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## Copland and Communism: Mystery and Mayhem

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# Copland and Communism: Mystery and Mayhem

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## Abstract

In the midst of the second Red Scare, Aaron Copland, an American composer, came under fire for his communist tendencies. Between the 1930s and 1950s, he joined the left-leaning populist Popular Front, composed a protest song, wrote Lincoln Portrait and Fanfare for the Common Man, traveled to South America, spoke at the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace, and donated to communist leaning organizations such as the American-Soviet Musical Society. Due to Copland's personal communist leanings, Eisenhower's Inaugural Concert Committee censored a performance of Copland's Lincoln Portrait in 1953. HUAC (The House Committee on Un-American Activities) brought Copland to the committee and questioned him on his communist connections. Copland clearly denied any and all communist activities or affiliations. This raised the questions: what impact did the contemporary political climate have on Copland's music? What actual ties did he have to communism? Does it matter? To answer these questions, I examined the primary sources in the Copland Collection at the Library of Congress, during the fall of 2019. In addition to selected secondary sources, I focused on the relevant letters, hearing records, and other materials contained in Box 427: the box on HUAC. In addition to the Performing Arts Reading Room Aaron Copland Collection, I utilized the Folklife Collection and their resources on Aaron Copland. I will conclude there is significant external evidence Copland associated with communists, but since Copland himself continuously denied the identity, it is difficult to conclude whether Copland was or was not in fact a communist. It is much easier to conclude that Copland was, at the very least, politically left-leaning, although his political beliefs held a secondary role to the musical style in his compositions.

## Keywords

Copland, communism, red scare, Lincoln Portrait, Fanfare for the Common Man, censorship, government

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## Copland and Communism: Mystery and Mayhem

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“From my impression of it I have never thought of myself as a Communist sympathizer.”<sup>1</sup> Subpoenaed into a closed committee hearing in 1953, Aaron Copland defended himself against charges of communism. Prior to this hearing, Senator Joseph McCarthy and Representative Martin Dies colluded to create the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), which often worked with the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Relations. The committee flagged Copland because of his involvement with alleged communist organizations and his connection to government-sponsored exchange programs in Italy and South America. They determined that he should not be teaching or advising on behalf of the United States government if he espoused communist ideals. Because he was considered a communist, the Inaugural Concert Committee removed his composition *Lincoln Portrait* from Eisenhower’s inauguration concert in 1953. Many spoke out in outrage after his composition was censored, bringing to light First Amendment and democratic concerns. All this leads to the question: can we discover by looking at historical evidence if Copland was a communist, and is this reflected in his music? There is significant external evidence that Copland associated with communists, but since Copland himself continuously denied the identity, it is difficult to conclude whether Copland was or was not, in fact, a communist. Based on existing evidence however, it is much easier to conclude that Copland was, at the very least, politically left-leaning, although his political beliefs held a secondary role to the musical style in his compositions.

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<sup>1</sup> *Aaron Copland’s Political Affiliations.*

During the Red Scare, there were varying definitions of how to spot a communist. In 1947, the American magazine *LOOK* published an article titled “How to Spot a Communist.” The article lays out the following five criteria to determine communist affiliation.

1. The Party member, who openly or secretly holds a membership card.
2. The fellow-traveller, who is not a Party member but who is carefully trained to follow the Communist policy.
3. The sympathiser, who may disagree with some policies, but who is in general agreement with Communist objectives.
4. The opportunist, who is unconcerned with Party goals or tactics but who believes...that the party can be used to his own advantage.
5. The muddled liberal, who despite deep disagreement with the Communist Party’s ultimate goals, co-operates with Party members in front organisations.<sup>2</sup>

Copland is examined based on most of these criteria at different points throughout the Red Scare.

### **The Popular Front: Copland’s Community**

Copland was connected to many left-leaning collectives and organizations. His community and political involvement reflect his engagement with the news and public events. Howard Pollack, an American pianist and musicologist, wrote that Copland “developed, early on, a deep admiration for the work of. . .socialists whose novels passionately excoriated capitalism’s physical and emotional toll on the average man.”<sup>3</sup> Vivian Perlis, an American musicologist who co-wrote Copland’s autobiography, de-emphasized Copland’s admiration for socialists, writing that Copland was “cautious...about politics.” She also wrote that “so many artists were caught up in the strong wave of sympathy for socialism that it *was* the thing to do.”<sup>4</sup> Here Perlis makes the connection that although Copland was cautious about politics, any political movement he did get caught up with was simply a result of the sentiments of his community. Perlis’s analysis downplays Copland’s political affiliations since Copland’s music was influenced by his

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<sup>2</sup> Cherne.

<sup>3</sup> Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 272.

<sup>4</sup> Perlis and Copland, *Complete*, 94.

community. Copland himself discussed his position that the artist and their work should be affirmed by their community near the end of his Norton Lectures in 1951:

The artist should feel himself affirmed and buoyed up by his community. In other words, art and the life of art must mean something, in the deepest sense, to the everyday citizen. When that happens, America will have achieved a maturity to which every sincere artist will have contributed.<sup>5</sup>

In Copland's view, music should be a reflection of one's community. For Copland, his community was the Popular Front. After the stock market crash in 1929, Americans plunged into the Great Depression. Unemployment ("one-third of the American workforce found itself unemployed"<sup>6</sup>) and global fascism drove the rise of the Popular Front, a decentralized group of writers, musicians, and artists who generally subscribed to left-wing ideology.<sup>7</sup> The idea of the Popular Front was to replace "the worker" with "the people." They worked to expand the efforts for class solidarity, racial justice, and the New Deal.<sup>8</sup> Musically, the movement meandered just next to the jazz and blues quarters of American song with the recovery of folk music. Folk-left icons like Charles Seeger revived the popularity of folk music. At the same time, Gershwin was composing *Porgy and Bess*, an intentionally American opera, and Alan Lomax, an ethnomusicologist, traveled the United States collecting recordings of folk music. For musicians, the Young Composers' Group and the Composers' Collective were the two primary groups for left-leaning composers. Copland headed up the Young Composers' Group and Charles Seeger, father of Pete Seeger, worked closely with the Composers' Collective. The Composers' Collective<sup>9</sup> was begun by Charles Seeger and others in 1932, as a branch of the Workers Music League.<sup>10</sup> According to the American Music League, a

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<sup>5</sup> Copland, *Music and Imagination*, in Pollack, 270.

<sup>6</sup> Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 273.

<sup>7</sup> Horowitz, 132.

<sup>8</sup> Horowitz, 133.

<sup>9</sup> Perlis writes, "Jacob Schafer, Leon Charles, and Henry Cowell" and Pollack writes that "Henry Cowell and Charles Seeger" established the Collective. Regardless of the specifics, they were left-leaning and Copland was involved.

<sup>10</sup> There is some controversy over the Workers Music League. Some believe that it was a wing of the Communist Party, while others believe it is simply left-leaning.

non-profit dedicated to developing young musicians in America, the Composers' Collective was created for several purposes,

the writing of (1) Mass Songs, dealing with immediate social issues. . .to be sung at meetings, on parades, and on picket lines; (2) Choral music for professional as well as non-professional choruses, dealing in a broader way with the social scene....3) Solo songs, on social themes to be sung at meetings and concentrate the attention on the subjective, private emotions to the exclusion of the realistic social questions...[and] (4) Instrumental music, to carry on the best musical traditions of the past, now threatened by the collapse of bourgeois culture.<sup>11</sup>

Pete Seeger, who graduated from high school in 1932, remembered meeting Copland at the Composers' Collective less than a year later around Christmas. Seeger left, certain of the composer's impact noting, "I got the feeling that here were people out to change the world. The world might be corrupt, but they were confident they could change it."<sup>12</sup>

Charles Seeger describes workers' music as a "social force" used to further the cause of the workers in the class struggle.<sup>13</sup> The Collective held a song contest for songs to be sung on the picket line, in "the true communist style."<sup>14</sup> Copland won in 1934. He set Alfred Hayes's poem "Into the Street May First" for voice and piano.

Into the streets May First!  
 Into the roaring Square!  
 Shake the midtown towers!  
 Crash the downtown air!  
 Come with a storm of banners,  
 Come with an earthquake tread,  
 Bells, ring out of your belfries,  
 Red flag, leap out your red!  
 Out of the shops and factories,  
 Up with the sickle and hammer,

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<sup>11</sup> *Unison* in Perlis and Copland, *Complete*, 96.

<sup>12</sup> *Aaron Copland Collection*, Bulletin, 38.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Seeger, 126.

<sup>14</sup> Perlis and Copland, *Complete*, 97.

Comrades, these are our tools,  
A song and a banner!<sup>15</sup>

Perlis and Copland somewhat downplay the political function of the song in *The Complete Copland* when relating the following anecdote as told by Charles Seeger,

I said to Copland[,] “Everybody here knows that your song is best. But do you think it will ever be sung on the picket line? And anyway, who would carry a piano into the streets May First or any time?” Well, Aaron was very nice and he said, “No, I don’t suppose it ever will be sung in a picket line.”<sup>16</sup>

Despite downplaying the political implications of the song, Copland himself later published a review of the Workers Music League’s publication *Workers Song Book*. *Workers Song Book* was a collection of folk and revolutionary songs. The review was published in *New Masses*, a Marxist magazine closely associated with the Communist Party, USA. Copland wrote,

Every participant in revolutionary activity knows from his own experience that a good mass song is a powerful weapon in the class struggle. It creates solidarity and inspires action. No other form of collective art activity exerts so far-reaching and all-pervading an influence. The song the mass itself sings is a cultural symbol, which helps to give continuity to the day-to-day struggle of the proletariat.<sup>17</sup>

The piece has since been withdrawn from public performance.<sup>18</sup> There are few recordings of the piece, and the sheet music is not widely published by reputable publishers.

The musical style of “May Song” was enchanting. It was unique, utilizing modal shifts, march-like syncopated rhythms, tonal harmony, and a varied melody. Ashley Pettis, who judged the contest, discussed

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<sup>15</sup> *People’s World*, “Today in History: Remembering Composer Aaron Copland.”

<sup>16</sup> Perlis and Copland, *Complete*, 97.

<sup>17</sup> Copland, “Workers Sing,” 88.

<sup>18</sup> Copland, “Into the Streets May First.”

her decision to choose Copland's piece in 1934 when she wrote, "Copland has chosen a musical style of time-honored tradition, but he has imbued it with fresh vitality and meaning."<sup>19</sup> The musical style foreshadowed his later work *Fanfare for the Common Man*. After his return to New York in 1934, he remained involved with the Composers' Collective, although during the McCarthy era<sup>20</sup> he declared that writing the "May Song" was "the silliest thing I did" and that he wrote it to "prove to myself that I could write a better mass song than the next fellow."<sup>21</sup>

Despite this involvement, Copland "never joined any political party," but considered himself "sympathetic toward the American-Liberal principles."<sup>22</sup> He wrote, "If one likes people, is sympathetic to them and concerned about their welfare in general, one's personal leaning is in the direction of the democratic or liberal viewpoint."<sup>23</sup> Given his own proclamations, Copland's political views seem to be left-leaning, although not specifically communist.

As left-wing populism grew in popularity, the Composers' Collective welcomed more members. They headed up journals such as *People's Songs* to support communist musicians and unions in the United States. As folk music became even more popular among the left thanks to the work of Charles Seeger and Alan Lomax, folk artists such as Pete Seeger, whom Copland knew well, continued the social movement. Michael Tilson Thomas, an esteemed American conductor, pianist, and composer, once commented about Copland,

His great insight is that he could rouse and unite people not by scaring them, or making them angry, but by helping them to find a sense of ownership and pride in a mythical heritage that they, as Americans, all shared.<sup>24</sup>

It was this American heritage, the culture of his community, more than a specific political view, that Copland sought to reflect in his music.

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<sup>19</sup> Pettis, n.p. The text first appeared in the sheet music for the song.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix A for an excerpt from the Senate hearing on this topic.

<sup>21</sup> Copland to Carlos Chávez, 30 September 1935, Copland Collection at the Library of Congress, in Pollack, 276.

<sup>22</sup> Smith, *Aaron Copland*, in Pollack, 271.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, *Aaron Copland*, 120. Note: Marc Blitzstein was, in fact, communist (Perlis).

<sup>24</sup> Peter Seeger, 425.



Copland incorporated the folk heritage, jazz style, and the European style (solidified during his time in Europe studying with Nadia Boulanger) into his music, including *Lincoln Portrait* and *Fanfare for the Common Man*.

### ***Lincoln Portrait and Fanfare for the Common Man***

Andre Kostelanetz, director of the New York Philharmonic, commissioned Copland, Virgil Thomson, and Jerome Kern each to write a work that presented a “musical portrait gallery of great Americans.”<sup>25</sup> Copland initially chose a literary figure, but Kostelanetz suggested a statesman. Copland chose Lincoln and composed the portrait as a work for orchestra and narrator. At the time, many other poets and artists chose Lincoln as a subject for their works. Although the Popular Front claimed Lincoln to some extent, he was ultimately popular because of his non-partisan political appeal. On a more personal level, Copland may have felt an affinity for Lincoln because of his calm demeanor, short, straight-forward speeches, and plain manner of dress. Leonard Bernstein, an esteemed fellow-musician, reflected on the similarities between Copland and Lincoln after he conducted *Lincoln Portrait* for Copland’s eightieth birthday celebration: “Conducting *Lincoln* with Aaron himself as narrator had a special poignancy and appropriateness. You know, Aaron always had some kind of identification in his mind between plainness and Abraham Lincoln.”<sup>26</sup>

Copland borrowed some of his musical ideas from Charles Seeger, whom he referred to affectionately as Earl. He related the following sentiment to Seeger while composing *Lincoln Portrait*, “Earl, I’m stealing some of your thunder.”<sup>27</sup> The piece is in ABA (slow-fast-slow) form. Section A is placed in rural and traditional America, designed to reflect Lincoln’s background and connection with the American people. There are two main themes in section A: a dotted rhythm in minor and a quotation of “Springfield Mountain.” Each theme holds significance. The former, “national resolve and democratic ideals, the latter. . .death and remembrance.”<sup>28</sup> The A section also includes a quotation of “Camptown Races.” About this quotation, Pollack writes,

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<sup>25</sup> Perlis and Copland, *Copland 1900*, quoted in Pollack, 357.

<sup>26</sup> Perlis and Copland, *Complete*, 143.

<sup>27</sup> Perlis and Copland, *Complete*, 98.

<sup>28</sup> Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 359.

This allusion not only establishes Lincoln's time and place but makes the connection between horse racing and political races. Did Copland know that political rallies of the time often made use of the tune, or that it sometimes was sung to words expressing abolitionist sentiment, or that Foster himself rewrote the text as a campaign song for two gubernatorial candidates?<sup>29</sup>

Simply connecting "Camptown Races" to political campaigns does not prove whether or not Copland was a communist, but the connection still raises a question. The Perlis and Copland biography does address what Pollack points out about Copland's inclusion of "Camptown Races." Perlis and Copland state, "My purpose was to draw a simple but impressive frame around the words of Lincoln himself—in my opinion among the best this nation has ever heard to express patriotism and humanity."<sup>30</sup> While somewhat explanatory, the statement ignores the current political climate in which Copland wrote the piece. After these quotations, the B section is either a reflection of Abraham Lincoln's background or a call to political action, depending on who was talking. The return of the A section for the final quotation of "Springfield Mountain" was intended to inspire Americans and remind them of their history. All of the emotions that Copland reserved for expression through music found their home in that final quotation before the words "that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion."<sup>31</sup>

After the completion of the work, Kostelanetz wrote to Copland, "I cannot tell you how happy I am about the *Lincoln Portrait*. You have written a magnificent work which I believe, aside from its wonderful musical value, will convey a great message to the American public. I want to thank you again for dedicating it to me."<sup>32</sup> The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Kostelanetz, performed *Lincoln Portrait* on May 14, 1942.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 359.

<sup>30</sup> Perlis and Copland, *Complete*, 144.

<sup>31</sup> Copland, "Lincoln Portrait," 42–43.

<sup>32</sup> Perlis and Copland, *Complete*, 144.

<sup>33</sup> The piece gained popularity around the world, particularly in South America. On March 27, 1957, Copland traveled to Venezuela to conduct the first performance in Caracas. The narrator for *Lincoln Portrait*, Juana Sujo, was a vocal opponent of former Venezuelan President Marcos Pérez Jiménez. Jiménez, a dictator, eliminated his political opponents, exploited Venezuelans,

In that same year, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, directed by Eugene Goossens, also premiered one of Copland's most famous works, *Fanfare for the Common Man*. He previously commissioned Copland to write a fanfare for the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. Goossens wrote, "It is my idea to make these fanfares stirring and significant contributions to the war effort."<sup>34</sup> Given the name and Copland's involvement with the left, it was easy to assume *Fanfare for the Common Man* was written as a sort of musical communist manifesto. This is not precisely the case.

*Fanfare's* genre is a fanfare with a light but strong brass texture in ABA form performed by four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, and tam-tam. He drew on musical ideas he previously explored in his ballet, *Billy the Kid*. When composing the ballet, Copland found himself "hopelessly" enraptured with "expanding, contracting, rearranging and superimposing cowboy tunes."<sup>35</sup> The opening is in triple meter, unusual for a march, but Copland reminded the choreographer "that 'My Country 'Tis of Thee' is in three."<sup>36</sup> Midway through Billy's variation is a brass declamation that "includ[es] a brief and telling anticipation of *Fanfare for the Common Man*."<sup>37</sup>

Copland carefully composed *Fanfare for the Common Man*, delaying the premiere for about a month. Copland wrote of his compositional process,

As with *Lincoln Portrait*, I was gratified to participate in a patriotic activity. Goossens, a composer himself, suggested the instrumentation of brass and percussion and a length of about two minutes. He intended to open the concert season in October with my fanfare, so I had no time to lose. I composed an introduction for the percussion, followed by the theme announced by trumpets, and then expanding to include groups of brass.

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and lived with excess wealth. The dictator arrived right before the performance began. When Sujo read the famous final words from the Gettysburg Address, the audience leapt to their feet, drowning out the final bars of the music.

Copland recalled, "It was not long after that the dictator was deposed and fled from the country. I was later told by an American foreign service officer that *Lincoln Portrait* was credited with having inspired the first public demonstration against him. That, in effect, it had started a revolution" (Beyer).

<sup>34</sup> Pollack, *Walter Piston*, quoted in Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 360.

<sup>35</sup> Copland, "Notes," quoted in Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 320.

<sup>36</sup> Siegel quoted in Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 321.

<sup>37</sup> Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 322.

The challenge was to compose a traditional fanfare, direct and powerful, yet with a contemporary sound. To this end, I used bichordal harmonies that added “bite” to the brass and some irregular rhythms. The music was not terribly difficult to compose, but working slowly as was my custom, I did not have the fanfare ready to send to Goossens until November.<sup>38</sup>

Copland considered several titles, settling on *Fanfare for the Common Man*. All of the titles he considered showed solidarity or concern for the downtrodden or working people. Later in life, Copland wrote, “I sort of remember how I got the idea of writing ‘A Fanfare for the Common Man’—it was the common man, after all, who was doing all the dirty work in the war and the army. He deserved a fanfare.”<sup>39</sup> When Goossens received the score with the title, he was somewhat puzzled about the name, but wrote Copland in return, “Its title is as original as its music, and I think it is so telling that it deserves a special occasion for its performance. If it is agreeable to you, we will premiere it 12 March 1943 at income tax time.”<sup>40</sup> Copland was “all for honoring the common man at income tax time.”<sup>41</sup> The fanfare was well received by most everyone but the musical elites. It was covered by groups such as Emmerson, Lake, and Palmer, although Copland preferred his version, even using it in a later symphony. With this piece, Copland revealed some of his left-wing populist tendencies by emphasizing the common man at tax time, while also minimizing them in the biography with Perlis because rising anti-communist sentiments posed such a threat.

### Travel to South America

For most of the 1940s, Copland served on various committees and traveled on State Department grants to South America. In 1947, Copland traveled to Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay.<sup>42</sup> On the trip to Argentina, Copland was to be “in no sense. . . a government employee” nor a “representative of the United States Government,” but it was “inevitable that [he would] be regarded in Latin America as representative of the

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<sup>38</sup> Perlis and Copland, *Complete*, 154.

<sup>39</sup> Perlis and Copland, *Copland 1900*, quoted in Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 360.

<sup>40</sup> Perlis and Copland, *Complete*, 154.

<sup>41</sup> Perlis and Copland, *Complete*, 154.

<sup>42</sup> Copland also received a Fulbright to travel to Italy in 1951.

United States.”<sup>43</sup> He traveled with the intention of composing and performing music and finding other musicians and composers who could take similar trips to the United States. His trip brought a sense of the United States to Latin America. In Argentina, he was viewed as, “a folkloric composer. . . [with] a nationalist stripe in the sense that a good part of his oeuvre extracts elements beyond. . . American folklore.”<sup>44</sup> These trips to Latin America established Copland as a representative of the United States to other countries, even though he was not directly hired by the government (see Appendix C).

### The Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace



**Figure 1:** Shostakovich and Copland at Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace at Waldorf.<sup>45</sup>

On March 26, 1949, artists, academics, scientists, and musicians from all over the world assembled at the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace at the Waldorf in New York. The conference was not sponsored by the Soviet Government or Soviet organizations, rather it was sponsored by the National Council of Arts, Sciences, and Professions.<sup>46</sup> This was a group of American progressives who wanted labor rights, world peace, and civil rights. At the conference, Copland

<sup>43</sup> Letter, Henry Allen Moe to Copland, 6 June 1941, *Aaron Copland Collection*, box 358, folder 25.

<sup>44</sup> D’Urbano, “un autor folklórico,” box 359, folder 9.

<sup>45</sup> Los Angeles Examiner.

<sup>46</sup> Copland previously donated money to this group.

met Dmitri Shostakovich, a world-renowned Russian composer, in person<sup>47</sup> (see Figure 1).<sup>48</sup>

Shostakovich only attended the conference after he negotiated with Stalin. The Russian government ruled with an iron fist, and Shostakovich was no stranger to hit lists and political surveillance. Solomon Volkov, Shostakovich's controversial biographer, writes,

The Shostakovich family was aware of political surveillance and denunciation even before the revolution. Caution was in their blood. The "Red Terror" of the early years of the revolution, when long lists of executed "conspirators" were posted on pillars in Petrograd, instilled even greater fear.<sup>49</sup>

Because of the authoritarian nature of the government, it is not surprising to find pro-communist statements in Shostakovich's letters. But, as Volkov points out that "it is not the few profoundly 'patriotic' passages in young Shostakovich's letters that surprise us, . . . but the multitude of disrespectful and mocking references to the official ideology that bursts through."<sup>50</sup> Shostakovich's works reflected his subversive attitude, specifically in the operas *The Nose* and *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. Musicians in the USSR were required to compose in a style called Soviet Realism, which these works did not reflect. As a result, Shostakovich was deemed dangerous. His works, including some of his symphonies and *Lady Macbeth* were banned from performance in Russia. Stalin, however, wanted him to attend the conference, so Shostakovich called Stalin.

Shostakovich bravely offered to Stalin two reasons for not attending the conference: ill health and the banning of his works in the Soviet Union. The composer asked how he could represent Soviet music when his own

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<sup>47</sup> Los Angeles Examiner.

<sup>48</sup> Shostakovich and Copland were first connected by a Russian organization named VOKS, an acronym for the Russian "Vsesoiuznoe Obshchestvo Kul'turnoi Sviazi s zagranitsej" (All-Union Society of Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries). The organization attempted to create cultural contact between creators, artists, composers, and athletes in the USSR and other countries. In 1943, after Copland's appointment to the State Department Music Advisory Position, VOKS received some of Copland's music and sent him a picture of Shostakovich looking through the music in return.

<sup>49</sup> Volkov, *Shostakovich*, 63.

<sup>50</sup> Volkov, *Shostakovich*, 64.

symphonies were forbidden in the Soviet Union. Stalin asked who had instituted the ban and assured Shostakovich that it would be revoked. On March 16 Shostakovich received a copy of an order withdrawing the ban on his works and those of others that had been issued on February 14, 1948. Stalin also sent doctors to Shostakovich's apartment for an examination, and he was pronounced healthy enough for travel. Thus, did Shostakovich become an official Soviet delegate for the Waldorf Conference.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, Shostakovich's ties to Soviet communism were shaky at best. However, Shostakovich's connections to the Soviets still harmed both Copland and himself. His supposedly patriotic connection to the Russian government brought Copland under suspicion in the United States, and his subversive actions brought him under suspicion in Russia.

Notable speakers at the conference included Henry Wallace, A. Fadeyev, the Secretary General of the Union of Soviet Writers, Lillian Hellman, and Dr. Harlow Shapley, the conference chairman/chairman of the sponsoring National Council of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions. The conference was widely considered a gathering of communists to advance the communist agenda. *The New York Post* reported, "The conference opened off-key Friday night when Norman Cousins, editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, assailed it as sponsored by 'a small political group' which 'owes its primary allegiance and duty not to America but to an outside government.'"<sup>52</sup>

At the conference, Shostakovich commented on the influence that communism had on his music. He said Russian criticism "helps to move my music forward."<sup>53</sup> He concluded his speech by focusing on the uniting features of music and art, not politics,

May our struggle for peace, life and human dignity, our struggle against war, death and barbarism unite and strengthen our forces and serve the cause of the true rebirth and full flowering of the musical art of our times.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Klefstad, 9.

<sup>52</sup> Luce, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Los Angeles Examiner.

<sup>54</sup> Gillmor quoted in Klefstad, 15.

Shostakovich's presence at the conference caused quite a stir. Some people protested and demanded he escape authoritarian Russia, which he did not do (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Protestors Asking Shostakovich to Escape outside the Waldorf Conference.<sup>55</sup>

Copland, however, came “as a democratic American artist, with no political affiliations of any kind.”<sup>56</sup> He spoke on “The Effect of the Cold War on the Artist in the U.S.” Because he believed the United States caused the Soviet Union to take a disapproving attitude towards art and music, he placed blame for the Cold War on the United States. For Copland, the conference was a resounding failure. He was taken as a Stalinist apologist, although he did make several critical remarks about the Soviet Union. In the Senate subcommittee he recounted, “I am very glad I went to that conference because it gave me first-hand knowledge in what ways the Communists were able to use such movements for their own ends.”<sup>57</sup> This comment avoids Copland’s own involvement in the conference, which fits with the theme already seen from the Perlis and Copland biography. In the end, the conference brought a lot of tensions

<sup>55</sup> Klefstad, 12.

<sup>56</sup> Copland, “Effect,” in Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 284.

<sup>57</sup> Copland, “Effect,” quoted in Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 284.



to the forefront that only accelerated heading into the 1950s and the rise of McCarthyism.<sup>58</sup>

### McCarthyism: Tensions Rise

McCarthyism was a reaction to the end of WWII and the beginning of the Cold War. After WWII, tensions continued to rise between Russia and the United States, leading to the Cold War and anti-communist sentiments in the United States. Americans feared their country would become like the authoritarian Russia and so sought to purge communists from their midst. First-term Senator Joseph McCarthy, one of the activists, set out to raise the issue of communism with a series of speeches across the United States in 1950. Beginning in West Virginia, McCarthy spoke, “I have here in my hand a list of 205 [men] that were known to the secretary of state as being members of the Communist Party and who, nevertheless, are still working and shaping the policy of the State Department.”<sup>59</sup> Not only did McCarthy target the State Department, but he also targeted anyone with even the slightest connection to the left and the State Department. Enter Copland. Given his two Russian immigrant parents and his personal connections to Russian composers, Copland was a prime target. Ultimately, the impact of WWII on Copland led to his distaste for authoritarianism. He especially denounced Hitler when he commented, “At the time of Hitler, Hitler hurt me. . . .I was considerably upset. . . .And I save my energy...for moments where I think it’s really worth extending all that energy.”<sup>60</sup> A mild-mannered man, Copland rarely exerted his emotions or made a strong statement outside of his music, so this statement demonstrates the extent to which he was affected by WWII.<sup>61</sup>

*Lincoln Portrait* reappeared in 1953, when it was expected to be heard at Eisenhower’s inauguration. However, *Lincoln Portrait* raised questions about the role of government in an artist’s life. Due to Copland’s political affiliations, the Inaugural Concert Committee

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<sup>58</sup> See Appendices B and C for two of three rounds of questioning at the Senate hearing regarding the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace.

<sup>59</sup> Fitzgerald, 10.

<sup>60</sup> Copland, interviewed by Oliver, quoted in Pollack, 4.

<sup>61</sup> During the Senate hearing, Copland’s connections to Hanns Eisler, the composer of the national anthem of East Germany, came into question. Despite working in Hollywood with Eisler, Copland denied extensive connections to Eisler outside of sponsoring him as a musician. (See Appendices E and F).

excluded *Lincoln Portrait* from the inauguration. According to the *Washington Post*, the Inaugural Concert Committee censored the piece because “Copland had associated with Communist front groups.”<sup>62</sup> Rep. Fred Busbey spoke harshly about the place of Copland and communist tendencies in a new America saying,

I do not detract one iota from Mr. Copland’s musical ability, but I do stand firm in my conviction that the inaugural concert of President-elect Eisenhower is no place for Copland’s music. For nearly 20 years, the Communist Party devoted time and effort to infiltrating the various departments of our Federal Government while the Democrats were in control. . . . You may rest assured the Communists will continue their efforts to infiltrate our Government agencies under the Republican Party. I fought this infiltration of government under the Democratic Party and I assure you I will continue to fight this infiltration under the Republican Party.<sup>63</sup>

The rest of those working with McCarthy stood against a bulwark of individuals who spoke out in favor of Copland. Many in the general public spoke out against the censorship of Copland’s piece, citing government overreach. *The Washington Post* wrote,

There you have it. The road is clear. It was traveled in Germany, and it is being traveled in Russia today. For there is no other way out of the tangle once you start on the path laid out by the Congressman. Clearly, you must screen all composers, listing those who are acceptable and those who are not. And from there it is a quick step to the place where you begin to hear ‘capitalist decadence,’ ‘bourgeois mouthings,’ and all the other things the Soviets claim can be heard in the demoralized music of the weakening civilization of the West.<sup>64</sup>

Unlike *The Washington Post*, another newspaper, *The Week*, was milder in their support of Copland, writing, “There is scarcely a major artist of Copland’s generation who has not, at one time or another, signed or

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<sup>62</sup> Hume.

<sup>63</sup> Congressional Record at A169.

<sup>64</sup> Hume.

given his name to what, now, might seem a questionable petition.”<sup>65</sup> This sentiment lines up with what Perlis wrote of Copland, believing that socialism was “the thing to do.”

Despite public outrage, Busbey dug in his heels and continued to back his decision. To the House of Representatives he said on January 16, 1953:

There are many patriotic composers available without the long record of questionable affiliations of Copland. The Republican Party would have been ridiculed from one end of the United States to the other if Copland’s music had been played at the inaugural of a President elected to fight communism, along with other things.<sup>66</sup>

Busbey’s analysis, however, turned out to be dead wrong. Rather than being ridiculed for including *Lincoln Portrait*, the Committee was ridiculed for excluding it. In response, Copland wrote to the Inauguration Board of Directors,

I have never at any time been a member of any political party: Republican, Democrat, or Communist. I have never joined any organization which did not have as one of its primary purposes the cultural interests of America, especially as related to music. I have never sponsored any cause except as a loyal American, proud of his right to speak his mind on controversial subjects, even to protest when some action seemed unworthy of our democratic traditions. My sympathies have always been liberal and humanitarian—I have always hated totalitarianism in any form. . . . This episode would be laughable if it were an isolated one—unfortunately it is symptomatic of a hysteria which has sinister implications indeed.<sup>67</sup>

Overall, the American public, Copland, and the arts community opposed the censorship of Aaron Copland, but that did not stop Busbey or McCarthy.

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<sup>65</sup> *Week*. (Ed. note: No page number cited.)

<sup>66</sup> Perlis and Copland, *Copland Since 1943*, quoted in Taruskin, 107.

<sup>67</sup> *Aaron Copland Collection*, box 427.7.

## The Hearing

The saga was not over. Copland was then brought before HUAC to testify on the relation of his music to communism as well as his own political beliefs. Copland entered the hearing calmly, maintaining his reserved and restrained temperament. As William Schuman, one of Copland's friends, remarked, "Aaron was always tactful."<sup>68</sup> An even more generous reflection on Copland's temperament came from Harold Clurman, after Copland helped him work through a disagreement with Boulanger. Clurman wrote,

Aaron is one of the most balanced persons I know; the most tactful, knowing exactly what to say to each person. He wouldn't yield to anything that he didn't want to do. He wouldn't declare anything he didn't mean. But he is never aggressive in any way, and he always knows exactly the right thing to say in the right circumstances. It has helped him not just as a composer but as a man of the world. The United States could send him abroad with full confidence that he would represent it well because he has an extraordinary sense of justness. He had it when he was young and he has it still. Boulanger recognized this immediately.<sup>69</sup>

When Copland entered the hearing, he remained tactful and almost shrewd, something reflected in the answers he gave to the chairman's leading and often accusatory questions. During the hearing, McCarthy, the chairman, and Roy Marcus Cohn, McCarthy's fiery chief counsel, attempted to ask Copland about his involvement in many of the causes discussed previously. Their exchange about the Waldorf Peace Conference is recorded below.

Mr. Cohn. Now, Mr. Copland, that conference was widely publicized in advance as a completely Communist dominated thing, but nevertheless you sponsored and attended it.

Mr. Copland. I sponsored it and attended it because I was very anxious to give the impression that by sitting down with Russian composers one could encourage the

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<sup>68</sup> Thomson in Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 5.

<sup>69</sup> Loggia and Young, quoted in Pollack, 5.

thought that since cultural relations were possible that perhaps diplomatic relations were possible. I did not go there to advance the Communist line or in any way encourage their operations. I went there in order to take part in a cultural panel, which included—

The Chairman. You knew that it had been widely labeled as a completely Communist movement, didn't you?

Mr. Copland. No, I didn't know it was a complete Communist movement at that time. I became convinced of it subsequently. I am very glad I went to that conference because it gave me first-hand knowledge in what ways the Communists were able to use such movements for their own ends. After that I refused to sign the sponsorship of any further peace conference.

The Chairman. Did you meet any Communists at that meeting other than Russian Communists?

Mr. Copland. Not that I know of.<sup>70</sup>

Here McCarthy discusses the Russian communists, but as previously noted, a Russian 'communist' Copland met was Shostakovich. Shostakovich's presence at the conference only occurred because he requested Stalin allow his works to be played in Russia once again. Unfortunately for McCarthy, Shostakovich was not a strong communist. It is more likely Shostakovich simply wanted to compose and have his music played. McCarthy, however, continued questioning Copland about political affiliation in music and the Soviets in particular,

The Chairman. Do you agree. . .that there is a political importance in music?

Mr. Copland. I certainly would not. What the Soviet government has been trying to do in forcing their composers to write along lines favorable to themselves is absolutely wrong. It is one of the basic reasons why I could have no sympathy with such an attitude.

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<sup>70</sup> *Aaron Copland's Political Affiliations*, Appendix C.

The Chairman. Would you say a good musician who is a Communist could be important in influencing people in favor of the Communist cause?

Mr. Copland. Perhaps in some indirect way.<sup>71</sup>

Copland maintained his calm but elusive air throughout the hearing as McCarthy brought lists and lists of charges against Copland, some of which had some merit under the criterion McCarthy set up and others which were almost blatant lies. Many of the charges relate to the material already discussed, but they are discussed with little nuance. McCarthy took an angle of “guilty until proven innocent” not “innocent until proven guilty.” These exaggerations set the precedent for McCarthy’s downfall.

After the hearing on May 26, 1953, Copland released a formal statement on the hearing. He stated,

I testified under oath that I never have been and am not now a communist; and that as a composer and free man I have always been and am now opposed to the limitations put on freedom by the Soviet Union. I also testified that as a composer I was not an expert in political matters, but I was a human being sensitive to human problems such as the conditions under which artists can best create their work and the cause of freedom. To the extent that I lent my name in the late 1930’s and 1940’s to organizations or causes, I did so without the knowledge or intention of supporting communist or communist front organizations. When in 1949 there was sufficient knowledge available to me to know that certain organizations might be communist... and that any association by me with them might lead to the erroneous view that I was a communist—which I never was—I no longer would lend my name.<sup>72</sup>

After releasing this statement, expecting another hearing, Copland gathered any evidence he had of his alleged affiliations. He found the money he sent to communist leaning organizations: a total of \$73.70,

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<sup>71</sup> *Aaron Copland’s Political Affiliations.*

<sup>72</sup> Copland, “Statement.”

including \$25.00 to “The American-Soviet Music Society.”<sup>73</sup> He submitted this report to the committee on June 5 with the defense that all connections not in the report were for “good causes” such as civil rights. However, the investigation continued. Copland had difficulty obtaining a passport. In 1955, the FBI completed a thorough investigation because a source told them Copland was a member of the Communist Party. However, the FBI concluded that there was “insufficient evidence to warrant prosecution.”<sup>74</sup> Copland avoided being convicted of either conspiracy against the state or perjury.

### **The Fall of McCarthy and the Rise of Copland**

In the mid-1950s, McCarthy’s power began to wane when he blatantly and publicly lied about Fred Fisher, a young lawyer. Joseph Nye Welch, a lawyer from Boston who hired Fisher, and McCarthy had a public discussion in a hearing. McCarthy became enraged at one of Welch’s jokes and Welch replied, “Until this moment, Senator, I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness. . . . Have you no decency, sir? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?”<sup>75</sup> The room burst into applause for Welch. Because the hearings were televised, it became clear to the American public and the American government that McCarthy overstepped the First Amendment—Copland and others associated with communists should not have been censored and brought before the Senate Committee.

Unlike McCarthy, who was widely condemned, Copland’s career flourished. Pollack notes, “For the most part, Americans, especially in the arts community, recognized the attacks on Copland for what they were: a sham.”<sup>76</sup> Copland continued to meet with Soviet composers almost ten years later. Copland was widely esteemed by the arts community at large and his personal friends and colleagues to whom he wrote for several hours each day.<sup>77</sup> Leonard Bernstein wrote, “I thought Aaron Copland was about the most sensational human being I’d ever come across.”<sup>78</sup> Copland also received several prestigious awards. In 1964, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Lyndon B. Johnson. When awarding Copland, Johnson said, “his music

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<sup>73</sup> Checks, *Aaron Copland Collection*, box 425.

<sup>74</sup> Copland, *FBI File 100-HQ-370562*.

<sup>75</sup> Fitzgerald, 76–77.

<sup>76</sup> Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 459.

<sup>77</sup> Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 4.

<sup>78</sup> Bernstein quoted in Shawn, 39.

echoes our American experience and speaks expressively to an international audience.”<sup>79</sup> In 1986, one of the legislative bodies that tarnished Copland’s reputation, the U.S. House of Representatives, awarded him the congressional Gold Medal.

In the end, historically, it does not seem as though Copland was a communist, although he had ties to communist strains of thought. His nuanced political views as revealed through his associations and music demonstrate a more left-leaning view of politics. Regardless, the historical question somewhat misses the point, because Copland is considered the preeminent American composer regardless of political affiliation. Although the press, some of the American public, and McCarthy all believed that being a communist was a threat to American democracy, Copland’s possible ties to communist groups do not diminish his status as an American or an American composer. Copland’s musical works, travels, and associations with others strengthened the music community both at home and abroad. HUAC and the Senate hearings were unnecessary shows of fear. Ultimately, Copland’s somewhat vague statement “From my impression of it I have never thought of myself as a Communist sympathizer”<sup>80</sup> answers the historical question.

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<sup>79</sup> Johnson.

<sup>80</sup> *Aaron Copland’s Political Affiliations.*



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## Appendices: Excerpts from the Senate Hearing

The following appendices are taken from *Aaron Copland's Political Affiliations: The Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations*, 83<sup>rd</sup> Cong. 101st Cong. 35 (1953).

### Appendix A: Questions Pertaining to Copland's "May Song"

The Chairman. You knew the New Masses was a Communist paper, I suppose.

Mr. Copland. I knew Communists wrote for it.

The Chairman. And Communist controlled?

Mr. Copland. I didn't know it was Communist controlled.

The Chairman. Did you know there were a lot of Communists in it?

Mr. Copland. I knew there was a considerable number.

The Chairman. Do you know now that it is Communist controlled?

Mr. Copland. I would suspect it.

The Chairman. Did you judge contests for the New Masses?

Mr. Copland. Well, I don't know.

The Chairman. Do you recall judging any contest for the New Masses?

Mr. Copland. I may have.

The Chairman. You don't remember?

Mr. Copland. Not precisely. I have a vague recollection. I see here the date is 1937. That is sixteen years ago.

**Appendix B: Questions Pertaining to Copland's Travel with the State Department**

The Chairman. Give us what you have and you can complete it later on.

I may say that I can understand a man who has got to depend upon the government for part of his income to have accepted a job with the government, perhaps knowing he had joined these front organizations, but it seems you have none of these qualifications and have been rather active in a number of these fronts.

Do you care to give us the list?

Mr. Copland. I think, Senator McCarthy, in fairness to me and my activity in relation to the Department of State, it was not primarily a financial relationship. I think that I was chosen because I had a unique position in American symphonic and serious music and I had a reputation as a lecturer on that subject. I, at any rate, was under the impression that I was chosen for that purpose. The payment was not the primary consideration. I was trying to help spread in other countries what we American composers were doing.

Senator McClellan. Were you employed by the federal government—by the State Department?

Mr. Copland. I believe it was in the program of interchange of persons. I don't know if that is an employee—

Senator McClellan. Were you paid by the government?

Mr. Copland. I was paid by the Department of State interchange of persons.

Senator McClellan. Over what period of time?

Mr. Copland. Are you referring now to the non-paid advisory capacity?

Senator McClellan. Give us both. I want to get both in the record.

Mr. Copland. I was a member of the Advisory Committee on Music, Department of State between July 1, 1950 and June 30, 1951.

Senator McClellan. Did you receive any pay for that?

Mr. Copland. No. Except the per diem expenses.

Senator McClellan. How much was the per diem?

Mr. Copland. My memory may not be right. I think it was about \$10.00 a day.

I was also a member of the same advisory committee from September 8, 1941 to June 30, 1942. I was also a music advisor to Nelson Rockefeller's committee when he was coordinator of Inter-American Affairs and that music advisory post was renewed to

June 1943. As far as I know, that was the end of the music advisory capacity.

Senator McClellan. Did you receive a salary?

Mr. Copland. No. That was not a government job.

I was appointed visiting lecturer on music in Brazil, Argentina, etc., by the Grant-In-Aid at a salary of \$500.00 a month over a period of three months around August or September of 1947.

Senator McClellan. Was that plus expenses?

Mr. Copland. I can't quite remember. It may have been per diem expenses when traveling.

Senator Mundt. You did secure traveling expenses for that?

Mr. Copland. Yes, sir.

Senator Mundt. And per diem also?

Mr. Copland. Yes.

Senator Mundt. What was the per diem?

Mr. Copland. It may have been eight or ten dollars a day. My compensation was \$500.00 a month.

I was given a Fulbright professorship for six months to Italy from January to June of 1951 at a salary of \$3,000 for six months, plus transportation to and from.

Senator Mundt. Did you get \$3,000 from the State Department or the difference between what the Italian University paid you and what you received over here.

Mr. Copland. I was paid by the embassy in Rome. I wasn't attached to the university. I was attached to the American Academy in Rome and they housed me, but I was paid at the embassy itself.

Mr. Cohn. Did you have a security clearance before you undertook this?

Mr. Copland. One that I knew about, no.

Mr. Cohn. Did you have to fill out a form prior to receiving this appointment?

Mr. Copland. No.

Mr. Cohn. None at all.

Mr. Copland. I am not sure there were none at all.

Mr. Cohn. Did you go under Public Law 402, the Smith-Mundt Bill?

Mr. Copland. No. I knew of the bill, of course.

**Appendix C: Questions Pertaining to Copland's Involvement with the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace Part 1**

The Chairman. Were you a sponsor and speaker at the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace?

Mr. Copland. Yes, I was.

The Chairman. That was held at the Waldorf-Astoria?

Mr. Copland. Yes, sir.

The Chairman. Counsel should not coach the witness unless he asks for coaching.

What year was this?

Mr. Copland. March 1949.

Mr. Cohn. Now, Mr. Copland, that conference was widely publicized in advance as a completely Communist dominated thing, but nevertheless you sponsored and attended it.

Mr. Copland. I sponsored it and attended it because I was very anxious to give the impression that by sitting down with Russian composers one could encourage the thought that since cultural relations were possible that perhaps diplomatic relations were possible. I did not go there to advance the Communist line or in any way encourage their operations. I went there in order to take part in a cultural panel, which included—

The Chairman. You knew that it had been widely labeled as a completely Communist movement, didn't you?

Mr. Copland. No, I didn't know it was a complete Communist movement at that time. I became convinced of it subsequently. I am very glad I went to that conference because it gave me first-hand knowledge in what ways the Communists were able to use such movements for their own ends. After that I refused to sign the sponsorship of any further peace conference.

The Chairman. Did you meet any Communists at that meeting other than Russian Communists?

Mr. Copland. Not that I know of.

The Chairman. Has the FBI or any other government intelligence agency ever interviewed you as to who you met at that conference?

Mr. Copland. No.



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**Appendix D: Questions Pertaining to Copland's Involvement with the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace Part 2**

Mr. Copland. Could I ask you to tell me again what you said about my having been connected with Sam Adams Darcy after the peace conference?

The Chairman. What date was that?

Mr. Copland. I believe the peace conference was March 1949 and you quoted the Darcy connection, if there was one, at a later date. I gather that your thought is that the Darcy petition may have been signed before that.

The Chairman. Here we are. We have it here. It appears from the report we have that you were a sponsor and speaker at the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace which was held March 25-27, 1945 inclusive.

Mr. Copland. The other matter was considerably before that, the petition.

The Chairman. I beg your pardon.

May I amplify the record. I had previously indicated in the questioning that the Sam Darcy petition had been signed after the New York conference. I misread it. I thought it was December 1949. Actually it was December 1940. You are correct.

Mr. Copland. I was going to explain why I didn't resign until 1950. The music committee was organized to further relations on a musical plane with the Soviet Union. It was an off-shoot of a committee, I believe, that had to do with the State Department. At any rate, that committee itself left the National Council and set itself up as the National Soviet Music Society and since I went with the music committee, I was under the impression that I was no longer a member of the National Council. In order to be sure I had severed connections I wrote a letter in 1950.

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**Appendix E: Questions Pertaining to Copland's Connection to Hanns Eisler Part 1**

The Chairman. You said with certainty. Do you have any reason to believe that you were affiliated with any of the others?

Mr. Copland. I have reason to believe that I was a sponsor of a concert devoted to Hanns Eisler's music in 1948.

The Chairman. In 1948.

Mr. Copland. 1948.

The Chairman. Anything else?

Mr. Copland. Nothing else that I with certainty can—

The Chairman. Not certainty now— that you have any reason to believe you were affiliated with any of these other organizations?

Mr. Copland. No. In view of the shortness of time and the seriousness of this question I am afraid I would have to ask for further time to study and investigate and refresh my mind.

The Chairman. Then at this time you have no recollection of any affiliation with any of the other organizations listed upon the two sheets which I just read into the record.

Mr. Copland. No recollection other than the fact that some of these organizations are names that I have seen on occasion.

The Chairman. Did you sign a petition to the attorney general in behalf of Hanns Eisler?

Mr. Copland. I may have.

The Chairman. Do you recall whether you did or not?

Mr. Copland. Not positively, no.

The Chairman. Did you know Hanns Eisler had been named as a Communist agent at that time?

Mr. Copland. No, I didn't.

The Chairman. When did you first learn that Hanns Eisler had been named as a Communist agent?

Mr. Copland. I never heard that he had been named as a Communist agent. I never heard that he had been named. I knew that he had a reputation in Germany in the twenties of having been a Communist, but I understood that was in the past and since his arrival in America and the Rockefeller grant of \$20,000, it was my impression that the Communist element in him was in the past.

The Chairman. Did you feel that you knew enough about the Hanns Eisler case to petition the attorney general in his behalf?

Mr. Copland. I would have to study what the petition was and think about the problem.

The Chairman. Were you well-acquainted with Hanns Eisler?

Mr. Copland. No.

The Chairman. Who asked you to sign the petition?

Mr. Copland. I have no memory if I did sign it.

The Chairman. This was not too long ago. It was reported in the Daily Worker, December 17, 1947. You say you can't remember whether you signed it or not or who asked you to sign it in 1947?

Mr. Copland. Well, that was six years ago. I might have been asked to sign it. I can't be certain.

The Chairman. In any event, your testimony is that you did not know enough about the case to advise the attorney general as to what he should do?

Mr. Copland. That is my impression at this time.

The Chairman. So that if you signed it you were either signing it out of sympathy for Eisler, the Communist, or you were duped into doing it?

Mr. Copland. I don't think that is a fair summary of my feeling. I have never sympathized with Communists as such. My interest in Eisler was purely as a musician. I think he is, in spite of his political ideas, a great musician and my signing of the concert sponsorship was in relation to that feeling.

The Chairman. Concert sponsorship? It is the petition I am talking about. Do you use the same term so many witnesses use? Do you refer to political beliefs—do you consider the Communist party as a political party in the American sense?

Mr. Copland. In the American sense? Not since the designation of the Supreme Court.

The Chairman. Was this a benefit for Eisler at which you appeared on February 28th, 1948?

Mr. Copland. I don't remember.

Pardon me. Will you repeat the question?

The Chairman. Did you appear at an Eisler program at Town Hall, New York, on February 28, 1948?

Mr. Copland. No, I did not. That was purely sponsorship.

The Chairman. Did you sponsor that?

Mr. Copland. I was one of the sponsors.

The Chairman. Did you know at that time he was in difficulty with the law enforcement agencies of this country for underground or espionage activities?

Mr. Copland. I may have known that, but my sponsorship was in terms of music only and him as a musician.

The Chairman. Would you feel today if you knew an outstanding musician who was also a member of the Communist espionage ring

would you sponsor a benefit for him? Mr. Copland. Certainly not. The Chairman. Then do you think it was improper to do it in 1948? Mr. Copland. 1948? I had no such knowledge in 1948.

The Chairman. Well, if you signed a petition to the attorney general in 1947—

Mr. Copland. Senator McCarthy, I didn't say I signed it. Mr. Cohn. Do you think your signature was forged on all these things?

Mr. Copland. I don't know.

The Chairman. Do you feel a man using common sense, Mr. Copland, apparently signing the petition to the attorney general advising him what he should do in the Eisler case—who was accused of espionage then—do you think the following February—this was in December that the petition was signed and this was about two months later that you sponsored a benefit for this man—you certainly knew of his alleged espionage activities.

Mr. Copland. The concert was not a benefit as far as I know, and I took no part in the concert other than just sponsor it. I didn't deny or affirm signing the petition. I said that in relation to all these organizations I must have more time to give consideration to them. I have had three days since receiving the telegram and finding myself here. I am trying to do my best to remember things. I am under oath and want to be cautious.

## **Appendix F: Questions Pertaining to Copland's Relationship with Hanns Eisler Part 2**

The Chairman. Were you a good friend of Hanns Eisler?

Mr. Copland. No, I knew him slightly. I was not a good friend of his.

The Chairman. Did you meet him socially?

Mr. Copland. Yes.

The Chairman. Roughly, how many times?

Mr. Copland. Roughly, this is a guess, two or three times.

The Chairman. When did you last see him?

Mr. Copland. My impression is I last saw him in California.

The Chairman. Did you agree with the statement by Eisler that "Revolutionary music is now more powerful than ever. Its political and artistic importance is growing daily."

Mr. Copland. That is a vague statement. I don't know what he means by "revolutionary music."

The Chairman. Do you agree with him that there is a political importance in music?

Mr. Copland. I certainly would not. What the Soviet government has been trying to do in forcing their composers to write along lines favorable to themselves is absolutely wrong. It is one of the basic reasons why I could have no sympathy with such an attitude.

The Chairman. Would you say a good musician who is a Communist could be important in influencing people in favor of the Communist cause?

Mr. Copland. Perhaps in some indirect way.

The Chairman. One final question.

Quoting Hanns Eisler, is this a correct description of you by Eisler:

"I am extremely pleased to report a considerable shift to the left among the American artistic intelligentsia. I don't think it would be an exaggeration to state that the best people in the musical world of America (with very few exceptions) share at present extremely progressive ideas. Their names? They are Aaron Copland."

Would you say that is a correct description of you?

Mr. Copland. No, I would not. I would say he is using knowledge of my liberal feelings in the arts and in general to typify me as a help to his own cause.