

# Aaron Copland: The American music man

By SUSAN TAUBER KLEIN

Oakland University hosted four days last week to honor American composer Aaron Copland. From May 16-19, the Department of Music had special programs on Copland's dance, vocal and piano compositions with a concert of his works on the evening of May 19.

In the first lecture of the series, given by Paul Osterhout from the Department of Music on Tuesday, May 16, Osterhout said, "There are a number of problems in discussing the American composer, Aaron Copland. He's very much alive."

The presence of Copland on the OU campus showed his public how full of vitality the 77-year-old composer is. Copland, an author, conductor and lecturer, has a quick sense of humor, twinkling eyes, and a gift of gab that brought a sense of vitality to everyone who came in contact with him.

He enthusiastically answered questions at the demonstration sessions and worked in the evenings specifically with music students, listening to their compositions and giving his impressions and advice.

THOUGH COPLAND is best known to the public for his more "popular" music, as Osterhout described his ballads "Billy the Kid" and "Appalachian Spring" and his movie scores, he is a composer of serious music that stretches a period of 50 years.

That he even became a composer illustrates his belief that one's relationship to the arts depends on instinct.

Copland told how he was born in Brooklyn to a family who didn't attend concerts and had no interest in serious music. His older brother played the violin, his sister and he played the piano. There was popular music for them to play. But Copland was drawn to compose serious music.

"When I told my father I wanted to be a composer, he said, 'Where did



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you get such a strange idea?" Copland said.

"Why did I turn to serious, not popular music, to compose? I was born interested in serious music. I was stuck with that interest."

Copland has seen the success of his compositions. Professionals say much of his success is in his efforts to Americanize his music, Osterhout said.

"When I was studying composition in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, I realized how French the Parisians are and how they managed to get this quality into their music," said Copland. "I thought why can't Americans do that in serious music."

THOUGH COPLAND staunchly supports the works of new composers, he said they aren't thinking about American qualities of music. "With the older generation, it was a preoccupation."

The winner of the 1964 Pulitzer Prize for the ballet he wrote for Martha Gra-

ham, "Appalachian Spring" and of an Overture for the musical score to "The Heiress," Copland said his favorite young American composer is California-born David Del Tredici.

The white-haired, tall man revealed much about his life and his talents at the events at OU. At the "Copland on Vocal Music" session, he answered questions after the Oakland University Singers, under the direction of John Dovaras, and OU voice students sang several compositions. Most were words Copland set to music.

When asked why he set certain things to music, he said, "It's very mysterious about what appeals to a composer. It's an instinctive reaction."

"I was interested in Emily Dickinson as one of the great treasures of American literature. I visited her New England home. She was a New England eccentric who one day went upstairs to her room and never came down. Her works were published post-

humously."

Copland discovered her poems and began setting them to music.

"I got to poem number 12 and I said, 'This is enough, I got to stop,'" he said, chuckling.

COPLAND ALSO told why he gave the rock group Emerson, Lake and Palmer permission to use his version of "Fanfare for the Common Man" in one of its records.

"I asked them to send me a tape. They played my fanfare straight, then had a tear of their own music for two minutes, then they came back to my piece."

"I was willing to take the risk that people might think I wrote the other two minutes too," he said, much to the audience's delight.

A question often asked of the famous composer is if he still composes. He explained that after 50 years of composing, it takes a long time to express

himself and he doesn't write now.

His musical career has taken a new direction. Now retired and living near Hudson Bay, the bachelor travels across the country, conducting and lecturing his own compositions.

Friday night, May 19, he showed his conducting skills when he conducted the Pontiac-Oakland Symphony, with Kent McDonald as the soloist, in his "Symphony for Organ and Orchestra," composed in 1924. Copland's long arms and hands expertly guided the orchestra and soloists through his notes, showing how abstract his music was in the 1920s. Others performing Copland's works were singers Jan Albright, Barbara Windham and members of the Oakland University Singers. John Dovaras conducted the singers and Beverly Labuta and Louise Angermeyer accompanied them.

COPLAND SAID he never considered himself a good enough pianist to perform concerts. Conducting gives him the outlet to work closely with his works of the past 50 years.

He keeps in close touch with music by others too, listening to records and the radio.

He is pleased, he said, that more and more Americans are composing and thinks the U.S. should be willing to subsidize American composers.

"There's no reason why the U.S. shouldn't be willing to risk a couple million dollars to shape a world-reknowned composer."

Copland isn't sure many of these new composers will be women however.

"It's one of the great mysteries of the world that women have escaped the composer scene. Maybe because of the formal side of music."

"It's amorphous material that may give women trouble. The feminine mind doesn't like to concern itself with abstract material."

Copland's own music has a wide diversity of style, something that Osterhout said often causes people to refer to the different styles of Copland's music.

"There is a single Copland," Osterhout said, "it's his ability to communicate with people of all ages over all the years."

## Drowning victim buried

Funeral services were held Tuesday for Cole Rosin, 31, a Southfield realtor who drowned in a canoeing accident in the Batchewana River in Algoma, Ontario.

Rosin and a companion, Yale Silverman, 28, of Wixom died after their canoe overturned. Rosin's body was found by loggers on Saturday, May 13 several hours after the accident.

A native Detroit, Rosin is survived by his wife Dene, his parents Harold and Shirley Rosin, his grandfather, Nathan Rosin of Westland, his grandmother Mrs. Joseph (Bertha) Sillman of Detroit, a brother, Hal Rosin of Southfield and a sister, Mrs. Nivon (Sherry) Rose of Huntington Woods.

Rosin was the owner of the Dearborn Real Estate Company and was a member of the National Board of Realtors. A 1969 graduate of the University of Michigan, he received a degree in economics.

## Overseas bound

### Photo roadshow continues

By CORINNE ABATT

Blake Simmons discovered he can't drop the Friends Roadshow, subject of his recent photography exhibit at the Ed Gray Gallery.

Simmons, who has been making a living as a leathercraftsman, started taking pictures in 1970 when he was in Troy High School working on the yearbook and the student newspaper.

The Friends Roadshow, and Jango Edwards of Livonia who originated the idea of the clown and mime spoofs, have so captivated Simmons that he plans to follow the show throughout Europe and North Africa this summer.

SIMMONS' PHOTOGRAPHS at the gallery were shown along with circus puppets made by Marie Ferrini. The two had previously shown their leather work under the name, Cat Dancers Leather, at many area art shows and festivals.

He and Miss Ferrini will be designing and making costumes while they tour with the Friends Roadshow. How-

ever, Simmons also plans to document his adventures with camera and diary to have a complete photo journal account.

During June some 60 groups of mimes, clowns, actors and entertainers will be performing simultaneously in the Netherlands under the all-encompassing name, "Festival of Fools."

Simmons will stay with Edwards' show in Amsterdam and continue with them when they play on the Mediterranean coast in Tunisia and North Africa at an art colony.

NEXT SUMMER, the Friends Roadshow will return to Ann Arbor for a two-month engagement. When the show played for four days in Rome last summer, the cast was overjoyed to learn that the Italian director, Federico Fellini, attended all the performances and later told Edwards he was the greatest clown in the world.

Edwards is scheduled to teach mime at the University of Stockholm for a

month before the Amsterdam run.

Simmons, who shares Fellini's enthusiasm for Edwards' work said, "He's a genius and his work fascinates me. I'm totally behind the group. It's so refreshing to see them."

Simmons' photographs in the Ed Gallery show, (a few are still there) are the work of a photographer who understands and deals in fantasy. He is tuned in mentally to the antics—some bawdy, some pure humor—of the clowns and mimes.

Simmons said he went to Europe last year with the specific goal of visiting the Salvador Dali museum in Spain.

"I have always been captivated by surrealism," he said.

His photographs of the Friends Roadshow International evidence that interest. He likes to use a fisheye lens which distorts, particularly at the edges of the photograph. He likes to work with infra-red film and sometimes finishes his work in sepia.

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