FROM THE CONCERT HALL TO THE CINEMA:
THE JOURNEY OF THE 20TH CENTURY CLASSICAL AMERICAN SOUND

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Liberty University

A MASTER’S THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN MUSIC EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

American classical music has enjoyed a long-standing presence around the world as its own entity within the classical music genre. As early as the 1920s, American classical music has had its own unique sound. The early 20th Century was a time of musical experimentation and social unrest in America. Due to its relative newness and experimentation by numerous composers, identifying the defining characteristics of American music, an experimental music itself, became difficult and ambiguous. Also, the continuation of American classical music became increasingly problematic as classical music was replaced in popular culture by other genres of music. The research for this study examined American classical music through the compositions of the Father of American Music: Aaron Copland. Through study and analysis of his music, characteristics of American classical music were identified, classified in this study as the Classical American Sound. Further research demonstrated that the Classical American Sound reached beyond the concert and into the world of film music. Through Western genre movies, the Classical American Sound – or the majority of its characteristics – were popularized in mainstream culture in the 1940s and 1950s. Through the compositions of modern composer John Williams, the Classical American Sound has evolved, yet has kept its basic characteristics. The Classical American Sound had a major impact upon American culture and identity, and the possibilities for further impact remains to be fully achieved.

Keywords: Classical American Sound, Aaron Copland, John Williams, modal interchange, 20th Century Music, pandiatonicism, film music, classical music
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

What constitutes American music? Scholars, historians, and musicians alike have found it difficult to accurately define classical American music, to create an all-encompassing definition for such a subjective genre. Older countries have established their own cultural musics, distinct in sound, style, and even instrumentation. America was and continues to be such a melting pot of cultures that pinpointing a specific musical sound or style was nearly impossible. The diversity of cultures and nationalities that comprised this nation made any attempt to define an American music exceptionally difficult. However, there was one sound that rose out of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century that has become the standard for classical American music. Much like Latin America’s salsa and clave, Europe’s famous classical composers, Africa’s numerous popular percussive styles, and Asian culture’s prominent use of the pentatonic scale, 20\textsuperscript{th} Century America finally developed and established its own unique musical sound. Pioneered by a group of talented individuals with distinct musical ideas, this style rapidly became America’s own classical music idiom: The Classical American Sound.

The development of American classical music required the gifts and contributions of a group consisting of numerous gifted composers. These composers developed and expanded upon various techniques and ultimately established a classical music that was uniquely American. Each composer added his own unique contribution to the formation of America’s classical music, but perhaps none more than American composer, Aaron Copland. Aaron Copland’s populist music, written during the 1930s through the 1950s, became the epitome of American-sounding music. Through 20\textsuperscript{th} Century techniques of pandiatonicism, open 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} intervallic
movement, stacked chords, and reduced emphasis on tonality combined with simplistic, folk tune melodies, syncopated, jazz-inspired rhythms, and brass fanfare, Copland composed popular music that did not forego musical integrity. Copland, along with other composers of his era, developed what is termed in this study as the Classical American Sound.

The Classical American Sound was a style of music developed by 20th Century American composers that captured the essence of the American spirit through use of numerous 20th Century musical techniques combined with indigenous folk tunes and simplistic melodies. As time passed, the Classical American Sound experienced several changes, but the underlying essence of American heroism and patriotism remained. The Classical American Sound greatly influenced other genres of composition and reached far beyond the concert hall to today’s modern culture. Perhaps no composer carried on the Classical American Sound more significantly than film composer, John Williams. In both his film compositions and his American classical compositions, John Williams recaptured the Classical American Sound in modern ways while still evoking the same emotions as his American predecessors.

During the Golden Age of Hollywood – roughly 1930-1950 – composers wrote film music in a romantic style, with several techniques unique to that period such as mickey-mousing, leitmotifs, and full symphonic orchestrations. In the mid 1950s, Classical Hollywood gave way to the Modern period of film composition, which completely changed the face of music in film. Film music began to focus on and reflect more of popular culture and mainstream music. Romanticism, and many of its techniques, were no longer evident in hit films and were replaced by title tracks, heavier use of 20th Century atonal techniques, and decreased use of symphonic orchestras. In the 1970s, a composer by the name of John Williams began to make changes yet again. Williams composed in a style reminiscent of the romantic Golden Age. Williams also
employed certain 20th Century classical elements within his compositions such as pandiatonicism, polytonality, and stacked chords, heavily influenced by early American music techniques. This is especially evident in his classical compositions. In his film music, Williams succeeded in doing what many film composers aspired to accomplish: to create a lasting impression on audiences by establishing memorable musical themes, enhancing and elevating the film without distraction. Williams’ film compositions became a fusion of 20th Century classical music techniques and Classical Hollywood film music, a representation of the Classical American Sound in the late 20th Century, both in the cinema and the concert hall. This study investigated the development of the unique aspects of the Classical American Sound through the music of Aaron Copland and illustrated how these techniques and concepts carried over to modern day film compositions through the film music of John Williams.

**Statement of Purpose**

This study highlighted significant contributions to the establishment of the Classical American Sound by researching both the development of 20th Century American music as a whole and, more specifically, the music of one of the most notable American composers of the time period, Aaron Copland. Other American composers contributed to the establishment of the Classical American Sound through their compositions. However, it was the music of Copland that popularized and established what is widely recognized as the standard for American music, and this music captured the essence of the Classical American Sound. Next, this study explored the history of film music from the Golden Age of film until the rise of John Williams as one of the most influential composers in film. Finally, this study explored and analyzed the music of Aaron Copland and John Williams by drawing connections between select individual compositions, examining them through the lens of the aspects of the Classical American Sound.
and demonstrating the continuation of the Classical American Sound from the concert hall to the cinema.

**Significance of the Study**

The full impact of classical American music on American culture and conversely, the impact of American culture on classical American music remains to be fully realized. While research has been completed on elements of this topic, especially concerning the early half of the 20th Century, an overarching, in-depth study of more recent times has yet to be conducted. The impact of this study reaches numerous areas of musicological research, composition, and education, as well as sociological research. It is important for individuals within the musical world to know that the classical American music that rose out of the Twentieth Century is such a poignant part of what comprises the American music idiom and an American musical identity that endures even today through genres that resonate with countless listeners. It is also important for music educators to realize that this American music idiom is a powerful tool for teaching future composers, theoreticians, and performers.

**Research Questions**

Research questions this thesis project attempted to answer included:

1) What is the Classical American Sound and can it be neatly defined?

2) What about Aaron Copland’s compositions qualifies them as examples of the development of the Classical American Sound?

3) Has the Classical American Sound crossed over from early American music to the genre of film music?

4) What musical and historical connections, if any, can be made between these early American composers and the film music of John Williams?
5) What about John Williams’ compositions qualifies them as a continuation of this classical American Sound?

6) What impact does the realization of the importance and influence of the Classical American Sound have upon the current and next generations of musicians, composers, and music educators?

**Assumptions and Limitations**

**Assumptions**

This study rested on a few assumptions that have been previously researched and are accepted as true by most within the scholarly music community. One of these was that classical American music derived from the work and dedication to innovation from composers such as Aaron Copland. These fathers of American music set the stage for future composers to write American music that also captured the Classical American Sound. Another assumption for this paper was simply that a Classical American Sound exists. The Classical American Sound may not have a widely-accepted, distinct definition, but most scholars admit that an American sound certainly developed in the chronicles of American music history. The last assumption that this study rested on is that film composer John Williams was the face of the new wave of neoclassical film music, better known as the Classical Hollywood Style (Audissino, 2014).

**Limitations**

Over the years, a significant amount of scholarly research concerning 20th Century American composers has been completed. However, not nearly as much research has been completed on John Williams, his works, and his impact upon the world of music outside of film music. This became the main limitation of this paper because as a result, original conjectures based upon solid historical research and analyzing of musical scores must be constructed.
Another limitation of this project was that the intended topic is exceedingly vast. The scope of this study was severely limiting to the entirety of what could be covered and researched.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

American music has always been a paradox. How does one, in both culturally and academically accurate terms, define a music that has grown out of such a melting pot as America? Nearly every American has formed his or her own definition of what American music is to them based upon many factors such as upbringing, culture, and tastes. As a result, American music today could be defined as anything from jazz to rock to the numerous styles in between.

The difficulty to define American music today lies in its extensive reach across cultural boundaries and popular musics. In the early nineteenth century, the difficulty of defining American Music was due to the lack of a musical, cultural identity in the American concert hall. In today’s culture, popular genre music reigns in determining American music, but in the nineteenth century, classical music and the concert hall dominated. The problem was that America simply did not have their own classical style. Poland had their Mazurkas; Italy had their Tarantellas; and Germany had Beethoven. America was a land full of immigrants in the nineteenth century and an American musical idiom or identity had yet to be clearly identified, or perhaps even fully developed.¹ Therefore, a classical musical idiom or identity had yet to be recognized as well. However, it was not long before measures were taken to remedy the situation.

In the following literature review, the researcher systematically explored the development, establishment, and evolution of the classical American music idiom, or the Classical American Sound. This was accomplished, first, through a brief study into the beginnings of 20th Century Classical Music in America. Next, this study examined American

composer, Aaron Copland, whose compositions established the backbone for the Classical American Sound, and explored the particular elements of his compositions that accomplished such a task. Also, this literature review explored the continuation of the Classical American Sound through the unlikely genre of film music through the compositions of legendary film composer, John Williams.

**Early American Classical Music History**

American Classical Music Development

Classical music established a profound presence in America in the early to mid 19th Century. European classics were performed in the most prestigious concert halls around the country, and lead among these concert halls were New York and Boston. Performances of these classics became a staple for any symphonic programing in both amateur and professional music institutions. However, composition and performance of true, American classical music was a more recent and hard-pressed development. In comparison with the European music of the “three B’s” – Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms – not to mention the countless other European compositions still widely considered as classics, the popularity lifespan of American classical music was considerably short. Of course, there were numerous American composers throughout the latter half of 19th Century such as John Knowles Paine, William Gilchrist, and Frederick Gleason, to name a few. However, the compositions of these American-born composers were deeply rooted in German romanticism, as was much of the music written elsewhere in the world. Therefore, these compositions were considered “American” based solely on geography.

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3 Ibid.  
5 Ibid.
With the social and economic growth of the late nineteenth century and the healing that took place during the 1880s and 1890s following the Civil War, several notable events occurred in the realm of music. These events led to the further solidification of America as an institution within the classical music world. One of these events included the founding of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1881 by Henry Lee Higginson. Though the New York Philharmonic had been previously founded in 1842, the Boston Symphony Orchestra was among the first catalysts for establishing America in serious music realms.

Also influential upon American composition was a small group of composers from Boston. These Boston composers dominated America’s symphonic writing until World War I. Composers a part this group included George Whitefield Chadwick, Arthur William Foote, Horatio William Parker, H. H. A. Beach, and, perhaps most influential, Edward MacDowell. The significance of this group of composers rested not so much in the revolution of American composition but rather in historical consequence as they were the first “school” of serious composition to emerge within America. German romanticism still reigned among American composers well up until the first World War, but American composers began to experience recognition and validation among their European peers.

Perhaps the person most influential in starting the idea of American classical music was composer Antonin Dvorák. Originally from Bohemia in Czech, Dvorák was most famous for his advocacy of nationalism within his symphonic compositions by including bohemian folk songs into his writings. In 1892, Dvorák became the director of the National Conservatory of Music in

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7 Ibid., 386-91.
8 Howard and Bellows, *Music in America*, 157-64.
America. During his time on American soil, he composed several pieces. One of his most famous American compositions was Symphony No. 9 or *From the New World*. This piece, along with others of his American compositions, was derived American folk songs, Negro spirituals, and American Indian tunes. Most notably, Dvorák pushed for a distinct American idiom to be developed throughout nationalist compositions by American composers. Concerning *From the New World*, Dvorák once stated:

“These beautiful and varied themes are the product of the soil. They are American. They are the folk songs of America, and your composers must turn to them. In the Negro melodies of America, I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music.”

It was the 20th Century that brought significant change to American classical music. Howard and Bellows stated:

American composers, accepting Dvorák’s challenge that they investigate and experiment with the vast treasure of American folk song, became more and more venturesome and audacious in their attempt to write music which could easily be recognized as American.

Top among these composers was Edward MacDowell. Though MacDowell felt music and politics should be kept far from each other, he could not escape the desire to compose music that showed America’s maturity in the classical realm. He also sought to treat “His own country as the equivalent, musically speaking, of a peripheral European nation, and bringing the American landscape and indigenous American materials into his own European-based style.” MacDowell began the quest for both American nationalism and universality: Nationalism meaning that

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
14 Ibid., 182.
16 Ibid., 378.
American classical music was unique and easily identifiable, and universality meaning that American classical music should have been appreciated and accepted both in America and across the world.17

At the same time as the rise of nationalism in American classical music, a new musical movement was occurring in Europe that eventually carried over to the United States. This new movement was a shift from the romanticism of the music of composers such as Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel to the atonal, 20th Century style of composition. A key figure in this movement was Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg.18 Using atonal, twelve tone rows, and other free composition techniques, Schoenberg strove for dissonance and freedom from tonality.19 Schoenberg once said “the overwhelming multitude of dissonances cannot be counterbalanced any longer by occasional returns to such tonal triads as represent a key.”20 The twelve-tone rows, chromaticism, and atonality pioneered by Schoenberg made a significant impact upon the trajectory of American classical music as well.21 Composers such as Anton Webern, Roger Sessions, and Milton Babbitt were all influenced by the methodology of Schoenberg and translated it into their own styles of composition.22 Music of this style and mindset eventually set the bar for serious classical music in America. At the same time, a subtle divide was created in American music that would later become blatantly apparent: a divide between the popular and the serious. What had yet to happen was a crossover between these two musical worlds.

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 568.
19 Chase, America’s Music, 583
21 Chase, America’s Music, 583-95.
22 Ibid., 583.
Popular Music Development

One of the major catalysts for change and for development of the classical American idiom occurred during the turn of the century and in an entirely different genre of music. This catalyst was ragtime. Ragtime proved to be the most influential American musical development in the 20th Century.\(^{23}\) Howard and Bellows comment on the ragtime phenomenon saying, “Its rhythms were gay and exciting, honest, and they were American to the core. It was music that came from a people, its appeal was universal…and nothing could have better expressed to the whole world the spirit of the American people.”\(^{24}\) Ragtime eventually led to the development of jazz, which later also proved to be one of the most influential steps in the solidification of a classical American music idiom.

Derivative of the Mississippi Delta blues and low-country New Orleans ragtime, this new music called jazz took the country by storm. Introducing syncopated rhythms derived from African drum beats, new instrumentation and contrapuntal melody lines, and, eventually, “bent” notes and extended chords helped to establish a new musical style that could be claimed as the original American music.\(^{25}\) Though jazz had become something of a wildfire phenomenon, during the 1910s and 1920s, it remained secluded in the clubs, far away from the concert halls. Jazz eventually made a public appearance in the sophisticated music world but not without difficulty. Being secluded to the clubs attached a stigma to the genre as being a “symptom of civilization’s decline.”\(^{26}\) In postwar America, prohibition and other efforts to raise the moral standards of mainstream America were at an all time high. Crawford says, “With its eccentric sounds, earthy rhythms, and the encouragement of brazen dance styles, jazz came to be linked in


\(^{24}\) Howard and Bellows, *Music in America*, 192.

\(^{25}\) Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 34.

the public mind with the moral drift that educators and the clergy had been deploring since the war’s end.”

Eventually, the crossover between the jazz world and the symphonic world finally occurred. A young composer by the name of George Gershwin was the first American composer to bridge the gap between popular music and the concert hall unlike ever before with his composition *Rhapsody in Blue*. Debuted on February 12, 1924, the jazz concerto was met with both popular acclaim and critical disapproval. According to Crawford:

Introduced with fanfare and performed often, Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* played a role in defining American musical modernism in the mid- to late-1920s. to several New York critics who aligned themselves more with Stravinsky’s diatonic approach than Schoenberg’s chromatic one, Gershwin emerged from the *Rhapsody in Blue*’s premiere as the American composer who most closely resembled Stravinsky. Older composers and critics, born in the 1870s and 80s, also responded favorably; they saw Gershwin as the man most likely to carry American composition beyond its unimpressive past. Both groups approved in principle the idea of an American concert music based on an American vernacular style.

On the other side of the spectrum, some critics and composers of the same era felt that Gershwin’s concerto, though virtuosic, was a sell out to popularity. Critics such as Paul Rosenfeld were responsible for fostering the divide among schools of American composition. His comments on Gershwin’s music further reveal the musical hierarchy forming within America which places the classical high above the popular. Rosenfeld, along with many others in the music business, successfully created a divide between the popular music of the common person and the serious music for the overeducated intellectuals. This divide continued throughout the first half of the twentieth century though pieces such as Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* fought

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27 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 579.
31 Ibid., 579.
Labeling Gershwin’s piece in the popular sphere, Rosenfeld ironically pitted George Gershwin against another young composer by the name of Aaron Copland. The irony of this parallel made by Rosenfeld existed in the fact that Aaron Copland would eventually take a similar position as Gershwin, making an effort to combine the popular and the classical.

By taking elements from those who had come before as well as discovering new ideas of American music, composers such as George Gershwin developed what would forever be the foundations for American Classical Music. This uniquely-American music was further developed and solidified through the compositions of early 20th Century American composers such as Aaron Copland. Copland greatly contributed to the development of Classical American Music and to the Classical American Sound in various ways. The next section of this study will examine Copland’s individual contribution to American Classical Music and ultimately the Classical American Sound.

Aaron Copland & The Development of the Classical American Sound

Aaron Copland: A Brief Biography

Aaron Copland was born on November 14, 1900 in Brooklyn, New York to Jewish immigrants, Harris and Sarah Copland. His father immigrated as a young man from Shavli, Lithuania in the mid 1870s to New York City. After arriving in Brooklyn, Harris sent for his entire family to join him. Aaron Copland’s mother, Sarah Mittenthal, was also a Jewish immigrant from a small town near Kaliningrad, under Russian oppression as well. Sarah and her family came to America and eventually arrived in Chillicothe, Illinois. Though immigrants from similar areas and with similar backgrounds, Harris’ and Sarah’s lives in America could not have

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 580.
been more different. Harris became a somewhat successful businessman in New York while Sarah and her family considered themselves pioneers, travelling all around the Mid- and Southwest before settling in the Dallas, Texas area. Growing up in “cowboy country,” cowboys, Native Americans, and the Wild West were all a part of the Sarah Mittenthal’s formative years, and it all became engrained into the history of the entire family. Likely due to financial reasons, the Mittenthal’s moved to New York in 1881, where Sarah met Harris.34

Harris Copland and Sarah Mittenthal were married in October of 1885, and the two had five children, Aaron being the youngest. Copland stated that he does not know whether being the baby of the family had a positive or negative effect but that “it gave [him] the elements of being a performer.”35 He also showed a love for music at a remarkably young age. Though some in his family were interested in music, some even able to play and sing, there were no other artists in the family on either side. This automatically coined Copland as the oddity of the family.36 Copland’s first experiences with music came through his beloved sister, Laurine, who was also his biggest familial support throughout his life. She, along with their mother, taught Aaron how to play the piano, thus starting his musical career. Aaron’s decision to go into music did not initially bode well with his father. However, Harris eventually supported Aaron’s dreams of becoming a musician and became something of his biggest fan, as did the rest of his family. Copland never married and never had children of his own, but both his immediate and extended family were important to him. However, it was evident that Copland’s musical career came first and foremost in all aspects of his life.

35 Ibid., 17.
Aaron Copland received his initial musical training within the family through his sister Laurine. When she had taught him everything she knew, she recommended he find a professional piano teacher, one who would carry him further. Copland’s first piano teacher was Leopold Wolfsohn of Manhattan, New York. Later, when he was sixteen, Copland began to study with the legendary Rubin Goldmark in Manhattan to further his study of harmony and counterpoint. While Goldmark’s style was too academic for him, Copland was grateful for the four years of instruction Goldmark granted him. Though strictly conservative concerning musical thought, composition, and performing, Goldmark was able to impart a solid foundation of musical principles from which Copland could grow in the future. During these four years of compositional instruction, Copland consistently revolved from one piano teacher and accompanist job to the next, all while composing music of his own. It was during this time that Copland the composer began to take shape in addition to being Copland the pianist.

In June of 1921, Copland left the United States to study music professionally in France. It was there that Copland gained freedom to explore musically with both performance and composition. Upon arrival in Paris, Copland was struck by the sheer foreign nature of this new world as compared to his native Brooklyn. He arrived at the newly-formed American Conservatory in Fontainebleau, France and spent his first months of studying there. While he wrote of enjoying his summer spent at the Conservatory, Copland said that much of what was taught here was in numerous ways similar to the teaching of Rubin Goldmark and therefore was not challenging or different enough for him. However, Fontainebleau was where Copland was met with the audacious and bold harmony and composition teachings of theorist and teacher Nadia Boulanger. Under the tutelage of Boulanger for nearly three years, Copland learned from

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37 Howard and Bellows, *Music in America*, 252.
38 Copland & Perlis, *Copland*, 45.
the classics, explored the new age, and harbored his interest in popular music and jazz.\textsuperscript{39} As a result, Boulanger granted Copland the freedom to compose and orchestrate in ways that were at once classic, with respect to tradition, and experimental, with new compositional style influences. Boulanger wrote of Copland as her student, “To let him develop was my great concern. One could tell his talent immediately. The great gift is a demonstration of God.”\textsuperscript{40}

Under Boulanger, Copland studied composition, harmony, and counterpoint and also spent time traveling throughout Europe to broaden his experience. His travels in Europe proved influential in various ways. Probably the most influential was his discovery of the popularity of jazz throughout Europe. During this time in his education, Copland searched for ways to write music that sounded American in contrast to the American compositions of the early twentieth century that were still reflective of European 20\textsuperscript{th} Century music. Though jazz was popular in many regions of America, it had not yet been accepted as America’s overall popular music idiom. Copland noticed this jazz trend in Europe and was inspired. “I began to consider that jazz rhythms might be the best way to make an American-sounding music.”\textsuperscript{41}

Taking all of his experiences and lessons he learned throughout his time in Europe, Aaron Copland returned to New York during the summer of 1924. He was met with difficult times in regards to his career, but he continued to compose. Copland would go on to write several popular compositions including \textit{First Symphony}, \textit{Piano Concerto}, and \textit{Music for the Theatre}. Thanks to the passionate pioneering of conductor Sergei Koussevitzky, other famous conductors, and the many musical leagues created in New York City during the early 1920s, Aaron Copland and other American composers like him were able to explore this new avenue of

\textsuperscript{39} Pollack, \textit{Aaron Copland}, 67.


\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 90.
American music that was born and bred out of the American spirit. Though still a work in progress, time, patience, and research would eventually yield a music that captured the American spirit: The Classical American Sound.

Compositional Style and Attitude

Compositional Style

Much has been researched and said about the life and music of Aaron Copland, but what about his music qualifies it as being so distinctly American? Primary to Copland’s music would be his combination of serious and popular music, a juxtaposition of simplicity against complexity, capturing the essence and spirit indigenous to the American life, full of beauty and struggle.42 When broken down into its basic attributes, Copland’s contribution to the Classical American Sound also begins with his use of folk tunes.43 Sometimes subtle but always distinctive, Copland composed many pieces that contained popular American folk tunes. For example, Copland’s Appalachian Spring included the popular tune Simple Gifts. One of Copland’s later pieces, Emblems, directly quoted the popular American hymn Amazing Grace. Copland’s second contribution to the Classical American Sound was his prominent use of fourth and fifth intervals, both in melodic and harmonic contexts. A classic example of this was the entirety of Copland’s Fanfare for the Common Man.

Finally, and likely most influential, Copland’s compositions included significant amounts of pandiatonicism, quartal harmony, syncopation and rhythmic variation, and brass fanfare.\textsuperscript{44,45} These 20\textsuperscript{th} Century compositional devices comprised many of the recognizable aspects of Copland’s music, and Copland employed them in various manners and combinations. Though he used many 20\textsuperscript{th} Century techniques, his compositions were also more accessible to the everyday concert attender, which perhaps made his compositions more popular than those of some of his counterparts. These compositions, also called “nationalist” music, are what eventually became the backbone for the classical American music idiom. While Copland certainly did not develop the Classical American Sound on his own, it could be argued that it was his compositions that are recognized as having codified a “characteristic” sound.

Modernism reigned in the 1910s and 1920s, and its effects could be seen and heard throughout Europe and America.\textsuperscript{46} Early in his musical career, Aaron Copland composed music that resembled the modernist styles of Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky. Stravinsky, especially, was one of Copland’s musical heroes.\textsuperscript{47} Copland’s early compositions included the atonal flow, chromaticism, forms and touches of serialism and 12 tone, and abnormal rhythms and patterns, reminiscent of jazz, all representative of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century music that rose in popularity among scholarly musicians. Later, as his music became more refined and intentional, Copland continued with this combination of jazz and classical music.\textsuperscript{48} While considered classical music in form and function, Copland’s affinity for jazz rhythms and modern

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{44} Kenny L. Adams, “Pandiatonicism in Three Ballets by Aaron Copland” (master’s thesis, University of North Texas, 1972), 2.
\textsuperscript{47} Pollack, \textit{Aaron Copland}, 65.
\textsuperscript{48} The jazz influence is seen mostly in the use of syncopated rhythms and alternating meters.
\end{footnotesize}
compositional devices were prominent in his works, giving him a unique sound. Aaron Copland ironically discovered his style of American Music while overseas. In his autobiography, Copland’s writing assistant, Vivian Perlis, explains:

Copland had gone to Europe to learn how to compose, and had ‘found’ America while viewing it from abroad. He saw European composers take up American jazz and thought that if composers like Debussy and Ravel, Stravinsky and Milhaud could use ragtime and jazz rhythms, the way might be open for American composers. Perhaps, he thought, here finally was a music an American might write better than a European.⁴⁹

In the 1930s, a shift was made in the music of Aaron Copland. The 1920s were marked by modernism and explorations in jazz and classical fusions.⁵⁰ In the 1930s a shift was made from modernism to a conglomeration of both modernism and populism. His compositions from the 1930s and 1940s were called his “nationalist” compositions.⁵¹ While retaining the musical integrity and new techniques with which he had been trained, Copland composed music for the people, accessible by all. He composed music indigenous to America, reminiscent of the spirit of Americans. Copland changed the face of music played in the American concert hall. As a result, Copland completed much field research in multiple countries into what was required to create this American music.⁵² By doing so, he captured a snapshot of the American life.

Copland’s 1930s-1940s compositional style – the era of focus for this study – was his folk music, or nationalist, period. This compositional period was marked by several features, but arguably the most recognizable of these features was his use of simplistic lines combined with abstract rhythms and harmonies.⁵³ In addition, Copland prominently featured pandiatonicism, modes, extended chords, certain jazz chords that created color and harmonic diversity, and

⁴⁹ Copland & Perlis, *Copland*, 95.
⁵³ Ibid., 256.
finally the prominent use of the flattened seventh chord throughout his nationalist works.\textsuperscript{54}

Rhythmically, Copland often employed irregular meters and syncopation or even changed meters within a piece, which allowed for rhythmic variety and provided forward momentum. Influences of jazz rhythms can be seen, though Copland himself said that his Piano Concerto was the last of his works that included direct examples of jazz.\textsuperscript{55} However, jazz rhythms still influenced even Copland’s nationalist works. *Appalachian Spring*, one of Copland’s most famous compositions, included elements of jazz rhythmic structures but did not overtly quote from jazz repertoire or style. The essence of jazz, which some analysts deemed ambiguous, could most definitely be heard.\textsuperscript{56}

**Compositional Attitude**

At the forefront of Copland’s compositional attitude was that serious music—academic music—should not be held in higher regard than the popular music that appealed to the general public.\textsuperscript{57} However, he also felt that the popular music tastes of the general public were too deeply rooted in the past.\textsuperscript{58} This created a conundrum for the composers of that day, Copland included. How did one compose music that appealed to the general public but was also a representation of the current time? The answer lied in a combination of popular and serious music. This answer brought even more issues to light. Top among these was the issue of writing music that was academic and appealed to mass audiences at the same time. Copland had no interest in alienating either side of the spectrum: those who enjoyed popular music to those who reveled in the serious. Instead, he composed music that satisfied both the academic as well as the common man.\textsuperscript{59}


\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 129-30.


\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 27.
Copland believed that serious music and music of the public could be combined because it possessed such a rich past that eluded to such a rich future. This combination developed into a style that accomplished two things at once. The first thing it accomplished was that the music maintained a scholarly integrity by incorporating elements of serious music while appealing to the mass audience. Second, inclusion of the popular styles and folk tunes brought a connection to the audience that did not often exist in extreme experimental composition. Copland included elements and themes such as cowboys, American heroism, and folk tunes that appealed to the imagination and spirit of the American public.

Aaron Copland’s motivation to compose was much more than writing music that had a distinct American sound or that pleased the ears of the American people. In fact, several American composers sought to encourage more than simple music-making, and rather encouraged efforts for finding what one does well and doing it to the best of his or her ability, among other things. Copland’s prominent days of writing (the late 1920s through the 1940s) came about during a time of tremendous hardship and turmoil in American society. He desired to foster a sense of unity without overtly-arrogant nationalism by composing music for the common man enduring America’s hardships of war and depression. Aaron Copland’s subtle yet profound use of folk tunes, combined with numerous other characteristics gave the American people a music that they accepted as their own. This classical American music produced by

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Copland set the stage and broadened the path for future American composers to experiment as well as set the stage for a classical American music idiom to be established.

**The Classical American Sound**

The Classical American Sound has many elements. Through study of Aaron Copland and his work in American classical music, this study briefly highlighted his contribution to the development and establishment of the Classical American Sound. Copland’s combination of folk song, melodic and rhythmic brass lines, varying rhythms, unique chords and progressions, and 20th Century harmonic devices all combined to create the foundation for the Classical American Sound. To summarize, the Classical American Sound can be characterized by the following categorical elements: (1) syncopation (2) brass fanfare (3) extended chords and quartal harmony (4) and finally, pandiatonicism and modal interchange.

Though these certain elements of the Classical American Sound can be listed and explained, these individual characteristics could be descriptive of a variety of styles of music. It is the combination of all these characteristics as well as the experience of hearing the music performed that encapsulates the Classical American Sound. Above all, the Classical American Sound is much more than a simple list of its elements. This is one instance in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The experience of listening to American music elevates the listener and cultivates a strong sense of patriotism and belonging. This experience, along with the physical attributes, combine to create the beauty that is the Classical American Sound. This sound, unique to American classical music, has had tremendous influence on numerous composers throughout a wide range of genres. From theatre to popular culture to film music, the Classical American Sound has proven to be popular among both composers and listeners alike. The remainder of this literature review will examine a brief history of film music, draw
connections between American classical music and film music, and discuss the continuation of the Classical American Sound through this vastly different genre of film music through the compositions of legendary composer John Williams.

Film Music, John Williams, and the New Face of American Music

In twenty-first century culture, most young people and perhaps even countless adults would not recognize the names of the most famous American classical composers. However, when asked to hum or sing their favorite film score, a large majority would likely be able to do so with ease and excitement. Many would even know the name of the composer who wrote their favorite film score. Film music has long been a source of enjoyment for the movie goer. Film music has also always been an integral part of the cinematic experience. The differences between early twentieth century music culture and modern-day music culture are staggering. The once-revered concert hall that inspired countless individuals has now become significantly less interesting and inspiring to the younger generation than in previous decades. Though the concert hall may not be as popular now as it once was, one thing has remained consistent throughout the changes: music continues to connect with people. Numerous changes may have occurred, but one genre of music seems to have bridged the gap between the concert hall and popular culture: film music.

The following section of this study provides a brief examination of the history of film music, focusing primarily on the journey of film music from the Golden Age of Hollywood of the 1930s and 1940s, its relation to classical American music, and the resurgence of the Golden Age compositional techniques through composer John Williams. This study attempts to draw connections between early film music composition techniques and the music of early American

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composers to show the crossover of the Classical American Sound from the concert hall to the film screen through the compositions of John Williams.

A History of Film Music

The Silent Era (1895-1929)

The beginning of film music ironically originated with the period of film called the Silent Era. This portion of film music history was termed the Silent Era due to the lack of audible dialogue in the films. Film production technology up to that time lacked the ability to produce audible synchronization. These “silent” films were only silent in production value. Most small-town theater houses hired pianists or other instrumentalists to accompany the films often with improvised music, matching the action on screen. The first appearances of predetermined film music emerged in the form of cue sheets. These cue sheets were typically accompanied by a comprehensive anthology of musical cues. Cue sheets were published to “encourage the selection of appropriate musical numbers from both classical and popular sources to accompany screenings of films…” The first anthology/cue sheet publication was compiled by Gregg A. Freling entitled *Motion Picture Piano Music*. Over time, cue sheets and stock libraries established tone associations in the filmgoer’s mind. Certain stock sounds common to cue-sheets included “Cowboy Music,” Grotesque or Clown Music,” and “Storm Scene.” Associations solidified the expectations of both filmmakers and filmgoers. As film music matured, the idea of a fixed film score became popular in America. The first fixed film score was for the Civil War epic *The Birth of a Nation*

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67 A cue sheet was a written map of the film with cues written in correlating to an anthology that accompanied most cue sheets. Each cue would coincide with the on-screen action, and the conductor and orchestra would follow along throughout the film, creating the mood and emotions through the cues played.
69 Ibid.
70 Larson, *Film Music*, 29.
(1915), which contained a set film score composed of several popular classical pieces compiled by Joseph Carl Breil. Beethoven, Flowtow, Schubert, and Wagner were among the composers used in the score.\textsuperscript{71} This fixed film score paved the way for further experimentation in film scoring.

In large cities across America, many cinemas held regular large film exhibitions that boasted large orchestral accompaniment. Instead of the improvisation used by solo cinematic pianists, popular classical scores were often chosen to accompany the films. It was not until the early 1900s that music composed specifically for the film screen rose in popularity. Camille Saint-Saëns was one of the first famous composers to compose an original piece exclusively for film.\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Film d’art}, as it was called, originated in France and throughout Europe, and soon became a phenomenon in the United States around 1910.\textsuperscript{73} From this time forward, film music became an industry of its own.

From the pianist in the small town theater house to the full orchestra at large film exhibitions, from cue sheets to fixed film scores, film music advanced greatly during the Silent Era. Techniques were developed, tone associations were solidified, and the foundation for one of the most dynamic and influential musical industries was established. Film music had numerous changes yet to come, but the foundations of American film music were solidified and growing. The growth of American film music rose exponentially during the next era of its development: The Golden Age.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Cooke, \textit{A History of Film Music}, 14.
\item \textsuperscript{73} MacDonald, \textit{Invisible Art of Film Music}, xv.
\end{itemize}
The Golden Age (1929-1959)

The Golden Age of Hollywood was a period in which cinema boomed, but not without hardship. This period of film came about just as world-wide tragedy rocked the nation through the Great Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Cinematic attendance declined drastically, but the film industry survived. It did so through “aggressive promotion of a formulaic product designed to appeal to a mass spectatorship.” Film survived by appealing to the emotions and needs of their audience, or in other words, becoming a consumer-based industry. This became a topic of disdain for some within the industry, – and even today among film historians – but the fact could not be argued that engaging the mass public in this way, as well as the deep pockets of a handful of executives on Wall Street, saved cinema from suffering the same fate as countless other businesses and industries during the Depression.

The studio system was the largest development in film during the 1930s. This “movie-making assembly line” became the topic of much heated debate throughout the country. Elmer Bernstein, a famous film composer starting in the 1950s, recalls that the studio structure “…was good, because the music directors took responsibility for the spotting of the picture…If there was something wrong with the score, it was the music director who took the flak and stood between the composer and the producer.” According to Mervyn Cooke, “Studio staff and musicians worked astonishingly hard, took much pride in their tasks, and endured unrelentingly punishing schedules.” However, others felt the studio system, and all that was a part of it, was a monopoly of the film industry. A culmination of musicians’ working conditions, copyright

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74 Cooke, History of Film Music, 67.
75 Ibid., 66.
76 Larson, Film Music, 123.
77 Cooke, History of Film Music, 71.
78 Ibid.
issues, government interference, and other problems led to the ultimate demise of this structure in the studio in the mid-1950s. The fall of the studio system determined the fall of the music departments.\(^7\) This combined with the public’s change of attitude toward the grandiose music in films lead toward drastic change in film music.\(^8\)

It was during the Golden Age that different genres within film music began to appear. From horror to westerns to dramas, this era of film composition established the stereotypical sounds of each genre that are still known today. Shying away from such blatant musical romanticism from the early days of film, changing to techniques such as leitmotifs and “mickey-mousing”, and even musical experimentation was not a simple adjustment.\(^8\) According to Cooke, “Indeed, a ‘symphonic’ and indestructibly tonal romanticism was so deeply ingrained in the consciousness of movie-goers and film composers that any dash of color such as jazz, extreme chromaticism or atmospheric harmonies and suggestive instrumentation…was instantly perceived as exotic and ‘other’ to the prevailing heart-on-sleeve, melody-based norm.”\(^8\) The top film music genres involved in these changes were the horror and western films.

Horror films set a large precedent for many of the films to come. In 1931, certain movie studios experimented with the idea of continuous scores, and horror films were some of the first films to include continuous scores.\(^8\) *Frankenstein* (1931) was one of the first horror films produced that included original, semi-continuous music composed by Bernhard Kaun.\(^8\) The

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\(^7\) Larson, *Film Music*, 124.
\(^8\) Ibid.
\(^8\) “Mickey-Mousing” is a term used to describe music that is almost sound effect-like. For example, Scott Bradley’s musical work in *Tom and Jerry* short films. Much of the music is directly represented through action on-screen.
\(^8\) Cooke, *History of Film Music*, 78.
\(^8\) Ibid.
film’s main title introduced many of the musical themes and techniques that are now instantly associated with horror films. These techniques are described by William H. Rosar:

The music begins with a glowering modal figure, harmonized in a minor key, which imparts a stark, heavy, Teutonic feeling. This figure is repeated and then varied over a chromatic bass line, which churns and rolls under it, punctuated at one point with brass trills (no doubt to connote fright). The second half of the piece is more subdued, misterioso, with a meandering woodwind figure, giving way to an orchestration suggestive of the sound of a bell tolling. As if it were a veil of mist, the music is swept away with a glissando on the piano, and ends on a bare open fifth leaving a feeling of bleakness and mystery.85

Horror film music of The Golden Age allowed composers more freedom in experimentation with harmonies and instrumentation. Twentieth-century techniques of chromaticism, serialism, and twelve-tone rows added greater depth from which composers could pull.86 According to Neil Lerner, “Frightening images and ideas can be made even more intense when accompanied with frightening musical sounds.”87

Western film music is perhaps the genre most closely associated with the classical American music idiom. “The Hollywood western is marked as uniquely American by its geographic setting, prototypical male protagonist, and core American Values,” according to Film Professor Kathryn Kalinak.88 Of all the genres of film, perhaps none depicted the true American spirit better than the Western. The Western first came into the film industry in 1903 with The Great Train Robbery.89 Even since the days of silent film, the Western experienced significant success. Characteristics of western film music included simple melodies, open harmonies, folk song styles, and distinctive rhythms. Musical techniques from the works of composer such as

86 Ibid., 418.
89 The Great Train Robbery was also the first blockbuster of the American cinema.
Aaron Copland made a significant impact upon the Western film industry. Western film composers implemented the same styles and techniques as Copland into their own film compositions. An example of Copland’s impact upon film music was that of Hugo Friedhofer’s score for the film *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), in which a nearly direct quotation of Copland’s “Corral Nocturne” from *Rodeo* was used in the film. The remainder of the film’s music was reminiscent of Copland’s “leaner, triadic folklorisms” as opposed to the compositions of Erich Korngold and Max Steiner. The Classical American Sound within Western films connected with the American people and became among the most popular styles of film score of The Golden Age.

**The Modern Era, 1960 – Present Day**

With the end of the Golden Age of Hollywood came many changes in both film and film music alike. The story-telling narrative of The Golden Age became obsolete in favor of the European *auteur*-styled film, which rose in popularity in America in the 1960s. Film music of this new style of films was no longer focused on tying images and sequences together but essentially delivered the opposite – a nonlinear and ambiguous musical experience. Instead of a steady stream of background music, these films utilized closed musical numbers as independent sections, which was made popular in European operas. Also, modern film music strayed away from the spatial-perceptive function of film music and moved toward the emotive or cognitive function of film music. Ennio Morricone was one of the frontrunners of this style of film music.

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90 Schneller, “Modal Interchange,” 53.
91 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
composition as well as John Barry and Henry Mancini.\footnote{Ibid.} Rejecting most if not all techniques from the classical era, these composers wrote film music that changed the industry. From changing the instrumentation to incorporating popular genres such as jazz and rock as main themes, a new style of film music composition developed.

Many reasons existed for the change, but one of the key reasons was economical and societal in nature. As Emilio Audissino points out, “Film music had to update according to the tastes of the new audience, which were certainly not in line with the symphonic late-romanticism of the classical style.”\footnote{Audissino, \textit{John Williams’s Film Music}, 62.} As changes within postwar American society rapidly occurred, so did the need to cater to the musical tastes became necessary to remain successful in the film music industry. Film producers also attempted to draw in the younger generation.\footnote{Larson, \textit{Film Music}, 150.} One of the results in this shift in focus was the compilation score – scores consisting of pop songs rather than original composed music reflecting these popular styles. Title tracks also became the focus of the film score.\footnote{Ibid., 148.} Title tracks held a commercial success of their own which occasionally seemed to take precedence over its contextual fixture in the film but was yet another area for revenue.\footnote{Ibid.} The film composer who mastered the best of both worlds of film composition was composer Henry Mancini, the composer who was “practically a brand name in pop culture.”\footnote{John Caps, \textit{Henry Mancini: Reinventing Film Music} (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 1.} Mancini was excellent at “balancing the old-school sense of drama with a knack for staying in tune with or even shaping himself the current musical trends.”\footnote{Audissino, \textit{John Williams’s Film Music}, 66.} Some examples of his superior and relevant compositions are \textit{Breakfast at Tiffany’s} (1961), \textit{The Pink Panther} (1964), and \textit{The Great Race}
Mancini’s ability to create multiple themes that remained cohesive yet distinct throughout the entirety of the film set the standard for film music composers to come.

In the 1970s, a composer emerged that changed the face of film music yet again. This composer returned the symphonic score to a place of prominence among film scores. Often labeled a neoclassical composer for employing Golden Era composition techniques, composer John Williams reached prominence in the industry for numerous reasons.\textsuperscript{103} The following section of the study will explore John Williams, his life and his extraordinary career in film composition and his contribution to the continuation of the Classical American Sound through his own medium of music-making, the orchestral film score. Due to his ability to connect with his audience, his emulation of the compositional techniques of his classical predecessors, and the sheer popularity of his compositions, John Williams was chosen as the case study for the examination of the continuation of the Classical American Sound into today’s musical culture.

\textbf{John Williams: A Brief Biography}

John Towner Williams was born on February 8, 1932 in New York City, New York. Williams’ father, “Johnny” Williams, was a musician employed as a percussionist in the CBS Radio Orchestra as well as a part of the Raymond Scott Quintette.\textsuperscript{104} In fact, Williams’ entire family was musical: his brothers both became percussionists and his sister eventually became a piano teacher. As a result, Williams was surrounded by music and received music lessons for numerous instruments at a young age. He demonstrated particular talent and interest in piano, composition, and arranging as he grew older.\textsuperscript{105} In 1948, Williams’ family moved the Los Angeles, California. Throughout his time at North Hollywood High School, Williams arranged

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\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 86. \\
\textsuperscript{104} Audissino, \textit{John Williams’s Film Music}, 86. \\
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
music for the high school band. After high school, he attended college at the University of California at Los Angeles where he was taught counterpoint and composition by Mario Castelnuovo until being drafted into the United States Air Force in 1952. It was while in the military that Williams was granted the opportunity to compose his first film score – the score for a German production concerning the Maritime Provinces of Canada.106

After serving three years in the military, Williams continued his musical education and aspirations of becoming a concert pianist at the prestigious Julliard Music School, learning piano under famous piano teacher Rosina Lhevinne. While studying at Julliard, Williams fully realized his passion for composition, though in a comical, self-deprecating manner. He said, “I started to hear some of her [Lhevinne’s] other students who were even younger than I was playing around the building…and I thought ‘Well, if that’s what the competition is, maybe I should be a composer.”107 As humble as he was, John Williams was – and is – a gifted and talented performer. However, time would prove that the choice to become a full time composer was not only the right choice for Williams, it was a decision that later impacted hundreds of thousands of individuals across the world.

**Early Career and Influences**

In 1956, John Williams moved back to Los Angeles in search of a consistent job that would provide for him and his new family. Williams married singer and actress Barbara Ruick, and the small family quickly began to grow. He found his first job in the movie industry as a pianist for Columbia Pictures. While not in the sphere of composing, this job proved to be an influential stepping-stone for Williams’ future career. While at Columbia, Williams sat as pianist on several popular movies such as *Funny Face* (Stanley Donen, 1957, music adapted by Adolph

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106 Ibid., 87.
107 Ibid., 87.
Deutsch) *Breakfast At Tiffany’s* (Blake Edwards, 1961, music by Henry Mancini), and *West Side Story* (Jerome Robbins, Robert Wise, 1961, music by Leonard Bernstein). Eventually, Williams left his stint as a studio pianist and began working where most film composers began in those days – as an orchestrator. Orchestrator for both film and recording studios, Williams was given the opportunity to work under composers such as Dmitri Tiomkin, Alfred Newman, and Bernard Hermann and recording artists such as Mahalia Jackson and Doris Day.  

He also spent a few years composing for television. Television was one of the most demanding and challenging areas of composition in Hollywood during that era simply due to the quick turnarounds, high volume, and the immense variety of music needed. Williams wrote compositions for shows varying from space fantasy to comedies.

During the 1960s, John Williams made the difficult transition from television to film. A few of his first notable compositions included *The Killers* (Don Siegel, 1964), *None But the Brave* (Frank Sinatra, 1965), and *The Rare Breed* (Andrew Mclaglen, 1966).  

At the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s, Williams became known for his compositions for comedies and then for disaster films. Over the course of the early 1970s, Williams composed scores of many genres and styles. From westerns with full symphonic arrangements to thrillers with atonal, disjointed melodies to even writing pop songs for films, he wrote them all. Not one to pigeonhole himself, Williams ensured his future in film composition by showing and proving he could write for any type of film.  

Although he composed such a varying array of styles, there is evidence of the Classical Hollywood style influence that can be seen in several of Williams’

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108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., 89-91.
110 Audissino, *John Williams Film Music*, 89.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
compositions throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Hints of Mickey-mousing, leitmotifs, and romanticism techniques are evident throughout his early career as a composer. However, it was not until the late 1970s that Williams made a seemingly drastic shift back in time to a compositional style once thought outdated and dead.  

John Williams gained his greatest notoriety as a film composer throughout the early 1970s. He composed the scores for blockbusters such as *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975), *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Spielberg, 1977), and his most well-known breakout composition, *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1977). It was the latter film that brought Williams to the forefront of the film world. While already possessing a unique style, it was not until the release of *Star Wars* that Williams’ style stood out as something new yet strangely familiar. *Star Wars* was a fantasy space drama, of which there were many during the 1970s. Countless B-level movies and television shows of the same genre were produced during this era. However, there was one major difference: the film score. The space fantasies produced in the 1970s most often included strange, “other-worldly” types of music, often to add to the fantasy or horror of the films or television shows. John Williams stepped on the scene and changed the face of the space fantasy, action film not by creating something entirely new, but rather by drawing inspiration from the past.

In his composition for *Star Wars*, John Williams did something that had not been done since the end of the Golden Age of Hollywood. Williams resurrected romanticism, mickey-mousing, Wagnerian leitmotifs, and fully orchestrated scores and combined these techniques with modern concepts of pandiatonicism, and stacked chords, among other techniques.  

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113 Ibid.  
114 Ibid.  
115 Ibid.
Bringing back this Korngold-style of film composition allowed Williams a new world of composition. It also allowed him the opportunity to bring back to the forefront a style of composition that, although it was so loved by viewers at the time, died out in the 1960s.

With his breakout film composition for the movie *Star Wars* in 1977 (directed by George Lucas), John Williams, went somewhat against the grain of what the Mancini’s and the Morricone’s of the 1960s and 1970s produced.\footnote{Ibid., 72.} Williams did not simply copy what had been done in the past, going back to a traditional Classical Hollywood style. He also did not carry on the strict use of “other-worldly”, alien music used in other space odysseys of the day. He combined the best of both worlds. John Williams composed a score consisting of solid foundations based on the Classical Hollywood style, highlighting the use of leitmotifs and full-symphonic scores. At the same time, he employed strong, tonal chord relationships blended with notable dissonances. He then combined them with strong, sometimes angular, melodic lines. The end result was a film score that combined the best of both styles, albeit leaning heavily toward the Classical Hollywood style. The score for *Star Wars* has remained to date one of the most iconic, memorable, and popular scores in American film history, still sitting at number one on the American Film Institutes’ 25 Greatest Film Scores.\footnote{Cooke, *History of Film Music*, 302.} The score for this film combined everything so beloved from the early days in Hollywood and introduced modern tonalities, syncopations, and chord-stacking. It was this combination that essentially brought the old and new of film music together.

John Williams pursued and produced a sound that did not blatantly push against modern film music. Instead, John Williams extracted some of the elements of both modern film music and early American classical music, combined them with Classical Hollywood film score
elements, and produced what some scholars called film music “neoclassicism”. By doing so, Williams composed epic film scores that appealed to audiences both young and old. Williams was strongly influenced by numerous composers, but distinct comparisons can be drawn between his own compositions and those of Peter Tchaikovsky, Erich Korngold, Sergei Prokofiev, and Richard Wagner. John Williams is most famous for his blockbuster film compositions, but he has composed other smaller American film compositions, major event theme songs, and classical pieces as well. His more popular compositions, such as the scores for the *Indiana Jones, Star Wars, Home Alone*, and *Jurassic Park* franchises, are a continuation of the Classical American Sound in regards to the capturing of the American spirit through music. Musically, it is through both his film compositions and his “Americana compositions” that best qualifies John Williams’ music as a continuation of the Classical American Sound.

John Williams and the Continuation of the Classical American Sound

John Williams has become one of the most dominant names among film composers in America. Other film composers equal in both fame and talent have shown up in the past three decades, but perhaps none have captured both the ears and hearts of the American film-goer more than Williams. Though many of his compositions are not a direct extension of American classical music, elements of the Classical American Sound are prominent throughout his music. Prominent brass fanfare, both sweeping and angular melodic lines, pandiatonicism, and perfect fourth and fifth intervallic movements, all aspects of the Classical American Sound, are part of the foundation for John Williams’ commercial compositions. Also in Williams’ vast collection of

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119 Cooke, *History of Film Music*, 305.
compositions is *American Journey*, which is a film score accompanying the six-part short film presentation directed by Steven Spielberg titled *The Unfinished Journey* that premiered in 1999. The film score of this presentation marking the millennial turn of the century is distinctly Americana in style, reminiscent of the compositions of early American composers. In addition to *American Journey*, Williams has written the opening fanfare for two Olympic games, several classical pieces, and two arrangements of *The Star Spangled Banner*. For both his contribution to film music and the modern American classical music canon, John Williams has continued the tradition of the Classical American Sound from the concert hall to the cinema.

**Summary**

From the beginnings of popularized American classical music in the early nineteenth century to the resurgence of the Classical Hollywood style of film music, it seems a common thread can be observed. This common thread has been deemed in this study as the Classical American Sound. Developed by the early pioneers of American classical music and further established through the compositions of Aaron Copland, characteristics of the Classical American Sound include foundations of folk song, prominent brass melodic lines and fanfare, use of alternate harmonizations including quartal and extended chords, and experimentation of twentieth century techniques of pandiatonicism and modal interchange. The Classical American Sound has become recognizable all over the world as being a sound unique to American music. This unique sound crosses over into the popular music realm through the medium of film music as early as the 1930s. Fast-forward several years, and the Classical American Sound continues this crossover into film music through the renaissance of Classical Hollywood film music through the compositions of John Williams. Williams’ compositions, both film and classical, have distinct impressions of early American music and the Classical American Sound. Including
techniques outside of the Classical American Sound, or perhaps adding to the Classical American Sound, Williams employs Wagnerian leitmotifs, mickey-mousing and numerous other unique musical techniques. John Williams has created his own distinguishable compositional style both inside and outside of the film world, and continues to be high on the list of favorite composers of both professionals and filmgoers alike.

The Classical American Sound has taken on many distinctive forms and can be considered subjective to the listener. However, the foundations of the Classical American Sound remain. The purpose of this study has been to identify the Classical American Sound and to draw connections from the past to the present, allowing for further impact upon American culture. From Copland to Williams, the Classical American Sound has had a significant impact upon American culture and continues to do so. The full impact of the Classical American Sound upon American culture, both past and recently, has yet to be fully examined. However, the power of music to influence both the individual and the masses has been seen throughout the decades. Though a relatively small part of the large picture of American music, the Classical American Sound has nonetheless made an indelible mark upon American history and culture that countless individuals have enjoyed and will enjoy for years to come.
Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

The ultimate goal of this study was to examine the development of early twentieth century American classical music and the characteristics developed by a select number of early American composers; determine these characteristics and how they unite to form the Classical American Sound; and analyze and determine what, if any, connections could be drawn between early classical American music and the neoclassical film music of John Williams with the Classical American Sound as a foundation. No one design fit perfectly within the approach of this study. However, the researcher decided to employ the qualitative methodology as it fit best within the study and allowed the researcher to investigate, analyze, and interpret the findings in a clear, straightforward design.

Design

In order to accomplish the tasks listed above, the researcher employed the qualitative method of research. The design of this study employed the narrative and case study designs within qualitative research. This study began with historical, narrative research design and explored the beginnings of twentieth century American classical music. Extending its reach slightly into the late nineteenth century, what followed was an examination of the development of an American musical idiom. Once this foundation was established, the researcher then performed a case study concerning the life, compositional style, musical influences, and compositional influences of American classical composer Aaron Copland. Aaron Copland was arguably the most influential and “American” composer of the first half of the century. This case
study investigated Copland’s overall contribution to the development of the Classical American Sound.

The second half of the research in this study repeated the historical, narrative research and case study process except in a new field of musical development: the film score. The historical research studied the development of film music from as early as the 1890s and continues until the breakout debut of John Williams and the neoclassical style of film composition in the 1970s. At this point, the researcher turned to a case study of composer John Williams, his life, achievements, and contribution to the continuation of the Classical American Sound in both his famous, blockbuster films and his more unfamiliar, Americana compositions.

The final section of this study was a final analysis of all historical and case study findings throughout the research process. Significant musical analysis drew solid connections between early American classical music and the compositions of John Williams. The sample for the analysis included examples from numerous musical selections, comparing and contrasting examples from both genres, and drawing parallels and setting the foundation for further argument for the Classical American Sound. The analysis of the selected pieces was broken down to sections based upon the individual aspects of the Classical American Sound. These determined aspects included foundations of folk song, prominent brass melodic lines and fanfare, use of fourth and fifth intervals in both melodic and harmonic cases, experimentation of twentieth century techniques of pandiatonicism, serialism, and contrapuntal movement in both simplistic and complex examples. Finally, the analysis concluded with a cursory look into the cultural impact of both generations of music, comparing the effects of both styles under the Classical American Sound upon popular culture and vice versa.
Research Questions and Hypothesis

Research Questions

1) What is the Classical American Sound and can it be neatly defined?

   The Classical American Sound has yet to be studied at length. Areas of American classical music have been discussed and reviewed, but to gain a complete understanding of the what made American music “American,” an examination into the foundations of American music, its key composers and origins, was necessary. Research into the history of American classical music, study of three of the leading American composers, and examination of their most popular compositions led this researcher to condense the Classical American Sound into four distinct aspects.

2) What about Aaron Copland’s compositions qualify them as an example of the development of the Classical American Sound?

   While other American composers certainly aided in the development of the Classical American Sound, Aaron Copland and his nationalist music and views ultimately progressed the popularity of the American Classical Music. This popularization with the American people through both the concert hall and the cinema solidified the Classical American Sound in the minds and ears of listeners around the world.

3) Has the Classical American Sound crossed over from early American music to genre of film music?

   In the early twentieth century, classical Americana music made a distinct impression upon the world of film music, primarily in the westerns. Many aspects of early American music that are also a part Classical American Sound could be easily identified in the western genre. In more modern film music, a less direct correlation exists. Rather than direct
connections, the Classical American Sound has crossed over more in similarity of musical ideas that comprise the Classical American Sound. Another aspect that has crossed over the genre divide is the ideological aspects of cultural impact and audience connection.

4) What musical and historical connections, if any, can be made between these early American compositions and the film music of John Williams?

   John Williams’ film music has substantial connections to early American music as well as classic Hollywood film music. Through analysis of select compositions from both eras and the impact upon music history and popular culture, this researcher draws several parallels between the seemingly separate genres of music.

5) What about John Williams and his film compositions qualifies his compositions as a continuation of the Classical American Sound?

   John Williams’ film compositions and Americana compositions are some of the most recent examples of the Classical American Sound available. Using techniques used by Copland and others, Williams has successfully bridged the gap between the concert hall and the cinema by composing music that resonates with the audience, American or otherwise. The Classical American Sound is, at times, more than just a musical sound, but rather is a unifying presence, and Williams has certainly accomplished this through his writings.

6) What impact does the Classical American Sound have upon the current and next generations of musicians, composers, and music educators?

   This researcher hopes to demonstrate that the Classical American Sound has had a significant impact upon American culture. Through historical research of the impression of early American classical music and the compositions of John Williams upon American
culture in their respective time periods, this researcher will examine the importance of the Classical American Sound in today’s context.

Hypothesis

The working hypothesis for this study based upon the above research questions is the following: A definable, recognizable Classical American Sound exists, its vernacular was developed by early American composers, and the Classical American Sound can be traced from its foundations in early American classical music to recent American film music and other compositions of composer John Williams.

Summary

This study does not claim to be an exhaustive, in-depth look into American classical music or a determining, all-inclusive foundation of the Classical American Sound. Rather, the researcher hoped to spur interest in the idea of the Classical American Sound and draw enough parallels to display the importance of the study. The researcher intended this study to be a springboard for further conversation and study into the Classical American Sound, its continuation to modern day, and its impact upon American culture. Through this cursory look into the foundations of the Classical American sound, this researcher hoped to encourage deeper thought and professional research in this fascinating area of the history of American music.
Chapter 4

Research Findings

Introduction

The following chapter of this study presents an analysis of select compositions by early American composer Aaron Copland as well as compositions by film composer John Williams. The early American pieces included in this analysis are Copland’s “Buckaroo Holiday” from Rodeo, “Very Slowly”, “Allegro”, and “Subito Allegro” from Appalachian Spring, and Fanfare for the Common Man. The film music selections by John Williams will primarily be focused on selections from “American Journey” but will also include selections from Hymn to New England, Star Wars, Indiana Jones, and Jurassic Park. Using the foundations of the Classical American Sound, this analysis will draw musical connections between these two groups of compositions, attempting to demonstrate the continuation of the Classical American Sound from early American classical music to popular, modern film compositions. These connections will be based upon musical analysis of the compositions themselves but will also include theoretical analysis of impact and acceptance concerning their respective time periods and popular cultures.

Exploring the Qualitative Research

The Development of the Classical American Sound

The historical narrative of early American music follows a path with many twists and turns. Eventually an entity develops. Though most American composers’ repertoires cannot be exclusively set within the Classical American Sound, there are numerous pieces which act as prime examples of this phenomenon, especially towards the middle and end of the 1930s. During the pinnacle of American classical music, these works solidified a distinctly American sound, both in the listener’s ear and in the composer’s pen. Through a narrative design, this study
followed the development of American classical music until its decline in the 1950s. The pattern that emerged over the early twentieth century was clear. American classical composers experimented with new sounds and new rhythms derived from numerous genres. These new combinations of sounds and rhythms coalesced to create an entity that, when heard, was immediately recognized as American. These combinations of sounds and rhythms ultimately united to form the Classical American Sound.

To investigate the individual components of the Classical American Sound, a case study design was employed. This case study was performed on the legendary Aaron Copland and his nationalist compositions of the 1930s and 1940s. Multiple composers played an important role in the development of American classical music as a distinct entity, and therefore played an important role in the development of the Classical American Sound. Their contributions were both cohesive and individual, further solidifying the validity of the Classical American Sound. However, it was the compositions of Aaron Copland that popularized the Classical American Sound once and for all. Through this case study, four characteristics were derived. These characteristics included: brass fanfare; jazz and extended-chord harmonization; pandiatonicism, modal interchange, and/or polytonality; and finally, significant syncopated rhythms.

Brass fanfare is included in numerous styles of classical and non-classical music. What makes brass fanfare in American classical music unique is its combination of both melodic lines and stacked chords. The brass in many classical American works feature the brass choir in both a prominent, melodic manner as well as in a foundational manner, setting the tone for the other orchestral choirs to perform over. Probably the most unique physical characteristic of the Classical American Sound is the use of both jazz chord and extended chord harmonization. Jazz is universally recognized as an American style of music, and the chords derived from this style
directly influenced the Classical American Sound as well as numerous other musical styles. These chords include variations of the 7th, 9th, 11th, and 13th chords, in the many variants that exist. Quartal harmony and prominent usage of the 4th and 5th intervals are also aspects of this unique characteristic of the Classical American Sound. These mixed with the next characteristic of the Classical American Sound, pandiatonicism and polytonality, unite to create a sound that was truly innovative and unique for its time. The final characteristic of the Classical American Sound is that of syncopation and irregular or changing meters. Yet another derivative of jazz, syncopation is obscuring of the beat, accenting “off-beats” instead. Irregular and changing meters are also found significantly throughout the music of classical American music. This technique is seen extensively throughout classical American music, and therefore is an important aspect of the Classical American Sound.

Each of the characteristics that comprise the Classical American Sound can be found in compositions of other musical styles, as they are derivative of other prominent styles of music. What makes the Classical American Sound unique is the combination of each of these characteristics. While not all of the characteristics are evident in each American classical piece, in most pieces, at least three to four out of five characteristics are present. What also makes the Classical American Sound unique and distinguishable is not something that can be musically described. Early twentieth century classical American music possesses a unique ability to evoke

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121 Quartzal harmony is the building of chords by intervals of a fourth rather than the extensively-used tertiary harmonic chords built by intervals of a third.
122 Pandiatonicism is a 20th Century composition technique that uses the diatonic scale but does not employ standard assigned functions and importance to chords built on these scale degrees. This allows the composer to move freely from chord to chord without restriction of chord function and dominance. Polytonality, not to be confused with atonality, is the use of multiple keys at once within the same musical passage, either simultaneously or consecutively within the piece.
a pride and pioneering spirit in its listeners. The nationalist music of Aaron Copland especially evokes a sense of home and unity among its listeners.123

The 1920s through the 1940s were a time of war and rebuilding among the nation. The first part of the 1920s was marked by great prosperity throughout most circles of American economy.124 In stark contrast, the year 1929 brought with it the most devastating blow to America’s economy in its short history. The economy was already slipping, but on top of that, the stock market crashed, unemployment rates skyrocketed, and the overall stability of the nation faltered.125 The aftershock, later named the Great Depression, was felt nation-wide, and its devastating effects rippled in waves across the world long into the next decade. With the stock market crash, countless Americans were forced into foreclosure, bankruptcy, and even homelessness. Those hit hardest were the “common man” of America. Farmers, laborers, and industry workers were among the greatest affected.126 Under both the Hoover and Roosevelt administrations, numerous laws and acts were signed and implemented as both administrations struggled and fought to keep America afloat as its economy drowned. While some of these implementations were successful and the American economy experienced some an upswing, unemployment remained at record highs and moral stayed low. On top of everything, America was heading into yet another war that would test her strength as never before.

World War II brought with it yet another wave of what seemed impossible odds. For the second time in under 20 years, America was at war and her resolve, unity, and perseverance were once again challenged. In the end, World War II resulted in one of the largest economic booms

123 Oja & Tick, Aaron Copland and His World, 442.
126 Crawford, America’s Music Life, 589.
in the 20th Century, creating numerous jobs for both men and women both in the military and on the home front. However, this economic rise did not come easily or cheap. Countless Americans laid down their lives on the battlefield and countless families were split due to deployment or jobs in other states or countries. The effects of this war were far-reaching, and it left the American people looking for someone or something to give them hope in what seemed hopeless times. With so much threatening to tear America apart, unity was seen in the most unexpected of places: the concert hall.

Through the music of composers such as Aaron Copland, the concert hall became this place for unity. Composing a style of music that could be easily identified and labeled as American provided a significant source of encouragement to a nation that had been divided and fractured in the wake of a world war. The compositions of men such as Aaron Copland allowed a chance for the listener and his or her life to be represented through music, and also to escape the world and be transported to a place of unity and peace. This is an important aspect of the Classical American Sound, as important as any physical characteristic. Without a connection to the audience, the claim of this music as American could be considered mute. Resonation with the heart of the listeners and the inspiration to harness the American spirit for good was the foundation of the Classical American Sound.

During the early 20th Century, classical American music was making a significant crossover into the film genre. Classic westerns were employing the sounds created by composers such as Aaron Copland to create a sense of genuine American-ness to the films. This crossover from the concert hall to the cinema set the precedent for further use of the Classical American Sound decades later in the film industry. Though not used in the sense of being overtly American or in the classic western previously used, the characteristics of the Classical American Sound
lasted. The Classical American Sound was most prominently used in the later 20\(^{th}\) Century through the film music of legendary composer, John Williams.

John Williams is most commonly known as the composer for the blockbuster film franchise *Star Wars*. However, in the film music world, Williams is known widely as the face of the resurrection of the Classical Hollywood style of composition. Williams returned to a classic style of film composing that included techniques of leitmotivs, mickey-mousing, and most of all, the use of the full symphony orchestra. These techniques combined with 20\(^{th}\) Century techniques found in the Classical American Sound qualified him as the case study for the continuation of the Classical American Sound in the cinematic world. John Williams’ music also resonated with the audience in both subtle and profound ways, yet another aspect of the Classical American Sound. With many of the film scores, audience members were drawn into the storyline and escaped reality. Audience members walked away remembering the various themes presented in the film score, and were instantly reminded of those scenes whenever they were heard again. Film score purchases saw an increase in profit, as audiences were buying the film score tracks to relive those moments outside of the theater.

Beyond his film scores, the material that further qualified John Williams as a case study for this project were his classical compositions. Williams’ non-film compositions also demonstrated the techniques of the Classical American Sound in an even more concentrated manner. His compositions *Jubilee 350*, *American Journey*, and *Hymn to New England* are just a few examples of his extensive composition outside of mainstream film. These compositions, though less well-known than early classical American music, are representative of the same compositional techniques and American spirit as the compositions of early twentieth century. His passion for symphonic orchestra composition, his resurgence of neoclassical film techniques, and
his adaptation of Classical American Sound techniques to contemporary film scores and other compositions qualified John Williams as the case study for the modern-day Classical American Sound.

Musical Comparison Analysis

For the analysis of this study, special attention was given to the individual characteristics of the Classical American Sound found through previous study of early American composer, Aaron Copland. Once these characteristics were established, each of the four aspects of the Classical American Sound were then studied independently and compared against select compositions of both Aaron Copland and John Williams. These select compositions were required to encompass at least two of the four physical characteristics of the Classical American Sound and were also required to embrace the ideals of the Classical American Sound as well. Certain selections from both composers were also selected as being model examples of the Classical American Sound, encompassing all four characteristics as well as its ideals. This musical comparison attempted to draw significant parallels, showing the continuation of aspects of the Classical American Sound from one American musical generation to the next, through modern interpretations of earlier techniques.\(^{127}\)

**Syncopation**

The first characteristic of the Classical American Sound is syncopation. Syncopation has become so commonplace in today’s popular music that it is often not noticed by the everyday listener. Simply stated, syncopation is the disruption or obscuring of the even flow of rhythm. This disruption is often seen in the form of an accent placed upon the weak beat or sub-beat of a

\(^{127}\) All examples included in this study were transcribed by the researcher for purposes of demonstrating described techniques.
measure. There are a few types of syncopation, but the types most common in today’s popular music is the “push” and the Nashville triplet (see Ex. 1 & 2).

Ex. 1: Rhythmic “Push”

Ex. 2: Nashville Triplet

Other forms of syncopation are the hemiola, the accented-off beat, polyrhythms, and backbeats. Syncopation has grown in recognition over the past century, especially with the rise of Jazz and dance music, but it has roots far beyond American soil. Used even as early as the Beethoven era, syncopation has prevailed as the top rhythmic variation among composers. However, American classical music experimented with the idea of syncopation more than its predecessors and in new ways. As a new manner of obscuring or displacing strong beats, American music often includes irregular and changing meters. Significant use of irregular meters combined with regular meters within one piece, such as 5/4 combined with 4/4, leaves the listener constantly guessing where the downbeat falls. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the irregular changes of time signatures obscuring the beat are considered syncopation.

The first selection in the area of syncopation is the American classic, Rodeo, by Aaron Copland. From the very beginning of the first movement, titled “Buckaroo Holiday,” Copland provides a striking example of the modern, 20th Century usage of syncopation (see Ex. 3).
Example 3: *Rodeo*, “Buckaroo Holiday,” Copland

This short selection features accents on the weakest sub-beats of the measure, the second and fourth sixteenth notes.\(^{128}\) By accenting these particular beats both in the melody and in the foundational lines, Copland provides the listener with a new and exciting adventure that always seems to be pressing ahead with forward momentum, but without too much anticipation. The listener is allowed to relax because the strong beats are never fully obscured but are rather briefly shadowed in favor of intrigue and excitement. This is an excellent example of an accented off-beat, a primary version of syncopation in Copland’s music and of the Classical American Sound.\(^{129}\)

Another Copland example of syncopation comes from arguably his most famous composition, *Appalachian Spring*. This piece offers a vast variety of rhythms throughout, but one of the more prominent sections is in the “Allegro” movement. At the pinnacle of the movement, Copland inserts a brief yet strong hemiola syncopation (see Ex. 4):

Example 4: *Appalachian Spring*, “Allegro,” Copland

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\(^{129}\) Ibid.
This section is in 2/4 meter, and at the height of the movement, a hemiola effect is created by placing emphasis on a combination of both strong and weak beats. This is an effect that has been used for centuries in numerous genres, either to create tension or even to release it. In this case, Copland seems to use the hemiola to release the tension built by prior measures and allowing a landing point, pushing towards the end. Aaron Copland is also famous for using the 20th Century technique of irregular meters combined with regular meters to create variety in his compositions. Examples of this can be found in nearly each of his symphonic compositions between the 1930s and 1940s.

On the film score side, syncopation is also used in a leading fashion. John Williams, like Copland, also uses syncopation in both melodic and foundational settings. The first example comes from one of Williams’ lesser-known works entitled *American Journey*. In movement three, “Popular Entertainment,” features syncopation that functions as both melody and foundational rhythm (see Ex. 5):

Example 5: *American Journey*, “Popular Entertainment,” Williams

The woodwinds are most prominent in this selection, creating an engine of activity. The syncopation is sporadic but regular and is highly effective in the piece. The second half of the second measure outlines what has become the most popular version of syncopation in the popular music world, the Nashville triplet. Williams’ use of this particular syncopated idea allows the listener to be transported back in time while keeping some remnants of familiarity.

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130 Ibid.
Other examples include selections from Williams’ more popular selections. For example, Williams’ most recent composition for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* introduces a new theme called “March of the Resistance.” In this selection, the melodic theme includes another prominent syncopation technique, often called a push. A form of accented-off beats, the push obscures the downbeat of the measure by accenting the eighth or sixteenth note of beat 4 of the previous measure, carrying over the barline (see Ex. 6).

![Example 6: Star Wars: The Force Awakens, “March of the Resistance,” Williams](image)

Another example includes *Raider’s March* from the *Indiana Jones* movie franchise. Combining weak and strong beat accents, syncopation is created (see Ex. 7).

![Example 7: Indiana Jones, “Raider’s March,” Williams](image)

One final example of syncopation within the parameters of the Classical American Sound is again from John Williams’ composition for the *Indiana Jones* franchise. The hero theme of the movies, *Raider’s March* boasts another unique feature. The entire theme has a tendency to feel shifted by beat. This is caused by the beginning of each section of the theme beginning on beat 4 which creates a “pick-up” beat (see Ex. 8).

![Example 8: Indian Jones, “Raider’s March,” Williams](image)
This pick-up can obscure the downbeat, making beat 4 of each measure seem like the intended downbeat. The same technique is used to a lesser degree in Aaron Copland’s third movement of his Third Symphony.

Syncopation in and of itself cannot be considered a trait unique only to American classical music. Syncopation was developed into a modern, pop-culture idea in American through ragtime, jazz, and later Rock ‘n Roll, but syncopation in its purest form has been used throughout music for centuries. It is the combination of syncopation with the other three characteristics of the Classical American Sound make it distinct. While not exclusively American, syncopation remains a vital part of the Classical American Sound, both in early American classical music and modern compositions.

**Brass Fanfare**

One of the most distinct features of the Classical American Sound is the prominence of brass fanfare. The term “brass fanfare” has previously been used in reference to the pomp of ceremonies in ancient times or more recent royal formalities. However, brass fanfare in all its forms has been adopted as a mainstay of American classical music and therefore of the Classical American Sound. In the case of this research, brass fanfare includes unison and harmonic melodic lines, contrapuntal melodic lines, and stacked, rhythmic chords, often using slightly dissonant chord structures. The timbre of each brass instrument work together to form a distinct sound that is unique to American classical music. Favoring the trumpets and horns, American classical composers used these instruments to the edge of their abilities and the entire array of their dynamic ranges. Brass melodic lines are most often seen in harmonic stacks, moving in tandem mostly in intervals of the perfect 4th and 5th.
One of the most prominent examples of tandem brass harmonies with classical American music is Aaron Copland’s *Fanfare for the Common Man*. This piece begins with a statement of the trumpets in prime unison. The horns are then introduced as a lower harmony, sticking primarily within the perfect 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} intervals and creating an open sonority that has become distinctly American throughout the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century (see Ex. 9). Throughout the remainder of the piece, the rest of the brass section adds color through intermittent 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} intervals. An alternate, complementary melody also seems to come to the forefront through the horns.

![Example 9: Fanfare for the Common Man, Copland](image)

The rhythms of the piece are surprisingly simple. Copland is not overly popular for his simplistic melodies or rhythms. However, the simplicity of the rhythm in *Fanfare for the Common Man* provides further emphasis on the brass lines. Another prominent example of brass fanfare with American classical music is the final movement of *Rodeo*, “Buckaroo Holiday.” In the opening, the brass performs a type of call and response with the strings, providing a true moment of fanfare combined with distinct syncopation mentioned earlier (see Ex. 10). The brass then creates contrapuntal melodic lines of their own, laying the harmonic foundation for the rest of the orchestra (see Ex. 10).
In the film world, John Williams has a seemingly inexhaustible library of brass fanfare in his compositional library. Arguably the most famous of these examples are his brass lines for the main theme from *Star Wars*, *Raiders March* from *Indiana Jones*, and finally the main theme from *Jurassic Park*. Each of these is an example of brass used in unison, melodic lines (see Ex. 11, 12, & 13).

Example 10: *Rodeo*, “Buckaroo Holiday,” Copland

Example 11: *Star Wars*, Main Theme, Williams
An example of the combination of stacked brass chords and contrapuntal melodic lines is *Hymn to New England* by Williams. This is not a film piece but is rather one of Williams’ classical American compositions. Adopting a folk-like, hymn-style foundation, the beginning of the piece is a stark contrast. The brass provides a true, stately fanfare that is instantly recognizable as modern American music (see Ex. 14).
Brass fanfare and syncopation are often seen occurring at once in American classical music, as is evidenced in “Buckaroo Holiday,” but this is not exclusively the case. The brass choir is essential to the Classical American Sound. Copland popularized it in the ears of Americans. John Williams carried on this tradition of brass fanfare by putting modern spins on classic techniques in his film music and classical compositions. Without brass fanfare in all its forms, the Classical American Sound would be lacking an essential pillar from its character. It is this fanfare combined with the following two Classical American Sound characteristics that truly
distinguish American classical music as its own recognizable entity throughout concert halls of
the world.

**Polychords, Extended Chords & Quartal Harmony**

The use of polychords, extended chords, and quartal harmony in classical music has become one of the iconic indicators of 20th Century music. Experimentation in harmonization can be found throughout the compositions of the 1920s-1940s and beyond. Polychords are simply two chords stacked upon each other. Extended chords can be defined as one tertiary chord with additional thirds stacked above, typically called a seventh, ninth, eleventh, or thirteenth chord. These chords can, and often are in American music, altered due to modal harmonies. Quartal harmony, on the other hand, is a completely distinct idea. Whereas polychords and extended chords are tertiary-based (or based on thirds), quartal harmony functions on the interval of a perfect 4th.\(^{131}\)

The full array of 20th Century American music harmonic techniques is an immensely vast topic; much too vast for discussion in this study. The three areas of polychords, extended chords, and quartal harmony are the most common techniques among the widest range of composers and can also be found significantly within the film music genre as well. Examples of each in both genres are given to draw parallels between each genre to demonstrate the continuation of the Classical American Sound in harmonic textures.

The first example comes from the opening lines of Copland’s *Appalachian Spring: Very Slowly*. The opening soli outline the following chords (Ex. 15):

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\(^{131}\) Audissino, *John Williams’ Film Music*, 123.
Example 15: Appalachian Spring, “Very Slowly,” Copland

These two chords could be considered either a polychord or an extended chord. The argument for a polychord lies in the fact that the two chords are presented distinct in both timbre and rhythmically. Further, the chords modulate to the transpositional equivalent of A over D, retaining the same V over I relationship. This combined with the stasis of the individual chords in their presented ranges allow for the chords to be labeled as polychords. However, the chords could also be simply explained as Amaj⁹ and Dmaj⁹ extended chords due to the continuation of the pitches by 3rds from the A in the bass all the way to B in the soprano and D in the bass all the way to the E respectively. Either way, this opening passage is an excellent picture of Copland’s ingenious ability to use chord colors to paint a scene. Taken from the same composition, quartal harmony can also be found in Copland’s compositions. An example in the same piece lies in the first Allegro (see Ex. 16).

Example 16: Appalachian Spring, “Allegro,” Copland

In meas. 103-111, the melody line shifts back and forth between quartal trichords built upon both C and D in the key of C. This simultaneously creates a feeling of both stability and instability due to the lowered ⁷th of the key – a phenomenon common to American classical music –

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133 Ibid.

134 Ibid.

135 Ibid., 66.
combined with the subdominant and dominant chords of the key being utilized. It seems Copland wanted to give the listener just enough of a tonal center to grasp but not enough to become complacent. Quartal chords accomplish this, and many other timbres and colors are a vital part of the Classical American Sound.

John Williams also employs each of these altered harmonic techniques in his music. Quartal harmony is prominent within his compositions. Quartal harmony can be used to create a feeling of tension by creating two or more “suspended” notes in each chord. This suspension creates tension that propels the listener forward to the resolution. In the main theme from *Star Wars*, the opening brass fanfare first outlines the tonic and then proceeds to outline a quartal trichord starting on F and starkly ends on an A♭ before moving back to the tonic (see Ex. 17).

![Example 17: Star Wars, Main Theme, Williams](image)

Williams’ music also employs the extended chord and polychord techniques of the Classical American Sound. Most, if not all, of his commercial film music is punctuated throughout with extended chords and polychords. It is the use of these altered harmonies combined with the final characteristic of American classical music that achieves the complete picture of the Classical American Sound.

**Pandiatonicism and Modal Interchange**

The final piece of the puzzle that is the Classical American Sound includes the 20th Century techniques pandiatonicism and modal interchange. Pandiatonicism is a composition technique that uses the notes of the diatonic scale without standard assigned functions and
importance to chords built on these scale degrees.\textsuperscript{136} This allows the composer to move freely from chord to chord without restriction of chord function and dominance.\textsuperscript{137} Modal interchange is an aspect of pandiatonicism, and is the free use of modes within a single composition.\textsuperscript{138} Modal interchange allows the composer the ability to “borrow” chords from any given mode within the diatonic scale. There are several devices for pandiatonicism employed by composers to create variety and extend the reach of creativity. These devices can include ostinatos, the diatonic scale, parallel thirds and fourths, polychords, pedal points, and arpeggios.\textsuperscript{139} During the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century, pandiatonicism and modal interchange allowed composers greater freedom to explore new tone colors and associations. Throughout the years as these modal tone associations became more popular, they became cemented in the listener’s ear. The Dorian, Mixolydian, and Lydian modes are most prominent within Copland’s writings while Mixolydian, Phrygian, Aeolian, and Lydian are most prominent in the writings of Williams.\textsuperscript{140} Pandiatonicism, and by virtue modal interchange, are prominent throughout American classical music and film music, and it is the strongest individual characteristic of the Classical American Sound.

Prominent examples of pandiatonicism in the music of Aaron Copland come yet again from \textit{Appalachian Spring}. Ostinato is used in much of Copland’s music as a device for pandiatonicism. In the following passage, the melody in the second violins is harmonized pandiatonically through ostinato in the violas and cellos.\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{137} Audissino, \textit{John Williams Film Music}, 123.
\textsuperscript{138} Adams, “Modal Interchange,” 51-53.
\textsuperscript{139} Kleppinger, “Copland’s Appalachain Spring”, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{140} Adams, “Modal Interchange,” 53.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid. 47-48.
Another pandiatonic device used significantly by Copland is the use of the scalar passage.\textsuperscript{142} By using the diatonic scale, the composer can ensure the use of each scale degree by superimposing the scale passage against the remaining harmonies throughout the orchestra. This passage from “Buckaroo Holiday” (\textit{Rodeo}) demonstrates the scale passage device.\textsuperscript{143}

The scalar pattern in the cello section allow for pandiatonicism, yet again allowing for each diatonic scale degree to be represented within the passage. The final example of pandiatonicism employs the parallel 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} pandiatonic device. Again from Copland’s \textit{Appalachian Spring}, the trombones, xylophone, and piano play parallel 4ths and 5ths in exact rhythm and similar motion.\textsuperscript{144}

John Williams’ pandiatonicism follows a design that seems to be more free than that of Copland. Williams uses pandiatonicism to its fullest degree, borrowing textures from other keys to create quick key changes and modulations that often seem to occur on a whim.\textsuperscript{145} For example, in the main theme of \textit{Indiana Jones}, the melody line follows a simple, tonal feel in the key of C. Once measure 10 arrives, the music introduces a new color: a Db major chord (see Ex. 21).\textsuperscript{146}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example18.png}
\caption{Example 18: \textit{Indiana Jones}, Main Theme, Williams}
\end{figure}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{142} Ibid.
\bibitem{143} Ibid, 48.
\bibitem{144} Ibid, 55.
\bibitem{146} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
One of the aspects of Williams’ music that makes it so iconic is his use of pandiatonic devices. According to Emilio Audissino, “…frequent shifts and unexpected modulations from one tonality to others in Williams’ music are powerful attention-getters, like sudden color changes in the lighting of a room.” Additional examples of pandiatonicism in Williams music are especially prominent in his film compositions “Hedwig’s Theme” from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* and “Journey to the Island” from *Jurassic Park*.

The true beauty of Williams’ film scoring, as well as his classical compositions, lie in his ability to use tone associations and modal interchanges to draw in the listener and feel the emotion of the character. Williams also uses leitmotifs to create individual musical personalities for each main character within many of his films. Copland also used modal interchange, but not to the extent of Williams. It is the combination of leitmotifs combined with modal interchange pandiatonicism that sets Williams apart but also qualifies his music as a continuation of the Classical American Sound.

There is one important aspect of American classical music that any research of the Classical American Sound would be incomplete without. This aspect is modal interchange. Copland employs the use of modal inflections, or modal interchange, throughout his nationalist, Americana music. This music, and his work on cinematic American Westerns such as *The Red Pony*, laid a framework for future Americana music. Music in the American Westerns quickly became tied to certain modal inflections and came to be expected in the music. Williams also

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147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
149 Leitmotifs are devices originally used by composer Richard Wagner which assign thematic material to individual characters, ideas, or emotions throughout a piece. The recurrence of each leitmotif connects the listener with the intended character, idea, or emotion with each repetition.
151 Ibid.
uses modal interchange heavily throughout his compositions, used in tandem with leitmotifs and cultural emotional associations. From the early days of opera, various musical devices have been used to suddenly shift the mood or emotion of the audience to reflect the action occurring on stage. Operatic composer Richard Wagner developed a technique of assigning thematic material to individual characters, ideas, or emotions within a dramatic performance. Nearly a century later, John Williams adopted this technique for his own writings in film music. Using the same general principles, Williams began writing film scores that were laden with leitmotifs based on the main characters of the film. Other composers began adopting leitmotifs in their film scores. What sets Williams’ leitmotifs apart from most other film composers is his in-depth knowledge of the power of modal inflections (modal interchange) and their ability to evoke emotions in a systematic manner.

In film, audiences are accustomed to hearing distinct sounds associated with certain emotions or events. Musicologists and music theorists have performed numerous studies on the idea of the link between tonal and emotional associations. The results of these studies show that cultural conditioning within film music exists. Not only does cultural conditioning exist, but in most cases, audiences have developed expectations to hear and experience certain tones and chord progressions representative of emotions within film music. Examples of this include the Major Tritone Progression (e.g. G major to C# major), often associated with science fantasy and the Tarnhelm Progression (e.g. G minor to E minor), associated with horror and frightening scenes. These are only two examples of the numerous tone and chord progression associations to which audiences have become accustomed. The musical device that allows for many of these

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152 Ibid., 50.
153 Ibid., 50.
unique chord progressions is the idea of modal interchange, or the use of modes freely within a piece.

Modes are scales built on each of the seven scale degrees of any given major or minor scale (see Ex. 22).

![Ionian Dorian Phrygian Mixolydian Lydian Aeolian Locrian Ionian Modes](image)

Example 19: List of Diatonic Modes

Modal interchange is the sudden or gradual shift from one modal inflection, typically major, to either another mode or to the original diatonic scale within the same piece. Film composers will often use modes to compose entire melodies or chord progressions, but they will also “borrow” chords from modes to add color or surprise to a piece. These techniques are used in Copland’s music and provide much of the foundation for the music of John Williams, both in film and his other compositions.

A prime example of modal interchange in Copland’s music is from *Rodeo*, in “Corral Nocturne.” In measures 13-15 of the movement, Copland uses a unique progression: $\flat$ VI, $\flat$ II, $\flat$ VII, V, I. This progression, especially the $\flat$ VII, V, I, has come to be largely associated with Westerns, as well as Americana as a whole. Especially in his opening themes, Williams often writes progressions that are largely diatonic in nature but throw in a surprise chord for color. For example, the main theme of *Indiana Jones* discussed earlier (see Ex. 23).

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154 Ibid., 49.
155 Ibid., 53.
156 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
The melody and chord progression of this composition is diatonic until measure 10 when a $\flat$ II is introduced to the progression, moving back to the diatonic to an extended G chord in measure 11. This $\flat$ II is commonly called the Phrygian $\flat$ II due to its association with the lowered second scale degree of the Phrygian mode. It is also called the Neapolitan $\flat$ II chord in traditional theory, but it has a different function in Williams’ music. The $\flat$ II in this example is an exception to the rule in Williams’ compositions due to his treatment of the chord’s function. Typically, Williams does not use the Phrygian $\flat$ II in the traditional predominant function. However in this case, the $\flat$ II clearly functions as a substitute predominant to the V. In either case and whatever its distinction, this chord adds a modal element of surprise and color to an otherwise fully diatonic melody. Other prominent examples of modal interchange in Williams’ include the Phrygian $\flat$ II in “Princess Leia’s Theme” from Star Wars; the Lydian supertonic in “Flying Theme” from ET: The Extra-Terrestrial; and the Lydian supertonic in “Love Theme” from Superman. There are simply too many examples of modal interchange in the music of John Williams to provide a complete overview of his treatment of the device, nor is that the intent of this study. The intent of this study is to examine the usage of the modal interchange device as a tool to

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158 Ibid., 52.
159 Ibid., 60-70.
create a sound that resonates with an audience. There is a sound that has become distinctly American; a sound that has been recognized as American for decades, since the heyday of the American concert hall. It has recently been realized that there is connection between modal interchange and this American sound.\textsuperscript{160} Starting as far back as the music of Copland, a distinctive American sound, the Classical American Sound, is centered around the modal inflection of the flattened-seventh.\textsuperscript{161}

The nationalist music of Copland pivoted on two distinct uses of modal inflection: the standalone $\flat$ VII and the $\flat$ VII - V progression.\textsuperscript{162} One iconic example of this is \textit{Fanfare for the Common Man} in which the $\flat$ VII is used repeatedly. Making its way from the concert hall into the film industry, Copland’s use of these modal inflections to represent the American Dream and rural America had gained even greater popularity with both film composers and American culture. Composers for decades since have used these two modal inflections, especially the $\flat$ VII, to depict American life both on screen and in the concert hall.

Williams used these two modal inflections in various manners but most often to depict American life and/or to portray the hero of the story, which is also at the heart of the Classical American Sound. The $\flat$ VII is often associated with American life in its many variants. The $\flat$ VII – V chord progression, also called the “Cowboy Half-Cadence” has been associated with the American hero of the western film.\textsuperscript{163} For example, in the 1984 film \textit{The River}, Williams depicts the struggle of a farmer and his family to stay on their farmland by using the $\flat$ VII - V progression in the main theme, “Ancestral Home.” The theme ends with the $\flat$ VII - I progression, again solidifying the depiction of the struggle and victories within America rural

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item \textsuperscript{160} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 53.
\item \textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 53.
\end{thebibliography}
This American hero theme goes beyond its literal usage in western films and translates into other genres with heroic symbols as well. An example of this is Luke Skywalker from the *Star Wars* franchise. The theme, or leitmotif, Williams composed for Luke’s character contains two distinct uses of the $\flat$ VII, once as the color of the IV$\text{sus}4$ and next in the $\flat$ VII – I cadence progression. These modal inflections associate Luke’s character as the heroic figure of the film(s) as well as add to the general “space cowboy” theme intended by the creators. “Americanization” of a science fiction film allowed audiences to enjoy familiarity while experiencing fantasy simultaneously.\footnote{Ibid., 55.}

**Summary of Findings**

The Classical American Sound has several distinct parts working together to create a sound that is markedly American. Comprised of the musical contributions of numerous American composers, the Classical American Sound was solidified through the nationalist compositions of Aaron Copland. The Classical American Sound then carried over into the film world and was brought into the modern music world through the compositions in multiple genres by John Williams. This musical manifestation of the American Dream had become influential in American culture and has become known worldwide as American. Aaron Copland and John Williams have both composed music that resonates with audiences across the world. However, their American compositions, employing the devices mentioned previously, are instantly recognized as such. Copland’s *Fanfare for the Common Man, Rodeo*, and *Appalachian Spring* each embody the essence of the Classical American Sound. They possess the four main characteristics of the Classical American Sound and connect with American audiences in a way unique to the Classical American Sound. Williams’ Americana compositions *American Journey* \footnote{Ibid.}
and *Hymn to New England*, are among just a few examples of Williams’ continuation of the Classical American Sound established before him. Elements of the Classical American Sound can also be seen throughout his commercial film compositions and have permeated culture in a way unlike most other film composers.

Aaron Copland and his American contemporaries set forth to create a uniquely American music. Through the commitment of these men to create an American musical identity, American culture was impacted in major ways. Through times of war, the music these men composed sought to connect with the common man and unite the country under divisive circumstances. Through economic stresses and prosperity, American classical music provided an opportunity for escape and the courage the face problems through the innate optimism and persistence portrayed through the music. By doing so, an idea was created and American classical music techniques became synonymous with the American dream, rural America, patriotism, and the universal idea of “home.” Classical composers and film composers alike began to employ these techniques in their own music. Most famous are the compositions of John Williams. In both his film compositions and his classical compositions, the ideals of the Classical American Sound are evident. Williams’ Americana compositions have had a similar effect upon American culture as those of Copland. When one listens to Williams’ *American Journey*, a patriotic sense of belonging and unity is felt. The listener senses the struggles and hardships faced by Americans who came before and feels the optimism through the trials and the victory in the triumphs. This is the essence of the Classical American Sound. Not only does it consist of distinct musical characteristics but also this direct communication and connection with the audience. The Classical American Sound is a powerful musical tool, and it will continue to inspire composers and audiences alike for years to come.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

Summary of Study

This study disclosed a journey of American music from the late 19th Century to present day. The research began with an examination of the compositional work of three prominent 20th Century American composer, Aaron Copland. Through study of his distinct musical style and impact upon American classical music, and through study of the characteristics of American classical music as a whole, the Classical American Sound emerged. The Classical American Sound was defined as a set of distinct musical characteristics that, when combined, created a definable and recognizably-American idiom. The Classical American Sound underwent numerous changes and could be seen in many forms. The Classical American Sound crossed over into film music, most popularly in western films. It then infiltrated other genres of film music and also continued in the concert hall.

Finally, the latest continuation of the Classical American Sound came through the modern compositions of famous film composer, John Williams. Though other film composers used the techniques and characteristics of the Classical American Sound, no other composer used it to its full extent by so many means. Williams utilized the Classical American Sound in part in the majority his blockbuster film compositions and in full in his American film, ceremonial, and classical compositions. His popularity as a composer and modern treatment of classic techniques reignited a passion for concert hall music, and the Classical American Sound found a new home. Its impact upon culture, both in early-mid 20th Century and in modern times, still remains to be seen and fully realized. However, the Classical American Sound does kindle a sense of patriotism and unity among American audiences, and that is an impact worth noticing.
Summary of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine and define the Classical American Sound established in the 1930s and 1940s and trace its continuation from the concert hall to the film score.

Summary of Procedure

This study employed the qualitative methods of research. The research design was a combination of narrative, historical research and case study research. The study began with a narrative, historical research of early American music ranging back to the late 19th Century. This led to a study of the changes American classical underwent throughout the early 20th Century. A case study was then performed on the American composer often called the Father of American Music, Aaron Copland. This case study included an examination of Copland’s life, work, and individual musical style. This case study also demonstrated both the individual and collective contributions of Copland to the development of the Classical American Sound. The next section of the study began with narrative, historical research into the world of film music. Following this, a case study of leading film composers, John Williams, was then performed. This case study examined the life, work, and individual musical style of the composer. Finally, the case study examined Williams’ impact upon film culture and his potential continuation of the Classical American Sound.

The final section of research was an analysis of the characteristics of the Classical American Sound. This analysis was completed by selecting musical works that demonstrated the characteristics of the Classical American Sound and examining their usage in the music. The music selected for examination was selections from Aaron Copland and John Williams. The reason only Copland’s work was selected for analysis lies in the fact that Aaron Copland is
widely known as the Father of American music. While many other composers of the 20th Century had an enormous impact upon the development of the Classical American Sound, Aaron Copland was the composer who encompassed the ideals of the Classical American Sound. The analysis dissected and explained the individual characteristics of the Classical American Sound, giving musical examples of selections by each composer representative of each characteristic. Finally, the analysis briefly discussed the repercussions of the Classical American Sound upon American culture.

**Limitations**

The limitations of this study were many. First, little previous research on John Williams’ American sound had been completed. Second, American classical music included such a plethora of examples for the Classical American Sound that an in-depth examination of its entirety could not be completed. The third limitation was similar in that examples for Williams’ use of Classical American Sound techniques were so vast that a limited number were included in the study. Fourth and finally, scores for much of Copland’s and Williams’ compositions are not readily available. This forced the researcher to transcribe selections of both composers’ music, meaning some instrumentation and aspects of the music may have been overlooked or even transcribed incorrectly. Where examples were provided in previous research, they were cited. All available measures were taken to ensure accurate transcriptions were included in this study.

**Summary of Findings**

The ultimate finding of this study was that a discernable and definable Classical American Sound existed. Through the compositions of composers such as Aaron Copland, the Classical American Sound developed into a repeatable and recognizable idiom that would carry on through the ages. Through the research of Copland’s musical style and techniques, the
Classical American Sound was defined as a four-part entity. They were (1) syncopation, (2) brass fanfare, (3) extended chords and quartal harmony, and (4) pandiatonicism and modal interchange. These four independent characteristics coalesced to form the Classical American Sound.

The Classical American Sound infiltrated film music in a noticeable manner. The western movies of the 1930s through the 1950s added another branch to the Classical American Sound through their adoption of techniques set forth by Aaron Copland. Film music popularized the Classical American Sound by granting it a larger platform in a country in which attendance at the concert hall was experiencing decline. This popularity also led to a solidification of tone associations among audiences. Audiences became accustomed to hearing certain chord progressions, and associated these chord progressions with ideals of the American Dream, rural, everyday America, and the American hero. These chord progressions revolved heavily around the $\flat$ VII chord, its chord progressions and its variations. Classical American Sound tone associations in film continued through the decades and eventually led to film composer John Williams.

John Williams was widely known for his resurrection of the classical Hollywood style of film composition. This style of film composition included techniques such as leitmotifs, mickey-mousing, and non-diegetic music. Williams also continued the use of the Classical American Sound in both his American compositions and blockbuster film scores. Williams was a master at modal interchange and using it to create or evoke emotions or feelings throughout a film. One of the most significant use of modes was his use of the $\flat$ VII used so distinctly in American music. Williams employed the $\flat$ VII in numerous variations such as the “cowboy half cadence”, $\flat$ VII-V and the $\flat$ VI – $\flat$ VII – I chord progression, indicating triumph or optimism. These tonal
associations based on modal interchange resonated deeply with audiences world-wide. However, it was within his Americana compositions that Williams fully unleashed the power of the Classical American Sound. It was his Americana compositions that fully demonstrated Williams’ ability to resonate with the American people through music in manners similar to Aaron Copland.

The four characteristics of the Classical American Sound – syncopation, brass fanfare, extended-chords and quartal harmonization, and pandiatonicism and modal interchange – coalesced to form one of the most decidedly important musical aspects of American culture: identity. Prior to the 1920s, an American musical identity had yet to be established. Even in modern times, identification of these characteristics as a single musical identity had yet to be fully explored. The Classical American Sound allowed American culture to develop its own signature style of classical music, a classical American musical identity. This identity was forever established and carried on throughout the years, extending far beyond the classical realm and manifesting in different genres of music. Many have said that culture is often reflected through the music of that culture. If this is the case, the Classical American Sound reflects optimism in hardship, tenacity in adversity, exultation in victories, and resilience in the face of defeat. This is a picture of the American people. This is the Classical American Sound.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The full impact of the Classical American Sound and the extent of its reach has yet to be realized. Further study should be completed in the application of the Classical American Sound to the development of popular music in the 1950s and 1960s such as Rock ‘n Roll, Disco, Country, and even Southern Gospel. Each of these genres have grassroots deeply embedded in
American culture. A study of these genres would likely show some connection to the Classical
American Sound in one form or another.

Another area of study for the Classical American Sound would be in depth research of its
cultural implications, both in its inception and in the last couple decades. The impact of the
Classical American Sound on 1930s and 1940s American culture is one that has not been studied
extensively. A study of this impact could reveal much of the power of music as a whole upon
society as well as the power of society upon music.

Further study in this area could also have dramatic implications upon music education.
Music education is responsible for training and guiding the next generations of performers,
composers, and music educators. Societal and cultural impact of the Classical American Sound
and how to successfully employ its techniques could be a useful tool for future composers and
music educators. The opportunities are vast and the areas of research are many. The Classical
American Sound gave America a musical identity, and its inclusion in a holistic American music
education is necessary for understanding of its implications and value for years past and into
future generations.
Bibliography


August 15, 2016

Rebecca Stegall
IRB Application 2607: From the Concert Hall to the Cinema: Tracing the Classical American Sound from Aaron Copland to John Williams

Dear Rebecca Stegall,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Your study does not classify as human subjects research because it will not involve the collection of identifiable, private information.

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by submitting a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Application number.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in identifying whether possible changes to your protocol would change your application’s status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School