

An Investigation of Aaron Copland's *Night Thoughts*
(1972) through a Performative Analysis

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Table of Contents

Abstract	iv
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Biographical Materials	6
Chapter 2: Current Research, Late-Style Discussions, The Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, and Existing Commercial Recordings	38
Chapter 3: The Performative Analysis	70
Conclusion	103
Bibliography	105
Appendix 1: Current Recordings of <i>Night Thoughts</i>	110
Appendix 2: Score of <i>Night Thoughts</i>	111

Abstract

Since the latter half of the 1900s, large portions of Aaron Copland's life and work have been researched and documented. However, the majority of the investigations pertain to large-scale solo, orchestral, and ballet works written in the middle of his compositional career. In addition, most authors tend to discuss these works within the framework of Copland's impact on American composition, often ignoring the personal emotions underlying his musical inspiration. *Night Thoughts*, written in 1972 for the 1973 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, is a late-period piece which has not been completely ignored, but has not been analysed in a detailed way, especially with regard to performers. This thesis fills that void, providing players and listeners with a performance analysis which demonstrates possibilities for shaping, voicing, and timing within each phrase, among other aspects. The analysis proceeds phrase by phrase, with numerous musical examples, in order to instruct readers on an approach to the work which both leads listeners through its structure while vividly portraying Copland's underlying emotions.

Prior to the analysis itself, a biographical study places *Night Thoughts* in a detailed context within Copland's life and oeuvre. The discussion of Copland's experiences leading to the creation of *Night Thoughts* is integral to understanding the work's emotional inspiration and relationships with other works in his output. This study is followed by a discussion of current research on the piece and late-style compositions by other composers which places the performance analysis in a wider context. The second chapter also contains an investigation of the 1973 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition which paints a picture for the work's premiere by each of the competitors, and also discusses a number of existing recordings. The commercial recordings demonstrate the current performative approaches to the work and provide an interpretative stage in which Copland's emotions can be further

explored. These emotions present in the work are the most important aspects of performative communication, and are the ideas which the following analysis portrays most vividly. Lastly, the overwhelming majority of research suggests that the quality and poignancy of Copland's compositions declined in his later creative period, and this dissertation works to rid readers and listeners of this allegation. Because of the consistency of quality of Copland's creative mind throughout his career, this analysis can ultimately be used as a springboard for other projects detailing the performance of his works.

Introduction

Aaron Copland has long been widely recognised as an icon of 1900s American composition. His unique voice, clarity of texture, rhythmic vitality, harmonic control and melodic imagination are only a few of the many reasons why Copland has reached the upper echelon of musical figures. While his lengthy career spanned numerous stylistic changes, the imaginative ways in which he implemented these aspects retained consistent quality through a quickly developing compositional voice. From a performance perspective, the ingenuity of Copland's writing demands an interpretation which travels beyond the markings in the score and seeks to bring his emotions to the fore.

By the second half of the twentieth century Aaron Copland's reputation had reached monumental status. This was the starting point for a plethora of research of his life and works which has continued to this day. However, the overwhelming majority of these projects concentrate on the large-scale works he wrote in his early and middle years. Solo piano works including the Piano Variations and the Piano Sonata, orchestral works like the Third Symphony, ballets like *Rodeo* and *Appalachian Spring*, chamber music like the Sextet and Piano Quartet, and songs cycles like the *Twelve poems of Emily Dickinson* all repeatedly become subjects of these studies. While Copland was not nearly as prolific as he aged, a paucity of investigative knowledge about his late work exists. This is especially true when considering his *Night Thoughts* for solo piano written in 1972 for the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. Several authors, including Vivian Perlis, Judith Tick, Neil Butterworth, and Joseph Straus, among others, make mention of this piece in their research, but none delve into the necessary level of detail and dissect its phrases in a performance

analysis.¹ This thesis aims to highlight a work of Copland's which is underappreciated and understudied, and inform musicians in ways which will lead to performances with the most musical creativity and clarity. This will give clues to performative strategies which can be employed to represent all of Copland's works to the fullest extent.

In 1972, Copland was commissioned by the organising committee of the 1973 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition for a piece to be performed in the competition by all the participants. The resulting work was *Night Thoughts*, an enigmatic piece which in some ways might not have been what the original commissioners may have been expecting. While containing clear connections with other pieces of Copland's oeuvre, *Night Thoughts* does not fit into any single one of the stylistic avenues which he pursued during his career. Harmonic dissonance abounds while avoiding serialism, there is a lack of rhythmic regularity except for a repeated motive which unifies the work, and there is a remarkable lack of melodic content and development. Therefore, *Night Thoughts* has generally been overlooked in discussions and analyses of Copland's works, both in terms of Copland's stylistic development, and the inner compositional workings of the piece. Furthermore, the investigations which do exist that examine the linear advancement of his compositional voice place *Night Thoughts* in a separate category from his earlier works, and generally explain the difference through discussions of late-style work and Copland's slowly-developing mental destabilisation. Though he was seventy-two when he composed the work, there is no specific evidence to assume that his brain was failing or that his musical and compositional goals were at all different from those in the prime of his career.

¹ Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland Volume 1: 1900-1942* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1984)
Carol J. Oja and Judith Tick (eds), *Aaron Copland and his World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)
Neil Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland* (London: Toccata Press, 1985)
Joseph N. Straus, 'Disability and "Late Style" in Music', *The Journal of Musicology*, 25 (2008) 3-45

This dissertation explores the interpretation of *Night Thoughts* and the responsibilities which performers bear in order to communicate the underlying emotions of Copland's work. An in-depth performance analysis will seek to demonstrate how slight variations of shaping, timing, and voicing can reach further than the limited arsenal of markings which Copland had at his disposal. Not only is *Night Thoughts* an underappreciated work, it provides the perfect backdrop for an exploration of interpretation of Copland's piano music largely because of its starkness of texture. The economy of means with which Copland develops the main material creates an atmosphere where the performer must find every available avenue between each note to paint the colours and emotions which Copland demands. It is this journey of searching between the notes which brings Copland's music to life and demonstrates his compositional prowess.

The first chapter explores Copland's biography in order to present the linear development of his life and trace the steps which led to the composition of *Night Thoughts*. As a work written late in Copland's composing career, it is a sum of the combined experiences of his earlier compositions. The discussion of his life story allows connections to be drawn between *Night Thoughts* and other works, ultimately communicating the emotions underlying its composition. As these emotions are the main aspects which performers attempt to portray to their audiences, a biographical investigation is mandatory before the formal performative analysis can come to fruition.

The second chapter covers a number of necessary issues which collectively provide a backdrop for the performance analysis of *Night Thoughts*. First, the existing analyses and descriptions of the work are presented and discussed. Their major contributions are noted both within the context of how the information can be used to benefit performers and also

within the frame of unresolved issues which make the performance analysis necessary. Secondly, research by a number of authors on the subject of late-style compositions are investigated. This includes discussions of works by Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann and others. These works and the commentaries by the authors are also traced back to Copland's biography to decipher as closely as possible the underlying emotions behind his composition. Next, background information on the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition is provided as a ground for the context for which *Night Thoughts* was written. The world of international musical competitions is a unique and uncompromising backdrop for contemporary composition. With a large jury panel listening very closely to each competitor as well as a listening public which generally exceeds the expertise of what might be considered a normal classical music audience, the pressure on the commissioned composer to provide material of high quality is immense. Thus, discussion of the prize-winning competitors and comments by the jury members about the competition can provide insight into the underlying ideas behind Copland's work. Finally, a number of existing recordings of *Night Thoughts* are presented and discussed. This highlights the performance strategies of world-renowned pianists and their priorities in terms of what ideas they mean to communicate. While all of these recordings are of very high quality pianistically and artistically, they vary to a considerable degree in fundamental musical aspects. This fact necessitates a performance analysis which aims to bring the performer as close as possible to the execution of these aspects which most effectively demonstrate Copland's emotions.

The third chapter presents the analysis itself by way of discussion of each chronological phrase. While *Night Thoughts* can often be divided into units comprising individual bars, the performance analysis tends to group these units into phrase sections usually consisting of between four and ten bars. These phrases normally separate themselves from the surrounding

material by textural variances. Grouping the phrases in this manner not only promotes discussion of these textural differences, but also allows analysis of the construction of each phrase by addition of small units. Copland's ability to employ repetition and slight variation of these small units to produce long and seamless phrases comes to the fore in *Night Thoughts*, and a performance analysis of this manner can most adequately communicate that idea using this strategy.

The most important aspect of this thesis is that it provides performers with a strategy which they can employ for each phrase of *Night Thoughts*. The work varies greatly throughout despite the fact that many of these variances accumulate slowly. Thus, it is vital that each phrase be gauged appropriately so that it serves its specific purpose within the gradual development of the piece. Furthermore, the background information mainly serves not only to place *Night Thoughts* in a context appropriate for analysis, but more importantly to highlight the underlying emotions which Copland aimed to communicate in the work. These emotions provide the foundation on which the performance analysis is built. The strategy for the shaping, voicing, and timing of each phrase stem from these emotions, and thus through the final analysis the three chapters combine to provide a linear direction from composer to performer to audience. The connections between these artistic roles are indispensable, and this analysis serves to make them as strong as possible. This performative analysis will not only help performers approach *Night Thoughts*, but also bring to light the underlying emotions of many of Copland's other piano compositions.

Chapter 1: Biographical Materials

Aaron Copland's musical and professional life was filled with a fascinating variety of activities. As a result he had wide-reaching influence over many aspects of the musical world and even neighbouring disciplines as well. Copland had a distinct ability to communicate and closely connect with so many of those with whom he worked, and this is clearly demonstrated through the large network of relationships he fostered over vast geographical distances and over many years. While his influence was far-reaching, these relationships were also reciprocal, thus providing Copland with critical feedback on his compositional work as well as his position within the larger musical context. This chapter explores Copland's life and the major influences that helped Copland on his path towards the composition of *Night Thoughts*. While not necessarily his most personally significant of musical creations, *Night Thoughts* has been described as 'virtually Copland's final original composition', and its path to existence can be traced back through the relationships and events in Copland's life.¹

Both of Aaron Copland's parents moved to America at a young age at different times in the late 1800s.² His maternal grandfather, Aaron Mittenthal, arrived in New York City from Russia after the American Civil War and proceeded to travel south, selling dry goods and products off wagons or out of stores.³ After he had settled around the area of Dallas, Texas, he sent for his wife and children. Sarah Mittenthal, Aaron's mother, was very young at the time, and while born in Russia, she grew up primarily in Texas, creating a fascinating mix of cultural upbringings.⁴ In the early 1880s, financial reasons motivated the family to move to

¹ Joseph N. Straus, 'Disability and "Late Style" in Music', *The Journal of Musicology*, 25 (2008), 41.

² Neil Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland* (London: Toccata Press, 1985), 8.

³ Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland Volume 1: 1900-1942* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1984), 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

New York City, where Sarah was eventually to meet Aaron's father. Harris Morris Copland was born in 1860 'in Shavli, a part of Russia that was then Lithuania', the first of eight children.⁵ As a teenager, faced with the unnerving prospect of military conscription in the mid-1870s, he escaped to Manchester in order to find passage to America.⁶ Arriving in New York in 1877, his name, originally Kaplan, became Copland through miscommunication with an immigration officer.⁷ Harris was diligent in his work, and managed to find resources to bring the majority of his family to America from Russia, where he also aided his siblings in establishing businesses and housing.⁸ Harris opened his own business in 1884, 'H. M. Copland's Department Store'.⁹ After marrying Sarah Mittenthal in Pythagoras Hall on Canal Street in 1885, the couple sought to establish a permanent home.¹⁰ Eventually in 1890 they were able to acquire a rental property on Washington Avenue above their department store, and in 1897 they expanded the property as both the business and the family grew.¹¹

Aaron was born on 14 November 1900 in this property on Washington Avenue, the youngest of five children. Copland reminisces in his interviews with Vivian Perlis how he grew up with 'comparatively little surveillance' from his parents during his young years as they were often overwhelmed with 'the management of the source of [their] livelihood'.¹² Young Aaron's senses of responsibility and personal interactions were aided by helping out in the store, while lack of parental attention gave him freedom to explore music and literature. Copland described the family's Steinway upright piano as 'the glory of the household', and

⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁷ Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 13.

⁸ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 6.

⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰ Ibid., 7.

¹¹ Ibid., 7.

¹² Ibid., 15.

while sources disagree on exactly when he started to compose, it is evident that it was at an early age.¹³

While schooling played no particularly significant role in his life, Copland recalls that it was when ‘I was just fifteen that I came to the daring decision to spend my life as a musician’.¹⁴ This resulted, after completion of secondary school, in his search for formal musical education along with a decision about which musical path to follow. While talented at the piano, Copland had no specific interest in becoming a concert pianist, and after a successful introductory meeting with the well-established Rubin Goldmark, the beginnings of Copland’s compositional journey were set.¹⁵ While Copland had fond memories of his study with Goldmark, they were at odds with each other in terms of musical taste. Goldmark’s incredibly conservative views towards contemporary composition stifled Copland and led to a sense of isolation. However, he provided strong foundations in harmony and counterpoint on which Copland depended his entire life. According to Peter Dickinson, Copland at age 18 first showed signs of a sort of original voice in three songs to poems by Aaron Schaffer.¹⁶ Subsequently, it was Schaffer who encouraged Copland to foster his artistic talents and to explore the world abroad. Schaffer himself had spent time in France and thought it was an ideal place for Copland to study.¹⁷ In 1920 Copland yearned to expand his musical horizons, and the discovery of an American music school established in the Palace of Fontainebleau piqued his interest.¹⁸

¹³ Ibid., 23. The earliest compositional manuscript of Copland’s dates from when he was eleven years old, but a letter he wrote when he was nine years old tells his sister-in-law he composed a song for her.

¹⁴ Ibid., 7.

¹⁵ Ibid., 27.

¹⁶ Peter Dickinson, ‘Early, Late and More Biography’, *The Musical Times*, 131 (1990), 582.

¹⁷ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 35.

¹⁸ Ibid., 35.

Copland's time in France between 1921 and 1924 proved fruitful in many ways. One of the main reasons for this would be his 'front seat' in the beginning of a decade which was hugely influential in musical history along with the geographical location in which so many of those developments were being tried and tested.¹⁹ In addition, Copland himself, along with music historians such as Annegret Fauser, considered 'Paris the source of [his] nationalism' within his 'defamiliarized surroundings', ultimately inspiring him to create an American musical vernacular.²⁰ The most significant personal development early in his years in Europe was his study with Nadia Boulanger. Copland reminisces on the enormous influence which Boulanger had on his career, stating that his years of study with her were the 'most important musical events of his life'.²¹ Not only were her lessons incredibly informative for Copland, but her curiosity for new compositional techniques far outweighed that of Rubin Goldmark. This gave Copland not only encouragement in his pursuits, but also a mentor with whom he was able to confide his ideas and safely develop his modern voice. Boulanger herself wrote of Copland's obvious talent and confessed her own apprehension of getting in the way of Copland's voice.²² In addition to his contact with Nadia Boulanger, he was also able to fully immerse himself in the musical scene in Paris and meet many important musical figures. These included the French composer Satie, the group of young composers who referred to themselves as *Les Six*, and international figures such as Stravinsky and the conductor Sergei Koussevitsky.²³ Copland's roommate, Harold Clurman, was involved in the theatre scene but was passionate about music and the two became inseparable in their hunger to discover the latest musical trends.²⁴ It was this combination of experiences that led Copland to extend his

¹⁹ Ibid., 55.

²⁰ Annegret Fauser, 'Aaron Copland, Nadia Boulanger, and the Making of an "American" Composer', *The Musical Quarterly*, 89 (2006), 524.

²¹ Julia Smith, *Aaron Copland: His Work and Contribution to American Music* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1955), 45.

²² Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 68.

²³ Ibid., 70.

²⁴ Ibid., 74.

stay in Paris from an initial one-year trial period to a full three-year immersion. Towards the end of his extended stay he became more closely acquainted with Koussevitsky through Boulanger, and this relationship gave Copland the opportunity for his first major commission: a work for organ and orchestra to be played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Koussevitsky with Boulanger as soloist.²⁵

Late in 1924 Copland returned to New York and felt a need to re-establish himself after his extended absence. It did not take long with Walter Damrosch also accepting Copland's Organ Symphony for its premiere on 11 January 1925 with the New York Philharmonic.²⁶ The reviews were mixed as the composition 'followed very much the aims of a typical pan-European student of that time', including 'continuous accompaniment patterns that almost summed up the new anti-impressionism of Paris'.²⁷ However, the following performance by Koussevitsky and the BSO was more successful despite technical issues with the organ.²⁸ After these premieres Copland also began to write about music with his first article appearing in the journal *Modern Music*, and his appointment as the recipient of the first Guggenheim Fellowship allowed him the freedom to focus on composition nearly full-time without the burden of finding extra work for financial support.²⁹ It was at this point that Copland also had the freedom to become more involved with the organisational aspects of the League of Composers, and work to programme concerts which would further promote the young generation of composers. Copland also discovered the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire, a haven for artistic personalities to escape the business of the urban lifestyle and have a quiet retreat in which to work undisturbed. This became a place to which he returned

²⁵ Ibid., 88.

²⁶ Ibid., 103.

²⁷ Norman Kay, 'Aspects of Copland's Development', *Tempo*, 95 (1970), 23.

²⁸ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 108.

²⁹ Arthur Berger, 'The Music of Aaron Copland', *The Musical Quarterly*, 31 (1945), 421.

many times over the course of his life when commissions were pressing or compositional ideas were flowing. His first visit was concentrated on a new work which Koussevitsky had commissioned, *Music for the Theatre*. According to Norman Kay, Copland in this work ‘grappled with the problem of incorporating indigenous material into his writing’, partly by not ‘placing themes over continuous-pattern accompaniments’, but by writing ‘short, pungently concentrated phrases’.³⁰ In addition, this was the largest-scale work of Copland to date which made a more overt use of jazz rhythms. A further benefit was the connections he was able to make with fellow artists and writers, especially with the young composer Roy Harris.³¹

1926 included a return to Europe with stops in Paris, Munich, and Zurich. Copland met with Boulanger in Paris and was introduced to Roger Sessions among many other young composers. Copland’s meeting with Roger Sessions sparked conversations about ‘the need for a concert series to implement the League of Composers presentations’.³² It was at this time that Copland began writing articles and reviewing concerts which spurred the trip to Zurich for a festival sponsored by the International Society for Contemporary Music, which Copland was to review for an article in *Modern Music*.³³ After the festival he travelled to southern France for a peaceful climate in which to complete work on his *Piano Concerto*.³⁴ By the beginning of October the work was completed and Copland returned to New York to show it to Koussevitsky who promptly accepted it for a performance. The *Piano Concerto* was premiered in January 1927 by the Boston Symphony Orchestra to underwhelming

³⁰ Kay, ‘Aspects of Copland’s Development’, 24.

³¹ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 118. ‘There was a freshness and homey quality about Roy at that time. He didn’t seem at all like a composer—more like a farmer who had taken it into his head suddenly to become a composer of concert music. Roy had a simple charm and a winning personality when I first knew him. It was fun to have another young composer to talk things over with. When he told me that he needed a teacher, I suggested Boulanger, and a year later Roy was in Paris studying with her’.

³² *Ibid.*, 143.

³³ *Ibid.*, 127.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 129.

reviews and audience reactions. While the work was firmly rooted in the jazz idiom, Copland's feeling of exhaustion with these compositional techniques signalled a change in his compositional style and the movement towards sounds of a more austere nature. Arthur Berger concurs in his assessment of Copland's stylistic juncture that 'all the works before 1928 are closer to one another than any one of them is to the music composed around 1930'.³⁵

The summer of 1928 included a visit to Santa Fe in order to prepare for a high profile performance of the *Piano Concerto* in the Hollywood Bowl.³⁶ Copland was conflicted in terms of whether to follow offers for engagements he had received from abroad or to return to New York and set up a full-time home base in order to promote American music. He chose the latter of the two options, returning to New York after the summer in order to continue to compose, write and review articles and concerts for *Modern Music* and other publications, direct the Copland-Sessions concerts, continue his administrative role in the League of Composers, and continue to give lectures.³⁷ This weighty decision served to demonstrate the distinct variety of Copland's musical activities and marked one of the main reasons his influence was so widely distributed among musical figures in the early and middle 1900s. Through 1930 these activities continued, among them three series of Copland-Sessions concerts of which there were usually three or four per season, many lectures and articles, and the beginnings of several landmark compositions including the *Piano Variations* and the *Symphonic Ode*.

³⁵ Berger, 'The Music of Aaron Copland', 422.

³⁶ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 153.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 155.

1930 and the years immediately following were largely dedicated to the *Piano Variations* and the symphonic works in Copland's new austere compositional style, namely the *Statements for Orchestra* and the *Short Symphony*. Listeners can hear many similarities between these and the *Symphonic Ode*. It was a time in which Copland's confidence increased even though critics were somewhat slow to respond to his work 'distinguished by the leanness of its textures and patterns'.³⁸ Bryan R. Simms describes the angularity of much of the writing which stems from distribution techniques of moving notes contained in certain motives to different registers.³⁹ In addition, 'the emphasis on architectural structure' and its 'overriding importance' characterises all of the works of Copland's austere period.⁴⁰

Through the entire year of 1930 Copland and the rest of artistic society were feeling the effects of the depression and as a result he 'planned a long trip to Europe to begin after the final New York Copland-Sessions series'.⁴¹ After leaving for Europe in April 1931, he stayed in Paris, was persuaded to spend time in Tangier, and then arranged concerts in Berlin in an attempt to introduce new American music to German audiences. On returning to New York, the Young Composers' Group was founded which met at Copland's apartment occasionally and provided lively discussion on current musical themes with contacts that he had befriended both in Europe and America.⁴² It was through some of these composers involved both with the Group and the League that Copland set up a Festival of Contemporary Music at Yaddo in upstate New York in the spring of 1932.⁴³ This festival was to be grander than others that Copland had organised, even the Copland-Sessions Concerts. It was at this festival that Copland truly became aware of the genius of Charles Ives, and this connection

³⁸ Berger, 'The Music of Aaron Copland', 183.

³⁹ Bryan R. Simms, 'Serialism in the Early Music of Aaron Copland', *The Musical Quarterly*, 90 (2007), 177.

⁴⁰ Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 21.

⁴¹ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 184.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 190.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 201.

continued all through his compositional life. Ives's music had such a profound effect on Copland that he ensured more of his music would be programmed at the following Yaddo Festival. Copland eventually illustrated this profound effect in his own music by giving *Night Thoughts* the subtitle 'Homage to Ives'. Copland proceeded to spend five months in Mexico beginning in the late summer in 1932. He travelled with Victor Kraft, a composition student who also acted as his assistant. Copland used the time to compose but also deepen his relationship with Carlos Chavez, the conductor of an All-Copland concert planned during his residency.⁴⁴ Arguably the most impactful moment for Copland in Mexico was a night spent in a local saloon which had a remarkably lively atmosphere for dancing. The music gave Copland an inspiration towards a new style of composition and a return to a more popular vein from the severity of the music he brought with him to Mexico.⁴⁵

In 1934 Copland was composing *El Salon Mexico*, based on themes with which he had become familiar during the previous months. He was eagerly approached by Ruth Page to write music for a ballet. This resulted in *Hear Ye! Hear Ye!*, a modern ballet in a courtroom setting.⁴⁶ It was at this point that Copland's horizons were beginning to broaden, and he realised the influence which his music could have if he expanded his oeuvre into the worlds of other genres of composition. The following year saw completion of *Statements for Orchestra*, a short work in the 'terse' style of the previous years, and he continued work on *El Salon Mexico*.⁴⁷ Because of various interruptions, *El Salon Mexico* was not finally completed until 1936 when Copland was in Mexico for the second time. It was given its

⁴⁴ Ibid., 213.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 216.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 233. 'Ruth Page was ballet director of the Chicago Grand Opera Company and a well-known dancer and choreographer. When she produced ballets for her own company, the Ruth Page Ballets, she often commissioned music by contemporary composers. Ruth had heard my jazzy *Music for the Theater*, so she invited me to compose music for a ballet about murder in a nightclub'.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 236.

world premiere in August 1937. Despite the length of time the work took to complete, the critical and audience response was unparalleled in its enthusiasm. Copland confesses, '*El Salon Mexico* caught on quickly, and it started the ball rolling toward the popular success and wide audience I had only just begun to think about'.⁴⁸ Part of this success has also been attributed to a change in his painting of America 'from the skyscrapers of New York to a pastoral fantasy, in which Copland tried to find not only *a* country but also *the* country, whether in the Maya villages of Mexico, or the wide open spaces of the ... Midwest and Southwest'.⁴⁹ Immediately following the success he composed a high school opera, *The Second Hurricane*. Between numerous live performances and radio and television broadcasts of *El Salon Mexico* and his new experiences writing scores for ballet and opera, Copland decided in late 1937 that he would try to garner a film contract in Hollywood.⁵⁰ However, this proved to be a difficult task without already having a film credit, and with most of the attention from *El Salon Mexico* coming after his visit, he was not immediately contracted in Hollywood.

After Hollywood, Copland returned to New York to resume various responsibilities including overseeing Arrow Music Press, the American Music Center, the American Composer's Alliance, and continuing his lectures at the New School which led to the publication of his first book, *What to Listen For in Music*, in 1938.⁵¹ Berger writes, 'it was doubtless this new concern with the public at large that prompted Copland to write *What to Listen for in Music*'.⁵² After finishing the manuscript, Copland left for visits to London and Paris where he worked on his next ballet score, *Billy the Kid*. Following on the immediate success of *El*

⁴⁸ Ibid., 248.

⁴⁹ Fauser, 'Making of an "American" Composer', 544.

⁵⁰ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 270.

⁵¹ Ibid., 278.

⁵² Berger, 'The Music of Aaron Copland', 424.

Salon Mexico, *Billy the Kid* allowed Copland to focus on American melodies with his idiosyncratic use of ‘fresh and unconventional harmonies’.⁵³ It was also greeted with rave reviews and audience responses. In the short time following, Copland continued to compose music for two theatre productions, a puppet show at the World’s Fair, another orchestral work, and a documentary film. The documentary, *The City*, proved to be one of his most influential scores, garnering excellent reviews from ‘such widely read magazines as *Time*, *Life*, and *The New York Times Magazine*, as well as in film and music journals’.⁵⁴ Considering Copland’s stay in Hollywood two years earlier and his subsequent return to New York without a contract, the critical response to *The City* was especially meaningful. According to Copland, the success of the documentary ‘gave me the credit I needed to approach Hollywood again, and it helped make 1939 the year my name became better known to the American public’.⁵⁵ The summer of 1939 was spent in Woodstock where Copland made his first connection with Benjamin Britten, beginning a long relationship which remained strong until Britten’s death in 1976.⁵⁶

Following the success of *The City*, Copland was invited to Hollywood to compose music for *Of Mice and Men*, and shortly after for *Our Town*. These two productions catapulted Copland’s name into the masses and also allowed him to further his voice as an American composer, especially with the threat of impending war. Both films were very well received, though critics complained of ‘too much slow music’, and Copland’s abuse of a ‘new ease in sustained, peaceful moods’.⁵⁷ In addition to his Hollywood activities, Copland first served on the faculty of the Berkshire Music Center in 1940. Koussevitsky invited him to teach

⁵³ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 279.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁵⁷ Berger, ‘The Music of Aaron Copland’, 435.

composition at the Center which ran alongside a series of concerts given by the Boston Symphony Orchestra.⁵⁸ Copland taught with Paul Hindemith, and his modest nature was especially appreciated in contrast with the severity of Hindemith's personality. Copland's tenure in what eventually was renamed Tanglewood remained for several years and he frequently returned to the Music Center as it further strengthened his bond with Koussevitsky and introduced him to the young Leonard Bernstein. After the summer in 1940 spent in New England, Copland returned to New York but spent the majority of his time lecturing and writing as opposed to composing. *Our New Music*, Copland's second book, published in 1941, was largely born out of his writings during that time, and 'was intended as a guide to mainstream developments in contemporary music'.⁵⁹ Because wartime made it difficult to focus on composing in addition to offering little demand for it, Copland 'immersed himself in organizational activities', and even 'wrote to the Department of State offering his services'.⁶⁰ This was answered with the prospect of a good-will tour of the Americas in order to 'advise the Department of State through the Division of Cultural Relations regarding musical interchange among the American republics and the coordination of activities in this country which concern inter-American music'.⁶¹ The summer of 1941 included another lengthy stay as composition professor at the Berkshire Music Festival, but shortly afterwards Copland embarked on a tour of South America as a member of the President's Advisory Committee on Music.⁶²

The four-month tour allowed Copland to visit the majority of South American countries while connecting with their major compositional figures. He travelled through Mexico,

⁵⁸ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 305.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 318.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 318.

Guatemala, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and finished in Cuba.⁶³

While he was generally underwhelmed with the musical facilities and the creative skills of the South American composers, the experience inspired Copland with a sense of how to strengthen the musical relationships with the countries by programming their music in the United States. Coinciding with the completion of the *Piano Sonata* and a rejection of his services in the military, Andre Kostelanetz commissioned Copland to write a ‘patriotic work: a musical portrait of a great American’.⁶⁴ The resulting work, *Lincoln Portrait*, dedicated to Kostelanetz, was performed extensively live and on radio, allowing Copland to play his part in America’s war effort while attempting to strengthen national ties and his role as the American compositional voice.⁶⁵

Before Copland returned to Tanglewood for the summer of 1942, he was approached by Agnes de Mille for music for a new ballet. The two corresponded about the subject matter of the ballet during the spring and during the summer months Copland worked extensively on putting his ideas on paper.⁶⁶ The resulting work, *Rodeo*, was finished by the end of the summer albeit requiring gruelling work hours. After Tanglewood, Copland returned to New York and turned his attention on *Music for Movies*, a suite made from selections of his various movie credits, and *Danzon Cubano*, a short two-piano work for a celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the League of Composers.⁶⁷ *Rodeo* was eventually premiered in October 1942 to rave reviews, especially towards Agnes de Mille’s performance.⁶⁸ However,

⁶³ Ibid., 329.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 341.

⁶⁵ Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 87.

⁶⁶ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 357. Agnes de Mille writes, ‘The Ballet Russe had no idea who I was; although it was fourteen years after my first public appearance, I had no reputation, nothing. But it was wartime, and they wanted an American ballet on an American theme by an American... When I made my suggestions for a cowboy ballet, the company manager complained to his colleagues in Russian that I would probably ruin the Ballet Russe’.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 366.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 361.

the immediate success of *Rodeo* for Copland was soon trumped in the beginning of 1943 when Eugene Goossens commissioned him to write a patriotic fanfare to begin the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra concert on 12 March. Part of a series of fanfares opening each concert that year, Goossens urged Copland that these compositions were ‘stirring and significant contributions to the war effort’, and Copland responded that he ‘was gratified to participate in a patriotic activity’.⁶⁹ The resulting *Fanfare for the Common Man* became Copland’s most well-known work, and is now nearly ubiquitous, being performed and arranged for myriad instruments and ensembles.

Copland’s remarkable success of the early 1940s continued into the middle of the decade. A large part of 1943 was dedicated to writing music for a massive Hollywood production, *The North Star*. Copland was present in Hollywood for much of the filming and delays in the process gave him the opportunity to begin work on a new ballet inspired by Martha Graham.⁷⁰ The ballet, which eventually became *Appalachian Spring*, was not completed without difficulties. Carlos Chavez, who was also involved with the project, eventually was forced to leave the collaboration because of his lack of organisation. In addition, scripts were late in arriving which meant that the original premiere date of October 1943 had to be postponed by a full calendar year.⁷¹ In the spring of 1944 Copland began to give lectures at Harvard and then travelled back to Mexico for the summer and part of the autumn. His *Appalachian Spring* score was completed while at Harvard, and Copland left Mexico to attend the Washington premiere of the ballet in October 1944.⁷² The critical and audience

⁶⁹ Ibid., 368.

⁷⁰ Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland Since 1943* (London: Marion Boyars Publishing Ltd, 1992), 30. ‘I had long been an admirer of Martha Graham’s work. She, in turn, must have felt a certain affinity for my music, since as early as 1931 she had used my *Piano Variations* for a solo dance composition—*Dithyrambic*. Surely only an artist with an understanding of my work could have visualized dance material in so rhythmically complex and thematically abstruse a composition. From then on, we hoped to collaborate on a stage work’.

⁷¹ Ibid., 33.

⁷² Ibid., 34.

success of the ballet performance was only exceeded by the fact that it eventually won Copland a Pulitzer Prize and an annual award from the Music Critics Circle.⁷³ According to Arthur Berger, ‘the tendency towards diatonism, manifested with increasing force during the last ten years, goes to an extreme’ in *Appalachian Spring*.⁷⁴ However, this could be one of the major reasons for its mainstream success. After concocting an orchestral suite from the original ballet score with thirteen instruments, the piece went on to be performed and recorded by countless orchestras and conductors, and became one of Copland’s favourites of his own pieces to conduct.⁷⁵

In early 1944 Koussevitsky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra approached Copland for a major commission. This project, which eventually resulted in the Third Symphony, nearly consumed Copland’s creative output for between the next two and three years.⁷⁶ He managed to finish the work ‘less than a month before the premiere in Boston under Koussevitsky’.⁷⁷ While he managed some small-scale compositions during this time as well as lecturing and teaching at the Tanglewood Institute during the summer of 1946, he also turned down a major Hollywood production as well as an opportunity to lecture at UCLA.⁷⁸ The piece was premiered in October 1946 to very successful reviews which made special mention of its triumphant nature. 1947 included Copland’s first composition for a *cappella* choir, *In the Beginning*, dedicated to mentor Nadia Boulanger.⁷⁹ Also in 1947, after finishing another summer at Tanglewood, Copland embarked on his second four-month ambassadorial tour of South America, this time with an added goal of finding young talent to recommend for study

⁷³ Ibid., 47

⁷⁴ Berger, ‘The Music of Aaron Copland’, 437.

⁷⁵ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 50.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁷⁷ Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 103.

⁷⁸ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 66.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 73.

at the Berkshire Music Center.⁸⁰ He was very well received during the tour, but once again did not find an overwhelming amount of talent in addition to finding the educational scene generally antiquated. During his travelling he managed to complete the first movement of the *Clarinet Concerto* written for Benny Goodman.⁸¹ However, Copland did not complete the work until the autumn of 1948 because he was offered a film-scoring opportunity for *The Red Pony*. Beginning in February 1948, his stay in Hollywood kept him occupied nearly until the summer when he returned once again to Tanglewood and the Berkshire Music Center.⁸² Unfortunately, *The Red Pony* was not widely successful or critically acclaimed. However, Copland was soon after contacted again for another score for *The Heiress*. Beginning his work on the film in November 1948, he continued until the spring of 1949. In the midst of these activities, the *Clarinet Concerto* was given its premiere and was made into a dance entitled *The Pied Piper*. After the premiere of *The Heiress* in October 1949 to tremendous success, Copland won an Academy Award in 1950 for what became his final collaboration with Hollywood.⁸³ While Copland garnered mixed opinions through his work in film, he was never willing to admit any lack of integrity in his compositional output. The prospect of composing music for movies was its own form of art which demanded equal attentiveness to that of music for the concert hall. Copland wrote in an article for *The New York Times* during his stint in Hollywood, ‘someday the term “movie music” will clearly define a specific musical genre and will not have, as it does nowadays, a pejorative meaning’.⁸⁴

In the early months of 1950 Copland began the planning stages for his *Quartet for Piano and Strings*, and by June was making headway in the solitude of the MacDowell Colony.⁸⁵ The

⁸⁰ Ibid., 78.

⁸¹ Ibid., 87.

⁸² Ibid., 88.

⁸³ Ibid., 106.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 107.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 149.

three-movement work, according to Butterworth, marks a return to some of the compositional methods Copland was implementing some twenty years earlier.⁸⁶ It was one of Copland's most earnest attempts at dodecaphonic composition, though he characteristically avoided constantly adhering to the rules, 'particularly as regards repetition of the row'.⁸⁷ His interest did not stem from the exactitude of execution, but instead the fact that 'taking a different perspective produces material you might not come up with if you were not thinking twelve-tone-wise'.⁸⁸ In addition, the 'structure of the row with descending and ascending whole-tone phrases avoids the usual chromatic element of atonal music'.⁸⁹ This work has also been noted as having a close relationship to the harmonic language of the *Piano Variations*. Furthermore, it was one of the first works with formal fugal techniques used within the entrances and repetitions of the row.⁹⁰ After his stay at the MacDowell Colony, he continued to work on the piece through the summer at Tanglewood and finished in October 1950 at his home in Sneden's Landing, New York, only nine days before the premiere. Though Copland was apprehensive about his fiftieth birthday, the numerous opportunities for articles and concerts, including the premier of the *Quartet for Piano and Strings*, helped him overcome any anxiety.⁹¹

Throughout the same time span of Copland's work on the *Piano Quartet*, he was composing a cycle of songs set to poems by Emily Dickinson. The *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson* became a staple of the modern American songbook, especially noted for the lyrical quality of the vocal writing despite often large leaps. The work demanded great energy on Copland's part through his inexperience with vocal composition, and the final song of the twelve-poem

⁸⁶ Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 134.

⁸⁷ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 151.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁸⁹ Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 134.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁹¹ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 154.

cycle took an inordinately long time compared to the others.⁹² Copland completed work on the cycle in May 1950 and had a private premiere before the official premiere with Alice Howland later the same month.⁹³ Though initial critical reviews were not highly praising the work, it quickly became one of the more commonly-programmed pieces in vocal recitals and was also arranged for voice and orchestra. During Copland's struggles with the formation of the last song in the cycle, he allowed himself a brief hiatus to compose two collections of American songs, *Old American Songs I and II*. Initially these were more in demand by orchestras and audiences, but the *Dickinson Songs* eventually surmounted the programming deficit.

A Fulbright Fellowship for 1951 allowed Copland to travel to Europe, where he had only spent two months in the preceding fourteen years.⁹⁴ He landed in Cherbourg and immediately went to Paris to reconnect with old friends. He then proceeded to Rome where he began employment by the US State Department to give a tour of lectures throughout Italy.⁹⁵ He also visited Israel for lectures and returned to Rome and Paris respectively to end his six-month tour. The news of Koussevitsky's death made a huge impact on Copland and intensified his desires to return home.⁹⁶

Though compositional productivity was low during the tour, the significant time which Copland spent lecturing prepared him for a new appointment as the Norton Professor of Poetics at Harvard University for the academic year beginning in the autumn of 1951.⁹⁷ During the academic year he gave six lectures which he collectively titled *Music and*

⁹² Ibid., 157.

⁹³ Ibid., 160.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 169.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 171.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 174.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 175.

Imagination. The lectures were followed by concerts of contemporary composers which sought to highlight the themes of the given lecture and attempt to mitigate the abstruse qualities of theoretical musical language. Later in 1952, the lecture transcripts were combined into a book of the same title.⁹⁸

Copland once again spent the summer at Tanglewood in 1952, his tenth time leading the composition department of the Berkshire Music Center. With Koussevitsky's passing, the future of the Center in 1952 was uncertain, but Copland fought to keep Koussevitsky's dream alive, and accepted additional administrative responsibilities as a result.⁹⁹ Charles Munch succeeded Koussevitsky as artistic director, but lacked the same zeal for which Koussevitsky was known, especially with regard for the Center and its young students. Copland remained in the Berkshires until September and returned to New York to work on a new opera with Erik Johns, a dancer-turned-librettist.¹⁰⁰

With the beginnings of Copland's opera *A Tender Land* taking shape, he was rudely interrupted by a subpoena and subsequent questioning about alleged associations with communist front groups. According to Gail Levin, 'what remains today to link Copland most conspicuously to the cultural Left are two published pieces in the communist journal *New Masses*'.¹⁰¹ Though Copland never actually had to attend public hearings, the initial investigation and following preparation required tremendous energy and resources, making musically-productive work very difficult in the early months of 1953. While Copland had initially intended not to teach at Tanglewood during the summer in order to make up lost time

⁹⁸ Ibid., 177.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 179.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 180.

¹⁰¹ Gail Levin, 'From the New York Avant-Garde to Mexican Modernists: Aaron Copland and the Visual Arts' in Carol J. Oja and Judith Tick (eds), *Aaron Copland and his World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 106.

on his opera, he ultimately decided to fill his teaching post concerned that his absence ‘might be construed as being connected somehow with the McCarthy business’.¹⁰² That summer he worked closely with Leonard Bernstein and also received a visit from Samuel Barber. After a trip to Mexico to work with the Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional, he returned to New York to resume work on his opera.¹⁰³ It was also at this time which Arthur Berger published the first major book about Copland and his music.¹⁰⁴

The first performance of *A Tender Land* was scheduled for early April 1954, and Copland worked furiously in order to meet the deadline.¹⁰⁵ The writing of an opera was a difficult task for him in addition to the fact that Erik Johns was not an experienced librettist. Furthermore, the performing forces and stage space were not firmly planned in advance. As a result, the music and action were intended for a space far smaller than was eventually available, and the work need to be altered in specific places. According to Neil Butterworth, much of the musical language ‘belongs to that of the three popular ballets and the scores for *Our Town* and *The Red Pony*’.¹⁰⁶ The first performance was not particularly well received, and Copland and Johns revised a version for performance at the next Tanglewood season in August 1954.¹⁰⁷ Though it fared better with critics, it was revised a third time before being presented by the Oberlin College opera workshop in May 1955.¹⁰⁸ Though never completely satisfied with the work, Copland arranged an orchestral suite from the opera by the same name which has been performed and recorded numerous times, including by the composer.¹⁰⁹ With

¹⁰² Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 207.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 211.

¹⁰⁶ Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 139.

¹⁰⁷ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 223.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 224.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 224.

audiences and critics, the orchestral suite has helped keep the music of the opera before the public.

Copland was also occupied in 1954 with the merging of the League of Composers with the US section of the International Society for Contemporary Music. Though Copland was not outwardly in favour of the merger, it added significantly to his administrative duties.¹¹⁰ In November, however, he was on a nearly three-week visit to Venezuela for the First Latin American Festival of Contemporary Music. It proved to be a ‘major effort for all concerned’, and a ‘great success’ despite Copland’s critiques written in an article for *The New York Times*.¹¹¹ It was filled with huge numbers of performances and allowed Copland to connect and reconnect with composers from all over North and South America.

During the spring and summer of 1955 Copland decided to take leave from Tanglewood and travel through Europe over the course of six months. Beginning in Monaco, the trip continued through Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland, Finland, Denmark, and Norway, and included lectures, performances and a jury appointment for the Olympic Hymn.¹¹² After his return to America, he worked to revise the *Symphonic Ode*, commissioned for the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.¹¹³ After receiving a Gold Medal in Music from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and an honorary doctorate from Princeton University in the spring of 1956, Copland’s stay in Tanglewood for the summer was a welcome return to routine. The philanthropic efforts of Paul Fromm

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 230.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 231. ‘A few gripes were in order: Chile was inadequately represented; Guarnieri from Brazil was absent, as was the young Chilean Juan Orrego-Salas. Most of all, one missed an experimental note. Of dodecaphonic music, there was not a trace’.

¹¹² Ibid., 235.

¹¹³ Ibid., 236.

greatly helped to expand the resources available at Tanglewood for the composition and performance of contemporary music.¹¹⁴

The following autumn and winter of 1956 proved significant in giving Copland the time needed to complete his *Piano Fantasy*, through which he had been working in various capacities for the previous six years.¹¹⁵ Copland developed material for the work as part of a celebration of American Music for Julliard as well as a commission from the Louisville Symphony Orchestra which eventually he did not meet. Though there were several delays in its completion, the *Piano Fantasy* was eventually given its premiere by William Masselos in the Julliard Concert Hall in October 1957.¹¹⁶ Copland expressed his gratitude that the critical praise for the *Fantasy* hailed it ‘a serious major work’ in the dodecaphonic idiom.¹¹⁷

However, ‘although the initial basis of the *Piano Fantasy* is serial, tonal orientation pervades the music’.¹¹⁸ This slight difference marked a new treatment of the serial technique for Copland. Masselos subsequently recorded the work and became known for performing the work in concert programmes combined with the *Piano Variations* and *Piano Sonata*, which stood out as Copland’s three major pieces for piano solo.

The success of the First Latin American Festival of Contemporary Music in 1954 meant the return of another in 1957. Copland was there for nearly two weeks where forty-four works were performed during the month of March.¹¹⁹ The summer of 1957 included visits to the Brandeis and Ojai Festivals in presentations of his music. The autumn months were then

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 238.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 238.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 240.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 244.

¹¹⁸ Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 147.

¹¹⁹ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 267.

spent as a visiting music professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo.¹²⁰

Throughout Copland's appointment he completed an orchestral arrangement of the *Piano Variations*, the *Orchestral Variations*, commissioned by the Louisville Symphony Orchestra, which premiered in March the following year.¹²¹

In 1958 Copland was invited on extensive conducting tours, marking a change in musical priorities away from composition. Nearly the whole year was spent touring in the US and Mexico as well as Europe. After spending December in New York, he began working on a new project with Jerome Robbins which ultimately became *Dance Panels*.¹²² While it lay dormant until 1962, it was eventually premiered in November 1963 by the Bavarian State Opera honouring the opening of a new house.¹²³ Divided into seven movements, the work 'has allowed choreographers to interpret it in abstract terms or with a story'.¹²⁴ It was subsequently recorded in 1965 for Columbia Records with Copland conducting.¹²⁵

In early 1960 Aaron Copland and Lukas Foss underwent a journey to Russia as part of a collaboration between the two countries which had begun a year earlier.¹²⁶ Copland described the 'friendly and genuine people desiring to do everything possible to further friendly relations, musically and humanly'.¹²⁷ He visited with Shostakovich and Kabalevsky, and played several of his works across the country. After returning from Russia and reporting his findings, he left for Japan, the Philippines and Australia on tour with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. While extensively conducting his own works, it was his first

¹²⁰ Ibid., 269.

¹²¹ Ibid., 270.

¹²² Ibid., 274.

¹²³ Ibid., 274.

¹²⁴ Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 156.

¹²⁵ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 278.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 283.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 287.

significant experience conducting works by others, including Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony.¹²⁸ He was able to meet composers in Japan, including Toru Takemitsu, and delivered lectures in London on his findings.¹²⁹ The summer was then spent in Tanglewood followed by his first visit to the Aspen Music Festival.¹³⁰ These activities culminated in a massive sixtieth birthday celebration over two days at Julliard, including performances and lectures.

Copland finished composing his *Nonet for Solo Strings* in December 1960. Commissioned by Dumbarton Oaks, the work is dedicated to Nadia Boulanger 'after forty years of friendship'.¹³¹ It was premiered in March 1961 with Copland conducting.¹³² That same year he also conducted the work in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Chicago, New York, and London. The work was well received by audiences and critics but it was highlighted as a surprising and significant move away from the dodecaphonic qualities of the works which immediately preceded.¹³³

The seventh decade in Copland's life brought changes in the way he organised his life and the activities which interested him most. His compositional productivity dropped as his conducting career began to demand ever larger amounts of time. According to Peter Dickinson, Copland was 'moved to compose either as a personal tribute or for a specific purpose'.¹³⁴ As a result, the 1960s contain many of his final significant compositional efforts in their respective genres. Copland's acquaintance with director Jack Garfein in 1961 led to

¹²⁸ Ibid., 293.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 293.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 295.

¹³¹ Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 152.

¹³² Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 300.

¹³³ Ibid., 303.

¹³⁴ Peter Dickinson, 'Copland at 75', *The Musical Times*, 116 (1975), 969.

his writing of a musical score for *Something Wild*, his eighth and final film score.¹³⁵ Though he may not have remained as prolific as in previous years, his sense of creativity was not in any way lost, and in *Something Wild*, he experimented with new techniques in silent interruption, dynamic volume changes in sound output, and even at one point considered implementing electronic segments.¹³⁶ A few years later, Copland turned his score for *Something Wild* into an orchestral suite as he did with several previous film and ballet scores.

1961 also marked Copland's last full-time appointment as composition professor at the Tanglewood Music Center. A leave of absence in 1962 was followed by three summers of part-time tuition, but according to Harry Kraut, 'an alienation took place between Aaron and Tanglewood' which shifted his focus to other projects.¹³⁷ A reason for this division was due to Copland's increased conducting activity, which led the Boston Symphony Orchestra managers to feel pressure to invite him to conduct the orchestra as a guest. The resounding indifference from the orchestra caused a distance between Copland and the festival eventually leading to his permanent absence. However, Copland's impact on the festival and the music school were not forgotten, in addition to the fact that Tanglewood was the place where some of Copland's most significant musical relationships were forged.

The main reason for Copland's leave of absence from Tanglewood in 1962 was due to his need for solitude in order to finish composition of *Connotations for Orchestra*, commissioned by the New York Philharmonic.¹³⁸ His first significant symphonic orchestral composition since the Third Symphony completed in 1947, as well as his last significant twenty-minute contribution to the genre, *Connotations* was premiered in the first programme of the opening

¹³⁵ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 327.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 329.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 317.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 335.

week of Lincoln Center's Philharmonic Hall in 1962.¹³⁹ According to Butterworth, 'Connotations is an essay in contrasts which do not destroy the inherent unity: the chordal writing gives way to outbursts of complex counterpoint, and the melodic lines with wide leaps and arpeggios, often incorporating ninths, resemble similar figuration in the *Short Symphony*, completed some thirty years earlier'.¹⁴⁰ While the work was well-respected by authorities, many agreed that the opening of a new hall was not the appropriate occasion for a work of such a stark and severe tone.

Copland's ballet, *Dance Panels*, finally premiered in 1963, was his last in the genre and his band piece, *Emblems*, completed in 1964, brought an end to his creation of large works for ensembles other than the symphony orchestra.¹⁴¹ While Copland did not complete a musical composition in 1965, in 1966 he produced a new piano piece, *In Evening Air*, along with an arrangement of the *Dickinson Songs* for voice and orchestra. In the two years of 1965 and 1966 he also hosted a television show on the Columbia Broadcasting Station about music in the 1920s.¹⁴²

In 1967 Copland finished a symphonic work entitled *Inscape*, commissioned for the 125th anniversary of the New York Philharmonic.¹⁴³ Though this work was not of the scale of *Connotations*, much of the material is similar and its dodecaphonic qualities also relate the two compositions, though *Inscape* is constructed with a firm tonal centre in mind.¹⁴⁴ A further difference is marked by a lack of counterpoint, where 'except for brief phrases of two-part writing, there is virtually no contrapuntal development, with a notable conformity of

¹³⁹ Ibid., 339.

¹⁴⁰ Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 161.

¹⁴¹ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 343.

¹⁴² Ibid., 346.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 348.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 350.

crotchet movement in the melodic lines'.¹⁴⁵ Copland produced several other compositions in the 1960s, but all were either very small in scale or pieces written for special occasions. Leonard Bernstein remarked in 1967 at the premier of *Inscape* that he 'recognized that as the moment Aaron really stopped composing'.¹⁴⁶ While Copland did not agree with this statement, it is remarkable to see Bernstein's view of Copland's composition output. The comment was also made in connection with Copland's nostalgic view that he noticed smaller numbers of young composers at concerts presenting his music. Bernstein noted that there was a stark difference between that time and the 1940s, where 'Aaron was like a magnet and had to stay in his seat for fear of being overwhelmed at intermission'.¹⁴⁷

Though the years immediately preceding the composition of *Night Thoughts* were full of travels and seventieth-birthday celebrations, Copland's compositional output remained limited, though in 1971 he produced the *Duo for Flute and Piano*. This piece was premiered in October 1971 by flautist Elaine Shaffer and pianist Haphzibah Menuhin. Shaffer was a former student of William Kincaid, first flautist of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra.¹⁴⁸ A group of seventy of Kincaid's pupils joined forces to commission a work in his memory. The work, in a more pastoral style than others of the period, is constructed on the basis of Copland's observance of the built-in lyricism inherent in the flute.¹⁴⁹

Night Thoughts was composed in the time between two very short pieces for flute and string trio entitled *Threnody I* and *II*.¹⁵⁰ Both of the *Threnodies* were tributes, the first to Igor Stravinsky and the second to Beatrice Cunningham. The first of the pieces was

¹⁴⁵ Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 172.

¹⁴⁶ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 324.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 324.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 375.

¹⁴⁹ Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 174.

¹⁵⁰ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 381.

commissioned by Boosey and Hawkes, and Copland continued by creating the second of his own accord. *Threnody I*, like the *Duo*, highlights the flute's lyrical qualities accompanied by a canonical passacaglia in the strings. *Threnody II* is 'a more extended and intricate work' in which alto flute features, and much of the material is derived from a centralising tone-row.¹⁵¹

These events led Copland to the composition of *Night Thoughts* in 1972, commissioned by the Van Cliburn Piano Competition. The competition, held every four years, employed a composer to write a test piece which at the time was performed in the preliminary round of the competition by each competitor. Vivian Perlis mentions that while Copland's emphasis was not placed on virtuoso playing, '*Night Thoughts* presents certain difficulties for the three hundred entrants in the competition who were required to sight-read it: unusual chords, wide spacings, and some complicated pedaling'.¹⁵² Copland remarked that his main intention with the piece was 'to test the musicality and the ability of a performer to give coherence to a free musical form'.¹⁵³

The musical language of the *Threnodies* as well as the *Duo for Flute and Piano* are not dissimilar from that found in *Night Thoughts*, but *Night Thoughts* does separate itself from the group in its occasional severity of tone which is a theme running through much of Copland's solo piano music. The free form to which Copland refers in his autobiographical interview also sets *Night Thoughts* apart from its solo-piano counterparts, with the exception of the *Fantasy*. However, the *Fantasy* does still have a recognisable form even if not separated by movements, as well as the fact that the twelve-tone idiom prevalent in the work gives it additional structure which further distances it from *Night Thoughts*. As a result,

¹⁵¹ Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 176.

¹⁵² Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 262.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 262.

though not Copland's longest or most personally significant work, *Night Thoughts* nonetheless has a unique role in his output. This role embodies an original composition which fills a stylistic gap after much of his compositional activity had ceased. Peter Dickinson describes *Night Thoughts* as Copland's 'last major piano piece and one worthy to stand at the end of the formidable cycle – Variations, Sonata, Fantasy – which has always seemed close to the core of Copland's creativity'.¹⁵⁴ Also of note is the fact that it is Copland's only piece designed to test the performer, originally in a competitive setting. This further illustrates a need for a specific examination of the interpretive possibilities within the work.

These pieces were virtually Copland's final original compositions. The majority of his musical pursuits from the following years consisted of conducting engagements and honorary appearances. Major conducting tours took Copland all over the world during the years of 1973-1975.¹⁵⁵ For the bicentennial in 1976, he was approached by Eugene Ormandy of the Philadelphia Orchestra for composition of a new work, but decided not to accept because of a lack of inspiration for new ideas.¹⁵⁶ As he reached his eightieth year, his conducting appearances slowed, and he gradually stepped out of the spotlight. Even though he lived a quieter life at his estate in upstate New York, he was consistently visited by numerous friends and colleagues, and had an unending curiosity to be updated on the current happenings in the field of new music.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Dickinson, 'Early, Late and More Biography', 585.

¹⁵⁵ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 383.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 387.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 399.

Copland's Character and Personal Life

It should be noted that in all of the research which has accumulated concerning Copland's oeuvre and musical activities, there is often a paucity of information regarding his character and personal life. While he did not share many personal details and tended to be a private man, there are some interviews with Copland's fellow composers and friends that can partially illuminate these understudied subjects. Alberto Ginastera shared anecdotes about Copland's understated but witty sense of humour. At a dinner party, Ginastera claims he 'was in conversation with other people speaking English, and [he] was looking very diligent. Copland said, "I never saw anyone like Ginastera, who can put his face like somebody who understands everything, and I know that he doesn't understand anything at all!"'¹⁵⁸ While Ginastera spoke of Copland's humour, Leonard Burkat spoke of his light-heartedness in a different way. Burkat mentioned that Copland 'could always say very serious things in a light way, and he always had that little, amused chuckle. He was kind and gentle—a person as lacking in cruelty, or even harshness, as one might ever encounter in the current musical world'.¹⁵⁹ Interestingly, memorable qualities of Copland's 'hearty laugh' were mentioned by many of Copland's close friends and colleagues.¹⁶⁰ Ned Rorem also commented on Copland's positive manner during their first meeting, saying that 'Aaron was affable, immediate, attentive, with that wonderful American laugh; in the four-plus decades since that day, I've seen him behave with the same unaffected frankness not only with other young unknowns but with countesses and Koussevitskys'.¹⁶¹ Lukas Foss also fondly speaks of Copland's character, though even through their many experiences together, he remembers a certain distance between them because of his 'composer's aloofness'.¹⁶² Copland was

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 112.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 119.

¹⁶⁰ William Schuman, 'Aaron Copland', *Perspectives of New Music*, 19 (1980), 2.

¹⁶¹ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 121.

¹⁶² Ibid., 285.

constantly known for his ‘devotion to the good of music’ through his constant work on juries and advisory panels.¹⁶³ Copland was also known for his pedagogical style, which mixed strong interest in his subject and each student with very open criticism. Ned Rorem described Copland as ‘less a pedagogue than an advisor—a sort of musical protocol expert’.¹⁶⁴ This fact is also confirmed by Jacob Druckman, who describes Copland’s influence as indirect, but one which ‘was more as an example, particularly in the kind of citizen that he is in the world of music’.¹⁶⁵ The idea was that Copland was not in any way trying to preach to young composers that his compositional approach was the right way, but instead attempting to hone in on the clearest way in which each composer could communicate his or her individual voice. While he was furiously dedicated to the promotion of music by young composers, he was humble about his own. Harry Kraut said that ‘he was never self-promoting or egotistical about his own work. In fact, very much to the contrary: if someone suggested a whole Copland program, he would recommend incorporating other works’.¹⁶⁶ It can be surmised that his penchant for sharing the stage with others had a significant impact on the wide range of close colleagues he garnered throughout his career. However, even though he had an extensive list of people with whom he had close relationships, he remained intensely private. Phillip Ramey shared a striking account that demonstrates this quality:

As an example of how private and emotionally contained Aaron is, there was the weekend in the early 1970s when I was at Rock Hill with two composer friends, David Del Tredici and Robert Helps. After lunch on Saturday, we played tapes of our latest pieces, and Aaron followed the scores. Then he disappeared for awhile (*sic*) and reentered the studio dressed in a suit. “I’ve got to go out for a couple of hours,” he said, and off he went in his Mercedes-Benz. When he returned, he was a bit subdued and would not tell us where he’d been, but we had a lively dinner and played four-hand

¹⁶³ Richard Franko Goldman, ‘Aaron Copland’, *The Musical Quarterly*, 47 (1961), 2.

¹⁶⁴ Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 123.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 318.

piano music afterward. The following week, a small article appeared in *The New York Times* concerning the funeral, Saturday, of Aaron's beloved sister Laurine, and it noted that Aaron had been present. I wondered then just how well I actually knew Aaron, since I hadn't realized that something was very wrong. Aaron is given to concealing his innermost feelings and, even so, he wouldn't have wanted to subject his friends to a personal trauma.¹⁶⁷

Ramey's account of Copland's private nature is especially significant given the two composers had known each other for many years. Nevertheless, this story gives insight to the fact that current research often does not touch on the personal details of Copland's life. It is important for the supplemental information and the following performance analysis that Copland's character be understood to the fullest extent. Even though this picture is difficult to see clearly at times, the visible evidence of his understated yet powerful demeanour set the stage for the research in the next chapters.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 356. Rock Hill was Copland's final residence in rural upstate New York, where he lived several decades in the latter half of his life.

Chapter 2: Current Research, Late-Style Discussions, The Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, and Existing Commercial Recordings

There are many different topics surrounding Copland's *Night Thoughts* which demand discussion before carrying out a performative analysis. This chapter highlights the current research and writings that exist which mention *Night Thoughts* as well as those which discuss the late-style work of other composers. Since *Night Thoughts* was one of Copland's final original compositions, it is necessary to search for connections between his experience and those of other composers to eventually facilitate the performance analysis. After these investigations, further information is introduced which firmly places the reader in the context of *Night Thoughts*. This includes examining the 1973 Van Cliburn Competition, the setting for the work's commission and premiere, and reviewing and discussing the current recordings of Copland's work that have come into existence since those inaugural performances several decades ago. Understanding the current approaches to the performance of *Night Thoughts* is an integral part of detailing the way in which a performer can communicate the work's emotions to an audience.

Current Analyses and Descriptions

While current scholarship does not generally cover Copland's late life and works in a thorough way, Joseph Straus provides the most detailed analysis of Copland's *Night Thoughts* in existence.¹ While the late-style implications of the work are discussed later in this chapter in addition to what Straus calls a 'disability style', its mention here facilitates an

¹ Joseph N. Straus, 'Disability and "Late Style" in Music', *The Journal of Musicology*, 25 (2008), 3-45.

understanding of the leading current musical analyses.² As attentive as Straus is to certain aspects of Copland's composition, his analysis only touches on a small number of sections of *Night Thoughts* while then discussing the descriptive themes of the rest of the work in a general way. However, because Straus is the only musicologist to approach an investigation of *Night Thoughts* in a harmonic, motivic, and pitch-oriented manner, his analysis is presented here in full:

Aaron Copland's *Night Thoughts* (1972) begins in a state of utter simplicity, with the simplest rhythmic values (half and whole notes arranged in a motivic short-short-long pattern), and with an assertion of G as a pitch center, GBD as an apparent tonic triad amid the [GABDE] pentatonic collection, and a sense of G-B as an inversional center with A between them and D and E flanking them. Beginning in measure 4, however, this absolutely spare, balanced opening is occluded and overwhelmed by chromaticism. An important melodic motive begins this process of concealment, an ascending <+3> (here on B-flat to C-sharp), and by the time this motive is balanced by F-A-flat in measures 9-10, the chromatic aggregate has been completed and the simple, almost naïve, tonal-sounding opening has been obliterated. The rest of the piece can be understood as an effort to recall this opening state, to remember it musically. A succession of musical gestures leads back toward it—we glimpse fragments of it, but it remains just out of reach. Finally, at the end of the work, the musical memory of the opening is restored, but only partially—the piece is ultimately incapable of fully remembering its opening.³

Straus's astute observations regarding the harmonic centre and motivic nature of *Night Thoughts* provide the reader with an understanding of Copland's compositional strategies. In addition, the general underlying patterns of attempted recall and fragmentary repetition which Straus brings to light gives the performer a clear idea of the difficulties he or she faces when realizing the piece in front of an audience. While not Straus's aim in the article, it is necessary to search further into each phrase of the piece and inform performers of the musical

² Ibid., 6.

³ Ibid., 37.

ideas which they must employ in order to translate these observations to an audience. That said, Straus's analysis effectively illustrates and explains the test with which Copland was providing the Van Cliburn competitors when faced with the difficulties of the open form of the piece.⁴ Straus continues his analysis:

Night Thoughts is highly fragmentary in its formal organization. It consists of a series of brief musical moments, none larger than eight measures, that are internally consistent but strangely cut off from what comes before and after. These brief moments generally involve a high degree of internal repetition, either direct or sequential ... The first episode (mm. 15-19) is the beginning of a sequence. Using the motivic short-short-long rhythm, the music presents four harmonies and then transposes them down eight semitones (the transposition is not exact in all voices). The first four chords culminate on a melodic B, the transposed repetition on E-flat. If the pattern were to continue with a transposition down a further eight semitones, the motion would culminate on G. But when the sequence resumes in measure 25, after an interruption, the transposition falls short by a semitone: the music moves down only seven rather than eight semitones, and we arrive melodically on A-flat instead of G.⁵

This passage further demonstrates Straus's idea of a piece attempting to recall the pitch centre of the opening while not succeeding. Thus, his musical examples very clearly illustrate the general ideas which he asserts in the opening of his analysis. What must be added to this study is the way in which the performer needs to balance these tones in order to communicate these ideas to his or her audience.

It must also be noted that while much of Copland's writing in *Night Thoughts* seems to create a musical outlier within his oeuvre, it is heavily informed by strategies employed in his earlier works. While it is not possible to present an exhaustive study on links between *Night*

⁴ Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland Since 1943* (London: Marion Boyers Publishing Ltd., 1992), 262.

⁵ Straus, 'Disability and "Late Style" in Music', 37.

Thoughts and earlier works, it is possible to notice certain clear relationships. The fragmentary nature of the *Piano Variations* can be easily linked with *Night Thoughts*, especially with regard to a piece which distances from the opening material and searches for a return. The coda of the *Variations* marks a return of the opening material, but altered and made even more dissonant, a clear similarity with *Night Thoughts*. Furthermore, in a general way the harmonic writing can be closely identified with chords from the *Piano Quartet* and *Inscape*. Howard Pollack draws a close similarity between *Inscape* and *Night Thoughts* in his analyses. He writes:

Although [*Inscape*] traces the characteristic outlines of a dramatic opening, a bustling scherzo, and a dirge-like finale, followed by a coda that reprises the opening, such a schematic contrast is softened by the brevity of the individual episodes as well as by nearly constant fluctuations of tempo, so that the work communicates great stream-of-consciousness than perhaps any other piece by Copland—at least until *Night Thoughts* (1972), its pianistic equivalent.⁶

Certain chords can even be linked with *Connotations*, to which Pollack also alludes in his study, though the stark difference in character between those two works makes their relationship quite tenuous. However, Pollack's linking of *Inscape* and *Night Thoughts* shows the generality of his study, especially given the difference in length of the two pieces.

Though there are many textural similarities between the two pieces, the differences in length and structural scope demonstrate that Pollack's general observations do not reach the level of specificity of those of Straus. Straus continues his detailed investigation:

A melodic G is achieved sequentially in the episode that follows (mm. 28-33), but the harmonic context is remote from the pentatonic opening of the work. The music seems to make another sequential effort to achieve a more definitive return to G (mm. 34-39), but the gesture is interrupted and contrasting material intervenes. It is as though the music were trying to recall something well

⁶ Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1999), 514.

known and deeply familiar, but can't quite get it right. The opening G and its harmonic environment are glimpsed in part but remain ultimately inaccessible. Each of the short episodes that comprise the work embodies a new effort to reach back toward the G, and each breaks off in disappointment and frustration.⁷

The final observations from this paragraph from Straus seem to illustrate an uncommon idea in Copland's output. Ideas of disappointment and frustration can be seen in earlier works, especially when disappointment is combined with nostalgia. Certain short phrases in the *Piano Sonata* certainly communicate disappointment with their fragmentary nature and patterns of rising and falling. Frustration can also be found in many of Copland's dodecaphonic works, particularly the *Piano Quartet* or the *Piano Fantasy*. Especially in the *Fantasy*, some of the aggressive tendencies unmistakably communicate a sense of unease with current surroundings. However, the information which Straus presents as new is Copland's sense of disappointment and frustration with himself. This is not only a very specific and powerful emotional idea, but one to which the performer needs to be particularly attentive. While it is arguable that Copland actually intended for the performer to attempt to communicate these ideas to the audience, it is nonetheless important that he or she has the performative resources available in order to communicate those ideas if necessary. This requires knowing the material with which Copland was working and combining that with a sense of melodic contour and harmonic balancing.

Straus finishes his analysis of *Night Thoughts* with the following paragraphs:

As the end approaches, the opening music is repeated "as at first" and "as before". But the process of clouding over with chromaticism begins almost immediately and never lets up (note Copland's admonition to "emphasize the left hand"). As in the opening, the <+3> on B-flat-C-sharp is

⁷ Straus, 'Disability and "Late Style" in Music', 38.

introduced at the top of the texture (mm. 96-99) and then remains there over iterations of four slowly arpeggiated chords. These four chords all contain G and present a direct bass motion toward G, but they nonetheless persistently cloud the G with notes foreign to the opening pentatonic collection.

The final two measures of the work are extraordinarily beautiful and evocative. The opening music is heard one last time—“very distant, but clear”—and rearranged to project, at this tonic level, a final statement of <+3>, this time B-D. The memory of the opening is present, but at a distance, unattainable, almost concealed by the foreground chromaticism.⁸

The level of eloquence which Straus attains in describing Copland’s music is particularly remarkable. Not only are the specific examples perfectly suited to the ideas which Straus means to communicate, the ideas themselves are closely related to Copland’s compositional process and the personal events of his life at the time. Furthermore, Straus effectively brings the music to life with his words by underlining Copland’s struggle of searching for the unattainable. It is then necessary from the attentiveness which Straus gives the music that a similar rigour is given to a performative analysis which helps musicians communicate the ideas which Straus so effectively demonstrates.

Apart from Straus’s work, the remaining studies of *Night Thoughts* tend only to be descriptive, lacking particularly detailed analysis. However, they still provide useful information. Neil Butterworth, a biographer and analyst of Copland’s music, made efforts to bring descriptive statements of *Night Thoughts* to readers. He writes:

For the Van Cliburn International Quadrennial Competition held in Fort Worth, Texas, in September 1973, Copland was commissioned to provide a test piece for the candidates. After its completion, he gave *Night Thoughts* the subtitle *Homage to Ives* because the subtle use of piano sonorities by careful pedalling effects and the powerful, often dissonant writing is a reminder of the older composer.

⁸ Ibid., 39.

(There is no relationship with Copland's earlier 'Night Thoughts', the slow movement of *Music for a Great City*: this piano piece is 'mood music', while the orchestral 'Night Music' is a peaceful nocturne of quite different character.⁹

Because of the brevity of Butterworth's background material regarding *Night Thoughts*, there are two noteworthy points about what information he chooses to include. First of all, his explanation of the addition of the subtitle, *Homage to Ives*, as not being part of the original plan of the work seems to hint that the work still contains the typical Copland compositional language and is not a complete outlier from his many earlier works. While aspects of the piece may remind a listener of Ives, the piece is still unmistakably Copland's writing and not composed in the manner of Ives. Butterworth's hint at this fact slightly contradicts Straus's argument that *Night Thoughts* particularly distances Copland of the 1970s from his earlier self. Secondly, Butterworth's description of *Night Thoughts* as 'mood music' contains ambiguity.¹⁰ It is difficult to discern his definition of 'mood music' because of his intent to contrast *Night Thoughts* with an earlier nocturne of the same name. However, typically 'mood music' defines a piece set in a single mood with communication of that specific atmosphere as its primary function. As a result, he attempts to differentiate *Night Thoughts* from the definition which describes it perfectly. It is possible that he intends to communicate how *Night Thoughts* develops the mood and atmosphere of the beginning, thus focusing on the aspect of gradual change within the work and not the overall character of the piece.

Butterworth also provides a musical description of *Night Thoughts*:

Cast in a single movement, the work is a study in textures: basically slow throughout, there are no sudden changes of tempo or character, each episode arising naturally from the previous one with slight fluctuations of speed. In the opening bars two of Copland's intervallic fingerprints appear: the melodic third and the harmonic ninth. These recur throughout. The first three notes provide a

⁹ Neil Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland* (New York: Toccata Press, 1985), 179-180.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 180.

unifying motto figure, at times harmonised bitonally between the two hands. As in other works, phrase lengths are short, usually of one bar. Only one more extended melody emerges, and even this contains balanced repetition. Copland is meticulous in marking the pedalling; in the first seven bars, the performer is instructed to depress the pedal *after* striking each note. In the closing bars, the *sostenuto* pedal is required to maintain one chord through several changes of harmony. At times the music is written on three and four staves to accommodate the wide range of the keyboard used and to determine clearly the duration of sustained chords against overlapping melodic phrases.¹¹

Butterworth's observation of the slow development of the character of the work without striking contrast is particularly astute. While tempo changes abound within the piece, their subtlety does not always mean that they are noticed by listeners. Even though Butterworth's harmonic and motivic discussion is brief, the reader still gains a sense of the atmosphere, especially when combined with his mention of Copland's short-phrase language.

Butterworth's comparison of the phrase lengths in *Night Thoughts* with those in other Copland works further clarifies his opinion that the piece contains a distinct Copland flavour and is not an anomaly in his oeuvre. The fact that Butterworth highlights the unusual pedalling techniques in *Night Thoughts* helps to define the significance of his earlier mention of pianistic sonorities responsible for the work's subtitle. Lastly, Butterworth is the only author to mention the extreme register spread which Copland employs, making note of the width of the textures and their multi-dimensionality.

Late Style Considerations

It is widely recognised that Copland had turned his career focus to conducting as opposed to composing in the year in which *Night Thoughts* was written. In addition, even though he still lived eighteen years after the completion of the work, the fact that *Night Thoughts* was one

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

of, if not the last truly original composition of Copland's oeuvre necessitates a study of its late style implications.¹² The qualifying investigations which discuss *Night Thoughts* within its period of composition are examined and compared to a small number of leading pieces of research on late-style works in certain artists.

Once again, Joseph Straus's research reigns supreme in this realm of discussion. He summarises his critique of Copland's composition as follows:

The work is so strange—repetitive to the point of obsession, fragmented in its form, lacking in any of the familiar Copland stylistic markers—that it has been largely overlooked in the Copland literature. Critics who have discussed it have tended to emphasize its characteristically late-style qualities—its private, intimate tone, its fragmentation, its obsessive repetitions, the willed simplicity of its opening, and the abrasive dissonance of much of the rest of it.¹³

This description strongly connects with Straus's perception of how late style is most obviously exhibited. He discusses how many of the recurring themes of late-style works of many composers tend toward these patterns, 'often including bodily features (fractured, fissured, compact, or immobilized) and certain mental or emotional states (introverted, detached, serene, or irascible)'.¹⁴ However, in his study of Copland's *Night Thoughts*, he determines that what makes a work part of a composer's late style might not always be what is expected:

I would argue that in the end *there may be nothing late about late style* in the sense of chronological age, the approach of life's end, or authorial or historical belatedness. Rather, late style may in some cases be more richly understood as *disability style*: a perspective composers may adopt at any age, often in response to a personal experience of disability. To the extent that composers find ways of writing their nonnormative bodies or inscribing their disabilities in their music, late style may be less

¹² Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland Since 1943* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 259.

¹³ Straus, 'Disability and "Late Style" in Music, 41.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

about anticipating death than living with a disability, less about the future hypothetical than the present reality.¹⁵

For Straus, the differences in Copland's *Night Thoughts* when compared to his earlier works do not stem from any conscious effort to change styles, but from a realisation of an altered world that had arisen through the aging process. While Copland was 'physically in good health' in 1972 and was not in any way concerned with 'hypothetical and remote mortality: he was experiencing the memory loss associated with the early stages of dementia, presumably Alzheimer's disease'.¹⁶ Thus, the manifestations of an altered compositional voice reflect the manifestations of Copland's affected mental state.

It must be noted that as fascinating as these conclusions are, it is very difficult to internalise them without a slight amount of scepticism. Howard Pollack defines Copland's compositional difficulties in a different way:

He only admitted that he had difficulty, as he entered his seventies, getting new ideas and that he would rather not compose at all than merely repeat himself. Moreover, by the mid-1970s he was experiencing memory loss. So in fact, not much time transpired between his final compositions and the onset of the dementia that afflicted his final years.¹⁷

Straus further argues that evidence exists in letters between Copland and Nadia Boulanger that memory loss could have been affecting Copland in preceding years as well.¹⁸

Pollack's discussion of Copland's late work, when mixed with Straus's conclusions, begs numerous clarifications of the emotions deep within the composer which were underlying

¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹⁶ Ibid., 42.

¹⁷ Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 553.

¹⁸ Straus, 'Disability and "Late Style" in Music, 42-43.

Night Thoughts. First of all, Straus's conclusions partly assume that Copland was aware that this initial bout of memory loss was symptomatic of a serious condition to follow. There is no reason to automatically assume that Copland was aware of any of this, or motivated to write these things into his music. In addition, the text of the letters which Copland and Boulanger communicated was generally quite informal and colloquial, meaning that Copland could easily have been writing in his usual self-deprecating manner and simply remarking on the fact that he was aging. For a man in his early seventies, to not experience any form of memory loss at all would be highly abnormal, in addition to the fact that a few years between the writing of *Night Thoughts* and Pollack's assessment of Copland's serious memory issues is a considerable amount of time for a condition to worsen. It is ultimately possible that the changes which Copland's compositional voice underwent in *Night Thoughts* was simply due to the time which had taken place between it and other major compositions, and that these were natural occurrences as Copland never maintained one specific style or voice for a particularly long period of time. The numerous similarities between *Night Thoughts* and earlier works also create scepticism that Copland's slightly declined mental state stemming from a natural aging process would cause him to produce work unrecognisable as his own.

Judith Tick provides a provocative critique of *Night Thoughts*:

Most critics of Copland's oeuvre do not believe his late work sustains the level of achievement of his middle-period music, particularly that of his ballets. Yet for many, the compositions Copland wrote after 1950, in spite of their flaws, confirm his vital musical imagination still at work. In *Night Thoughts*, for example, while a three-note motive does unify the work as a whole, the material does not support the kind of emotional energy Copland evidently believed the piece contained. Not much lyricism envelops the bare linear passage marked "simply singing"; nor does the passage marked "eloquently" support that wish either. Instead, obsessive reiterations of chords and piano figurations, ranging over the extremes of the piano, are repeated over and over again. This suggests Copland's own inner preoccupations, perhaps with decline and death. Thus the piece projects a haunting

atmosphere of private contemplative candor, as if clues to the beyond could be found in overtones; it is an old man's work.¹⁹

Judith Tick makes quite extreme claims regarding Copland's musical output. While the ballets are indeed on an elevated level of artistry and their worth is proved through the numerous performances which they have been given, it is unwise to qualify the later pieces as not achieving as much as pieces of the middle period. In addition, the confirmation of a musical imagination still at work further illustrates this point as it is Copland's compositional mind which determines the level of achievement. It is true that his productivity was significantly reduced, but to claim diminished achievement in his later years hints that his compositional prowess was declining. The works which Copland completed in his later period, including *Night Thoughts*, 'contain some of the most dissonant, abrasive chords he ever wrote'.²⁰ The level of dissonance of the compositional language certainly contributes to the fact that the pieces are not programmed often, in addition to the fact that the more esoteric style creates higher levels of ambiguity of feeling and emotion. *Night Thoughts* does not tend to provide the performers or listeners with clear answers in the way certain earlier works do. However, this does not mean that Copland's conviction behind his instructions in the score are diminished. As much as his compositional style varied throughout his career, Copland's decisions to change compositional voice did not waver and he continued down each new path with the same level of intent. It is overwhelmingly possible that the change which resulted in the language of *Night Thoughts* and other corresponding late works was a fearlessly intended decision, much like his decision to move away from jazz-oriented motives in the 1920s. To move even one step further, not only does this intended decision mean that the late pieces

¹⁹ Judith Tick, 'The Music of Aaron Copland' in Gail Levin and Judith Tick (eds), *Aaron Copland's America: A Cultural Perspective* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2000), 162-163.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 163.

contain the same compositional integrity of those written earlier in his career, it also means that it could have the same root cause as his other alterations in compositional voice, and not have anything to do with the aging process or increasing disability as Joseph Straus suggests.

Judith Tick does not take the performer's role into account when she claims that the written notes in *Night Thoughts* do not achieve the written markings of 'simply singing' or 'eloquently' which Copland provides. The melody which the performer is directed to play in this manner has several repetitions and meanders around a single note, meaning it is a more difficult task to communicate intense lyricism to listeners. However, the simplicity that Copland wishes the performer to portray means this melody becomes the perfect candidate for this role as the repetition and lack of register expansion both naturally communicate simplicity. Something which Tick does not mention is the regularity of the lilting rhythm which further strengthens the clarity of Copland's instructions. Lastly, the abrasive qualities of the harmonic language throughout the work mean that the melody which Copland marks 'simply singing' appears more lyrical within the context than it otherwise would, as listeners are yearning for a softening of the constant harshness.

In addition to discussing the role of Copland's mature work within the context of his earlier compositions, it is also necessary to investigate the ideas behind *Night Thoughts* within the larger landscape of late-period work by other composers. Arguably the composer most strongly associated with the struggles and symptoms of late-period composition is Beethoven. Theodore Adorno gained intense recognition for his writings on Beethoven's late style in addition to his many accomplishments as an art critic and philosopher. Rose Rosengard Subotnik explains the difficulties in fully comprehending Adorno's understanding of late Beethoven:

Adorno left only two essays dealing exclusively with Beethoven, an aphoristic essay on the late style and an essay on the *Missa Solemnis*; the latter is the only detailed study Adorno left behind of any specific work by Beethoven, except for a brief analysis of Op. 111 in *Doctor Faustus*; and it is impossible to understand Adorno's interpretation of the third-period style without examining his discussions of the second-period style, which are scattered in numerous essays and monographs. Such problems, together with Adorno's generally uncommunicative style, have forced the present writer...to play an unusually active role in inferring the interconnections and implications of Adorno's ideas.²¹

The difficulty inherent in deciphering Adorno's meanings is well documented. However, it is valuable for determining any similarities between the compositional symptoms between Beethoven and that of Copland in *Night Thoughts*. Adorno's work is made even less transparent due to the fact that his 'musical essays analyse music not merely as an organization of sounds but as an embodiment of the truths perceived by human consciousness'.²² To extract the exact context musically from his writings demands a deep search because 'the purpose of his musical writings is to criticize not merely the technical workings of music but, above all, the human condition of the societies that give music life'.²³ It is undoubtable that Copland's music has not been criticised in the same manner, which makes drawing similarities difficult. In addition, the 'human conditions' inherent in both composers' respective societies were markedly different, and the emotions from each man which inspired his music were completely divergent as well. However, this does not mean that connections cannot be drawn between the two.

²¹ Rose Rosengard Subotnik, 'Adorno's Diagnosis of Beethoven's Late Style: Early Symptoms of a Fatal Condition', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 29 (1976), 243-244.

²² *Ibid.*, 244.

²³ *Ibid.*, 244.

In terms of the music, Adorno connects many different social issues with Beethoven's music. The large number of these issues makes it impossible to mention all of them. However, one idea which Adorno closely connects with Beethoven's middle period is that of 'developing variation'.²⁴ It is necessary to understand Adorno's conception of Beethoven's middle period as he 'interprets the third-period style as a critique of the second-period one'.²⁵ 'Developing variation', according to Subotnik, is 'the general principle of form through which Beethoven's second-period subject asserts its freedom'.²⁶ To be more specific, it is a 'process whereby a musical element subjects itself to logical, dynamic change while simultaneously retaining its original identity'.²⁷ Adorno believes that this process occurs most clearly in the journey through the development and recapitulation within Beethoven's middle-period sonata-allegro movements, and he even goes so far as to consider this structure 'essentially synonymous with the second-period style'.²⁸ This 'focus upon the development section in Beethoven's second period signifies for Adorno the attainment of the musico-historical moment when individual freedom finally overtakes externally given order as the most manifest governing principle of objectively existing structures'.²⁹ Thus, Beethoven's level of use of freedom of the manipulation of the main subject through its changes essentially reflects the exact social struggles of his time, where individuals sought to break free from oppressively structured order. Adorno postulates that the reason Beethoven's middle-period output was so well received by the public was not that he consciously attempted to create well-received art, 'but because for a time his individual artistic interests and the artistic interests of society genuinely coincided'.³⁰ Unfortunately, for Adorno, the

²⁴ Ibid., 248.

²⁵ Ibid., 251.

²⁶ Ibid., 248.

²⁷ Ibid., 249.

²⁸ Ibid., 249.

²⁹ Ibid., 249.

³⁰ Ibid., 249.

balance between form and freedom which Beethoven attains in his middle period ‘calls attention by contrast to the ongoing lack of wholeness or integrity in the human condition’, and that these factors eventually illustrate the reality that this ‘synthesis’ or balance in real life is not possible.³¹ Thus, Beethoven’s late style is needed, or even inevitable, and is his ‘most realistic’ of styles in that he is able to reconcile the impossibility of the character of human nature which he demonstrated through the balance between form and freedom of the subject in his middle period.³²

The connection between Adorno’s study of Beethoven and Copland’s compositional development could be construed as somewhat tenuous. However, in its simplest terms, Adorno highlights the close connections between art and society, that the composer is not necessarily inspired by events in history to compose certain works, but that the oeuvre of a composer is naturally reflective of the assimilated society in which that composer resided. Thus, Copland’s output from the years ranging from his ballets through to his late works is symptomatic of the society in which he lived and also his position within it and his opinion of it. Connecting this fact with Judith Tick’s judgement of *Night Thoughts* that ‘the material does not support the kind of emotional energy Copland evidently believed the piece contained’, Copland’s ideas of exactly what material contains certain emotions or elicits certain feelings could be divergent from those of society. This would contrast in a way markedly dissimilar from his ballets, which almost all won immediate approval from audiences and spoke very poignantly to listeners. Even though ‘such assertions had little foundation’, Howard Pollack acknowledges Copland’s ‘sharply critical view of the world’ and his slow withdrawal from the public spotlight, which even though it may not have been

³¹ Ibid., 249.

³² Ibid., 249.

‘because of some supposed antipathy toward the times’, still could result in conflicting viewpoints of the ideas which are communicated by specific orderings of tones.³³ Leonard Bernstein was also aware of Copland’s insecurities regarding feeling alienated from his younger compositional compatriots as he grew older.³⁴

While strong connections can be drawn between the relationships of Beethoven and Copland with their respective social surroundings, it is also possible to highlight even more specific similarities in the compositional techniques found in their late works. Rose Rosengard Subotnik acknowledges that ‘Adorno attaches particular significance to the heightened role of convention (for example, the trill, cadenza, and other ornaments, the accompanimental bass pattern and the simple V-I cadence) as a distinguishing element in Beethoven’s late style’.³⁵ While not all of these connect perfectly with Copland’s *Night Thoughts*, the return to basic musical elements is particularly apropos. Certain elements of Copland’s work, the ‘willed simplicity of the opening’, the harmonic language based primarily on thirds and ninths, and its structure based on small fundamental units pieced together all point to conventions which he implemented early in his career.³⁶ Another significant aspect which Adorno analysed was that the ‘repressive potentialities of force were acknowledged in Beethoven’s third-period style through the replacement of dynamic development with an explicit form of the principle once implicit in recapitulation: static, invariant—as it were, contingent and yet inexorable—repetition’.³⁷ This aspect is possibly most clearly connected with *Night Thoughts*. Written accounts of the work’s ‘obsessive repetitions’ claim it as one of its most distinguishing features.³⁸ Tick also makes note of the ‘obsessive reiterations of chords and piano

³³ Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 553.

³⁴ Copland and Perlis, *Aaron Copland*, 249. Also see Chapter 1, p. 30.

³⁵ Subotnik, ‘Adorno’s Diagnosis of Beethoven’s Late Style’, 259.

³⁶ Straus, ‘Disability and “Late Style” in Music’, 41.

³⁷ Subotnik, ‘Adorno’s Diagnosis of Beethoven’s Late Style’, 260.

³⁸ Straus, ‘Disability and “Late Style” in Music’, 41.

figurations' that are 'repeated over and over again'.³⁹ Lastly, Subotnik claims one other distinct feature that Adorno associates with late Beethoven: his 'third-period homophony'.⁴⁰ The aspect of this 'free homophonic style' that causes its mention is 'its inclination toward techniques that banish the physical presence of the subject; these appear to include unisons, hollow octaves, wide-spaced sonorities (instead of hierarchical, centred triads), static or stylized melodic lines, conventions generally, and nonpropulsive rhythms'.⁴¹ Some of these attributes can clearly be connected with Copland's *Night Thoughts*, especially the chords and sparse melodic material with 'not much lyricism' which is 'ranging over the extremes of the piano'.⁴² Copland himself claims similarities by describing the work as having 'wide spacings' and a 'free musical form'.⁴³ Copland's self-judgement of the piece as 'not a virtuosic work' could even connect to Beethoven's late-style returns to convention and static lines. Whether the reasons for each respective composer to make these transitions in their writing were born out of the same motivations or not, it is apparent that patterns and associations with Copland's late work contain similar manifestations to those in Beethoven and in Adorno's critical conceptions.

Beethoven's late-style works differentiate themselves from others in his oeuvre through their distinctly divergent properties. However, Beethoven's output is not alone in its divisions. Chopin's late works also have recognisable properties setting them apart from his earlier compositions. Jeffrey Kallberg diligently highlights many of these distinctions in an effort to trace them through two works, the *Polonaise-Fantasy*, Op. 61, and the *Mazurka in F minor*, Op. 68 No. 4. The two works belong to what Kallberg describes as Chopin's 'last style', and

³⁹ Tick, 'The Music of Aaron Copland', 163.

⁴⁰ Subotnik, 'Adorno's Diagnosis of Beethoven's Late Style', 261.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁴² Tick, 'The Music of Aaron Copland', 163.

⁴³ Copland and Perlis, *Copland Since 1943*, 262.

his main goal is to contrast this with his 'late style'.⁴⁴ Even though the two periods are related, they have specific differences. Generally speaking, the *Polonaise-Fantasy* and the *Mazurka* both contain the same characteristics as other late Chopin works, but come full circle with his earlier works in a manner of 'aesthetic renewal'.⁴⁵ It is the difference between a 'phase of general reappraisal' within his late style of experimentation and his return to old forms with a matured view which motivates Kallberg to define a new style. Thus, to understand Chopin's 'last style', it is necessary to study his late style which began with a 'significant shift in his artistic direction' in 1842 until his death in 1849.⁴⁶ While the relationship contains subtle differences, this is not unlike Adorno's views on Beethoven's late style, which can only be understood thoroughly through painting a complete picture of his middle period.

In the music specifically, many of the traits which Kallberg associates with Chopin's late style can be connected with Copland's late works. 'Ornamentation, always central to Chopin's melodic style, was applied with greater restraint, often to articulate moments of structural importance'.⁴⁷ If this idea is to be understood as a general simplification of melodic lines undeterred by ornaments, then it is strongly connected with the opening of Copland's *Night Thoughts* with its 'willed simplicity' as Joseph Straus describes.⁴⁸ In addition, Kallberg describes how Chopin's late-style 'harmony transcended the high sophistication of earlier works, either by probing more chromatic reaches, or by repeating, as a unifying device, the same chordal progressions throughout a work'.⁴⁹ Chopin's venturing into more chromatic language certainly can be tied to Copland's writing of 'some of the most

⁴⁴ Jeffrey Kallberg, 'Chopin's Last Style', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 38 (1985), 267.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁴⁸ Straus, 'Disability and "Late Style" in Music', 41.

⁴⁹ Kallberg, 'Chopin's Last Style', 266.

dissonant, abrasive chords he ever wrote' in his late works, in addition to the fact that the repetition of Chopin's chordal progressions strikingly matches Copland's 'obsessive reiterations' in *Night Thoughts*.⁵⁰ Lastly, Chopin's 'rhythm in particular was used to increase tension over entire sections of pieces'.⁵¹ The repetition of Copland's rhythms certainly increase tension within individual sections, making each section lead more strongly to the next.

There are other extra-musical ties which can be drawn between Chopin and Copland in the latter parts of their output. Even though 'Chopin's oeuvre resists rigid segmentation into periods', the changes that occurred in 1842 significantly affected his productivity, 'which in the years 1842-47 dropped by nearly half'.⁵² It has been documented that Copland's creative output also drastically decreased in his later years, an even more extreme change than Chopin's, and that he 'produced no new score in the last seventeen years of his life'.⁵³ Unlike Copland however, Chopin had imminent personal reasons in 1842 for a drop in productivity and a reimagining of his compositional voice. There were 'debilitating attacks on his health', 'the rupture with his companion of nine years, George Sand', and even 'the subsequent months of self-imposed, lonely exile in Great Britain' after the 'outbreak of revolution in Paris'.⁵⁴ While Copland did withdraw steadily from the public eye in the last two decades of his life, he certainly did not suffer the same onslaught of personal crises that befell Chopin. This might also account for the fact that Copland was writing what are considered his late works in the late 1960s and early 1970s, almost twenty years before his death in 1990, while Chopin's entire late period only began a mere seven years before his

⁵⁰ Tick, 'The Music of Aaron Copland', 162.

⁵¹ Kallberg, 'Chopin's Last Style', 266.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 264.

⁵³ Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 516.

⁵⁴ Kallberg, 'Chopin's Last Style', 264.

demise. Even more heart-wrenching for Chopin was that of his ‘last style’, ‘in which he sought to transform and alter basic tenets of his musical language’, but ‘he had scarcely established it before death intervened’.⁵⁵

The sub-categories of late style in Chopin’s work means the change in his stylistic voice was gradual despite his premature death. Richard Wagner’s music also shares this gradual transition, and even elicits an unending debate about whether or not his late works changed dramatically enough in compositional voice to define a late style. Adorno appears again many times as critic and philosopher of Wagner’s art, and Anthony Barone describes Adorno’s reports on Wagner’s *Parsifal* that it contained ‘continually strange newness’ and that its ‘force produces the virtue of a late style; a style that, according to Goethe’s dictum, withdraws from appearance’.⁵⁶ This idea of withdrawing from appearance paints the picture of the aging composer who slowly ceases activity within the public eye, much in the vein of Copland. However, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact musical aspects in this case. Barone reports that Werner Breig, the German musicologist, ‘claims that *Parsifal* was recapitulatory, stylistically homogeneous with the earlier works’.⁵⁷ Barone continues to explain that Wagner, in his letters to Cosima and others, was constantly speaking of how he had nothing new to say, and that he was repeating his earlier self from his composition of the *Ring Cycle*.⁵⁸ It is impossible to decipher whether this was Wagner’s true voice, or one which was attempting to build a persona. Carl Dahlhaus proceeded to claim *Parsifal* was ‘alienated’ and ‘ascribed this quality to its being a late work’.⁵⁹ Finally, the critic Carl de Cisenoy, ‘noted that in the work’s reception in France, alleged weaknesses were attributed to the physical

⁵⁵ Ibid., 264.

⁵⁶ Anthony Barone, ‘Richard Wagner’s *Parsifal* and the theory of late style’, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 7 (1995), 37.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 38.

infirmity of the aged Wagner'.⁶⁰ Whatever the case, it is striking not only that the opinions on Wagner's late work are so contradictory, but that they stem from the same sounds and musical characteristics. The sounds which communicate strange newness to one writer become stylistic homogeneity to another. In Copland's world, this is also the case, where many characteristics of *Night Thoughts* can be read both as setting the work apart from its earlier counterparts, and also as bringing it full circle by bringing new sounds to the earlier compositional voice.

Examples abound of how different composers are affected by self-acknowledgement of composing in their own late style, or of how critics and audiences respond to the changes in compositional style of an artist who is maturing. Robert Schumann, according to Leo Black, 'returned to the piano' in his late years 'for which he had written little since 1840'.⁶¹ Black discusses Schumann's late style through a character examination of the *Drei Fantasiestücke* Op. 111 (1851) and the *Gesänge der Frühe* Op. 133 (1853). Schumann's Op. 111 contains many of the same characteristics that are also found in his earlier *Drei Romanzen* Op. 28 of 1839.⁶² Black writes that 'in both, a stormy first movement and resolute finale frame a strongly contrasting, ultra-lyrical melody; the old Florestan-Eusebius duo could be back in business'.⁶³ Thus, it seems that for Schumann, the maturity which he reached in 1851 motivated him to look back on his younger self with changed ideas. One other aspect which Leo Black highlights in late Schumann is his emulation of Schubert, which also manifested in works of his younger days.⁶⁴ This fact 'is reflected in this second piece of Op. 111, whose rhythm and sequential pattern clearly allude to the slow movement of [Schubert's] *D Major*

⁶⁰ Ibid., 52.

⁶¹ Leo Black, "Eine ganz eigne Stimmung": Schumann's late piano music, and a new symposium', *The Musical Times*, 152 (2011), 57.

⁶² Ibid., 57.

⁶³ Ibid., 57.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 58.

Piano Sonata D 850.⁶⁵ It is noteworthy to see this shift in Schumann's late piano music not only because it is another aspect which comes full circle with his earlier compositional voice, but also that in his late years he alludes to one of the composers by which he was inspired.

Several of the composers discussed had gradual but lengthy transitions in compositional voice. However, Aleksandr Scriabin's late style contrasts with these subtle developments as his compositional voice was constantly changing, even in his early years. As a result, his late works have some of the starkest contrasts with earlier pieces despite his short life. Jay Reise, in his article discussing certain qualities of Scriabin's late works, relies mostly on the organisation of pitches to reinforce his theses.⁶⁶ However, one of his first main points is 'that the principal elements of Scriabin's later style have their sources in the earlier functionally tonal works'.⁶⁷ Once again it is possible to see that even though extreme changes in style may result from a composer's maturity, the end result still can be logically and linearly connected through the entire oeuvre. Reise's study highlights Scriabin's use of octatonic and whole-tone scales in order to derive pitch material in his late works.⁶⁸ He also points to the fact that notes which seem to be outliers from these underlying scales can be seen as 'chromatics', and that the technique for implementing them strongly relates to the techniques which Scriabin used in his tonal pieces.⁶⁹ Thus, it seems that for Scriabin, the late-style alterations were based on pitch foundations, but that the compositional technique remained consistent.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 58.

⁶⁶ Jay Reise, 'Late Scriabin: Some Principles behind the Style', *19th-Century Music*, 6 (1983), 220.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 220.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 221.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 220.

It is readily apparent through studies of works by composers in the years leading to their death that their styles undergo a change. It is impossible to know the exact motivations of these changes, or whether they are brought on by consciousness of impending demise or by natural alterations which have nothing to do with aging. In the case of Copland, his style was constantly evolving, from the jazz-inspired works of the 1920s to the austere works like the *Piano Variations* in 1930, to the popular works and ballets and those written in the serial technique. *Night Thoughts* ultimately can be thought of as an outlier, or as of a branch of the same tree from which others works germinated. However, what is necessary is understanding the oeuvre in which the work is placed in order to communicate the composer's conscious emotions to an audience. Because of the fact that the composer's life is one linear journey, it can be seen in all the examples mentioned that there are consistencies which manifest in all works of any composer.

The 1973 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition

Surprisingly, very little information exists on the events of the competition in 1973 for which *Night Thoughts* was commissioned. Vivian Perlis and Aaron Copland claim that three hundred entrants were to sight-read Copland's piece during the competition.⁷⁰ However, of the few reports that exist, it seems that these numbers may have been considerably exaggerated. In a review of the 1977 iteration of the competition in *The New York Times*, John Ardoin spoke of the number of applicants and competition logistics which in 1977 were apparently unprecedented. Ardoin writes that, 'contest officials were caught off-guard last spring when 197 pianists from Russia to Brazil, applied to compete'.⁷¹ Since in 1977 these numbers were much higher than expected and the logistics of the competition required their

⁷⁰ Copland and Perlis, *Copland Since 1943*, 262.

⁷¹ John Ardoin, 'Triumphs and Turmoil at the Cliburn Competition', *New York Times*, 9 October 1997.

reduction, officials were forced to quickly assemble a ‘screening panel’ which was aimed toward turning away potentially unworthy competitors.⁷² 104 of the 197 applicants were accepted to travel to Fort Worth to participate in the first round of the competition, and 76 finally decided to make the journey.⁷³ Thus, if these numbers were unprecedented in 1977, the competition following that in 1973, then certainly the claim of 300 participants is highly inaccurate, especially since the logistics were impossible and the number of pianists to actually travel to Fort Worth never matched that of the final number of accepted applicants. Furthermore, the commissioned pieces were only played by participants at the live rounds of the competition, and it was generally the rule that the scores for the commissions were mailed to the pianists in the months leading up to the competition, meaning that the claim that the competitors were to sight-read the work was also inaccurate.⁷⁴ It must also be noted that even though Copland did not consider the piece virtuosic, there were still many pianistic difficulties contained within the piece, including wide leaps, dissonant chords, quickly changing tempi, and many dynamic contrasts, among others. Even though the level of the participants in the 1973 competition was of some of the highest quality in the world, the act of having each competitor sight-read the work within the competition would not provide the most stimulating result for the audience. Based on the 1977 numbers, it might be estimated that as many as 50 competitors performed *Night Thoughts* in a period of about one month of preparation, a stark contrast from the reports given by Copland and Perlis.

Despite these apparent discrepancies, the Van Cliburn International Competition is nonetheless a prestigious and internationally-renowned spectacle of artistry, and certainly a statement of worth for any composer who was commissioned to write a piece for it. In 1977,

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Samuel Barber wrote his *Ballade* for the competition, and it was described as ‘vaporous’.⁷⁵

The level of prestige was partly due to the size of the prizes which the competition awarded to the winners, apparently ‘the largest purse ever offered by a competition’.⁷⁶ According to

Ardoin:

in addition to two medals and a certificate (everyone who reaches the semi-final level comes away with something), the Texas-size first prize consisted of \$10,000 in cash, Carnegie Hall debut, a two-year orchestral and recital tour of the United States (from the orchestras of Chicago, Cleveland and Philadelphia down to those of Austin and Wichita Falls), a recording option plus \$500 from RCA Victor, a London debut, a European tour, a Far-Eastern tour, a Brazilian tour, and \$2,500 and an appearance with the National University Symphony in Mexico.⁷⁷

Clearly the size and the number of prizes associated with winning the first prize of the Van Cliburn Competition would attract the finest young pianists from around the world. In fact, the first editions of the competition marked the first occasions in which leading young Russian pianists travelled to America in order to compete.⁷⁸ However, despite the attractive qualities of the prizes, many individuals including the jurors of the competition thought the opportunities were too taxing, or at the very least viewed them with scepticism.⁷⁹ The famous American piano pedagogue, Leon Fleisher, remarked that ‘the level of mediocrity was as high as ever’ despite the increased size of the prizes, and that ‘increasing the prize to include half the moon is not going to produce better talent’.⁸⁰ Others worried about the mental toll which the large number of concerts would have on the eventual winner. Lili Kraus mentioned that the jury, by awarding the prize, ‘could hurt as much as help’.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

However, despite the apprehension, Leonard Pennario felt that the 1973 winner, Vladimir Viardo, ‘was worthy of the prize’, and the workload ‘is not too much’ if it is won by an artist of his calibre.⁸² In the 1973 competition, Viardo was also the winner of the prize for the best performance of Copland’s work.⁸³ Unfortunately, however, Viardo was immediately refused travel permission and ‘detained behind the Iron Curtain for fourteen years’ after his victory.⁸⁴ Nearly 15 years later, when his freedom to travel was finally reinstated, he continued a successful career which included debuts and performances at major venues, including Carnegie Hall, the Concertgebouw, and the Lincoln and Kennedy Centers.⁸⁵ He later became a member of the faculty at the University of North Texas.⁸⁶ Other prize winners from the 1973 edition of the competition included Christian Zacharias, Michael James Houstoun, Alberto Reyes, Evgeni Koroliov, and Krassimir Ivanov Gatev.⁸⁷ Alberto Reyes, the fourth-prize winner from Uruguay, immediately made his American orchestral debut following the competition under the directorship of Copland himself.⁸⁸

The paucity of reports and reviews about the 1973 Van Cliburn Competition is remarkable, especially with regard to the performances of Copland’s *Night Thoughts* which would have been prevalent throughout the first round. Indeed, there is also no evidence that Copland was present in Fort Worth for any part of the competition, and given the lack of existing reports, it is very likely that he was not. Lastly, there is only one recording from the competition, a compilation of select performances from the first three prize-winners, and unfortunately

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ ‘Fourth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition’, <https://www.cliburn.org/?performer=1973-cliburn-competition-2> [accessed 27 April 2019]

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Night Thoughts is not one of the selected works.⁸⁹ However, despite a lack of information, it must be acknowledged that without the 1973 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, Copland's *Night Thoughts*, a late gem from the inimitable American composer, would not have come into existence.

Current Audio Recordings of *Night Thoughts*

It is not surprising that the number of commercial recordings of *Night Thoughts* is not high. Additionally, the recordings of the work all exist within larger compilations of Copland's music. Thus, it does not seem as though any one artist has singled out the composition as particularly intriguing, but instead has recorded the work as a necessity in terms of completing the compositional cycle of Copland's oeuvre. Nonetheless, it is possible to glean information from the recordings that exist by examining the performances and the backgrounds of the artists themselves.⁹⁰

David Northington, an American pianist, produced the second volume in his compact disc series of Copland's solo piano music in 2012, and *Night Thoughts* is contained in this release.⁹¹ Also on the disc are some of Copland's other small-scale pieces, including *Proclamation*, the only piano work to be finalised after *Night Thoughts*, even though sketches originate from earlier. *Midday Thoughts*, another late work, also makes its appearance on the album, directly following *Night Thoughts*. However, while the disc seems to give attention to several of Copland's late works, it also contains piano versions of *Rodeo* and *Our Town*, providing a balanced approach to Copland's oeuvre and a mix of styles. Northington's

⁸⁹ *The Fourth Van Cliburn Competition 1973, Retrospective Series, Vol. 7*. Christian Zacharias, Vladimir Viardo, Michael Houstoun. Compact disc. Video Artists International. B00000I7H6. 1999.

⁹⁰ In addition to the discussions of the three artists and their recordings, a table of complete records of current recordings of the work has been provided in Appendix 1.

⁹¹ Aaron Copland. *Complete Solo Piano Works, Vol. 2*. David Northington. Compact Disc. Centaur. CRC3240. December 2012.

performance of *Night Thoughts* is remarkably detailed and very precise. While he tends towards tempi which move slightly faster than Copland's written metronome markings, the momentum which this produces propels the listener from the beginning of the piece to the end in a very smooth way. It is possible to get the sense from Northington's performance that he views the piece as one large entity, without large pauses or exaggerations of breaks between contrasting sections. Thus, as a result, the listener receives the message that this is the 'mood music' which Neil Butterworth described.⁹² While the shaping or voicing do not become major factors in Northington's performance, the momentum which he produces delivers a very specific sound world to his listeners. Though it remains consistent through the entire work, it does not become tiresome because of the specificity of the atmosphere which he creates.⁹³

Leo Smit, an American composer and a close friend of Copland, also recorded a series of discs of Copland's piano music which was released in 1994, when he was seventy-three years old.⁹⁴ In this compact disc, *Night Thoughts* is placed at the very end of the entire compilation, providing a fitting conclusion. In addition, it follows some short, youthful and contrasting works such as *The Young Pioneers* and *Down a Country Lane*. Smit's performance is a perfect example of contrast to Northington's precision and exactness. First of all, Smit's recording of *Night Thoughts* lasts nearly a minute longer than Northington's, indicating not only tempi which closely approach Copland's metronome markings, but also

⁹² Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland*, 180.

⁹³ 'David Northington to Present Final Piano Concert Before Retiring', <https://news.utk.edu/2016/03/03/david-northington-present-final-piano-concert-retirinplaceg/> [accessed 29 April 2019] Northington, now retired, spent thirty-nine years on the faculty of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville in America. He was a major prize winner of international competitions, including the Gine Bachauer International Piano Competition in Utah, and he participated in the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 1966. He was also selected by the United States Information Agency to tour many cities in Europe as part of the Artistic Ambassador Program, a task similar to Copland's tours of South America for the United States Department of State.

⁹⁴ Aaron Copland, *Piano Music (Complete)*. Leo Smit. Compact Disc. Two Discs. Sony Classical. 074646634523. 1994.

more freedom in his use of delayed timing between phrases and section boundaries. As a result, the piece does in fact seem longer in Smit's execution in addition to simply lasting nearly a minute longer. However, Smit keeps the listener engaged by providing some delicate phrasing and shaping where needed, in addition to creating some moments of heightened suspension by changing dynamics and tone colours on certain harmonies, an approach quite different from Northington's performance. Leo Smit was a friend of Copland and highly respected his music. In a public letter to Copland, published in *Perspectives of New Music*, Smit praised Copland as a composer who even from his mid-twenties was giving 'new expression and direction to American music'.⁹⁵ He also made note of the many faces which Copland wore as a composer, describing him as many things including 'the pensive pianist', 'the ebullient dancer', 'the combustible conductor', and the 'mountain pioneer', among many others.⁹⁶ Lastly, Smit's detailed accounts of Copland's character describe him as having the 'inner strength of aloneness'.⁹⁷ While he contrasts this with 'the narcissism of loneliness', he describes Copland as a man who lived alone even though he was often in the company of others, though the comfort he found in being alone spoke to his mental fortitude as he pursued his art.⁹⁸

While Northington and Smit both recorded *Night Thoughts* as part of collections of Copland's entire output for solo piano, Charles Fierro places extra musical significance on the work by including it on an album which is not comprehensive.⁹⁹ *Night Thoughts* is placed third on the album following the opening *Piano Fantasy* and *Passacaglia*, and preceding the *Piano Variations*. As a result, within the overall narrative it provides a slight

⁹⁵ Leo Smit, 'To Aaron Copland', *Perspectives of New Music*, 29 (1981), 66.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 66.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 66.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 66.

⁹⁹ Aaron Copland, *Piano Fantasy, Piano Variations, Passacaglia, Night Thoughts*. Charles Fierro. Compact Disc. Delos. DE1013. 1987.

respite from the intensity of the two massive works which open and close the album. Fierro's rendition is the fastest in tempo of the three versions mentioned, which is surprising given that 'the recording was made under the auspices of the composer'.¹⁰⁰ Fierro tends to blend performance strategies of the previous artists mentioned in that there is an uncompromising sense of forward motion throughout the whole piece, but it is also balanced with a strong sense of shape in each section. The opening of Fierro's rendition is also particularly captivating, as it creates a large difference in tone colour between the opening diatonic harmonies and the first dissonance.

It is possible to garner from these performances of *Night Thoughts* just how different approaches to Copland's music can be. From the detailed and uncompromising rendition by Northington to the almost overly free but highly shaped and nuanced version by Smit, the piece contains certain ambiguities which can be explored and communicated in different ways. The majority of the time these ambiguities stem from lack of information on Copland's part, and it is the goal of the following performative analysis to not only examine these problems, but to guide future performers towards a strategy of overcoming them in a way which communicates the underlying emotions of the work to listeners. While the piece naturally creates a serene atmosphere, especially in the beginning and the end, the tranquillity is interspersed with outbursts of coloured dissonance, and the performer must decide and communicate the role of this harmonic development. This, in turn, means making decisions

¹⁰⁰ Charles Fierro, 'Biography', <charlesfierro.blogspot.com> [accessed 4 May 2019] Fierro currently lives in California and serves on the faculty of the California State University Northridge, which he joined after receiving his doctorate from the University of Southern California. He has several connections with Copland in that he has performed at the Palace at Fontainebleau where Copland spent his first years abroad studying with Nadia Boulanger, and he performed at the Ojai Festival, where Copland also served as resident composer. Lastly, he has also proved to be a dedicated supporter and communicator of Hindemith's music, Copland's faculty colleague at the Tanglewood Music Center.

regarding phrasing, shaping, timing, voicing, and tempo, among other things, which is exactly the approach which the performance analysis follows.

Chapter 3: The Performative Analysis

A performance analysis of Aaron Copland's *Night Thoughts* for solo piano necessitates a discussion of the definition of this type of analysis as well as its purpose. While there are many styles and strategies for executing a performance analysis, the following work will illuminate Copland's score for anyone interested in performing the work and realising it to its full musical potential. The combination of the score and this project ideally will lead to performances of the work which take more significant advantage of Copland's markings, phrasing, textures, and also highlight possibilities for timing as well as the use of various dynamic colours, among other things. This analysis intends to open performers' minds to ways of thinking about this music which makes its interpretation less of an overwhelming task. Listeners will also hear the work with a more fine-tuned understanding of its possibilities, especially with regard to its emotional content. Jeffrey Swinkin remarks that analysis is 'not primarily about stating a neutral or objective fact about a piece', but rather that it is 'about detecting and expressing the physical or emotional quality that most analytical assertions embody or connote'.¹ It is precisely this emotional connection and its transmission to the audience which the analysis considers most valuable.

The subtitle of Copland's *Night Thoughts*, 'Homage to Ives', necessitates an exploration of the relationship of this piece with Ives's music. The level of ambiguity inherent in *Night Thoughts* connects with the significant degree to which the idea of ambiguity plays a role in Ives's creative output. Thus it is only fitting that an 'Homage to Ives' embraces this lack of clarity of meaning. While this ambiguity can never be fully explained, the following analysis

¹ Jeffrey Swinkin, *Performative Analysis: Reimagining Music Theory for Performance* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2016), 7.

works to limit it to the extent that the performers themselves are not confused, but able to embrace certain ideas to deliver a performance of *Night Thoughts* full of musical intent.

A general interpretive approach to Copland's music must also be investigated. While Copland's compositional style often lends itself to jagged and thorny writing, especially in his piano music, the investigations presented here will approach the music from the standpoint that it lends itself to natural shaping, phrasing, voicing, and colouration, much like the majority of piano music written in the centuries preceding Copland's output. Copland's music can often be performed in a harsh and strident way following close study of his scores. However, while this music contains pointillistic aspects and phrases with sharp edges, the music is rooted in melodic and harmonic foundations which demand from the performer the same attentiveness to phrasing and shaping that would be given to pieces by Mozart or Beethoven, for example. As a result, there are passages where small variations in sound will be suggested that are not necessarily notated in the score, but are meant to show phrases and section boundaries as part of this overall approach.

In a general sense the subtitle 'Homage to Ives' may give a misleading impression upon first hearing of Copland's *Night Thoughts*. While there are certain specific parallels which can be drawn between Copland's work and certain passages in Ives's oeuvre, the message portrayed in *Night Thoughts* is that of a distinctly Coplandesque voice not impacted by any other composer. A small number of lines can be drawn connecting moments in Copland's work possibly under Ives's influence, but the overwhelming majority of the inspiration for Copland's material comes from his own work. Passages from the *Piano Fantasy*, the *Piano Variations*, the *Passacaglia*, and even the *Piano Sonata* all make appearances in *Night*

Thoughts. As a result, the suggestions regarding phrasing and shaping can provide clues and act as examples for the performances of Copland's other works as well.

It is apparent from looking at the score of *Night Thoughts* that, even though it was commissioned by the Cliburn Foundation for the 1973 edition of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, the piece would not satisfy the usual expectations for what might be considered a test piece. The tempo remains slow and broad throughout, and aside from some leaps in both hands on the third page of the score, there are no obvious major technical difficulties to overcome. The virtuosity required in *Night Thoughts* is of a nature grounded in shaping, voicing, and textural aspects. There is no doubt this was a deliberate decision on Copland's part.

The attentiveness required to shaping, voicing and textures is apparent in the opening bars of *Night Thoughts*. Copland's use of three staves already demonstrates the multiple layers which he implements, in addition to the fact that he envisions the piece orchestrally with several different colours and ideas of sound. The presence of repeated minims and semibreves in the opening bars suggests stasis and tranquillity, but a gradual yet very slight increase in the intensity of the sound is required to keep the momentum of the opening moving forward (Example 1, CD Track 1). The performer can strictly observe the fact that Copland does not indicate any dragging in the opening bars, especially given his specificity of this type of indication in other instances.

Example 1: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 1-7

Slow ♩ = circa 72

Depress pedal after each tone (or chord) is struck (first 7 measures)

The beginning of the piece contains single notes and chords which are repeated either two or three times. It soon becomes apparent that this pattern continues unceasingly, with the further addition of a fourth repetition as the piece develops. It is especially the three- and four-note repetitions which highlight the shape of Beethoven's 'fate motif' which Ives so rigorously employs, especially in his Piano Sonata No. 2, 'Concord, Massachusetts'. This connection with the 'fate motif' is purely theoretical, and not aurally noticeable in any way. Nevertheless, the following chord which changes each harmony in the opening bars can act as the goal of each small section of the opening phrase. The repeated chords in bars 2 and 3 can be phrased as moving towards the first chord in bar 4, completing the motif and beginning again with momentum moving from the beginning of bar 4 to the downbeat of bar 6. The repeated two minim Gs in the first bar along with the fundamental G major harmony

contained in the second and third bars leads to the chord on the downbeat of bar 4 with its E-flat and B-flat bell-like sonority.

The opening of *Night Thoughts* also introduces Copland's audience to the intervallic material which will continue throughout the piece. The single pitches stated in the first bar quickly develop into two pairs of major 3rds and perfect 5ths, intervals which repeatedly appear in most bars. From the outset the performer must expertly voice these intervals against one another as Copland makes clear from his writing on different staves that they must have differing sounds even though they are located in the same register. Nondescript voicing in the second and third bars can turn the sonority into a generic-sounding G major chord with an added A when Copland intends to balance the 5th against the 3rd, possibly imitating two different sections of an orchestra. Copland's orchestral thinking in this score is immediately noticeable and to bring this state of mind to its clearest realisation the performer can balance the 5th slightly above the 3rd and also balance the A above the D of the 5th whereas the voicing of the 3rd can be relatively flat in comparison. This will differentiate the 5th from the 3rd in terms of dynamic level but also give it a slight accent which will foreshadow the addition of the E-flat and B-flat 5th in bar four. Without this carefully-planned voicing it becomes increasingly difficult for listeners to differentiate the intervals for themselves, especially as the piece develops, and it is possible to lose sense of the value of each interval and instead hear masses of dissonant chords. To further this idea it is then possible to voice the added 5th in bar four above the chord in the top stave to highlight the fact that Copland has widened the range of the register as well as the addition of new pitch material. This voicing pattern continues as the piece moves to bars 6 and 7 where another 5th is added, now F-sharp and C-sharp. Copland's dynamic markings reflect this expansion as the *subito forte* located on the downbeat of bar 4 intensifies to a *fortissimo* in bar 6 which sustains to the end

of bar 7. In bar 4 the addition of the *sforzando* ninth on beat 2, the first notes iterated in the bass register, further complicates the overall texture. With this dyad Copland introduces his listeners to the interval of the 9th, and its counterpart the 2nd, which in addition to the 3rd and the 5th will generate the majority of the sonorities in the rest of the piece. The 9th in bar 4 can be voiced with a significant portion of the sound on the bass C-sharp. This will highlight not only the dramatic register leap but more importantly foreshadow the bass movement from C-sharp down to F-sharp in bar 6. This in turn sheds light on Copland's use of the 5th linearly as well as vertically, and also mirrors the movement of the treble 5ths moving higher in the register in bar 6 by the interval of a 3rd. In addition, as the F-sharp and G 9th has two iterations in both bars 6 and 7 as opposed to the one iteration of the C-sharp and D 9th in bar 4, the F-sharp and G 9th in bar 7 can intensify in sound. This not only demonstrates the power of the added second chord but shows its rhythmic displacement being delayed by the value of a quaver, a pattern which Copland also continues to develop. The extreme specificity of voicing required to differentiate certain intervals from the overall texture can be noticed, and it only becomes more demanding as the piece progresses. However, the skill with which Copland employs these intervals to their fullest effects justifies this attention.

Copland's detailed use of *tenuto*, accent, and *marcato* markings in the first phrase provides clues to the performer about phrasing and intensity levels as well as providing a basis for how these markings can be interpreted as the piece develops. The tenuto markings in the first three bars indicate an increased concentration of sound within the piano dynamic, while Copland employs accents on the *subito forte* which occurs in bar 4. Marcato markings identify an even further amplification when the dynamic level changes to *fortissimo* in bar 6. Thus, while exceptions to the rule will always exist, the performer can garner from these

developments that *marcato* markings denote Copland's most intense form of sound modification.

Copland also instructs the performer to depress the pedal specifically after each chord or note is struck for the first seven bars. This seems to confirm Copland's thinking in terms of orchestral timbres and colours. With the exception of a very small number of percussion instruments, the piano is the only instrument which can increase its resonance level before playing a note by depressing the pedal as a preparation. Copland's marking deprives the performer of the use of this technological advantage, and thus imitates players of other instruments in the orchestra who are only able to create vibrations through the employment of friction or their own air flow.

Several changes in the eighth bar signify the end of the first seven bars as the end of the first phrase. The introduction of a 3/4 time signature contrasting the 4/4 of the opening, the first drop of the overall dynamic level in the piece from *fortissimo* down to *forte*, a change in the way in which Copland uses the registers of the piano, and the introduction of different chord voicings are all pieces of evidence towards this end (Example 2, CD Track 2). Thus it is necessary to take note of the phrase shape of the first seven bars as one which begins softly and intensifies through to its completion. The marking of *forte* in the beginning of bar 8 must signify the beginning of a new force of momentum for the next phrase.

Example 2: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 6-14

The second phrase continues in the seven-bar format introduced by the first phrase.

However, the performer is required to deliver a different contouring of the phrase to reflect Copland's new dynamic planning. While only a *forte* marking is given at the beginning of bar 8 without any other clues as to the shaping of this second phrase, the fact that the end of the phrase leads to a new tempo marking and phrase length signifies an intensification leading to an arrival point in bar 15. Also of note is Copland's consistency of the subdivisions of the seven-bar phrase. In the first phrase the first three bars lead to bar 4 where the bass voice is introduced and the harmonic complexity is increased, creating a division of the seven-bar phrase into a first part of three bars and a second part of four bars. The second part of four bars can also be divided into two groups of two bars as the harmony changes and remains consistent through each two-bar unit. In the second phrase, the first three bars contain a similar register displacement while the four bars which follow diverge

from the pattern. While the harmonies in the four-bar unit change in every bar unlike the corresponding part in the first phrase, the meter groupings allow these four bars in the second phrase to be divided in two, each coupling containing a 2/4 bar and a 3/4 bar. Copland's continual shortening of the meter in the second phrase also signifies an intensification of the sound to bar 15 with the 2/4 bars playing a particularly important role in the forward movement. As a result, even though the first phrase gains considerable momentum moving to bar 8, the second phrase develops in a way in which that momentum is even further increased into the first tempo change of the piece.

The first three bars of the second phrase each follow the same pattern of rhythm and placement of notes within the register of the piano. Thus each individual bar can be shaped accordingly and the three bars together can be treated as a single unit. Copland's instruction to play the lower note of the right hand chords first if the performer is unable to span the tenths signifies the importance of the upper notes of the chord, especially since in two of the instances these upper notes create the interval of a 3rd. As a result, these chords can be voiced towards the upper notes while also giving the interval of a 3rd extra weight. The chords struck with the left hand in the middle register can also be voiced towards the upper notes which will highlight the clash of the interval of the 2nd. However, in bar 9, the bottom interval of the left hand chord is a perfect 5th which can be given extra intensity as this does not exist in bars 8 or 10. Interestingly, this perfect 5th coincides with the only iteration of the right hand chords which does not contain a 3rd in its upper voices. Thus it is possible to see how 3rds and 5ths continue to reveal themselves from within the overall texture.

The highest notes in the register in bars 8, 9 and 10 have *marcato* indications which suggest they can be isolated from the downbeat harmony with added intensity of sound. However,

the further delay of the bass note determines the apex of the shape of each bar as it creates the largest span, even though it is contrary to the pattern of comparison between accent and *marcato* markings. This contradiction is also continued in bars 11-14 as the first two bars of this four-bar section culminate with *marcati* with the second grouping containing accents. However, the intensity of the added 5th harmony in the long notes of these bars coupled with the shortening of the meter trumps the inconsistency of accent markings. Also in bar 13 Copland provides the performer with an accented crotchet, the shortest accented note to that point, and a clear indication of rhythmic intensification. With the removal of the bass notes in the lower register in bar 11 it is impossible for the same level of intensity of sound to remain. The introduction of arpeggiation also mediates the density of the sound over a wider area. This causes a natural diminuendo which sets the following four bars up perfectly for a crescendo leading to the tempo change at bar 15. A lack of dynamic indications combined with the natural reactions of the music creates opportunities for this type of expression.

The *mezzo forte* in bar 15 becomes a sudden dynamic decrease after the gradual intensification of the previous four bars. Thus begins a five-bar phrase in a slightly slower tempo leading to a new tempo change in bar 20. Copland returns to *tenuto* markings and also lengthens the meter even more than at the opening. These factors contribute to a relaxation of the overall strength of sound and a decrease in the movement of the forward momentum. However, Copland's repeated use of the three-note motif means this momentum is not lost entirely (Example 3, CD Track 3). This three-note motif is also a diminution of the opening rhythmic motif, further connected by the fact that the first two notes repeat the same sonority as in the opening bars.

Example 3: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 15-19

The shaping of each bar to the third and longest chord will highlight this fact along with the increased amount of voicing toward the upper notes which can occur as each third chord stretches the register span. Copland's alteration of upper notes in the chords in bars 15 to 19 creating 3rds and 5ths also provides intervallic manipulations which the performer can elicit from the score. The repeated 2nds and 3rds in the lower voices of the chords can also be voiced slightly under the upper 3rds and 5ths to produce a lush sonority in keeping with the minimised overall intensity level in this phrase. Lastly, the appearance of two indications of *poco rit* furthers this minimisation and a performer who cautiously observes the first while becoming more indulgent on the second will bring Copland's markings to fruition while keeping the five-bar phrase unit intact.

The fourth phrase differentiates itself from the previous three as the most rhythmically regular. The first four bars of this five-bar phrase contain only notes struck on beats one and three, making the notions of shaping and momentum difficult to place. However, the climactic fifth bar, with its *fortissimo* dynamic marking, syncopations, added fifth beat to the meter, and chromatic chord voicings, provides a goal for which to aim. The sound world of the first four bars of the fifth phrase is markedly different from before, and contains the first chords where Copland marks a different dynamic between the two hands (Example 4, CD Track 4).

Example 4: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 20-24

Somewhat faster ($\text{♩} = 84$)
(r.h. sharp and clear, bell-like)

(f)
(l.h. foggy and distant)
(p) *ped.* * *ped.* * *ped. sim.*

ff sfz sfz sfz

Each bar can be shaped towards the second chord on beat three which reaches higher into the register, while the four bars together can be grouped as a unit which intensifies towards the fifth bar of the phrase. As the first four bars progress and Copland continues to add voices to the *marcato* bell-like tones of the right hand chords, the voicing can lean even further towards the upper register as a signal of the fifth bar in which the left hand leaps up nearly an octave. The fifth bar also ceases to contain a dynamic difference between the two hands, and this can be highlighted through more evenly-spread voicing throughout the chords. The clash of the B and C minor 2nd in the left hand can be given extra weight for added effect. Lastly, the pedalling in the fifth bar can leave spacing for the breath marks which Copland utilises, whereas the pedal in the first four bars can continue through to each approaching chord, creating a smoother sound and further contrasting with the fifth bar.

The piece makes its first return to previous material in the next three bars. Bar 25 marks the beginning of a repeat of bars 17-19 transposed down a 5th and slightly rhythmically altered.

Bar 25 also adds an extra bassline a 5th below the already transposed chords (Example 5, CD Track 5).

Example 5: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 24-27

Copland's indication of *as before* but with a slightly hastier metronome marking suggests a minimal intensification. However, care must be taken to show the relaxation of momentum and tension from the climactic bar 24. Also of note is Copland's re-barring of the last two bars of the phrase from their earlier counterpart. This sets up the syncopation of the last chord of the phrase and the breath mark which can be executed with an earlier release of the pedal as in bar 24. It is possible to see how aspects of certain phrases invade others and spawn their development. The *piano* dynamic marking on the last chord of the phrase in bar 27 also marks a difference from the counterpart phrase stated earlier, and also signals Copland's negation of the intuitive phrasing leading to the last chord of the phrase.

Bar 28 introduces a new texture with the most sparing use of notes in the piece with the exception of the first few bars. It is also the first six-bar phrase, and the beginning of a succession of three six-bar phrases leading to the first iteration of distinctly melodic material in bar 40 (Example 6, CD Track 6). While the meter in the six-bar phrase starting in bar 28 is consistent throughout, the rhythmic displacement of the soprano voice keeps the listener from being able to identify with certainty this regularity.

Example 6: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 28-33

The musical score shows six bars of music. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melody with slurs over pairs of notes in each bar. Above the staff, the instruction "press forward" is written with a dashed line extending across the bars. The left hand (bass clef) provides a steady accompaniment with a "ped. sim." instruction. Dynamics include "(sense of weight) mp" in the first bar and "poco cresc." in the fourth bar. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 72.

Copland's instruction to keep the pedal depressed throughout the bar creates a delayed harmony as the soprano voice stretches upwards either a 5th or a 6th. Also, his indication to play with a sense of weight reads contrary to the repeated two-note slurs. While the natural inclination of the pianist to lean on the first note and make a diminuendo to the second can be entertained, care should be taken not to exaggerate this gesture. Instead, the two-note slurs can be executed in an even fashion which will add weight to the phrase, and each slur can be intensified slightly as the phrase continues. Copland's first instruction in the piece for a pressing forward along with a *poco crescendo* add to this intensification leading to the next six-bar phrase in bar 34.

At bar 34 the meter changes to 6/8 but retains its regularity. In addition, the rhythm becomes more monotonous and the triadic harmonies seem to shape in accordance with the lilting and repetitive rhythm within the meter. Bar 34 marks the first clear indication of triadic harmony since bars 2 and 3, and thus the voicing can reflect this fact by giving less weight to the very top voice and a denser approach to the three notes with a slight accent on the bottom. In the left hand sufficient weight can be delivered to the bass notes, the first two of which must last two bars each. However, the middle voice of the left hand can be given additional accentuation in order to highlight its counterpoint with the lower line of the right hand. The regularity of the rhythm, the reintroduction of triadic harmony, and the implementation of counterpoint all lead to the first recognisable melody of the piece in bar 40. The pianist can

highlight this with increased intensity and accentuation in the left hand when the last two bars leave the polytonality of the first four bars of the phrase and rely almost entirely on triads with doubled bass voices (Example 7, CD Track 7).

Example 7: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 34-39

The musical score for Example 7 shows a piano piece in 3/4 time, marked 'Slower (♩ = 54)'. The right hand plays a melody with a 'mark lower line' instruction and a 'hold back' instruction. The left hand plays a bass line with 'ped.' and 'ped. sim.' markings. The score ends with a 'dim.' marking.

As Copland introduces the first recognisable melody of the piece, he suppresses the tempo to the slowest to this point. This gives the performer the opportunity to take full advantage of shaping of the melody in maximum space. The melody beginning in bar 40 is constructed from 3-note segments, some containing *tenuto* markings on the third note (Example 8, CD Track 8).

Example 8: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 40-45

The musical score for Example 8 shows a piano piece in 3/4 time, marked 'Slower still (♩ = 126)'. The right hand plays a melody with a 'mp simply sung' instruction. The left hand plays a bass line with 'p' and 'ped. sim.' markings. The score ends with a 'ped. sim.' marking.

The performer can phrase with slight crescendos leading to the *tenuto* notes, and diminuendo to the ends of the small phrases when no *tenuto* markings are present. The exception to this is bar 43 where Copland does not provide a *tenuto* on the second D in the right hand, but the

crescendo can keep moving through the bar in order to more strongly lead to the *tenuto* G in bar 44. Both of the two-bar phrases, bars 41-42 and bars 43-44, contain essentially the same melody with the final G displaced by its octave above. The first of these two-bar phrases can diminuendo while the second crescendos toward the higher G. This not only shows the slight difference between the two units, but also allows the second two-bar phrase to lead to bar 45 where the melody introduces a new shape and note material. Even though the *tenuto* marking on the first melody note of bar 45 suggests a diminuendo, a crescendo here instead leads the phrase towards its repetition in the following phrase. The bottom As in the left-hand chords can be voiced over the other notes in order to highlight Copland's first use of a pedal point. As the melodic material becomes more complex, the harmony and bass line movement becomes static. Even though Copland employs minimal instruction in terms of dynamic markings, these shaping and voicing ideas aim to fully take advantage of the change of texture.

In bar 46, Copland heightens the tension between melody and harmonic underpinning by spreading the two different parts over wider spans of register (Example 9, CD Track 9). While the melodic contour is generally similar to that of the previous phrase, the *mezzo piano* and *poco a poco crescendo* markings also indicate the presence of heightened intensity over a longer phrase period. The first four bars of this second large melodic phrase match bars 41-44 exactly in terms of melodic contour, but Copland adds a second *tenuto* marking to the first of the two repeated Fs. Even though this second *tenuto* marking is added, the performer should maintain the same shaping as before but with added pressure. This second *tenuto* also heightens the overall tension of the phrase and aids it in leading towards the loudest and most forcefully played section of the piece. The chords in the bass and central staves can be

voiced as in the previous phrase showing Copland's continued use of the pedal point, now a 6th lower.

Example 9: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 46-54

The melody in three octaves can be voiced towards the outer reaches, demonstrating the orchestral nature of the writing and taking full advantage of the wide register displacement. Bar 50 inverts the last bar of the previous phrase and extends it a bar which allows the crescendo to develop further. These two bars can be phrased as one crescendo which leads to the last three bars of the phrase, bars 52-54. These three bars are an extension of bar 40 which are switched to the end of the phrase and instead of acting as an introductory bar form

the final gateway to the climax which intensifies exponentially. Copland's use of the 3/8 meter in bar 54 further intensifies the lead to the climax, and correspondingly this bar can contain the most extreme crescendo the performer can muster. The change of harmony also indicates this amplification and the performer can voice the clash of the 2nd on the lower two voices of the chord to magnify the crescendo and signify the transition to a new section and a dramatic change from the repeating pattern of two alternating harmonies from the previous bars.

Bar 55 marks the climax of the piece and highlights the interval of the 5th to maximum effect for the entire four-bar phrase (Example 10, CD Track 10). The C pedal point which had continued for the previous nine bars leads down a 5th to the bass note F. The left hand chord, spanning a 9th in this bar, should be voiced toward the F to show this 5th descent, and this note should arguably be the most forcefully played within the entire piece.

Example 10: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 55-58

The image shows a musical score for four measures of music. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The time signature is 3/8. The music is marked 'con tutta forza'. The top staff contains a series of notes with accents and tenuto markings. The bottom staff contains a series of notes with accents and tenuto markings. There are asterisks under the bottom staff in the second and fourth measures. The score is annotated with fingerings (I-IV) and accents (v) throughout.

The top voice in this climactic phrase is also constructed from 5ths and can be performed with less of a sense of phrasing than any of the previous sections. The combination of accents with *tenuto* markings on all notes suggests each note be played equally heavily and sharply, with effort from the performer on the part of not losing any intensity at any point.

The inner voices which clash with 2nd intervals can also be played as heavily as possible, creating the impression of incredibly thick chord voicing. While the top voice can peak slightly above the inner notes of the chords in order to show the leaping 5ths, this can be done in a very subtle way so as to differentiate the voicing of this phrase. The grace notes in the third and fourth bars of the phrase can be played as rapidly and virtuosically as possible, shaping in dramatic fashion towards the note they decorate. As can be seen, this four-bar phrase is set far apart from any other in the entire piece. Extreme care should be taken to observe Copland's marking for playing *con tutta forza*, and the voicing and shaping should reflect this marking accordingly.

Even though the next phrase begins with a *fortissimo* dynamic marking, it can still elicit a sense of easing away from the percussive climax. Copland's metronome marking gives this section a flowing quality which aids relaxation in addition to his reinstatement of slurs which group each bar (Example 11, CD Track 11). While the entire phrase lasts seven bars, the harmonic progressions along with the melodic writing divide the seven bars into two groups of two bars followed by three individual bars. The structure of this phrase also aids in a continued loss of intensity, and this effect is confirmed by Copland's marking of *meno forte* coinciding with the beginning of the three isolated bars at the end of the phrase.

Example 11: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 55-65

The musical score consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system covers bars 55-60, starting with a tempo marking of quarter note = 66 and a dynamic of *ff* (fortissimo). The music is marked 'eloquently' and features slurs over each bar. The second system covers bars 61-65, marked 'meno f' (mezzo-forte) and 'poco rit. e dim.' (poco ritardando and diminuendo). The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

The slurs which begin and end with each barline suggest phrasing each bar individually towards the third beat coinciding with the harmonic change. While the essence of Copland's instruction to play the passage eloquently is difficult to determine, it may provide clues to not allow the shaping of each bar to start overly soft or taper in the extreme. This will heighten the clarity and embrace an eloquence in the form of a clear dictation of each slur. However, the performer can be attentive not to execute this phrasing in exactly the same manner in each bar. The phrasing in the second bar can direct more energy to the third beat than in the first bar in order to show the first two-bar section. In contrast, the third bar of the phrase can shape more drastically to the third beat than the fourth bar in order to demonstrate the octave displacement of the G-flat melodic note, as well as the added bass note a 4th below the original harmony introduced in the first two bars. The bass notes of the left hand chords can all be voiced above the upper notes in order to show the chromatic motion in the first four bars along with the stasis of the last three bars. The last three bars of the phrase can be contoured with decreasing intensity and observe the *poco ritardando* and *diminuendo*, leading to the next phrase which continues this period of relaxation and ultimately culminates

in a recapitulation of the opening in bar 78. This section of decreasing intensity combines to form nineteen bars, a significant portion of the piece, and this trajectory should be taken into account in terms of dynamic planning from bar 59.

Bar 66 marks the beginning of the next phrase and continues this period of unwinding intensity for a full eight bars (Example 12, CD Track 12). Copland's extension of the meter by two beats creates one of the longest phrases in the piece even though the tempo increase promotes a more flowing nature.

Example 12: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 66-73

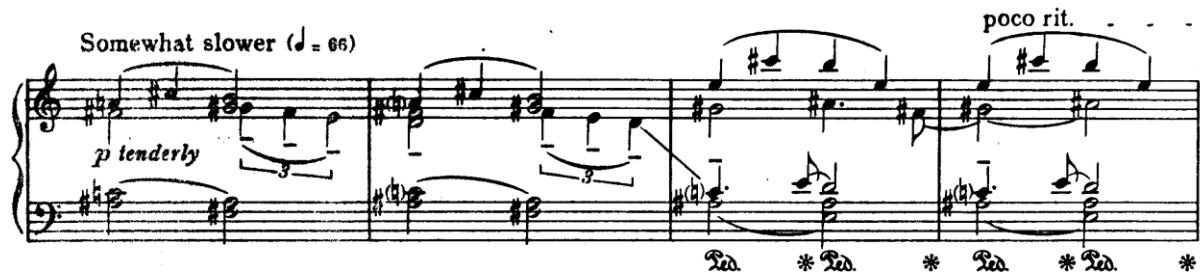
The musical score for Example 12, Copland's *Night Thoughts*, bars 66-73, is presented in two systems. The first system covers bars 66-70, and the second system covers bars 71-73. The tempo is marked as $(\text{♩} = 84)$. The right-hand part (r.h.) is marked "firmly sang" and "molto espress. mf". The left-hand part (l.h.) is marked "mp". The score shows a sequence of chords and melodic lines across eight bars, with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

The harmonic stasis also increases this feeling of phrase length as the bottom two voices circle around a B-flat and F 5th for the entire phrase. The fifth and sixth bars invert the 5th so the F is in the bass, but the harmony essentially remains consistent. As a result, in keeping with the previous phrase the left hand can emphasise the bass line in order to show the

circling around B-Flat in the first four bars and the descent to the F in the fifth bar. The top two voices mirror this circling, while the third and fourth bars reiterate exactly the notes introduced in the first two bars but with an added soprano and alto decoration. The fifth and sixth bars further this idea with an extension of the alto decoration and added notes in the tenor. The soprano decorations in the fifth and sixth bars are raised a 3rd from the third and fourth bars and can be played with an according heightened intensity. Also, the added notes in the soprano in the fourth bar are transferred to the alto voice in the sixth bar, extending the alto fragment in the third bar into a more fully fledged melodic line. Nearly all of the slurred material in this phrase is comprised of three-note fragments which can all be shaped to the middle note, with the third note acting as a resolution. The only exceptions to this are the alto decorations in the third and fifth bars where the first of these can taper the sound throughout all three notes, and the second can keep the intensity through the motif in order to contrast and show the extension into the sixth bar and also the connection with the transfer of the decoration from the soprano voice. The sense of stasis created from repeated resolutions occurring in every single bar also hones the listener's ear towards hearing B-flat as the central note, and thus announcing the recapitulation of the opening in bar 78. The repeated use of three-note slurs also clearly signals an imminent return to the opening material. The seventh and eighth bars of the phrase act as an extension of the main six bars, and can accordingly be played with decreased melodic intention. While the tenor and bass voices remain, the top two voices have been stripped of the material with which they began the phrase, and are left with an outline of the melodic contour of the previous phrase. This fact can be reflected through a flatter representation of the melodic lines, a move away from Copland's instruction to sing firmly in the beginning of the phrase.

Bars 74-77 provide the last link from the climax of the work through to the recapitulation of the opening material. Curiously, they strikingly depart from the harmonic grounding in B-flat, but the uncertainty which they create can be embraced by the performer by not overly accentuating the bass notes. The second bar of each two-bar unit within this four-bar phrase is an almost exact repetition of the first bar, a fact which can be represented by playing the second bar slightly softer (Example 13, CD Track 13). This will also provide a further diminuendo in bar 77 leading to the recapitulation.

Example 13: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 74-77



Three-note motifs continue in the first two bars of the phrase and can be shaped as before, thereby extending the continued resolutions in each bar. Care can also be taken to slightly highlight the soprano voice in the first two bars and the alto voice in the second group. The resolution of the soprano voice to a B connects with the alto resolution to an enharmonic B-flat in the exact register of the recapitulation. As in the end of the previous phrase, if the melodic lines are played in an understated way the character of the phrase will lead perfectly to the static and atmospheric quality of the recapitulation.

The recapitulation in bar 78 strengthens the idea of tranquillity introduced in the opening of the piece. The raising of the fundamental harmony up a 3rd from G major to B-flat major suggests a search for a new harmonic colour, and the performer can respond to this with a

clearer voicing of the upper register of the chords as opposed to the voicing of the opening bars (Example 14, CD Track 14). In addition, while the first bars of the recapitulation develop from single notes to harmonies in the same manner as the beginning of the piece, the pure B-flat major harmony of the recapitulation differs from the opening where Copland employs the D and A 5th juxtaposed against the G and B 3rd.

Example 14: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 78-82

The musical score for Example 14, Copland's *Night Thoughts*, bars 78-82, is presented in a grand staff. The tempo is marked 'As at first' with a quarter note equal to 72 (♩ = 72). The piece begins in bar 78 with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The upper register of the chords is clearly voiced. The score shows a crescendo leading to a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic in bar 82. The lower register of the chords is also clearly voiced. The score is marked 'As at first' and 'ff (as at first)'. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano (*p*) dynamic in bar 78, followed by a crescendo leading to a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic in bar 82. The upper register of the chords is clearly voiced.

A more grounded harmony might suggest a more static character and less of a feeling of moving through bars 79 and 80, but Copland responds with a *crescendo* marking which demonstrates that this is not the case. The presence of *crescendos* on the second and third iteration during these groups of three in bars 80 and 82 suggests an even more intense movement leading to the following material. It is important for the performer to pay close attention to these *crescendos* not only because they do not exist in the opening of the piece, but also because they cause the dynamic level to blossom more rapidly. This quickly leads to a violent climax in bar 83 which begins to set up the harmonic foundation for the remainder of the piece. It is also important for the performer to execute the *crescendo* more intensely in these bars because the bass 9ths of the opening are absent in the recapitulation. Copland's use of 3/4 bars instead of a steady stream of 4/4 bars helps the three-chord groups lead to the following material, but it is still up to the performer to voice the chords to the upper register as the *crescendos* continue.

The phrase which lasts from bar 82-88 comprises of three groups which each repeat two different harmonies, the first lasting three bars, and the second and third lasting two bars (Example 15, CD Track 15). This phrase links with the very last phrase of the piece, and thus it is Copland's way of seamlessly introducing the concluding material.

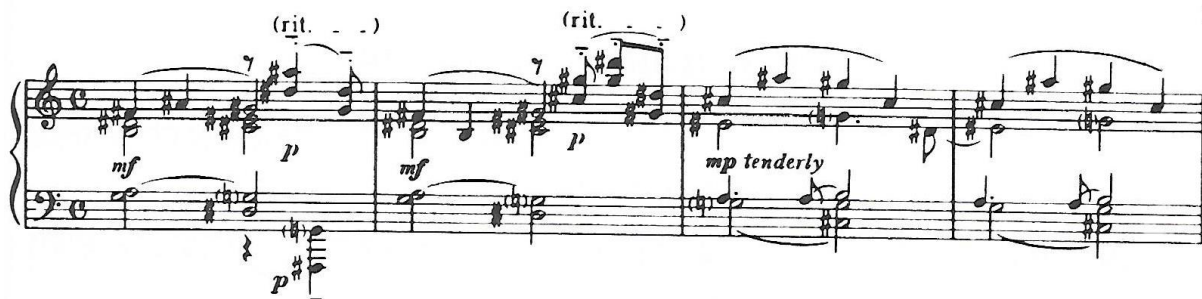
Example 15: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 78-88

While the harmonies are the primary functions at work in these bars, the rhythmic intensification on the second 3/4 bar of each group helps to signal to the performer to intensify the voicing of each second iteration of the chord pattern to the upper register. This will help each section of the phrase lead to the next. However, unlike the previous phrase which builds through from bar 78 to the climax in bar 83, these two-bar groupings lead to a softer dynamic which drops suddenly. Copland decreases both the dynamic and tempo marking in bar 85, the beginning of the second two-bar section. While he does not mark any difference in the beginning of the third section in bar 87, a small dynamic decrease can be made which will help lead to the next phrase in bar 89. The grace notes which occur before the beat in bars 87 and 88 along with the notes in the upper register which are delayed by a

semiquaver also add to this decrease of energy as they spread the harmonic utterance over a longer period. Thus, while the performer can voice each chord more intensely towards the upper register on each repetition, care can be taken to realise that the beginning of each section must contain a sharp subtraction of energy and intensity which must also contain room for the section to lead to the following material and eventually the next phrase.

The four-bar phrase from bar 89-92 recapitulates different material than the previous phrases and leads to a nearly exact repeat of the opening material of the piece in bar 93 (Example 16, CD Track 16). In order to lead as clearly as possible to bar 93 the performer can continually decrease the intensity level through the phrase even though it is not explicitly stated through Copland's written dynamics.

Example 16: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 89-92



While not an exact repeat, harmonically this phrase reflects the phrase from bar 74-77 leading to the recapitulation in B-flat in bar 78, although shifted a minor 3rd lower. Dynamically the phrase starting in bar 89 is more varied than its previous counterpart, but can be shaped in generally the same manner. The second bar of the phrase contains a slight melodic variation as it stretches a 5th lower on the second beat instead of repeating the first bar as in the earlier phrase. In addition, the harmonies have an added note in the middle of the chords which intensifies the voicing in conjunction with the *mezzo forte* dynamic. This phrase also

contains different decorations of the melody in the first two-bar section and delays the *tenderly* marking until the second two-bar section. Instead of the triplet crotchets of the earlier phrase, Copland writes crotchets and quaver 5ths to decorate the melody in the first two-bar section which reflect the melodic contour. This can be highlighted by the performer by shaping these materials in the same way, along with making a drastic colour change between the two dynamic levels. In bar 90 the second of the two *ritardando* markings can be more extreme than the first in bar 89 in addition to voicing the 5ths to the top voice even more in bar 90 to show the larger register leap in this phrase versus the previous one. The left hand in the first two-bar section starting in bar 89 marks an exact repeat of previous material except for the added 9th harkening back to the very first phrase of the piece. The 9th can be voiced toward the bass and played with a slightly increased intensity of sound in order to show this connection. Lastly, the second two-bar section in bars 91 and 92 can be played with a decrescendo to lead to the repeat of the opening material which the 9th in bar ninety begins to highlight. In addition, the repeat of the material in bars 91 and 92 can be played in a manner resembling an echo, which will strengthen the feeling of the decrescendo through the two-bar section and lead to the repeat of the opening material in bar 93. Melodically and harmonically this two-bar section reflects exactly the earlier two-bar section starting in bar 76, but the lowering of the material by a minor 3rd means the performer can make the decrease of intensity more exaggerated than the previous version.

Bar 93 represents a reflection of the opening of the piece (Example 17, CD Track 17). Thus, it can be performed in a similar way to the beginning but altered through the way the material is developed. It should be noted that the A in bar 94 is omitted in the sense of corresponding with bar 2. This fact can be demonstrated through a slightly intensified D in the left hand.

Example 17: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 93-99

The musical score for Example 17 shows a piano accompaniment for bars 93-99 of Copland's *Night Thoughts*. The score is written for a grand piano and consists of seven measures. The first measure (bar 93) is marked 'p' (piano) and includes the instruction '(as at first)'. The second measure (bar 94) is marked 'mp' (mezzo piano). The third measure (bar 95) is marked 'mp' and includes the instruction '(as before)'. The fourth measure (bar 96) is marked 'mf' (mezzo forte). The fifth measure (bar 97) is marked 'mf' and includes the instruction '(emphasize the l.h.)'. The sixth measure (bar 98) is marked 'ff' (fortissimo). The seventh measure (bar 99) is marked 'ff' and includes the instruction 'rit.' (ritardando). The score also features various musical notations such as accidentals, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Bar 93 can be played very differently from bar 78, the true recapitulation. In bar 78, the material begins again and continues to develop, demanding at least the same amount of forward momentum as in the opening of the piece. In bar 93, the reflection of the entire journey of the piece can be demonstrated through a more static feeling. The performer can take great care not to rush forward, can make an effort to not overly accentuate the phrasing which has already been clearly displayed, and can even play with a minutely slower tempo than the opening. Even though Copland does not specifically write any of these suggestions in the score, these slight alterations will aid in producing an effect of reflection and remembrance which seems to be the main goal of the passage as the piece comes to an end.

Apart from these details, the entire phrase from bar 93-99 can be played exactly as the opening except for the dynamic differences evident in the score. The *mezzo piano* marking in bar 95 changes the dynamic development of the phrase significantly as it seems to negate the *subito forte* of the opening and causes the phrase to increase more gradually in intensity. However, this difference also confirms Copland's desire for a feeling of dynamic development through the beginning of the phrase, and thus its implementation by the performer in the opening of the work is confirmed. While the *mezzo forte* marking in bar 97 represents a difference from the opening, the *crescendo* which immediately follows and leads to the *fortissimo* in the next bar can be treated as more important. This is the final *crescendo*

of the work and the last time that a significant level of dynamic intensity exists before the end. Copland highlights this fact with a *ritenuto* marking and an instruction to emphasise the left hand 5ths, making a strong and final indication of arguably the most important interval in the work. These 5ths become especially significant given the fact that Copland omits the 9ths in the lower register that were introduced in the first phrase. Lastly, Copland's implementation of the 3/4 time signature in the penultimate bar combine with the other markings to intensify the feeling of leading to the final phrase.

Copland drastically changes his writing technique in the last phrase which allows the piece to seem to float away into thin air. The rolled chords which Copland instructs the performer to play very slowly combine with the dragging tempo marking to decrease the level of forward momentum as much as possible (Example 18, CD Track 18).

Example 18: Copland, *Night Thoughts*, bars 99-105

Very slowly (dragging the tempo) (♩ = 48)

pale, at a distance

l.h. p

pp

* *red.*

* *red.*

* *red.*

* *red.*

sost. *red.*

*very slow grace notes to the end

l.h.

l.h.

l.h.

l.h.

(sost. *red.*)

* *red. sim.*

*)

r.h. very distant, but clear

(very long)

l.h.

l.h.

l.h.

l.h.

* *red.*

* *red.*

sost. *red.*

The rolled chords in the first three bars of the phrase reflect the same harmonies which Copland introduces in bar 85, the first bar of the phrase immediately following the recapitulation phrase in B-flat. In bar 88 the chords develop in the same way as the corresponding previous phrase by expanding in register. Copland's pedalling markings allow the harmonies to resound as long as possible without being obscured by blending together. The lush harmonies and spaciouly tranquil atmosphere provide a foundation for the G major triads to ring like bells. These triads become the last sounds which remain in the listener's

ears. Since the previous phrase represented a distant reflection of the opening bars, the final phrase deconstructs the opening to its basic harmony which floats on the grace note harmonies. As a result, the performer can be careful to keep the dynamic level as consistent as possible so as to not add any additional manipulation of timing. Especially when the harmony changes, a sudden change in dynamic would cause the dispersion of energy to cease. The final iteration of the repeated chords in the last two bars of the piece can be shaped in the opposite way to those in the beginning so as to continue the fading quality of the ending. The very last chord inverts the 5ths of the second and third bars of the piece and can be played in the same manner with the D and A voiced very slightly above the G and B. The *decrescendo* combined with this voicing will highlight Copland's instruction for distant but clear playing. In order to also adequately portray the long pause over the last chord the performer can hold the harmony until the sound is nearly completely gone. This will leave the audience in suspense along with committing as strongly as possible to the slow release of momentum which defines the last phrase and the end of the piece.

There are several general observations regarding the performance of *Night Thoughts* which can be discussed following a detailed phrase by phrase examination. The first and possibly most obvious is that which has to do with the title. It can be surmised that the role which the nocturnal element of the title plays has more personal involvement for the composer rather than being a quality which needs to be portrayed by the performer. The loss of momentum and energy in the last phrase of the work can easily be compared to a scene of night time, but the rest of the piece which contains elements of significant intensity, harsh and clashing harmonies, and sharp accents and *marcato* markings seems not to represent a late hour. As a result, the performer can make an effort to not let the title impact an interpretation in any

way. The intensity and concentration of tone along with the extreme dynamic differences can be portrayed without any sort of mitigation.

Arguably the most significant overarching observation for a performative approach to *Night Thoughts* has to do with timing. It is possible to see that the majority of the specific suggestions in the preceding paragraphs comprise of subtle variations in shaping and voicing. These seem to be the aspects of the piece which the performer can slightly alter without disturbing Copland's musical intentions. Copland is incredibly specific about exactly where the timing of the underlying pulse can be manipulated, both by increasing and decreasing the momentum. Thus, while the performer can make specific decisions about the shaping of phrases and the voicing of chords, a steady underlying pulse will keep the overall structure of the work as compact and concise as possible. The number of tempo changes within this relatively short piece is considerable, meaning a concise structure is necessary in order for the audience's attention to remain piqued. This results in a general performance strategy for *Night Thoughts* which puts the performer's freedom of expression with manipulation of sound as a priority over manipulation of timing. While some pieces from other composers and eras may put these two forms of expression on equal ground, Copland's compositional control over the timing of passages in *Night Thoughts* seems to rid the performer of the responsibility.

In connection with the previous point, since the performer lacks this freedom of timing, a larger responsibility results in the form of voicing and shaping. This means that the quality of tone is of utmost importance, especially when the dynamic level becomes its most forceful. With the exception of the phrase at bar 55 where Copland's instructions and markings combine to result in a jagged tone which stays consistent throughout the phrase, the piece

should generally always have gradations of voicing and shaping. While the suggestions provided are not the only valid ideas for the shaping and voicing of the work, any other ideas which aim to fulfil Copland's compositional approach can have as their foundation this constant varying of tone and harmonic shading.

Aaron Copland's *Night Thoughts* is a remarkably intelligent work which lends itself to different musical approaches, especially with regard to the shaping of phrases and the voicing of chords. While the suggestions provided in the preceding paragraphs are by no means the only worthwhile strategies for fulfilling Copland's musical thoughts, they aim to subtly highlight the structure of the work and the harmonic tension without being disruptive. In addition, they strive to allow the performer as much freedom of expression as possible within the restraints of Copland's specific markings. This balance is ultimately impossible to achieve in an exact way, but the search for it produces a performance which strikes closest to the intentions of the composer.

Conclusion

Night Thoughts is an underappreciated and generally unexamined piece that has been ignored in favour of Copland's famous early works. Not one performer, musicologist or critic has ventured to discuss its performance possibilities. Those that have approached the subject have largely pushed it aside with other late works as an anomaly that casts a shadow over Copland's otherwise pristine oeuvre. While the work explores new realms in comparison with its predecessors, the compositional validity of *Night Thoughts* is well-founded and its differences stem from the inner workings of a composer still in his prime, in connection with foundational roots firmly planted in the numerous masterpieces of his earlier years.

Copland's biography traces the journey he travelled that ultimately created his compositional voice. It showcases the numerous stylistic changes and the various musical activities with which he became involved. More importantly, however, it highlights the emotions that were underlying Copland's personality and fuelling his creative desire. Even though that desire waned as he grew older, his compositional mastery still allowed those emotions to come to the fore in his writing. Ultimately, it is the performer's task to communicate these ideas to the audience.

The background material of *Night Thoughts* strengthens the need for the preceding performance analysis. In highlighting the diligent but generally superficial research which exists, it is possible to see how performers and audiences both lack access to an investigation of *Night Thoughts* which not only explains the underlying emotions of the work and Copland's late style, but also demonstrates the performative techniques the musician can execute to most effectively communicate those ideas. While certain authors and performers have examined *Night Thoughts*, all of them have done so within a larger framework, meaning

the maximum level of detail cannot be achieved. The performance analysis hones in on each phrase to give every performer ideas for phrasing, shaping, and timing, and to provide audience members with a detailed architecture with which they can listen to and understand the work. It is only through this rigorous process that Copland's underlying emotions can clearly be communicated and internalised.

The ultimate goal is for the process not to culminate at its present point, but to continue ad infinitum. *Night Thoughts* is not Copland's only underappreciated work, and none of the emotions underlying the famous works have been exhaustively and comprehensively communicated. With these techniques, performers can advance the cause of bringing Copland's music to life, and heighten the general interest and appreciation of these masterworks for years into the future.

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Appendix 1

Current Recordings of *Night Thoughts*

CD Title	Artist(s)	Label	Catalogue Number	Release Year	Length of <i>Night Thoughts</i>
Great Performances from the Library of Congress (Live Recording)	Leo Smit (with Jan DeGaetani)	Bridge	BCD9046	1981	8:20
American Song	Peter Dickinson (with Meriel Dickinson)	Heritage	HTGCD231	2012	6:28
American Nocturnes Anthology Vol. 2	Cecile Licad	Danacord	DACOCD783-784	2017	8:47
Copland: Piano Music	Charles Fierro	Delos	DE1013	1987	6:50
Copland: The Complete Music For Solo Piano	Leo Smit	Sony	G010001222604W	1994	7:49
Illegal Harmonies	Stephanie McCallum	ABC Classics	ABC4566682	1997	7:36
Copland: Complete Solo Piano Works Vol. 2	David Northington	Centaur	CRC3240	2012	7:03
The Aaron Copland Collection	Leo Smit (and others)	Sony	88883737232	2013	7:50

Appendix 2
The Score of *Night Thoughts*