin Shaw, and produced in 1939 by the Group Theatre in New York, whose principal founder, the composer’s close friend Harold Clurman, convinced Copland to write the music. The play’s protagonist has a trumpet-player brother, David Mellinkoff, whose music, as described by Copland biographer Howard Pollack, “represents the fear and restlessness—alternately associated with sexual repression, material deprivation, and anti-Semitic violence—felt by David and the other characters.” At the end of the play, one hears, according to the stage direction, “the trumpet, wonderfully clear, wonderfully promising, wonderfully triumphant.” Though the play closed after just a few performances, Copland’s ten-minute musical distillation has proved to be one of his most popular scores. Like Barber’s Adagio for Strings, *Quiet City* has also served to memorialize: this is music that touches both the heart and the mind, music filled with wisdom, solace, and promise.

MARC MANDEL

Marc Mandel is Director of Program Publications of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

Piano Concerto in A minor, Opus 16


Grieg’s familiar and popular piano concerto was one of the most important steps on his path toward the creation of a national Norwegian music. After completing his course at the Leipzig Conservatory, he returned north and settled in Copenhagen, the only Scandinavian city to have an active musical life. There he met Rikard Nord-raak, another Norwegian composer just one year his senior, whose influence on him was to prove decisive, especially after Nordraak’s
premature death at the age of twenty-four. He spent several years in the musical backwater of Christiana, Denmark, where he was the director of the Philharmonic Society, fighting the good fight for music of real substance on his programs. He was later to look on these years as “entirely unproductive,” since his time was almost totally taken up with performance rather than composition.

Following the birth of a daughter on April 10, 1868, Edvard and Nina Grieg spent a pleasant and productive summer in a cottage at Sollerøc, Denmark, where he experienced a creative outburst that resulted in the Opus 16 concerto. From the very first it has been regarded as Grieg’s finest large-scale accomplishment (he generally found the small keyboard miniature to be more congenial to his temperament) and as the fullest musical embodiment of Norwegian nationalism in romantic music.

The winter following this splendidly fruitful summer was discouraging, as Grieg found himself once again trapped in the indifference and philistinism of Christiana. He had applied for a state traveling grant and had been rejected; it seemed unlikely that any new application would be favorably received. Then, suddenly, he received a gracious letter from Franz Liszt, apparently unsolicited, in which Liszt expressed the pleasure he had received in perusing Grieg’s Opus 8 sonata for violin and piano and invited the young composer to visit him in Weimar if the opportunity should arise. This letter opened doors that had up to then been firmly shut; not long after, Grieg received his travel grant, which allowed him to take Liszt up on his invitation a year later.

In the meantime there was the first performance of the new concerto to be attended to, as well as repeat performances to introduce the work to Denmark and Norway. At about this time, too, he discovered a treasury of Norwegian folk music transcribed into piano score. He delved avidly into the collection and began to realize how a skilled musician could make use of folk elements in his works. From this time Grieg’s interest in the formal classical genres began to decline—of that type, he produced only a string quartet and two sonatas after this date.

It took until February 1870 for the Griegs to catch up with Liszt, not in Weimar but in Rome. When they did, though, the result was highly gratifying for the young man. Liszt promptly grabbed Grieg’s portfolio of compositions, took them to the piano, and sight-read through the G major violin sonata, playing both the violin and piano parts. When Grieg complimented him on his ability to sight-read a manuscript like that, he simply replied modestly, “I’m an experienced old musician and ought to be able to play at sight.” At a later visit, in April, Grieg brought his piano concerto, and this time Liszt’s sight-reading was even more fabulous: he played at sight from the manuscript score the entire concerto, both orchestral and solo parts, with ever-increasing enthusiasm.

Though the concerto was popular from the start, and was published in full score only three years after its composition, Grieg himself was never entirely satisfied with it, and he continued to touch up details of both the orchestral and solo parts for the rest of his life. A few critics have attacked the work—notably Bernard Shaw (writing as “Corno di Bassetto”) and Debussy—and it has certainly been overplayed and mistreated, especially in a popular operetta, Song of Norway, very loosely based on Grieg’s life, but it retains its freshness and popularity nonetheless. The basic architecture is inspired by Schumann’s essay in the same medium and key, though the piano part is of Lisztian brilliance, blended with Grieg’s own harmonic originality, which was in turn influenced by his studies of Norwegian folk song. One Norwegian analyst has pointed out that the opening splash of piano, built of a sequence consisting of a
descending second followed by a descending third, is a very characteristic Norwegian melodic
gesture, and that this opening typifies the pervasiveness of the folk influence. For the rest, the
first movement is loaded with attractive themes, some obviously derived from one another,
others strongly contrasting, a melodic richness that has played a powerful role in generating the
concerto’s appeal. The animato section of the first movement includes figurations of the type
used by folk-fiddlers; the lyric song of the second movement is harmonized in the style of
some of Grieg’s later folksong settings; and the finale consists of dance rhythms reminiscent of
the halling and springdans.

STEVEN LEDBETTER

Steven Ledbetter was program annotator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1979 to 1998.

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Third Symphony


Aaron Copland had already produced two symphonies, in 1924/28 and 1934, when in March 1944 the conductor Serge Koussevitzky extended a commission for another major orchestral work, which he hoped to introduce at the outset of the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s 1946-47 season. In Copland: Since 1943, the second volume of the impressive oral history prepared by Vivian Perlis with the composer, Copland provided many details about the genesis and early history of this work:

“While in Bernardsville [NJ] in the summer of 1945, I felt my Third Symphony finally taking
shape. I had been working on various sections whenever I could find time during the past few
years. My colleagues had been urging me to compose a major orchestral work.... Elliott Carter,
David Diamond, and Arthur Berger reminded me about it whenever they had the opportunity....
They had no way of knowing that I had been working on such a composition for some time. I did
not want to announce my intentions until it was clear in my own mind what the piece would
become (at one time it looked more like a piano concerto than a symphony). The commission from
Koussevitzky stimulated me to focus my ideas and arrange the material I had collected into some
semblance of order.”

Copland, by the way, employed the locution Third Symphony as a sort of specific title for this
work, preferring it to the more generic implication of “Symphony No. 3.” In the summer of
1944, he retreated to the remote village of Tepoztlán, Mexico, to work on the symphony’s first
movement in relatively uninterrupted isolation. The second movement waited until the following
summer, which he spent in Bernardsville. “By September, I was able to announce to [the
composer] Irving Fine, ‘I’m the proud father—or mother—or both—of a second movement. Lots
of notes—and only eight minutes of music—such are scherzi! It’s not very original—
In the fall of 1945 he retreated to a rented property in Ridgefield, Connecticut. “Again, I told almost no one where I could be found. I felt in self-exile, but it was essential if I was to finish the symphony. By April I had a third movement to show for it. With Tanglewood reopening in the summer of 1946, and an October date set for the premiere, I headed to the MacDowell Colony for the month of June to work on the last movement.” Copland enjoyed a bit of a head start in deciding that the finale would incorporate the Fanfare for the Common Man, which he had written three years before. Although its general contours do seem to pervade a fair amount of the symphony’s material, it primarily serves as an introduction to the rest of the finale. However, in his program note for the premiere, Copland observed that he “used this opportunity to carry the Fanfare material further and to satisfy my desire to give the Third Symphony an affirmative tone. After all, it was a wartime piece—or more accurately, an end-of-war piece—intended to reflect the euphoric spirit of the country at the time.” Copland made progress at the MacDowell Colony but did not complete his work before being again distracted by his teaching obligations at Tanglewood. “After Tanglewood, I stayed on in the Berkshires to work on the orchestration. It was a mad dash! The finishing touches were put on the score just before rehearsals were to start for the premiere, 18 October 1946. It was two years since I had started working on the piece in Mexico.”

Dedicated “To the memory of my dear friend Natalie Koussevitzky” (the conductor’s wife), and premiered by Serge Koussevitzky and the BSO on October 18, 1946, at Symphony Hall, Copland’s Third Symphony—at about forty minutes, his longest orchestral work—was warmly received at its premiere, and received the New York Music Critics Circle Prize as the best orchestral work by an American composer played during the 1946-47 season. Koussevitzky, George Szell, and Leonard Bernstein all championed the work early on, although Copland’s feathers were considerably ruffled when Bernstein decided to cut eight measures from the finale, without bothering to discuss the matter with the composer first. Bernstein conducted two noteworthy performances of Copland’s Third Symphony at Tanglewood: on August 8, 1952, with the BSO, in a Koussevitzky Memorial Concert the year after Koussevitzky’s death; and on August 14, 1990, with the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, anticipating a European tour the TMCO was to make with Bernstein immediately following that Tanglewood season, but which was cancelled due to Bernstein’s final illness.

Regarding the end of the piece: The second edition of the score, published in 1966, removed ten measures of music from the finale, based on the cut made by Leonard Bernstein in 1948 and formally sanctioned in 1954 by Copland, despite the composer’s initial displeasure. However, because of thematic recurrences from the first and fourth movements that are lost due to the cut, the latest printing, from December 2014, gives the original as the preferred version, and the cut version as an “alternative ending.” The present performance under Andris Nelsons is of the original version.

JAMES KELLER

James M. Keller is the longtime program annotator of the New York Philharmonic and San Francisco Symphony, and served as Leonard Bernstein Scholar-in-Residence at the New York Philharmonic. This program note on Copland’s Third Symphony is derived from an essay
Artists

Jan Lisiecki

Canadian pianist Jan Lisiecki has won acclaim for his extraordinary interpretive maturity, distinctive sound, and poetic sensibility. His insightful interpretations, refined technique, and natural affinity for art give the twenty-three-year-old pianist a musical voice that belies his age. He began piano lessons at the age of five and made his concerto debut four years later, while always rebuffing the label of “child prodigy.” He was brought to international attention in 2010 when the Fryderyk Chopin Institute issued a recording of Chopin’s piano concertos, performed live by Mr. Lisiecki when he was thirteen and fourteen. The release was awarded the Diapason Découverte. Confirming his status among the most imaginative and poetic pianists of his generation, Deutsche Grammophon signed him to an exclusive contract in 2011. His latest album, featuring Chopin’s rarely performed works for piano and orchestra, was released in March 2017 and has been awarded both the ECHO Klassik and JUNO Award, the major classical music awards of Germany and Canada, respectively. In 2013, Jan Lisiecki became the youngest-ever recipient of Gramophone’s Young Artist of the Year award and also received the Leonard Bernstein Award at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival. In 2012 he was named UNICEF Ambassador to Canada. Mr. Lisiecki performs with the world’s most prestigious orchestras on major stages—as evidenced in part by his recent subscription debuts with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Wiener Symphoniker, and Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden—and has worked closely with prominent conductors including Sir Antonio Pappano, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Daniel Harding, and Claudio Abbado. Among the highlights of his 2018-19 season, he returned to Carnegie Hall for a performance with the Philadelphia Orchestra, toured throughout Europe with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and performed with the Mozarteum Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, and Oslo Philharmonic, to name but a few ensembles. The season also included further performances of his highly acclaimed recital program “Night Music.” Jan Lisiecki made his BSO debut as soloist in subscription performances of Chopin’s Piano Concerto No. 1 in April 2018. He makes his Tanglewood debut with tonight’s performance.

Thomas Rolfs

Thomas Rolfs is principal trumpet of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, occupying the Roger Louis Voisin Chair; he is also principal trumpet of the Boston Pops Orchestra, occupying the Roberta and Stephen R. Weiner Chair. Mr. Rolfs began his career with the BSO in 1991, serving first as fourth trumpet and later as associate principal trumpet. Initially hired by Seiji Ozawa, he was promoted to associate principal trumpet by Ozawa and to principal trumpet by James Levine. As a student, Mr. Rolfs was a Tanglewood Music Center Fellow in 1978, earned his bachelor of music degree from the University of Minnesota, and received his master of music degree from Northwestern University. He then returned to Minnesota for a five-year tenure with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. As a soloist, Thomas Rolfs has performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops Orchestra, and Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. At the request of John Williams, he was featured on the Grammy-nominated soundtrack of the Academy
Award-winning film *Saving Private Ryan*. He was also soloist in Williams’s *Summon the Heroes* for the nationally televised Boston Pops concert on the Esplanade on July 4, 2001, under Keith Lockhart’s direction. His varied performance background also includes appearances with the National Brass Ensemble, Minnesota Orchestra, Vienna Philharmonic, Empire Brass, Saint Petersburg Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and American Ballet Orchestra. Mr. Rolfs is a founding member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra Brass Quintet, which remains in residence at Boston University. As an educator, he has presented master classes throughout the world, including North America, South America, Asia, and Europe. He has served on the faculty of the Tanglewood Music Center since 1998, regularly coaches the New World Symphony, and teaches at the New England Conservatory, Boston University, and Northwestern University. Thomas Rolfs has previously been soloist with the BSO in Frank Martin’s Concerto for Seven Winds, Timpani, Percussion, and String Orchestra (under Seiji Ozawa in October 2001 and Charles Dutoit in October 2012), Bach’s *Brandenburg Concerto* No. 2 (at Tanglewood with Pinchas Zukerman in July 2013), Copland’s *Quiet City* (at Tanglewood under Shi-Yeon Sung in August 2010 and Andris Nelsons in August 2016), and Jolivet’s Concertino for trumpet, string orchestra, and piano (subscription performances in January 2017 with Ken-David Masur on the podium).

Robert Sheena

Robert Sheena has been the English horn player of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Boston Pops Orchestra since 1994, during which time his uniquely vocal style of playing has garnered accolades from audience members and the media alike. In his more than twenty years as a member of the BSO, he has performed as soloist with the orchestra on several occasions, most notably in the world premiere performances of George Tsontakis’s *Sonnets*, which was composed for him, at Symphony Hall in February 2016 and a repeat performance at Tanglewood that August, as well as in Julian Anderson’s *Incantesimi* in January 2017, and performances at Tanglewood of André Previn’s *Reflections* and Aaron Copland’s *Quiet City*. With the Boston Pops Orchestra he has been featured at Symphony Hall in *Quiet City* and Michael Daugherty’s *Spaghetti Western*. From 1987 to 1991 Mr. Sheena was the assistant principal oboe and English horn of the Hong Kong Philharmonic. Since then he has made numerous trips to perform in Asia, not only with the BSO, but also to perform in Japan as a guest English hornist with the Super World Orchestra, Affinis Music Festival, and Seiji Ozawa’s Saito Kinen Orchestra. From 1991 until joining the BSO he was assistant principal oboe and English horn with the San Antonio Symphony. From 1984 to 1987 he was a freelance oboist in the Chicago area, playing in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and frequently as a substitute oboist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Sheena is an instructor of both oboe and English horn at Boston University’s School of Music and Tanglewood Institute, at the Boston Conservatory, and at the Longy School of Music of Bard College. An alumnus of the Tanglewood Music Center, he works with the fellowship oboists there every summer, coaching them in chamber music and giving English horn master classes. Mr. Sheena occupies the Beranek Chair in the woodwind section of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.