

NORTHWEST Sinfonietta

A FLAIR FOR THE CLASSIC

Aaron Copland *Short Symphony (No 2) – Sextet version*

BORN	November 14, 1900 in New York City
DIED	December 2, 1990 in Tarrytown, NY
WORK COMPOSED	1931-1933, revised for Sextet in 1937 by the composer
WORLD PREMIERE	1939 in New York City, Juilliard Ensemble

After studies in France in the 1920s with the famed pedagogue Nadia Boulanger, Aaron Copland quickly made a name for himself as a modern firebrand. When his *Organ Symphony* was first performed in 1924, conductor Walter Damrosch quipped to the audience, “If a young man at the age of 24 can write a symphony like this, in five years he will be ready to commit murder!”

In the mid-1930s, Copland experienced an epiphany of sorts, leading to a stylistic shift from lean and acerbic Stravinskian neo-classicism to a popular/folk idiom that has endeared him to generations of music lovers. The composer’s shift to a more accessible style paralleled a similar stylistic re-orientation by Prokofiev and Bartók in Europe as well as the artistic efforts of the Federal Arts Project in the United States. Copland’s ballets such as *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo* and film scores for *The Red Pony*, *Our Town* and others, put this Brooklyn-born son of Russian Jewish immigrants at the forefront of American composers, especially as far as the public was concerned. These and other scores seemed to evoke the good-heartedness, warmth and pioneering spirit in which Americans needed to believe in the face of the Great Depression and the horrors of two world wars.

Copland gave this description of his *Short Symphony*: “The work is in three movements: fast, slow, fast played without pause. The first movement is scherzo-like in character. Once, I toyed with the idea of naming the entire piece *The Bounding Line* because of the nature of the first section. The second movement is in three brief sections—the first rises to a dissonant climax, is sharply contrasted with a song-like middle part, and returns to the beginning. The finale is once again bright in color and rhythmically intricate.”

Charlie Chaplin *A Dog’s Life*

BORN	April 16, 1889 in Walworth, London
DIED	December 25, 1977 in Vevey, Switzerland
PRODUCTION STARTED	January 15, 1918
PRODUCTION COMPLETED	April 9, 1918
RELEASE DATE	April 14, 1918

Charles (Charlie) Chaplin continues to occupy a hallowed spot in the pantheon of past movie makers and actors. His superb physical talents, as displayed by the skating sequence in *Modern Times*, his extraordinary timing evident in virtually every gesture as The Tramp and other memorable roles and his perfectionist directorial gifts have assured him lasting fame despite his leftist politics that have periodically been skewered by conservative media figures. What many moviegoers may not know is that he wore another hat than his ubiquitous derby—that of composer of music.

Chaplin did not write down his music. “It’s all simple music,” he explained. “In keeping with my character, I ‘la-laed’ and Arthur Johnston wrote it down, and I wish you would give him credit, because he did a very good job.” Chaplin was probably being overly modest about his own contribution. He spent an enormous amount of time and energy listen-

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ing to Johnston's renderings and suggesting specific instruments to be used in orchestrating the music; additionally, he was sufficiently self-critical to reject whole sections he considered unworthy of inclusion.

Synopsis

A Dog's Life: The Little Tramp finds companionship with two fellow outcasts—Scraps, a stray mongrel, and a young girl exploited as a hostess in a disreputable dive, The Green Lantern. With Scraps's help he overcomes two thieves from whom he wins a well-filled wallet, which provides the three with a happy end together.

Shoulder Arms

PRODUCTION STARTED May 27, 1918
PRODUCTION COMPLETED September 16, 1918
RELEASE DATE October 20, 1918

Charlie is recruited to the "awkward squad." Posted to the front line in France, he encounters all the privations of trench life—snipers, flood, food rations, solitude and lice and other vermin. He meets a French girl, whom he subsequently rescues from the German troops. After assuming a series of disguises, he manages to hijack the German Kaiser along with the Crown Prince and General von Hindenburg ... but then wakes up, still in the awkward squad.

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