RICE UNIVERSITY

MUSIC FROM THE RED PONY -
FILM MUSIC BY AARON COPLAND

BY
AUBREY S. TUCKER

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APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

George Burt, Chairman
Associate Professor of Music

Anne Schnoebelen
Professor of Music

Ellsworth Milburn
Professor of Music

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ABSTRACT

As the motion picture is the twentieth century's unique contribution to the dramatic arts, academic attention to the study of film music is more than justified. The greatest hindrance to research is the unavailability of many film scores.

The film composer's task is specialized, demanding the ability to create quickly and coolly under pressure.

Aaron Copland developed as a dramatic composer from the beginning. While studying in Paris, he was influenced toward seeking an accessible and uniquely American style. His arrival at that style in the late 1930's preceded an invitation to compose music for films.

Analysis of the original score for The Red Pony reveals Aaron Copland as a skillful and artistic film composer. The Copland music is also discussed as it relates to other aspects of the film. Copland was a dominant influence on film scores after 1940, particularly concerning themes of Americana and the West.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are two men without whom this research would have not been possible:

David Walker, Mr. Copland’s assistant, has been of immeasurable help, not only in granting permission to use a copy of the composer’s Red Pony manuscript, but in a continuing friendly and caring communication to be of any help that he could.

George Burt of the Rice University Shepherd School of Music has been my mentor, advisor and friend since the very inception of this project well over a year ago.

The Shepherd School of Music graduate studies faulty has been most supportive toward this study, and I particularly wish to thank Anne Schneebelen and Ellsworth Milburn.

The Music Division of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. is most appreciated for sending me Copland’s Red Pony manuscript copy, and in their willingness to help. Equally helpful has been the American Music Center in New York. I wish to also acknowledge the Rice University Fondren Library and the University of Houston; M.D. Anderson Library for their expert assistance.
There is a third man without whom this study would be impossible, and to whom I dedicate it -- Aaron Copland. Though for him the light is sadly failing, it will forever be brilliant to those of us privileged to hear his music and to know something about his life and works.
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MUSIC FROM THE RED PONY -

FILM MUSIC BY AARON COPLAND

BY

AUBREY S. TUCKER
INTRODUCTION

Every composer functions within the limits of his own time and place and in response to the needs of his audience.

If film music sound tracks had existed in the 1920's, Aaron Copland (1900- ) would have undoubtedly been composing for them. Although he composed effective music in both abstract and programmatic styles, it was the suggestion of drama that marked his most successful scores. His development as a composer was strongly accompanied by interests in opera, theater, literature, art, and film. He evolved a popular yet serious style that was essentially dramatic and essentially American. As Hollywood films were obviously dramatic and certainly American, it was almost inevitable that Copland's music would not only find its way to major motion pictures, but would, in addition, become a dominant influence.

As shown by his score for The Red Pony, Copland demonstrated great understanding and sympathy for the drama that his music served. His music was accessible without being patronizing, and constantly maintained a high standard of integrity. His musical ego never seemed to mind sharing the screen.

And like Stravinsky, Copland "...never cared much for poverty."²
I. WHY NOT MORE SERIOUS ATTENTION TO FILM MUSIC?

No discussion of movie music ever gets very far without having to face this problem: Should one hear a movie score?¹

In view of the great popularity and artistic appreciation of motion pictures, it seems somewhat surprising that more serious attention has not been paid to the contributions that Aaron Copland and others have made to film music. Of what there is, Martin Marks has written, "Books on film music pass speedily out of print, while articles lie scattered and buried in ephemeral or out-of-reach journals."² In Aaron Copland's case, we are fortunate that he has written rather widely (and well) on music, with some references to his own film experiences. On the other hand, his literary gifts have made him seem more accessible, and have probably inhibited some scholarly inquiry through other sources. Moreover, the mixed media in which film music is only a part probably presents the greatest obstacle to written analysis and criticism. Music is difficult enough to discuss on silent pages. When the element of a scripted film is added, it can indeed challenge the reader. And what about the writer? Marks also observes,

"...research into film music requires an understanding of not one but two nonverbal systems of communication, as well as the problematical jargons with which we attempt to describe each of them in speech. In this age of specialized studies, few scholars have been able to master more than half of the subject."³
A more frustrating and sometimes sinister inhibition to the accessibility of film music, for audience, scholar, and often even the composer himself, is the business and resultant legal end of the medium. To begin with, film studios have always been very defensive of their very expensive properties, and composers generally surrender all copyrights to production companies when they are contracted to do a film. Even Copland's own sketches, which were used for the studies which comprise the main body of this thesis, were made on manuscript paper inscribed, "Property of Republic Productions" (see Figure 1, Copland Sketch Score [CSS], p. 1) - he was doubtless invited to do all work on "company" paper.

What the studios had made common practice was codified into the U.S. Copyright Act of 1976 -- the first complete revision of U.S. copyright law since 1909, when, of course, sound on film did not exist. The 1976 law considers a motion picture a "complete work", with no extended copyrights to individual contributors, such as composers, unless the film uses music that has been previously copyrighted. Studios often hope and are sometimes desperate that sales of sound track recordings and music publications contribute substantially to the revenue of a film. Indeed, a number of films have grossed more from recording and sheet music sales than from screenings.
Figure 1. - "Prelude and Main Titles" (Copland sketch
Score, p. 1)

Prod. ____________

Title ____________

M-100

Copland

(Copland)
Thus, film producers are not generally disposed to allow a composer to compete with their product by making the music available on his own behalf. The final frustration on this point is that the only available music from films is usually "lead" sheets of popular songs. The original dramatic scores rarely reach any other venues except for occasional "sound track" albums and in the aforementioned suites. The suites are rare and, at any rate, are rewritten versions of the film music. Because of its very nature, film music is simply not in the repertoire.

Films are produced in what is essentially a business environment. Producers talk about box office gross far more than they discuss camera angles, film aesthetics, or the judgements of motion picture critics. . . . The most interesting comments on the role of producers in relation to motion picture music come from the composers themselves. Unfortunately, much of what they have to say about their employers in private is unprintable, and they are reluctant to discuss them publicly. The basic fact of life is that the producer’s authority is absolute. (Aaron Copland once described his function as that of a dictator.)

An interesting story along this vein was related by the eminent film composer David Raksin when he visited Houston to conduct a concert of his film music at Rice University in November 1987. It seems that a very prominent producer called Raksin to discuss doing the music for his new film. Raksin was delighted when the producer informed him that he wanted "quality music along the lines of Alban Berg."
(Mr. Raksin was himself a student of Arnold Schoenberg.) He invited the producer to his California ranch for a Sunday
cookout to discuss the project. When they retired to his
den to talk business, a recording of Berg’s opera Wozzeck
was playing, as planned by Raksin. The producer began the
conversation by saying, "Let’s get that ____ off of your
record player and talk about writing some music." 7

Consistent with the business considerations of most film
producers is that there is almost no regard for any future
historical or academic implications of their projects.
Commercial films are huge financial deals, so educational
(and otherwise unprofitable) gestures are minimal. Each
modern commercial film often involves an investment risk of
millions, even tens of millions of dollars, and the careers
of the producer and director are often dependent on the
bottom line result of the project at hand. With The Red
Pony, we will see how such considerations adversely affected
a producer/director (Lewis Milestone) and screenwriter (John
Steinbeck) who were both generally considered to have high
artistic standards.

In Our New Music, Aaron Copland offered some most
insightful observations on how film producers might be
coaxed into giving their music properties more regard:

Why shouldn’t the music critic cover important
film premieres? . . . a large part of music heard by
the American public is heard in the film theater.
Unconsciously, the cultural level of music is
certain to be raised if better music is written for
films. This will come about more quickly, I think,
if producers and directors know that scores are
being heard and criticized. One of the ways they
will find out what’s good and what’s bad is to read
it in the papers.
The real answer to the dilemma of film music accessibility would be a National Film Music Archive which would both serve the scholarly community and protect the rights of film makers. It has been a topic discussed in trade and educational journals and progress is being made toward that goal.\(^9\)

Of course, there is also the factor, often justified, of academic prejudice as to the seriousness of film music as art. An important mission of this study is to help show that Aaron Copland is as deserving of appreciation for his film scores as he is for his concert music -- and he is not alone.

Happily, there does appear to be a growing interest in hearing music from some of the more noteworthy film composers. Among others, David Raksin, Jerry Goldsmith, and John Williams (now Boston Pops Music Director) are occasionally heard conducting adaptations of their film music for the concert stage.
II. THE TASK OF THE FILM COMPOSER

For the American composer of today, it is the closest thing in our society to the setup of, say, J.S. Bach who, in a similarly functional capacity, supplied a steady, workaday flow of music for his church in Leipzig.

The job of composing film music often appears to be, in many ways, a task that demands more technique than artistry. The film composer is placed in the difficult position of having received his instructions to compose only after all of the necessary production work has been done except for final editing. Thus, millions have usually been invested, all shooting done, and now a tiny window of time is allowed for the music to be composed, recorded, and edited into the film before it is copied and distributed to theaters that have already been booked. A stiff penalty must be paid if the film does not arrive on time. As Copland describes it:

The demand for speed from the composer is familiar to anyone who has ever worked 'in pictures'. The composer may sit around no end of time, waiting for the picture to be done; as soon as it's finished the director, the producer, the script writer -- everybody -- is in a frightful hurry; valuable time is passing, and the studio has visions of the money it is losing each day that the film is not in a theater. It is difficult to make studio executives realize that no one has yet discovered how to write notes any faster than it was done circa A.D. 400. The average movie score is approximately 40 minutes long. The usual time allotted for composing it is about two weeks. For Of Mice and Men, I had about six weeks, and I believe that other composers insist on that much time for writing an elaborate score. 2

There is a "standard" contract for film composers that stipulates that the music be composed and recorded within 10
weeks. In practice, however, producers often insist that the job be done in as little as three or four weeks. Most film composers rely on orchestrators to fill out their sketches, which, of course, saves them a great deal of time. Copland among others insisted on doing his own orchestration. In a Film interview, Copland responded to the question of whether he personally orchestrated his film music. He answered, "Composers should always orchestrate their own music, since no one else is competent to say exactly what tonal coloring is wanted, and since the tonal coloring is an essential part of the expression value of the music." As Bernard Herrmann, a great career film composer with 50 feature length films from Citizen Kane (1940) to Taxi Driver (1975), told Regal S. Brown, 'I'll give you the first page of the Lohengrin "Prelude", with all of the instruments marked, to write it out. I bet you don't come within 50% of Wagner.' Needless to say, composers who insist on doing their own orchestrations are still expected to meet deadlines.

Of course, the suggestion of these "deadlines" as inhibiting the artistic creativity of the film composer ignores the fact that most commissions for concert compositions are predicated on performance schedules. It is well known that some of the greatest concert and theater works in the repertoire were composed in remarkably brief periods of time.
This brings us to another important observation regarding film composers. In this, the first age where dead composers are more generally in demand than living ones, films offer real opportunity. As Copland expressed, "...Hollywood is...a place where composers are actually needed. The accent is entirely on the living composer...Theoretically, at any rate, the town is a composer's Eldorado."\(^6\)

Copland devoted a chapter to "Film Music" in the revised *What to Listen For In Music* -- actually derived from a *New York Times* article in 1949, and described the duties of the film composer after the film is completed:

The first run-through of the film for the composer is usually a solemn moment. After all, he must live with it for several weeks. The solemnity of the occasion is emphasized by the exclusive audience that views it with him: the producer, the director, the music head of the studio, the picture editor, the music cutter, the conductor, the orchestrator -- in fact, anyone involved with the scoring of the picture.

This is called the "spotting" session. Discussion at this viewing leads to the important decisions of when to have music and when to have silence accompanying the film. Almost all of the music sequences will be brief, and "...perhaps thirty or more such sequences, may add up to from forty to ninety minutes of music."\(^8\) While the composer is probably weighing the value the omission of music as heavily as scoring,

The producer-director, on the other hand, is more prone to think of music in terms of its
immediate functional usage. Sometimes he has ulterior motives: anything wrong with a scene -- a poor bit of acting, a badly read line, an embarrassing pause -- he secretly hopes will be covered up by a clever composer."

As to how music can serve the screen, Copland offers:

1. Creating a more convincing atmosphere of time and place;
2. Underlining psychological refinements the unspoken thoughts of a character or the unseen implications of a situation;
3. Serving as a kind of neutral background filler;
4. Building a sense of continuity;
5. Underpinning the theatrical build-up of a scene and rounding it off with finality.

Having established the targeted scenes for music in the "spotting" meeting, the composer is now given a "cue sheet" by the music cutter, which describes the action in each sequence with timings in thirds of a second. Cutters using today's digital technology may time to a hundredth of a second. Although some composers score the film from the cue sheet alone, without referring again to the film, Copland preferred to use a machine called a Movieola, with which he could run the film back and forth as he experimented with the music cues at the piano. Other composers, such as Erich Wolfgang Korngold, would have a projectionist run the film for them in a projection room. However the composer chooses to remind himself of the sequences that he is scoring, now comes that brief, highly charged episode when his artistic contribution is made to the film -- he composes the music.
Although the film, in a larger sense, has a deadline schedule of post production, preview screenings, and the theater bookings, the composer now points to his own personal deadline -- usually scheduled months in advance -- the studio recording sessions of his score. Writes Copland:

The scoring stage is a happy-making place for the composer. Hollywood has gathered to itself some of American's finest performers; the music will be beautifully played and recorded with a technical perfection not to be matched anywhere else.

Most composers like to invite their friends to be present at the recording session of important sequences. The reason is that neither the composer nor his friends are ever again likely to hear the music sound out in concert style. 12

As Copland cautions in *Our New Music*:

For the composer the day of recording is perhaps the high point. He has worked hard and long and is anxious to test his work. He hears his music sounded for the first time while the film is being shown. . . . But if he wishes to remain happy he had better stay away from the sound recording booth. For here all the music is being recorded at about the same medium dynamic level so that later on the loudness and softness may be regulated when the moment comes for rerecording. 13

The film score recording session would itself undoubtedly be a marvelous script source for a film. Legendary stories abound about this crucial event: producers and directors throwing out entire scores (and, of course their composers!), young film composers finding their day of discovery, moments of true magic and beauty, and eons of tragedy and despair.

In describing his "sessions" on the recording stages of Paramount and 20th Century-Fox, David Baskerville relates:
These facilities are huge, upholstered barns. I felt that no music-making environment could be less hospitable. These cavernous chambers are cluttered with a big projection screen, discarded equipment, dusty chairs and an old AFI contractor leering at his watch. Besides a half-acre of musicians, sound stages are attended during scoring sessions by audio technicians, a music librarian, the music cutter, assistant directors, the conductor’s agent, the producer’s girlfriend, and the head copyist who has the appearance of being on the threshold of a nervous collapse.

After the music has been recorded on numerous recording "tracks", it is mixed into a balanced form, free of technical faults. The usual format is monophonic, but some films employ multiple sound tracks.

Now comes what Copland referred to as "...a kind of composer’s purgatory." -- The rerecording session in the dubbing room. This is where all sound sources in the film are synchronized by mixing engineers.

"A movie composer’s immortality lasts from the recording stage to the dubbing room." (Eric Korngold quoted by Copland in What to Listen For in Music) In attendance are the composer, music cutter, sound effects man, often the director, and, when allowed, the composer. "Not infrequently, the composer approaches despair when his precious music gets lost behind shouting dialogue or screaming sirens," writes Baskerville. Copland elegantly adds, "This is the place that calls out for all a composer’s self-control; it’s a moment for philosophy." Ever the observer of how the media he served could be improved,
Copland more than once raised the question of why the critical power to destroy music with the twist of a knob must rest with a sound engineer. In his *New York Times Magazine* article, he answered, "What is called for is a new species, a sound mixer who is half musician and half engineer. . ." ¹⁹

Although the composer's work with the film is essentially finished, his "purgatory" is not. The tonal volume of the film sound track can still be controlled by the individual theater manager. . .who is, of course, "susceptible to advice from Tom, Dick, and Harry sitting anywhere in the house." ²⁰

With all of these inhibitions cited on the artistic freedom of the film composer, why be an apologist for Aaron Copland's (or anyone else's) film music, or why consider composing for films as a serious artistic endeavor? In his article, "Copland as a Film Composer", Frederick Sternfeld summarizes:

. . .in the last analysis the strength of the cinema lies in the fact that its novel and plentiful resources challenge the artist as artist. Monteverdi responded to the challenge of opera as did Stravinsky to Diaghilev's ballets, for it is not possible mechanically to transport existing art forms to a new medium. The difficulties of adjusting to new types of dramatic environment have been defied and surmounted in the past. The stature and example of Copland augur well for the future." ²¹
III. COPLAND’S FORMATIVE YEARS

If there was anything wrong with being twenty in the twenties, it is being eighty in the eighties. From a musical standpoint it was a marvelous time to be alive. . . . I have often thought that all our preoccupations in music since then may be traced back to that period. Nothing really new, with the possible exception of electronic and computer music, has happened since.

The threads of Aaron Copland and Hollywood films, were actually intertwined long before his early days as student of Nadia Boulanger in Paris. From his childhood in Brooklyn, Copland had an interest in dramatic music. Laurine, his older sister by eight years, studied piano and voice at the Metropolitan Opera School. He began "... hanging about the piano. . . ." when she practiced and she would give him the programs and libretti from the Met performances that she would attend. Despite his obvious musical interests, his parents, who owned and ran a moderately successful department store, were not eager to provide young Copland with lessons, "... after all, they had paid for lessons for the other kids without remarkable results. . . .", but Laurine began giving her young brother lessons when he was about eleven.

At that age, Copland began his first composition that has survived, "... about seven measures for chorus and piano. . . . At the top of the page stands the rather ambitious title: 'Music for the opera, Zenatello, Act I.'"
As his musical studies became formalized during his teens, Copland also developed a great interest in reading outside of the field of music. At the Brooklyn Public Library on Montague Street, "...I made my acquaintance with Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis, Romain Rolland's *Jean Christophe* and Walt Whitman's *I Hear America Singing*. Reading became a passion second only to music." Through his friend and literary mentor, Aaron Schaffer (who later became a respected poet) a French major at Johns Hopkins University, Copland also developed a passion for French.

After graduation from the Brooklyn Boys High School in 1918 Copland, disdaining collegiate studies "...to devote myself entirely to the study of music...", began playing professionally as a popular music pianist, much to the consternation of his friend Schaffer. His first engagement was to play for dances, at the Finnish Socialist Hall in Brooklyn, which was then a center for 'radical' politics -- the Russian Revolution was a year earlier, and World War I had not yet ended. The ideas of the Left, introduced to Copland at age 18, would also play a curious role in his Hollywood destiny.

Copland continued playing piano jobs at the hotels of the "...Borscht Belt of the Catskill Mountains..." through the summers of 1919 and 1920, working odd jobs and studying during the rest of the year. His friend Aaron Schaffer studied at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1920, stirring
his interest a great deal. Copland read in *Musical America*
"...of a plan by the French government to establish a
summer school for American musicians in the Palace of
Fountainebleau. ...a gesture of appreciation to America for
its friendship during World War I. I was in such a rush to
enroll that I was the first student to sign up and be
accepted." However, he would not be in Paris with his
friend Schaffer, who had accepted a position of the
University of Texas. ¹⁰

In an interview anticipating his 80th birthday, Copland. ...‘reminisced about his three years of
study in Paris and how he became very conscious of
the French school of composers who ‘sounded as
French in comparison with Brahms and Beethoven and
the rest.’" ¹¹

Although Copland was not very impressed with his music
studies at Fountainebleau in the summer of 1921, he was
fascinated by Napoleon’s grand old palace, particularly its
library. He also found in himself a further humanistic
commitment, this time in pacifism. After a tour of the
battlefield and cemetery at Rheims, he wrote his parents,

One thing is sure — I am absolutely inoculated
against war fever, for all time to come, and not
if everybody on earth stand on their heads, would
I fight for any army in any cause. I’d go to
prison first. If everyone did the same there
would be no war. ... ¹²

This position by Copland helped keep him politically
unaffiliated throughout his life, and protected him when
many of his close friends and associates were being
persecuted in the 1950’s for their earlier leftist leanings.
It should be noted, however, that in many ways, he had been a "fellow traveler." He was undoubtedly fortunate that he was past induction age when the draft was enacted in the United States in 1940.

The other remarkable event for Copland at Fountainebleau was his introduction to the great composition instructor Nadia Boulanger. She was teaching harmony at the Paris Conservatoire, and Djina Ostrowska, a harpist friend of Copland's at Fountainebleau, encouraged him to visit her class. He repeatedly demurred, "I had had several years of harmony, so, of course, I wasn't interested in further harmonic studies." It may be that his disillusion with his Fountainebleau composition instructor, Paul Vidal, who "...had little or no sympathy for the contemporary musical idiom..." may have played a part in this attitude.

Ostrowska finally prevailed, and Copland visited a Boulanger class:

I no longer recall what Mademoiselle Boulanger was doing that day, harmonically speaking, that was so striking, although I remember that the subject was Boris Godunov. Her sense of involvement in the whole subject of harmony made it more lively than I had ever thought it could be. She created a kind of excitement about the subject, emphasizing how it was, after all, the fundamental basis of our music, when one really thought about it, I suspected that first day that I had found my composition teacher. Later in the summer, I was rather surprised and flattered when Mademoiselle invited me with a group of her students to come to the other side of Paris for tea at her summer home in Gargenville. It felt like special attention, so I went, and that day I made the decision to study with her after returning to Paris in the fall.
During Copland’s Paris years (1921-24), he shared a room with Harold Clurman, the younger brother of the husband of one of Copland’s cousins. Clurman, interested in writing, came to Paris to study French civilization at the Sorbonne. Their friendship was fast and "...lasted for sixty years, until his death in 1980." Clurman, later critic, writer, and director, was a most important factor in the development of artistic and professional career of Copland. With Clurman, Copland frequented concerts, ballets, plays, films, and the cafes of Montparnasse and the Left Bank. They met George Antheil in 1923, who lived above Sylvia Beach’s famous bookstore Shakespeare and Company. There they would see Hemingway and James Joyce — *Ulysses* was then being published by Miss Beach. Through his association with Boulanger, Copland found himself rubbing shoulders with all of the important composers in Paris in the early 20’s. She held Wednesday "teas" for her students, before which they performed and discussed new music, sang Monteverdi and Gesualdo madrigals. "...which were virtually unperformed at the time." and examined "...the latest literary and artistic works. ...Kafka, Mann, Gide, Pound." Guests to her Wednesday teas after *dechiffrage* classes, included Stravinsky, Milhaud, Poulenc, Roussel, Ravel, Villa-Lobos and Saint-Saens ("He played the piano and he played well, though he was in his eighties.")
Copland was particularly interested in the group of composers coined *Les Six* by the critic Henri Collet --

"...a group of composers who realized that they could more easily set heard as a unit than individually." -- they were Francis Poulenc, Georges Auric, Germaine Tailleferre, Louis Durey (who "...seceded from the group in 1923 and was not heard of again.")) and, most striking to Copland, Arthur Honegger and Darius Milhaud. Milhaud "...and others of the group taunted the critics, who fought back, giving *Les Six* a great deal of notoriety and publicity."

*Les Six* must have influenced the organization of the Copland/Sessions Concerts several years later in New York and Copland's general interest in group artistic efforts. "Erik Satie was their musical godfather. He had a program for French music: it had to be anti-German, anti-grandiose, anti-impressionist, and even anti-impressive." Satie certainly appears to have been Copland's role model when he returned to New York dedicated to organizing and nurturing other young American composers.

For me there was no doubt that Stravinsky was the most exciting musical creator on the scene. He was the hero of my student days, and I was relieved to hear at one of Boulanger's classes that he composed at the piano as I had always done. Heading the list of Stravinsky's gifts was his rhythmic virtuosity. There was also much to learn from Stravinsky's bold use of dissonance and his unusual instrumental combinations that projected sharply defined colors so differently from the luminous, soft lines of French impressionism. I was particularly struck by the strong Russian element in his music. He borrowed freely from folk materials, and I have no doubt that this strongly influenced me to try to find a way to a distinctively American music. The most important thing for me, though, was that Stravinsky proved it was possible for a
twentieth-century composer to create his own tradition. 22

The two composers grew to know each other in later years. "In Hollywood during the early forties, Stravinsky was full of praise for the film The City. He told me that the score was wonderful." 23 These revealing insights by Copland, of course, show the influences that led to his development as a total composer, not merely one of film music. But it was these very qualities that made him first seem to be of use to the motion picture community, and then to become a cherished and often imitated film composer.

Sternfeld writes that Copland's talent:

...is a singularly dramatic flair. The inner spacing of his music is theatrical in the word's best sense. In tempo, the distribution of points of repose, the quiet intensity with which climaxes are reached and sustained, the uncanny judgement with which repetition and contrast are employed -- all reveal an awareness of the public's responses to dramatic entertainment without, however, any condescension to that public. 24
IV. COPLAND ARRIVES AS A COMPOSER

'What I was trying for in the simpler works was only partly the writing of compositions that might speak to a broader audience. More than that they gave me an opportunity to try for a more homespun musical idiom....This musical vernacular...was perhaps nothing more than a recrudescence of my old interest in making a connection between music and life about me.'

Copland returned to New York in 1924 unknown in the United States as a composer, but events in Paris prior to his leaving would serve him well during the coming year. In Paris in 1923, he and Harold Clurman had seen the German horror film Nosferatu together. "It was about a vampire magician with the power to make corpses come to life." Copland decided to write his first ballet based on the story, with Clurman doing his first scenario. The piece was eventually titled Grohg. Copland and Clurman had no production entrée, both were still essentially students, but nevertheless they optimistically wrote the entire ballet. It was never staged, but the introduction "Cortége macabre" was arranged (under Boulanger's tutelage) as an orchestral work -- Copland's first, and inspired by a film. Other material was later used by Copland in his Dance Symphony. "Grohg as a youthful work had its shortcomings, but it foreshadowed my preoccupation in jazz for the next few years and was the forerunner of my later ballets."

The great Russian conductor Serge Koussevitzky had been conducting concerts in Paris in the early twenties,
championing new music. When it was announced that he would become the new Music Director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra after he concluded his Paris concerts in 1924, Mademoiselle Boulanger said "We must go and visit him!" She was on cordial terms with Koussevitsky and took it for granted that he would want to meet a young composer from the country he was about to visit for the first time."\(^4\)  

*Cortège macabre* being Copland’s only orchestral portfolio, he took it with him when he and Boulanger were received by Koussevitsky, who was also entertaining Prokofiev that day. The Maestro asked Copland to play his piece. As Copland played, Prokofiev:

"]...much to my discomfort, . . . stood directly behind me. . . .-- I wanted to do my selling job alone. When I had finished, and before anyone could say anything, Prokofiev blurted out, ‘Too much bass ostinati.’\(^5\)

Koussevitsky, however, seemed taken with the piece and promised to program it with the Boston Symphony the following season. He also knew that Boulanger would be in New York at the invitation of Walter Damrosch, and invited her to appear with the Boston Symphony.

"You will write an organ concerto, Mademoiselle Boulanger will play it and I will conduct!". . .when we left, I exclaimed, "Do you really think I can do it?" (I had never heard a note of my own orchestration or written anything for the organ. . .) She pointed her finger at me. "You can do it."\(^6\)
Boulanger contacted Damrosch and had the yet unwritten Copland piece for organ and orchestra scheduled for premiere in her New York program.

Thus, Aaron Copland returned to New York, unknown and short of funds, to resume his piano playing jobs, but with a major work to compose and performances scheduled by both the Boston and The New York Symphonies in the coming season.7

What was eventually titled Copland's *Symphony for Organ and Orchestra* was premiered on January 11, 1925, getting an unintended publicity boost from Maestro Damrosch at its conclusion:

As things quieted down, Mr. Damrosch advanced to the footlights and to everyone's surprise, addressed the audience, "Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "I am sure you will agree that if a gifted young man can write a symphony like this at twenty-three" -- and here he paused dramatically, leaving the audience to expect a proclamation of a new musical genius -- then continued, "within five years he will be ready to commit murder!"

The day after the premiere, a news article proclaimed, "Young composer to Commit Murder!"8

Copland was on his way. Of particular praise was critic Paul Rosenfeld, who became an active Copland supporter.9 Rosenfeld attempted to find an arts patron to assist Copland (he had advertised as a music teacher with no results). Eventually, he introduced Copland to Alma Wertheim, "...the daughter of Ambassador Morgenthau and a wealthy patron of the arts. ..."10 After twice having Copland play for her and giving the matter some thought, she gave him a check for $1,000. "I don't know how, without
that, I would have managed in the year that followed while I
was composing Music for the Theater.\textsuperscript{11}

The orchestral suite Music for the Theater continued
Copland’s flair for the dramatic as shown in his Organ
Symphony and ". . . applied some syncopated and polymetric
rhythms and some ‘blue’ intervals. . . . This was again
evidenced in the Symphonic Ode (1927-28).\textsuperscript{12}

Material support came from the MacDowell Colony and the
Guggenheim Foundation ". . . -- he had returned at a lucky
moment when advanced New Yorkers were hoping to outdo
Diaghilev’s Paris.\textsuperscript{13} Copland joined the League of
Composers and contributed to its journal, Modern Music. In
the summers of 1926, 1927, and 1929 he returned to Europe.
With Roger Sessions, who continued to live in Europe, he
cosponsored the Copland-Sessions Concerts in New York,
1928-31, which were, naturally, dedicated to new music. He
was among the founders of the Yaddo Festivals and the Arrow
Music Press. Copland succeeded Rosenfeld as a lecturer to
laymen at the New School for Social Research, 1927-37 and
his lectures and articles were compiled into the books What
To Listen for in Music and Our New Music.\textsuperscript{14}

Copland completed his Piano Concerto in 1926 and
premiered it with the Boston Symphony with himself at the
keyboard. Though the Boston reviews were particularly
negative, Koussevitzky courageously kept the piece in his
New York program the following month. Surprisingly, the
reviews were more favorable.\textsuperscript{15} Koussevitzky continued to program the work, and undoubtedly was greatly responsible for its acceptance. Copland was invited to perform the Piano Concerto at the Hollywood Bowl the following summer giving him his first opportunity to travel west:

There at rehearsals the musicians actually hissed. The conductor, Albert Coates, was distraught: "Boys! Boys, please!" he pleaded, pointing to me at the piano. "He's one of us!" The Los Angeles Times reported (21 July, 1928)

"Bowl stirred up a frenzy. . . .Fans greet sophisticated jazz with derision in catcalls, hisses, laughs, and applause follow pianist. . . ."\textsuperscript{16}

Copland associated with and gave financial support to his friend Harold Clurman's Group Theater when it was formed in the winter of 1930-31. Clurman, Lee Strasberg, and Cheryl Crawford held Friday evening meetings ". . . after showtime for discussions and lectures by the directors and others -- among them, Waldo Frank on the relationship of the theater to the American social system and Copland on the uses of modern music in the theater."\textsuperscript{17} Other contributors were the film photographers, Paul Strand and Ralph Steiner and architect William Lescarze. The group eventually accepted Copland's offer of the Copland-Sessions offices at Steinway Hall as a meeting place. Regular attendees were Stella Adler (who later married Clurman), Morris Carnovsky, John Garfield, Robert Lewis, Sandy Meisner, Clifford Odets, and Franchot Tone. The political idealism of Group Theater in the early thirties was decidedly Marxist, and Copland,
while not a real activist, was certainly being "... nudged toward the Left..."\textsuperscript{18} The Depression was hard upon America in the early 30’s and was hurting Copland’s family.

Perhaps most important, his compositional style had become less dramatic and more abstract, displaying an admittedly Schoenberg influence.\textsuperscript{19} His works at that time, including the \textit{Piano Variations} (1930) and the \textit{Short Symphony} (1932-3) were winning the accolades of his intellectual friends but were failing to achieve the audience that he had enjoyed in the late 20’s.\textsuperscript{21} Copland was ready for a change.

By 1931, The Copland-Sessions Concerts had been experiencing friction between the two principals for three seasons, primarily because Sessions was rarely on hand (he was living in Europe). Sessions was uneasy at being so prominently publicized as being responsible for concerts in which he played little or no role.\textsuperscript{22} Included in the final Copland-Sessions Concerts season, however, was a significant concert attesting to Copland’s interest in film music -- at a time when the medium was very new.

Roger and I had agreed that the time had come to present something unusual. We decided on a film program with music to be played by thirty members of the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra conducted by Hugh Ross. It took place 15 March 1931 at the Broadhurst Theater and was considered "arty" and very daring. Included were three films by the young avant-garde photographer Ralph Steiner, one with music by Blitzstein and two with scores by McPhee; films by Cavalcanti and news clips with scores by Milhaud; my \textit{Music for the Theatre}; and Sessions \textit{Black Maskers}.\textsuperscript{23}
The following year (1932) Copland became the informal leader and mentor of the Young Composer’s Group in New York, the ‘regulars’ were Arthur Berger, Henry Brant, Israel Citkowitz, Lehman Engel, Vivian Fine, Irwin Heilner, Bernard Herrmann, Jerome Moross and Elie Siegmeister. They decided on an age limit of twenty-five (except for me, of course).” Other than that, there were no rules. 24

Copland was, at thirty-one, becoming an elder statesman of American music. Henry Brant wrote to him on May second, 1932, "You are destined to become the ‘Dean of American Composers!’" 25 (Henry Brant, letter to Copland)

The final influence toward Copland evolving a radical change in his compositional style seems to have been his visit, with Victor Kraft, to Mexico in 1932-3. His Short Symphony was premiered by Carlos Chavez, whom Copland admired greatly, with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Mexico. The Short Symphony had actually been scheduled for a performance by both Stokowski with Philadelphia and Koussevitsky with Boston, but both "... gave it up because of the rhythmic difficulties." 26

Copland and Chavez were truly a mutual admiration society. Chavez programmed the very first all Copland concert on September second of 1932, and Copland remained in Mexico, visiting with Chavez, and seeing the sights:

I was beginning to sense something in the Mexican character that was especially sympathetic. When Chavez took me to an usual night spot called El Salón México, the atmosphere of this dance hall impressed me, and I came away with the germ of a musical idea." 27
Copland had at last found the catalyst for his new style, which he later termed "Music for the People", in Mexican folk and popular music.\textsuperscript{28} He took over a year to make the transition, working on \textit{Statements for Orchestra} and \textit{El Salón México} concurrently, "...the former in his 'old' austere style; the latter, the first of the 'new' popular works."\textsuperscript{29}

Before either piece was completed, in late August 1934, Copland was approached to compose a ballet by Ruth Page, the ballet director of the Chicago Grand Opera Company, and producer of ballets with her own company, The Ruth Page Ballets. The performances were scheduled for November (not unlike the time deadlines for film scores). Page had been impressed with Copland's pre-Abstractionist \textit{Music for the Theater}. After five weeks, he returned with a forty minute "working" score, some of the material drawn from the unperformed \textit{Grohg}. The new ballet was called \textit{Hear Ye! Hear Ye!}; "...was to take place in a courtroom, and the plot consisted of three witnesses giving highly divergent accounts of the same nightclub murder."\textsuperscript{30} Copland was back with dramatic music, and the audience was back with Copland. After Copland conducted the ballet in New York in 1936, W.J. Henderson wrote in the \textit{New York Sun}: "The music by Mr. Copland demonstrated again that composer's instinct for the theater."\textsuperscript{31}
El Salón México was finally completed and premiered in Mexico City by Carlos Chavez on August 27, 1937. It was a tremendous success, to say the least. "One year after publication in 1938, Boosey (Hawkes, Belwin, Inc.) put together a list of orchestras that had played El Salón México: fourteen American orchestras... two radio orchestras; and five foreign ensembles."33

The next major works that Copland composed were the Second Hurricane, a "play-opera" for high school performances, and Music for Radio commissioned by The Columbia Broadcasting System. CBS also broadcast The Second Hurricane on May 9, 1937.34

Although things were going well for Copland as a composer and lecturer, his finances continued to be difficult:

All things considered, especially financial, June 1937 seemed like a good time to accept Clurman’s invitation to visit Hollywood to try for a film contract. I had followed George Antheil’s column in Modern Music, "On the Hollywood Front," with great interest. "Something is going on in Hollywood," Antheil wrote. "Composers remain aloof to it, but only at the peril of being left behind, esthetically as well as financially.35

Clurman, who was working in Hollywood, made the rounds of the studios acting as Copland’s agent. The Second Hurricane was broadcast on radio, and Clurman had talked some producers into listening. Copland took the train out in June:

George Antheil and Kurt Weill came by to take me to dinner and Luther Adler invited me to the
Brown Derby restaurant, where I was introduced to James Cagney and to Harpo Marx, who was unrecognizable without the wig. Harold took me around to several sets at United Artists and to Paramount to meet His Majesty, Boros Morros (who was promoting the concept of modern serious composers for films), who immediately started to call me "Aaron". I saw Cliff Odets and his wife, Louise Rainer, and the Group people. ... Oscar Levant took me to visit George and Ira Gershwin. I was impressed with the swimming pool and tennis court in their "backyard". It was hard for me to realize that you could get all that for writing songs and lyrics!"

Copland performed a concert of his piano music with Oscar Levant and Jerry Moross, and ". . . left Hollywood for Mexico. . . without a film contract. Antheil was right about needing a film credit in order to snag a contract. But how was one to go about that?"  

The answer would be another two years in coming. Copland returned to New York, began teaching his course, "What to Listen for in Music", took some private students, and became involved in the creation of the American Composers Alliance (ACA) with forty-seven of the leading composers in America. 

The New Yorker of 3 June 1939, subheaded its music column "Mr. Copland Here, There, and at the Fair." (The New Yorker Magazine, 6/3/39.) In under two month's time, Billy the Kid, An Outdoor Overture, From Sorcery to Science, and music for The City were introduced. The City, a documentary film, was produced specifically for showing at the New York World's Fair. It was directed and filmed by Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke, and it was Ralph who
brought me into the project. . . The City started me as a film composer, a direction I would pursue on and off during the next decade. It 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. 41
V. THE COPLAND FILM SCORES

I had been working on a piano piece (The Sonata) in Woodstock with no thought of Hollywood. But it seems that The City was playing in a movie theater out there and it was seen by the producers, who earlier had not been convinced by my symphonies, opera, and chamber music. Now I finally had a film credit, and I was in! A telegram arrived from Hal Roach, producer, and Lewis Milestone, director, asking me to write the musical score for Of Mice and Men, a film version of John Steinbeck’s prize-winning play.¹,²

Copland composed music for only eight major motion pictures, and one of these, previously discussed, is a documentary, The City. The City has endured as a critical success, and is still screened occasionally at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. An excerpt adapted from the film score, "Sunday Traffic" is included in Copland’s Orchestral Suite for Small Orchestra Music for Movies.³ As Irwin Bazelon describes that scene from The City:

An uninterrupted, perfectly balanced rhythmic flow of visual-aural movement is present. . . During the highway-congestion sequence, with automobiles choking the road in a traffic jam not unlike today’s monumental tie-ups, Aaron Copland’s marvelous theme and lyric sweep makes a virtual ballet out of the cars streaming along bumper to bumper in a freewheeling parade of cinematic motion.⁴

Oddly enough, Hal Roach and Lewis Milestone had waited until Of Mice and Men was completely filmed before they engaged their composer, Copland. Copland felt a great sense of artistic freedom from his director, "Obviously, Lewis
Milestone, a cousin of Nathan Milstein, was not the ordinary Hollywood director. . . (He actually added four seconds to the film for the sake of the musical score when I told him it was needed for a particular scene)"

Excerpts from Of Mice and Men are also to be found in Music for Movies.

When Copland scored a third film, Sol Lesser's Our Town, in March of 1940, he had composed music for three major films in a year. The film was based on Thornton Wilder's Pulitzer Prize-winning play about life in a small New England town called "Grover's Corners." The town Wilder had actually used for his model of Grover's Corners was Peterborough, New Hampshire, where Wilder had written the play, while at the McDowell Colony. Copland, having also worked at the Colony, had a strong feeling for the tone of the play, and composed a memorable score, strongly suggestive of New England hymns. Copland wrote (rather immodestly) in Music and Imagination, "It is a satisfaction to know that in the composing of . . . a film score like Our Town . . . I have touched off for myself and others a kind of musical naturalness that we have badly needed along with 'great works.'"

Representative of the general critical acclaim for these three film scores, Sternfeld writes:

. . . whatever the French influences may have been, Copland's early film scores . . . can take their place beside the best work of Europe's film composers. The overall cast is one of deliberate control that gives vent to lyrical or traditional expression only at a few well-considered points of
the action. The idiom is essentially identical with that of his works, for the concert hall.  

About Our Town, Martin Marks added:

Like each person in Grover’s Corners, the score of Our Town does its job, projecting a quiet serenity, stability, and the same enduring sense of rightness that pervades the play itself. Copland’s music for this film is a splendid example of a composer adding quality to a motion picture without sacrificing musical value.  

It should be noted that Copland was not the first of the "modern" composers to adapt as a film composer. Virgil Thomson’s scores for the Depression documentaries The Plough that Broke the Plains (1936) and The River (1937) preceded Copland in a style not unlike Copland’s. This should not be too surprising, as the two composers were fellow students of Boulanger in the 20’s. In an interview with Vivian Perlis Thompson stated:

I wrote opera, ballet and film music before (Copland) did these things, and I did them in a straightforward manner. There came a time when Aaron needed a simpler approach. He has said and written that I’m one of the few composers who influenced him. . . . the social content of theater and films was moving away from complexity -- any theater audience wants music that is accessible. Didactic modernism sets nowhere with them.  

Music from Our Town is heard in concert halls, as Copland created an orchestral suite for broadcast on CBS shortly after the premiere of the film in May of 1940. A "...more careful..." version of the suite was introduced at a Boston Pops Concert in May, 1944 by Leonard Bernstein and dedicated by Copland to him.
Copland was very much involved as a citizen with the events of World War II. Although he did two less known film scores during the war, it was a general time, for Copland and the world, of urgency and great creative output. The war years films were *North Star* (1943), after the Lillian Hellman Story, directed again by Lewis Milestone, and *The Cummmington Story* (1945), produced by the U.S. Office of War Information. Two songs for chorus, with lyrics by Ira Gershwin, were published from *North Star* and an excerpt "In Evening Air" was arranged for piano in 1966 from *The Cummmington Story*. None of the other music from these films has been published.

This period saw the premieres of some of Copland's most revered works: The ballets *Rodeo* (1942) and *Appalachian Spring* (1944), the orchestral works *Fanfare for the Common Man*, *Lincoln Portrait*, and *Danzon cubano* (among others), and the *Piano Sonata*.

Copland returned to Hollywood in 1948 to compose music for two films: *The Red Pony*, again for director Milestone, and *The Heiress* for William Wyler. He received an Academy Award for his film score to *The Heiress*, which was a major film that year based on the Henry James novel *Washington Square*. *The Heiress* somewhat overshadowed *The Red Pony* (released as a children's film) in critical attention, but the "Oscar" was more likely an acknowledgement by the members of the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences
for all of Copland's film scores, particularly the two of that year. It is noteworthy that none of the music from Copland's Academy Award winning score for The Heiress was ever published, but Copland had problems with Wyler on the film, and that was doubtless a factor.

Mark Evans describes the incident:

Most disheartening to composers is the power of producers to edit, rearrange, or cut their music. A composer's completed score may have been recorded but, after the recording session, when the producer and director discuss the music, the producer may decide to replace any or all of the composer’s music without his knowledge. After Aaron Copland finished his score for The Heiress, he went home to New York. A studio executive then decided to replace Copland’s rather dissonant main title, chose another piece, and never bothered to explain the situation to Copland. The composer, understandably furious, made a public statement disclaiming the main title. His treatment was hardly unique, but he wasn’t used to standard Hollywood procedures.21

Even without Copland’s choice for the "Main Title", The Heiress is undoubtedly one of the classic film scores and it has been the subject of some keen interest and study. Notable commentary on this film is to be found in Frederick Sternfeld's Copland As A Film Composer22, and Irwin Bazelon's Knowing the Score.23

Copland enjoyed some of the techniques not available on the concert stage in The Heiress:

In scoring one section of The Heiress, for example, I was able to superimpose two orchestras, one upon another. Both recorded the same music at different times, one orchestra consisting of strings alone, the other constituted normally. Later these were combined by simultaneously
rerecording the original tracks, thereby producing a highly expressive orchestral texture."

It is also interesting to note that, despite his earlier disclaimers, Copland did use an orchestrator for The Heiress, Nathan Van Cleave.²⁵

Possibly in part because of Copland's negative experience with The Heiress, he did not return to Hollywood for several years. He composed only one other film score, Something Wild (1961), directed by J. Garfine. None of its music has been published.²⁶
VI. THE RED PONY FILM PRODUCTION; THE ORCHESTRAL SUITE'S HOUSTON PREMIERE

We have had a few people that created cinema music that was the same as the music of the art world. I don't, for instance, feel that Copland's music for The Red Pony is any the less than the music of his symphonies.¹

The Red Pony reunited the three off screen-principals that had produced Of Mice and Men: director (and now producer) Lewis Milestone, writer (and now screenwriter and co-producer) John Steinbeck and composer Aaron Copland. Of Mice and Men was (and remains) a critical success, but it lost money for the Roach studios. Now Milestone and Steinbeck had their own investments at stake. As Steinbeck film historian and critic Joseph Millichap describes:

If similar financial failure were to be avoided, The Red Pony had to be refashioned and pigeonholed as a kind of kiddy Western about a boy and his horse. The film's conclusion, altered to a stock happy ending, is representative of the general transformation of plot, character, and theme in this cinematic adaptation of one of Steinbeck's finest works of fiction.²

Steinbeck and Milestone had planned to film The Red Pony shortly after Of Mice and Men in 1939. The short stories on which the screenplay was based were immensely popular as they had been published in periodicals through the 30's. They were collected in The Long Valley in 1938.³ The Steinbeck Red Pony stories are, in his own words, about how a "...child becomes a man."⁴

As R.S. Hughes explains in Beyond the Red Pony:
Steinbeck believed that facing death brings about "the first adulthood of any man or woman," and in these stories he attempted to depict this painful process. Steinbeck himself was surrounded by impending death when he wrote the first of the four Red Pony stories. It was summer, 1933, and Olive Hamilton Steinbeck, the author's mother, was succumbing to a fatal illness.

The film did not go into production until 1947. The war and other factors -- certainly the financial losses by Of Mice and Men played a part -- had delayed Milestone and Steinbeck's plans. The Red Pony stories seemed to be excellent material for a film, but were not without their problems of adaptation. Millichap describes how the screenplay developed:

Steinbeck's story sequence is episodic, unified only by continuities of character, setting, and theme. These subtle variations on the theme of initiation had to woven together and considerably cut for a screenplay. The exigencies of production forced Steinbeck to eliminate completely one of the four stories in the sequence, 'The Great Mountains,' and to severely cut another one, 'The Promise.' For adaptation purposes the remaining stories were then spliced to form a sequential narrative of considerably less complexity. In addition Steinbeck concluded his screenplay with a Hollywood happy ending that completely distorts the meaning of his original work.

A severe problem with the film is its casting -- or miscasting. The producers had obviously banked on two box office stars in the charades of Billy Buck -- supposedly a wise old ranchhand -- played by Robert Mitchum at the peak of his heartthrob days, and Alice Tiflin -- a simple, honest and plain ranch wife and mother -- played by Myrna Loy in fashionable hairdo and makeup, right out of a Thin Man set.
Loy and Mitchum create a sense of romance that is unintended in the film. As Millichap describes Fred Tiflin, Alice's husband "...is weaker and less interesting than in the story sequence, and he is made even less so by Sheppard Strudwick's hangdog interpretation." The greatest casting problem rests with Tom, Alice's and Fred's son, who is the film's protagonist, played by Peter Miles:

Perhaps no child star could capture the complexity of this role, as it is much easier to write about sensitive children than to film them. Young Mile's [sic] portrayal often seems rather sugared and his anger at the world more or less a tantrum. The only other characters of note are a group of Tom's schoolmates, whose Our Gang antics make Peter Mile's [sic] performance seem peerless by comparison.

Although the criticism seems to be hysterical, the film is not a bad one. Millichap went on to write:

The other production values are good. The film was shot on location at a Salinas Valley ranch that looks very much like the one used in Of Mice and Men. As in the earlier film, settings are very well handled with realistic interiors and natural exteriors. Tony Gaudio's color cinematography makes use of natural, muted tones which often suggest the best of regional American painting and sometimes Wesley Dennis's illustrations for the 1945 edition of The Red Pony. Perhaps the best single feature of the film is the powerful score by Aaron Copland, who had also scored Of Mice and Men; both scores later became concert favorites. As in his earlier work for Milestone, Copland [sic] matches the mood of the visuals.

Millichap sums up his appraisal of The Red Pony as a film with some observations that are reminiscent of Copland's experiences with The Heiress:
Although Milestone's *The Red Pony* is not as fully realized as Steinbeck's original story sequence, it remains a reasonable film adaptation, one much better than most in its generic pattern. Nevertheless, Steinbeck's complicity in its artistic compromise indicates how much his ideals had been altered by Hollywood. There were no telegrams to protest the alteration of his work or asking to remove his name. Perhaps he needed the money because of his divorce; perhaps he wanted to see his name on the silver screen once more. In any case, Steinbeck and Milestone, had both declined as artists since their happier collaboration on *Of Mice and Men* in 1939. 10

In notes for The Children's Suite from *The Red Pony*, Copland writes:

> The Children's Suite from *The Red Pony* is derived from music composed in 1948 for the film of the same name. The composer has supplied the following commentary: '... The concert suite from the film score was prepared at the request of Efrem Kurtz who told me he wanted a world premiere at his opening with the Houston Symphony Orchestra. I worked on the concert version during the summer of this year (1948) and completed it in August. It consists of six movements lasting about 21 minutes. I decided to call it a children's suite because so much of the music is meant to reflect a child's world.'

It appears here that Copland was going along with Milestone's and Steinbeck's marketing strategy for *The Red Pony* -- to consider it a children's film. Perhaps that was even a price for Copland's owning his version of the film music. The Boosey and Hawkes editor of the score (published 1951) makes no mention of "Children's Suite" -- including Copland's score notes. The work is simply entitled, "The Red Pony Film Suite." 11
The Film Suite was premiered by the Houston Symphony at the debut concert of Efrem Kurtz as its conductor. Longtime Houston music critic Hubert Roussel wrote:

...he commissioned from his own pocket a number of new works for the orchestra, including a suite by Aaron Copland to be drawn from his score for the film version of Steinbeck's *The Red Pony*. Altogether the air was full of symphony news with a bright edge and the promise of change. ...The program began with *The Red Pony Fantasia* of Copland, a premiere dressed up by the presence of the composer in one of the stage boxes. It was not his privilege to hear one of his more distinguished creations. The potpourri from his movie score was a slick, hothouse evocation of pastoral scenes. But some of it galloped nicely at any rate, and in this atmosphere it received a modest audience blessing.
VII. THE RED PONY MUSIC CUES – ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The following paragraphs undertake a consideration of the score of The Red Pony from both musical and dramatic points of view, with the method of analysis determined by the best perception of describing the music’s dramatic function. In most cases the music illustrated will be from Copland’s own autographed manuscript sketch, which, while difficult to read at times, is the ultimate, most revealing source. The titles of the cues are Mr. Copland’s. Also included is a motivic and thematic index which illustrates and labels the thematic material in The Red Pony. For clarity, the identifying labels from this index will be referred to when appropriate. (See Figures 2a, 2b, 2c)
Figure 2a. - The Red Pony - Motivic/Thematic Index, 1-6

[1] Prelude (a)  (b) "The Dawn"

[2] "Rabbit appears" (Variant of [1])

[3a] Main Titles (antecedent)

[3b] (consequent)

[3c] (Counter melody - bar 54)

[4a] Walk to the Bunkhouse  etc.

[4b] Walk to the Bunkhouse (Variant of [1])


[6] March - Dream (Variant of 3a, b)
Figure 2b. - The Red Pony - Motivic/Thematic Index, 7-12

[7] Circus Dream

[8] Boring Dinner

[9] The Gift

[10] Horse Training - Rhythmic Style of 4a


[12] "Westering" March
Figure 2c. - The Red Pony - Motivic/Thematic Index, 13-20


[14] Morning Training m. 53

[15] Tom undecided - bar 60

[16] "Strangles" m. 39 15b (motive) 16b (motive)

[17] Buzzard Fight "Buzzard" motive

[18] Buzzard Fight Pt III (As Tom is carried away - told he will get Rosie's colt)

[19] Tom "Readjusted" p. 160 m. 1 (Variant of [16])

[20] (Variant of 16)
1. Prelude and Main Title

This film, as did Of Mice and Men, opens with a pre-title sequence. The opening measures, fanfare-like, present the octave leaps, orchestral unison, and major second relationships (meas. 2) that permeate not only the style of this score but also much of Copland's music in general (Figure 3). The melodic material is indexed #1a in measure 1 and #1b in measure 4. The key center is F major with for a strong C pedal. The harmonic progression over the C pedal functions as a prolongation of V and moves through B♭ major (meas. 2), a minor, B♭ major (meas. 3), C major, B♭ major triads (meas. 4), and quintal chords to open fifths in measure 5.

In measure 7, a voice-over narrative begins (cued above the score) and the music becomes more subdued, with less rhythmic activity. Thematic material from index #1 continues. The notations "----->o" on the score refer to grease pencil arrow strips which are actually drawn on the film to be used at the music recording session. This visual cue helped the conductor to time and synchronize the music sequence to the scene.
Figure 3. - "Prelude and Main Titles" (Copland sketch Score, p. 1)

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A more chromatic approach begins with the $A^b$ in measure 10 and continues with the superimposition of $G^b-D^b$ (no thirds) in measures 13-14. (Figure 4) This seems to prelude the drama of the film; to set the inner feeling of the conflict to come, as well as to introduce the first real "theme" of the film, cued "the dawn comes" (meas. 15). At this point the optimistic open octaves and leaps of the beginning return in a more definable rhythm. It is interesting to note that Copland changed the time signature from $6/4$ to $6/8$ when he produced the Film Suite, probably to make it more readable (Figure 5).
Figure 4. - "Prelude and Main Titles" - "In Central Cal"

(Copland sketch Score, p. 2)
THE RED PONY
FILM SUITE
I
MORNING ON THE RANCH
AARON COPLAND
(1946)

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In the first of several short scenes in this film laden with symbolism, a rabbit appears on the screen (Figure 6) and is given a brief flute line in 5/8, which is actually a rhythmic variant of the opening phrase. (Index #2) It should be reiterated here that, while there is phrase and period structure in most instances, giving a sense of balance to the music, the essential structure for the music evolves through the structure of the film. In the ensuing measures 30-40, Figures 6 and 7, as an owl symbolically slays the rabbit just off camera, Copland keeps a positive feeling in the music, playing against the violence suggested on the screen with a positive statement that is, after all, the ultimate message of these Steinbeck stories—the complex beauty of life through death in the natural world.²

The music continues to build on the octave leaps and open voicings already established until we see Billy Buck (Robert Mitchum) emerge from the bunk house and walk toward the barns, self consciously lighting a lantern. The camera focuses on the cover of the novel and zooms in to frame the book’s title, The Red Pony. The main title theme begins at this point. (Figure 8, meas. 51, Index 3a.) It is a cheerful theme in C major (although Copland insists on a key signature of 1 flat), and is, as is often the case with main titles music, the most complete thematic statement of the film.
Figure 6. "Prelude and Main Titles" - rabbit appears

(Index #2)
Figure 7. "Prelude and Main Titles" (CSS, p. 5)
Figure 8. - "Prelude and Main Titles" - Main Title Theme

(CSS, p. 7)
The theme begins with two melodically identical phrases, varied rhythmically, (index #3a) meas. 51-55 and 56-59, which use a ii⁷ (in C major) to suggest a half cadence in measures 54-55 and 58-59. Copland's bar line changes regarding meter (changing bar 53 from alla breve to 1/2) are interesting here, offsetting the metric accent within the phrase.

A prominent countermelody (Index 3b) appears in quick leaps of sixths and fifths in measure 54 (Index #3a). Contrasting B material begins in bar 60 (Index #3b), with also a change in accompaniment, but still employing the supertonic with 7th harmony introduced in the first two phrases. The B material functions as a consequent, with inner lines involving upper and lower auxiliaries (meas. 68 - Figure 9). The return to A material appears in meas. 69. The main titles segment concludes and segues into:
Figure 9. "Prelude and Main Titles" (CSS, p. 8)
2. Morning on the Ranch

Copland comments in notes for this section in the Film Suite: "Sounds of daybreak. The daily chores begin. A folk like melody suggests the atmosphere of simple country living."

The main titles' musical material (Figure 10, Index 3A, meas. 1-11, etc.) is reprised in a more subdued rhythm as establishing shots introduce the central characters of the play. There is Billy Buck, the hired hand (representative of wisdom and strength), Tommy Tiflin, a boy of about 10 who is the central character and through whom we experience most of the story, his generally sympathetic and strong mother, Alice, and his generally unsympathetic and weak father, Fred.

The dramatic activity is obviously somewhat static as characters are introduced, and the happy gait of the main titles music serves to propel the film forward. The key remains in C major as the characters are introduced (which complements the lack of dramatic development), and then begins shifting harmonically as "Billy brushes Rosie", the horse who has subtle but great meaning as the play unfolds, (Figure 11, meas. 37) Copland consistently allocates subdued but careful musical attention to the horse. The harmony steps down, $E^b$, $D^b$, $c$ minor, with strong bitonal suggestions in places, exemplified by $f$ minor on $E^b$ major in meas. 37—the ever present "second" relationship.
A strong major tonality is re-established as all assemble for breakfast in the kitchen, and this fades out.
Figure 10.- "Morning on the ranch" (CSS, p. 12)
Figure 11.- "Billy Brushes Rosy" [sic]
3. Walk to the Bunkhouse

After a brief breakfast scene that is without music, Tom and Billy leave. Fred and Alice have an exchange about Tom’s attachment to Billy, indicating the father’s "...sense of inadequacy and jealously of his hired hand." This observation of Tom is borne out in the next scene, as Tom asks Billy to show him the newspaper clipping about Rosie’s stock show victory. Music returns as they walk toward the bunkhouse, and it is quintessential Copland— that Western style that he sometimes borrowed from himself (Billy the Kid, Rodeo) and that many other composers often borrowed from him. (Figure 12)
Figure 12. - "Walk to the Bunkhouse" - beginning (CSS, p. 22)
Because of an obvious rough edit or old break in the film copy used for study, the cue actually begins at measure 4.

Copland's description in the Film Suite quoted Steinbeck: "Billy Buck 'was a fine hand with horses', and Jody's (Tom in the film) admiration knew no bounds. This is a scene of the two pals on their walk to the bunk house."

The western cowboy gait is enhanced by the irregular rhythms within the 3/4 2/4 metrical design, and the melodic line is simple and sustained (Index 4b), followed by variant upper woodwind themes. Copland musically punctuates a joke: Tom keeps asking questions about pictures of girls on the wall, to which Billy replies, "That's my cousin." Billy finally sums up Tom's prying queries, "We're a big family." The spatial melodic element of this sequence works perfectly to allow extra beats for the joke lines without seeming to be slapstick. (Figures 13 and 13a)

As this cue is significant to the Copland style, and he used a complete portion in his Film Suite, a closer inquiry might be made of the fully orchestrated score. (Figures 15-16a).
Figure 13 - "Walk to the bunkhouse" - punch lines

(CSS, p. 25-26)
As mentioned, the music begins in measure four in the film. Measures 5-19 feature a sustained theme A over the established rhythmic accompaniment, followed by a sforzando muted trombone (which sounds like French Horn in soundtrack) which functions as punctuation of the dialogue.

Measures 21-23 (Figure 15) introduce an important but brief contrasting chorale-like section as the camera pans past Rosie. (See Figure 17 for a reduction.)

Apparently, Copland felt that the discussion about Rosie and her underlying importance needed strengthening beyond script, image, and acting. This is a likely example of the tendency of film composers to judge matters of importance on the basis of how strongly they are brought about by the camera. If strengthening is needed, they will tend to do something musically. If the scene stands on its own without musical emphasis, music may be omitted altogether. George Burt has stated, "Unnecessary musical emphasis compounds the expressive quality of the incident, reducing its inherent power." Copland’s subtle tribute to Rosie reminds us that we are seeing this story through the eyes of Tom, the boy. Tom does not realize Rosie’s significance, nor will he for some time, but it does not go unobserved by the composer.

The ostinato-like western accompanimental rhythm returns and thematic material appears in clarinet and trumpet, measures 25-33 (Figure 15) and 36-41 (Figure 16),
which are actually, truncated versions of the sustained theme A. (Figure 15, Index 4B) The second reduced analysis in Figure 17 shows the nature of the truncation.
Figure 15: The Red Pony Film Suite - "Walk to the Bunkhouse" (meas. 1-23)
Figure 16. - The Red Pony Film Suite - "Walk to the Bunkhouse" (meas. 24-37)
Figure 16A. - The Red Pony Film Suite - "Walk to the Bunkhouse"
Figure 17. - "Walk to the Bunkhouse" - reductions

The Red Pony - Reductions

"Walk to The Bunkhouse"


Choral Idea:

Reduction:

Reduced Theme

m. 5-18

truncated ver. I
m. 25-33

truncated ver. II
m. 36-41
4. March-Dream

Copland composed an innocent yet solid march theme in E to accompany the daydreaming Tom to school. (Figure 18) Metric changes (3/4, meas. 7 and alla breve, meas. 11) add to the out of step quality of Tom in reality and the heroic march in his imagination. This sequence was much longer in Copland’s sketch, but much was left on the cutting room floor. Perhaps Milestone was cutting his losses. As Millichap describes it:

Milestone dramatizes these feelings, as Tom sets off for school, fantasizing that he and Billy are knights leading a troop of splendid soldiers. This interpolated sequence includes animated background which seems right out of a Walt Disney production. Of course, it is intended to visualize the boy’s fantasy life, but it only establishes a kids’ picture undertone which would have been best avoided here. This mood is underlined by the next scene when Tom’s reverie is disturbed by the other school children. In his story, Steinbeck handles both of these sequences in a single sentence: ‘At the crossroads over the bridge he met two friends and the three of them walked to school together, making ridiculous strides and being rather silly.’ When this sentence is translated into a combination of Disney and Our Gang, the film quickly loses much of the power promised by the literary source and anticipated in the strong opening sequence. (Millichap 115)
Figure 18. - "March-Dream" (CSS, p. 30)

Prod. Title M-201 Composer

March-Dream

Composer 30

Arranger O

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5. Circus Dream

Once again, Millichap describes the scene with harsh remarks:

"Alice. . . allows Tom to leave his books and go off to prowl the ranch yard. Here he feeds the chickens and performs other chores in Tom Sawyer or Huck Finn fashion while Milestone makes a nice overhead shot of the boy circled by the clucking hens. However, animation changes the fowl to white circus horses prancing around a ring while Tom directs them with a long ringmaster's whip. The screenplay indicates that both of these animated fantasy sequences were to have been longer, but Milestone wisely cut them down; he would have been even wiser to cut them out completely.

These two cues represent a considerable amount of music by Copland, a significant amount of which was cut. The "Circus Dream" (Figure 19) begins with a circus waltz introduction. The melodic material is a variant of (Index #6) the March-Dream and serves as an introduction to the theme of The Circus Dream at meas. 9, shown here in inversion from the original presentation (Index 7). The musical suggestion becomes more burlesque, with the material clearly bitonal at the end (Figure 19). This cue does not end in the usual way, but, as Copland wrote:

...used overlapping incoming and outgoing music tracks when the daydreaming imagination of a little boy turns white chickens into white circus horses.
Figure 19. - "Circus Dream" (CSS, p. 50)
Figure 20. - "Circus Dream" (CSS, p. 60)
6. Boring Dinner

This is a fascinating page of manuscript. (Figure 21) Copland had originally titled it proudly, 'Unsuccessful Raconteur'. Then he scratched out his title and seemed to write dejectedly "The Boring Dinner". Its mundane title had apparently been changed by someone over Copland in studio hierarchy. The music shows comedic elements again here; the major sixth dyads fall to ever present major seconds (meas. 1-8). Violins in the extreme register (meas. 10-12) add to the irritation as Grandfather insists on telling his pompous stories of the Old West one more time. These musical techniques continue until the scene becomes too embarrassing for music. (See Figure 21, Index #8)
7. The Gift

Finally, the Red Pony arrives! (Figure 22, Index #a) Copland’s alternating metrical structure with bar lines is again evident, resulting in an absence of a strong or regular metrical pulse. The effect accommodates the moment by suspending the passage of time.

This is very different music from what has been used previously in the film. The ascending fourths are leading to an A major triad with compressing seconds which, by means of contrary motion, (meas. 1-3) suggests a shimmering revelation through the eyes of Tom. The gift of the Red Pony becomes a rite of passage, musically dramatized with care and wonderment. The boy’s feelings are projected beyond the screen.

He promises to take the best possible care of the animal, and to perform all of his other chores faithfully in repayment for the gift. Fred soon leaves, with a final threat to sell the pony if he ever finds it hungry or dirty, and Billy Buck takes over as the father surrogate, promising to help Tom raise the best horse in the region. The pony will be trained well enough to ride by Thanksgiving, Billy assures the boy. Clearly, Gabilan, the red pony, represents a link with primal nature within the natural process of a boy’s maturation.
Figure 22. "The Gift" (CSS, p. 68)
8. Tom’s Friends

This is another cue that was cut in editing (almost 43 measures). Shortly after the uncut version begins, the "chorale" motive reappears (Index #5), then the Western "walk to the bunkhouse" rhythms provide an irregular pulse that pushes the scene forward. The training of Gabilan (the Red Pony) begins with a pleasing new variant of the bunkhouse theme in the key of F# major. (Figure 23, Index 4a, meas. 79)
Figure 23. - "Tom's Friends" (CSS, p. 85)
9. Grandfather's Story

(Figure 24) A chorale like section (Figure 25, Index # 11) reminiscent of the earlier motive but without the chromaticism brings added sympathy to the grandfather and serves as an introduction to his storytelling to Tom. As he tells of the "westering" movement and its irresistible westward march, a powerful, ghost-like march appears pandiatonically (meas. 30). Muted trumpets call a mournful and ominous bugle, (meas. 33). This is a very effective cue. So effective, in fact, that Ernst Gold used a nearly identical passage in the main titles of the film Tom Horn. As grandfather's story builds with the unrelentless energy of the westward march (Figure 26), the melodic line ascends up to B^b, fortissimo, meas. 46. When he expresses resignation about contemporary reality (Figure 27), the line descends an octave and a fifth, meas. 53.
Figure 24.- "Grandfather's Story" (CSS, p. 88)
Figure 25. - "Grandfather's Story" (CSS, p. 90)
Figure 26.- "Grandfather's Story" (CSS, p. 4)
10. Morning Training (Figure 28)

A lovely three-bar transition bridges Alice playing "Shall We Gather At the River" on the piano to an elegant new theme in measure 3 (Index 13). This underscores Tom's early rising and waking his Grandfather because he is excited to begin training the red pony. In measure 13 (Figure 29), the modality shifts a tritone away as the Grandfather half seriously says "you get out of here!", realizing the early hour. The hushed orchestra and sparse rhythmic accompaniment supports the poignant themes, giving a special sense to the relationship between grandfather and grandson. There is also an important motive, A-F, measures 3-4, which will remain identified with the pony. The chorale motive (Figure 30, meas. 19) returns as Tom takes Gabilan past Rosie in the barn, this time associating Billy and Rosie together. The Western rhythm on a variant theme accompanies the pony's workout. Copland does an interesting thing here: while the pony is running on the screen, there is only the rhythmic accompaniment (Figures 32, 33 meas. 49-52). The pony is the melody, visually presented. When the camera focuses on Billy and Tom watching the pony (off camera), the melody enters (Figure 33, meas. 53-57), becoming the pony when it is not on the screen. The chorale motive returns, bringing spiritualism to Tom and Billy's relationship, then goes abruptly out when Grandfather appears. This cue was apparently too short in the final
edit, and measures 35-43 and 19-26 were added again at the end, evidently by the editor.
Figure 28. - "Morning Training" (CSS, p. 95)
Figure 31. "Morning Training" (CSS, p. 98)
11. Tom's Indecision (Figures 35-41)

This is a building scene to the climax of the film. After Tom goes to school on a stormy day, musically set in a derivative of the opening theme, over a C pedal, the pony gets out of the barn. Tom, being pressured by his teacher, worries about the pony, while symbolic shutters bang and thunder claps. Shots cut back and forth between Tom and Billy as the music develops a medieval-like canon, over which an ominous accompanimental motive interchanges minor seconds. Copland's canon begins with a false entrance (in augmentation) meas. 7-15. The real "dux" enters at meas. 16, with the first "comes" imitating at the octave (basso) after two bars (meas. 18). A third voice enters two octaves below dux in meas. 20, with some octave displacement in its line. The strict canon dissolves after a fourth extremely high entrance, meas. 26 (8va dux, which was a C⁴) while the first comes becomes affiliated with the dissonant (to canon) accompaniment -- D♭⁴ versus C² and C⁴. The counterpoint continues, though not strictly, emphasizing the C – G fall as at the start of the canon. This two note motive will follow the pony through the film, and is suggestive of a child calling an animal's name. The counterpoint continues to the end of the cue in invertible technique, emphasizing two note motives, and an important new subject (Index #15) enters at meas. 60, and dies away (meas. 64--70) suggestive
of a modal final cadence. Tom finally runs home from school to find the pony wet and cold in the corral.
12. The Sick Pony

The minor second motive continues to underscore the tragic drama unfolding, (Figure 42) and becomes anacrusis for a new foreboding theme in f minor (Figure 43, measure 4) which sequentially modulates (measures 6, 8, 11). The ambient noise level is high in this scene, restricting a sophisticated musical presence.
Figure 42. - The Sick Pony (CSS, p. 111)
13. At The Fireside

The minor second motive continues in augmentation in the bass. There is a strong triadic accent when Alice tells Tom to go care for his horse, reaffirming her motherly love for her son (measure 12). (Figure 44) The countrapuntal technique continues with the subject from the previous cue (Index #15).
Figure 44. - At the Fireside (CSS, p. 119)
14. Strangles

The minor second motive continues against grotesque aberrations of earlier pony training music as his death approaches. Fred, who had left for San Jose in frustration, is called back by Alice because she fears her son will need his father if the horse dies. There is a beautiful "Coplandesque" moment on a cut to Alice in her scene with Fred on his return which is reminiscent of Appalachian Spring. (Figure 45) The music gives some sense of emotional release without sacrificing the depth of the drama by briefly returning to wide triadic intervals in the melody underscored by major seconds. The cue continues with frequent suggestions of bitonality and regular rhythms that aid the pacing of the film as the drama slows to the inevitable end for the red pony.
Figure 45. - Strangles (CSS, p. 123)

Title: M-802

Composer

Arranger

No. 2

Tempo: 14/16

Moderato

No. II0
15. The Operation

The basic shape of the motive in Figure 47 is retained, but the intervals are compressed and often chromatic (Figure 48). The chromaticism is consistently focused on the dying horse, but the music becomes triadic when the human activities to save the horse are underscored. The changes in music are cued with dialogue or shot direction. The operation itself, not actually viewed but seen through the face of Tom, is a descending, dying chromaticism in clarinets. (Figure 49)
Figure 48.- The Operation (CSS, p. 130)
Figure 49. - The Operation - Part II (CSS)
16. Buzzard Fight

Tom falls asleep in the barn. The symbolic owl is shown in the night. (Figure 50) An important two-note sixteenth-dotted eighth motive plays triadically over a dissonant D pedal (meas. 4). The triads $E^b$, $D^b$, and $C^b$ step down over the most dissonant possible pedal. (measures 4-7) The pony opens the barn door and leaves to die in nature, and the rhythmic motive relaxes to triplet eighth-quarter. The pedal steps down to C as the first motive returns. When Tom wakes up the rhythmic motive is missing the down-beat as he misses the pony in the barn. He starts to run out, following the pony's tracks to frankly rather hackneyed chase music. It does have an interesting touch in high piccolo descending triads "calling" the pony, derivative of the happy, earlier pony training music. Tom finally finds the pony, covered by buzzards, and attacks them, catching one and beginning a terrible fight with it. (Figure 51) The score page is shown in this instance to illustrate the tightness of the action cues to the music. (See Copland's notations on the score) Billy and Fred arrive and separate Tom from the buzzard to pandiatonic chordal splashes. The music makes a recording dub "overlap" as it had in "Circus Dream", as Billy carries Tom home. The former falling piccolo calls are now rising as shots of the now receding colt tracks in the mud are shown.
Figure 50. Buzzard Fight (CSS, p. 136)

M-1001

Title Buzzard Fight

Composer

Arranger

Prod.

Title

Composer

Arranger

Dissolve

Example

17b

Property of Republic Productions, Inc.
Billy tells Tom that he will get Rosie's colt. The music becomes much more monophonic and relaxed, though still metrically uneven and still forcing major seconds into otherwise triads. (Figure 52)
Figure 52. - Buzzard Fight - Part III (CSS, p. 155)
17. Tom "Readjusted"

I am assuming that this is Copland's title. It is misspelled on the score. (Figure 53) The music is much more lyrical and resolved. Tom is grieving for his pony and goes through sequences of denial, especially to Rosie. The music steps diatonically over ever sustained bass lines in a strong showing of resolution. Rosie shows Tom a sense of bucolic wisdom. There is a reinforcing shot of the grandfather. The music plays against the grain of the drama by countering the emotions of the boy in a resolute manner. The music sets a lyrical edge on what the audience knows but the boy is still learning. This cue is a good example of the quiet dignity that Copland achieves in his music.

The question must be asked, however: couldn't Copland have better underscored the changing of Tom, through whom we are supposed to be experiencing this story, and who in the hands of child actor Peter Miles needs all the help he can get?
18. The Promise (Figure 54)

The minor second motive returns, in canonic imitation, as the viewer must now worry about a safe delivery for Rosie. However, the dominant melodic material continues to flow from the previous cue. In Figure 55, we see examples of that and a neatly elided cadence in measures 26-27. This serves the function of bringing the cue to a close without a strong sense of cadence, allowing the film to keep moving.
Figure 54. - The Promise (CSS, p. 164)

Title: \textit{M-1101B}

Composer: 164

Arranger: 

\textit{Andante}

\begin{music}
\begin{musicnotes}
\begin{musicmeasure}
\begin{musicclef}G\end{musicclef}
\begin{musicnote}C\end{musicnote} \quad \begin{musicnote}F\end{musicnote} \quad \begin{musicnote}G\end{musicnote}
\end{musicmeasure}
\begin{musicmeasure}
\begin{musicclef}C\end{musicclef}
\begin{musicnote}C\end{musicnote} \quad \begin{musicnote}F\end{musicnote} \quad \begin{musicnote}G\end{musicnote}
\end{musicmeasure}
\begin{musicmeasure}
\begin{musicclef}G\end{musicclef}
\begin{musicnote}C\end{musicnote} \quad \begin{musicnote}F\end{musicnote} \quad \begin{musicnote}G\end{musicnote}
\end{musicmeasure}
\end{musicnotes}
\end{music}
19. End Title (Figure 56)

Billy almost kills Rosie to save the colt and Tom steals his knife before he can do so. In the ensuing fracas in the house as Billy gets his knife back, Rosie (off camera) delivers her colt normally. The whole cast runs out to the barn and discovers the happy event. Music comes up, reprising the main titles themes in reverse order in a rather quick happy ending. About *The Red Pony* and its influence, Mark Evans writes:

The whole approach to film scoring has relied heavily on established styles, and in the 1940s big symphonies and the romantic tradition were still the norm...But it was less suitable for Westerns and other films of a peculiarly American genre. Another style developed, strongly influenced by Aaron Copland, particularly by his score for *The Red Pony*. 
VIII. COPLAND’S LEGACY TO FILM MUSIC

In the forties and fifties... Aaron Copland’s Western style lyrically and rhythmically influenced an entire generation of film and concert composers, many of whom wrote Coplandesque music without bothering to sign his name to their scores.

As the Irwin Bazelon quote above makes clear, there is no doubt that Aaron Copland, with a comparatively scant catalogue of film scores, greatly influenced an entire approach to style in film music, particularly with regard to Americana and the West. One has only to flip to a post-1950 western on television to verify this point. Rossini, Wagner, and Strauss are simply unthinkable as stylistic models in this genre after The Red Pony.

Of course, not only his film music established this influence: the ballets Billy the Kid, Rodeo, and Appalachian Spring, and the orchestral work El Salón México perhaps played an even greater role because they were heard in the concert hall, on recordings and on the radio, and the scores were available.

As Mark Evans writes in The Music of the Movies:

...a different style grew out of a reaction against Viennese post-Straussian romanticism and in the direction of a more dissonant, rhythmic, and incisive form of harmonic expression. Aaron Copland exercised a prime influence on this style, although his career in films was regrettably brief. Among the composers who exemplified the trend were David Raksin, Hugo Friedhofer, Jerome Moross, and ultimately, Alex North.
Of Friedhofer's highly acclaimed score for The Best Years of Our Lives, Evans states that Friedhofer "...cast his themes in an American idiom and orchestrated them in the style of Copland." Friedhofer himself is said to have been proud of the association.

Evans also writes, "Another Hollywood composer who might be said to belong to the Copland school is David Raksin, who himself has provided a strong influence with his highly chromatic writing." About Alex North, Irwin Bazelon says:

In his fast music, North (Alex) often employs techniques reminiscent of Aaron Copland. This is especially noticeable in his use of short rhythmic figures that start, proceed, back up, and proceed again, gradually growing larger and longer as the pattern repeats itself, piling the phrases one upon another. The score to "The Misfits" illustrates this point.

Perhaps the reason that Aaron Copland leaves with us such an enduring legacy for film music is because, as a composer, he always seemed to be so perceptive of his environment. With only a slight pun intended, he composed from without as much as he composed from within. Like the good novelist, he soaked up the things about the world around him and reprocessed them in his own creative mold -- not imitative, but suggestive.

Sternfeld observes Copland in practical terms:

Altogether, the lesson of Copland's success as a film composer may be summed up in these terms: flexibility and team-work. Studio producers, and directors are not persuaded by prima donnas but by craftsmen who have proved themselves quick,
efficient, and effective. Is the game worth the candle? In financial as well as in social terms, it obviously is. The industry is capable of making available funds that exceed all the usual music awards and fellowships, but quite apart from pecuniary considerations, to write good music for the millions who see and hear the movies means doing something about musical taste instead of preaching about it.

Responding to a question from the editors of Films regarding the difference between composing for film versus other dramatic media, Copland responded, as does his music, in visionary terms:

I seek a style that ideally speaking might be called a movie style. We now know what that is in a bad sense. But I can visualize a time when, just as we now speak of ballet music, theatre music, symphonic music, so we will be able to say movie music...
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