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BOOK REVIEWS

Aaron Copland in Latin America: Music and Cultural Politics

By Carol A. Hess. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2023.

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Aaron Copland in Latin America is, in the first place, a detailed chronicle of the composer's travels south of the U.S. border. These excursions have already been treated in Howard Pollack's award-winning biography of the composer,[1] as well as in Copland's own autobiography.[2] Carol Hess's self-described impetus for this study, however, was a result of her previous (also award-winning) book on the U.S. reception of Latin American classical music in the middle part of the twentieth century.[3] The resulting perspective situates Copland's journeys in the musical, cultural, political, and diplomatic contexts of the Western hemisphere as much as into the context of his own life. This monograph provides a new, sharp lens on mid-century U.S. diplomacy efforts, and on the dynamic relationships among the many musics and musicians of the Americas that were freshly activated by new technologies of recording and transportation. This larger picture also allows Hess to cast fresh light on the shape and evolution of Copland's personal attitudes toward the musical issues of the day.

Chief among Copland's travels to Latin America—and central to Hess's study—were four extended visits in 1941, 1947, 1962, and 1963. The cumulative itinerary of nations in these four trips is overwhelming: Argentina (three times), Brazil (four times), Chile (twice), Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay (three times).[4] Various U.S. government entities sponsored these trips as part of a series of initiatives meant to promote U.S. interests and counter perceived threats in the region, first of Nazism and then communism. In this way, the administrations of FDR and later of JFK engaged Copland, among a number of other artists, both to showcase U.S. culture and to open lanes of artistic exchange with their neighbors to the south. As a cultural diplomat, the composer's time in Latin America was typically packed with events: he conducted and attended concerts, performed on recitals, delivered lectures to live audiences and in radio broadcasts (in English, Spanish, and Portuguese), gave interviews and press conferences, attended receptions and soirees (hosted by local musicians, local government offices and officials, and American embassies), and met with composers individually and in small groups to explore and discuss their craft—all while exhaustively journaling his activities and his impressions of the nations, people, and music he encountered. Hess's account of these travels deftly traces the many facets of the complex domestic and international contexts that shaped Copland's mission, illuminating the intertwined threads of art, politics, and diplomacy.

Hess's scrutiny of the composer's interviews, lectures, diaries, and letters opens a unique window into his own musical perspectives. As she demonstrates, these perspectives were not always consistent,

[1]Pollack, Howard. *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man.* New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1999, 223–33.

[2]Copland, Aaron and Vivian Perlis. *Copland: 1900–1942.* New York: St. Martin's/Marek, 1984; and *Copland: since 1943.* New York: St. Martin's/Marek, 1989. These two volumes were reprinted as one under the title *The Complete Copland* by Pendragon Press (Hilldale, NY) in 2013.

[3]Hess, Carol A. *Representing the Good Neighbor: Music, Difference, and the Pan American Dream.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

[4]Copland's other extended (and privately funded) trips to Mexico—one of which inspired *El Salón México* (1936)—do not receive extensive treatment by Hess. See Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 223–28.

or at the least seem to have evolved over time. Copland's relationship with jazz is a chief (and well known) example, given its prominence in a string of his compositions in the 1920s, including *Music for the Theatre* (1925) and the Piano Concerto (1926), and later in the Clarinet Concerto (1948). He also explicitly valued jazz as an essential U.S. export, advocating for "progressive jazz" recordings to be disseminated to Latin American radio stations and libraries alongside "symphonic music" and "American opera" (219). But his comments to a Chilean journalist led him to report after the interview that "the composer preferred not to be 'associated with those [jazz- and folklore-influenced] stages in his music and points out that afterwards he evolved in considerable measure'" (230). Hess notes a similarly fascinating (and perhaps related) inconsistency that shades his thinking about the value of folk musics for composers of the concert hall. In 1954, the composer of *El Salón México* and *Danzón Cubano* (1942) was surprisingly critical of the overall content of a Venezuelan music festival that he adjudicated, writing that they tended to "over-emphasize the folklore-inspired side of Latin American music" (206). Yet by 1959, two of his *Three Latin-American Sketches*—the very paradigm of "folklore-inspired"—were premiering at the Spoleto Festival in Italy.

Hess crystallizes the issues illustrated in these vignettes in passages like this:

> On the one hand, he advocated for achieving a "whole new musical taste" by collaborating with the listening public through radio and the phonograph. On the other, he tells the cognoscenti of his aim to "cultivate so-called modern music in its serious form," clearly not tailored to the mass audience. To one interviewer, he recognizes the virtues of jazz, and to another he questions its viability. As always, folklore is a wild card: either he employs it "only on rare occasions" or applauds its potential. None of these positions is strictly untrue nor incompatible with Copland's actual beliefs, which were many-sided and conflicted. But one can only wonder how many points of view on the same issue a public figure can present, sometimes within the space of weeks. All point to the question: who was Copland? (124–25)

This question of "who was Copland?" becomes a motive in Hess's history. She is judicious and fair in her appraisals of the seemingly paradoxical ideas Copland articulated. She aptly places them in the swirling pressures of the composer's desires to represent his nation's interests, advocate for music he admired as well as his own, demonstrate his own compositional advancement since his first works of the 1920s, and encourage musical growth in the countries he visited. All the while, political tensions abounded: he was at pains to position himself as a respectable public figure while targeted at the height of the Red Scare. Jennifer Delapp-Birkett has noted the impact this pressure may have caused on Copland's music.[5] Additionally, in the decades surrounding World War II, the nations Copland visited each had their own unique and fluctuating relationships with fascism and communism. These factors certainly made it all the more difficult for Copland to maintain the phlegmatic, diplomatic persona for which he was so well known.

Thus, even as these annals bring us closer to Copland's own "many-sided and conflicted" opinions, they also pull us into the esthetic debates permeating Latin America in the twentieth century's middle decades. The air was rife with competing musical -isms: universalism, nationalism, Pan-Americanism, serialism, modernism—to say nothing of those looming political winds of fascism and communism. While the dynamics of these competing influences differed from country to country, South American artistic scenes generally featured folklorists and European expatriate musicians alongside musicians who (like Copland himself) had trained in Europe and returned to their native countries, those who (also like Copland) were interested in building a national musical identity, and those who sought out a "universal" musical esthetic that would transcend national or ethnic identity. Copland represented the injection of a U.S. perspective into these conversations, and Hess's history allows us to look over his shoulder as he watches and takes part. The influences—or rejections—of folklore and imports of both specific musical techniques and of the esthetic or political attitudes behind them, whether from the U.S.

[5]DeLapp-Birkett, Jennifer. "Aaron Copland and the Politics of Twelve-Tone Composition in the Early Cold War United States," *Journal of Musicological Research* 27, no. 1 (2008): 31–62.

or Europe, are represented in wildly diverse ways in the music and perspectives Copland heard during his time there.

Hess's prose is a pleasure to read, and she is refreshingly frank about the inevitable shortcomings posed by the distances of time, language, and political agendas represented in the enormous quantity of primary sources from which she assembled this history (7–9). I admit to becoming sometimes lost amid the swirl of names as Copland flits from city to city and country to country, though this is perhaps unavoidable when telling the story of such intensive diplomacy—if nothing else, I am all the more impressed with the composer for keeping so many relationships alive! If there is one shortcoming in this book, it is the lack of a true bibliography or reference list. Some of the sources cited in the extensive end notes are awarded full bibliographic entries in a "Recommended Reading" list, but a great many of them are never completely referenced. Thus (to take a single example), David Metzer's 1997 study of eroticism in Copland's early music is cited simply as "Metzer, 'Spurned Love'"[6] without any further elucidation (302). This unfortunate bibliographic approach is used for all of Copland's own writings as well, aside from his autobiography and one published collection of essays.[7]

Aaron Copland in Latin America is a substantial addition to scholarship on the composer himself, but of at least equal significance is the unique perspective it provides on the societal and geopolitical contexts in which he lived and moved. Hess's narrative, girded by a virtuosic analysis of the relevant source materials, turns Copland's voyages into a revealing exploration of U.S. diplomacy and politics, and of various Latin American musical and cultural trends—even as it re-examines Copland's own identity as a self-described "American" composer. More than previous biographical studies, this monograph situates him in the web of political and esthetic global disruptions that characterized the mid-twentieth century. As such, this book is a treasure for Copland scholars, but also for readers interested in American musics or the cultural history of the Americas.

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Sounding Latin Music, Hearing the Americas

By Jairo Moreno. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2023.

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Let's consider the following questions: What makes Latin America Latin America? What is Latin America in the concert of the Americas, and even in the cultural spectacle of the world? Furthermore, seemingly unrelated but ultimately bringing the first two questions into a productive dialogue: What does music making have to do with the production of our ideas about places and peoples? Put another way, what happens when music happens? To do justice to the intricacy of these questions, especially when entangled with each other, disciplinary boundaries in academia would prove a cumbersome obstacle. Notwithstanding the deceptive centrality of "music" in the last two questions, the tools of musicology—or music studies at large—could be too limiting, not only in the sense of not being

[6]Metzer, David. "'Spurned Love': Eroticism and Abstraction in the Early Works of Aaron Copland," *Journal of Musicology* 15, no. 4 (October 1997): 417–43.

[7]Copland, Aaron and Vivian Perlis. *The Complete Copland.* Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2013; Copland, Aaron. *Our New Music.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1941.