

Scherzo Humoristique 'The Cat and The Mouse'

Aaron Copland (1900 – 1990)

Aaron Copland was an American composer born on November 19, 1900 in Brooklyn, New York, U.S. He was famous for his expressive modern style in his songs. His older sister first taught him the piano and at age 17 he studied harmony, counterpoint, composition and sonata form with Rubin Goldmark. In 1920, he went to Paris and attended classes with Nadia Boulanger. His concert music was considered as characteristically American. Copland began his career upon his return to the U.S. when Serge Koussevitzky agreed to conduct the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Copland's *Organ Symphony*. He also taught at Harvard in 1935 and 1941.

Scherzo Humoristique (The Cat and The Mouse) was Aaron Copland's first published piece. He composed the song shortly before studying in Paris in 1920, and first performed it in 1921. *Scherzo Humoristique* was based on a fable called 'The Old Cat and The Young Mouse' by Jean de la Fontaine.

Scherzo Humoristique consists of a lot of augmented harmonies and whole tone scales. The theme and motives are highly patterned. This piece also contains frequent tempo changes as well as different types of rhythms, where quick notes and higher pitches represent the mouse, whilst slower and deeper pitches represent the cat.

Scherzo Humoristique by Aaron Copland storytells the tale of 'The Old Cat and The Young Mouse' in such a unique way through the various rhythmic patterns, styles in notes, etc. This piece was considered one of the ways that led to America's eminence in music.

No. 1 from Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm

Bela Bartok (1881 -1945)

Bela Bartok was a renowned Hungarian composer, pianist, ethnomusicologist, and music teacher born in Banatian, a town of Nagyszentmiklos, Hungary, Austria-Hungary on 25 March 1881. He was born to a lower noble family. He began his musical career as a concert pianist at age 10 and wrote his first dances at age 9. Bartok began studying the piano with his mother and continued studying piano and composition by attending the Royal Hungarian Academy of Music in Budapest after he graduated from public school. He toured for several concert performances. After his second tour in the United States in 1940, he moved there and was appointed as a research assistant in music at Columbia University, New York City.

Bartok created music by travelling to places such as the remote corners of Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Turkey and Morocco and recording the ethnic sounds and songs with his Edison phonograph. He listened to the recordings several times and then wrote them down. His ability to meld the folk tunes with classical-contemporary styles entitled him as the father of ethnomusicology.

Bela Bartok's Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm No. 1 was no. 148 of volume 6 of his Mikrokosmos, which contains a total of 153 pieces that he created between 1926 and 1939. Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm was based on asymmetrical rhythms of the folk tunes and traditional dances in Bulgaria. These pieces were dedicated to Harriet Cohen, a British pianist.

Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm No.1 consists of 4 parts, there are A, A', A'', and the concluding passage of the piece, called Coda.

The first part is the A, where the main theme is introduced. The piece starts with an energetic yet gentle feeling and with a harmonic scale. Then, the melodic element is present on the melody (theme). The second part, A', is where the first variation takes place, which is a slower and more calming attitude whilst the theme gradually builds. The third part, A'', section is a calm, thoughtful and soft second variation, yet strong in purpose. The piece ends with the last part, a strong and highly energetic coda, in addition to its octaves parts as well as the dynamics that go from forte and then gradually increasing to subito fortissimo, which is defined as 'suddenly very loud'.

Bela Bartok's Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm reflects uniqueness of Bartok's ideas, due to the unusual chords and time signatures, and is at the same time, able to illustrate the image of Bulgarian ethnicity through dances. This piece is considered as one of the greatest works of the 20th century.