Copland - Appalachian Spring Suite; Fanfare for the Common Man; El Salon Mexico (1990)

1. Appalachian Spring: Very slowly 2:43 2. Appalachian Spring: Allegro 2:42 3. Appalachian Spring: Moderato 3:51 4. Appalachian Spring: Fast 3:34 5. Appalachian Spring: sub. Allegro 3:44 6. Appalachian Spring: As at first (slowly) 1:14 7. Appalachian Spring: Doppio movimento (shaker melody "The gift to be simple") 6:46 8. Fanfare for the Common Man (Version of Symphony No. 3, Fourth Movement) 2:01 9. El Salón México 10:56 10. Danzón Cubano 6:47
New York Philharmonic Leonard Bernstein – conductor

If Copland's own recordings of his music have the warmth of a soft summer night, those by Leonard Bernstein convey the blazing heat of noon. In his later remakes of several of these scores for Deutsche Grammophon, Bernstein exhibited a tendency toward overly-nuanced readings. But his earlier accounts with the New York Philharmonic, recorded by CBS in the late 1950s and early 1960s, are still incomparable in their vitality and impetus. Bernstein's way with the Western ballets is exuberantly personal and persuasive. He has the ability to move between delicacy and brashness, always getting the gestures right, and he delivers magical characterizations of both scores. The Phiharmonic's playing, while sometimes a bit raw, is confident and rhythmically secure; there is certainly nothing to apologize for here. There is a wonderful sense of immediacy to Bernstein's account of the Appalachian Spring Suite, in which the New Yorkers give a virtuosic account of themselves, playing in a rhythmically incisive fashion that puts Copland's account with the London Symphony in the shadows. The couplings are a mixed bag, however. Bernstein always had the measure of El Salon Mexico, and gives a rousing account of it here. But the so-called Fanfare for the Common Man is lifted from his recording of the Third Symphony; its beginning is not the same as that of the real fanfare. Both recordings have been wonderfully remastered by their original producer, John McClure, and have excellent presence and a palpable sense of atmosphere in the quiet pages. ---Ted Libbey, Editorial Reviews

Leonard Bernstein was a friend of Aaron Copland's, and he approaches this music with rare flair and verve--as well as with sympathy and warmth--and, we can assume, with a good idea of the composer's intentions regarding it. This is a classic album, containing several of the works in the essential Copland oeuvre; the sound is not as good as you'll find in a more contemporary recording, but for most listeners the spirit will make up for that. ---Sarah Bryan Miller

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