



# American Brass!

West Side Story (Suite)  
El Salón Mexico  
Fanfare for the  
Common Man  
Prelude, Fugue & Riffs  
& more.....

London Symphony Brass  
Eric Crees

*alto*

The brilliance of the brass is integral to the soul of American music as the lushness of the strings is to German romantic tradition. The LSO have been tremendously fortunate in having such a close working relationship with the two 20<sup>th</sup> century giants of American music, Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein, and this album based on their music became inevitable.

Copland gave many successful concerts and television performances with the LSO and his friendship and warmth was such that his *Music for a Great City* premiered at the Royal Festival Hall in May 1964 was affectionately dedicated 'to the members of the London Symphony Orchestra' My arrangements of *El Salón México* (made with the blessing of the composer) were finished on, and made a tribute to, his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Although he died before he could hear this recording of the transcription, we suspect that the fortissimo of our brass and percussion, so splendidly captured by John Timperley, might reach him if anything does!

The talents of "Lenny" need no eulogising here. Working with him was always a mixture of challenge and fun; never more so than in our last recording collaboration of *Candide*. But for those present at the LSO President's very last appearances with the orchestra at the 1990 Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo Japan and later in Tokyo, the performances had a special energy and other-worldliness which in retrospect makes us wonder if he was indeed aware of his impending departure. They were a rare musical privilege that defy all verbal description.

This recording is dedicated as a celebration of the work of these two great musicians.

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### **Brass Americana (by John Humphries, re-edited 2005)**

After the Civil War, American music was increasingly dominated by the military band, and by the mid 1880s Sousa was threatening Stephen Foster's position as the country's most famous composer. Ives was directly affected by this movement, for his father, George, was a bandmaster with the First Connecticut Heavy Artillery, and taught the boy the cornet as well as the organ and piano. George Ives was also interested in new sound qualities, and shared his experiments in tonality with his children, attempting to "stretch our ears and strengthen our musical minds" by training them to sing songs in one key while playing them in another. When the 17-year old Charles incorporated two such polytonal interludes in his organ *Variations on America*, however,

George was horrified and made him remove them for fear that they would be derided. The first performance, on Independence Day 1891, therefore omitted the offending interludes, and the work only achieved fame in 1964 when it was orchestrated by William Schuman. Eric Cree's more recent arrangement for brass brings out the charm and wit of the original while treating his chosen instruments entirely idiomatically.

Ives was extremely shy, and the importance of his contribution to American music was recognised only in his old age, when Copland and Cowell were among many who took up his cause. Even in 1951 he declined to attend the premiere of his second symphony, under Bernstein, but listened to it instead on his maid's radio in the kitchen at home, and was so delighted with the result that he danced a jig.

Samuel Barber did not subscribe to popular opinion, however, and always regarded Ives as "an amateur hack who didn't put pieces together well" The two composers had little in common, for Ives' main income came from his insurance company, and after work could "hardly wait for dinner to be over so he could get to the piano". In contrast, Barber, the professional musician, found composing difficult, and said that it made him bad-tempered, "silent and melancholy". His reflective *Mutations from Bach* repeatedly transforms the Lutheran chorale, *Christe du Lamm Gottes*, and although it opens and closes with a harmonisation by the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century composer, Johann Decker, the work revolves around arrangements which Bach used in *Cantata 23* and the *Orgelbüchlein*.

Although Henry Cowell championed the music of Barber, his early work with note clusters and polytonality more closely resembles that of Ives, and provoked such riots that one New York editor sent a sports journalist to cover a "bout" between "Battling Cowell" and his piano. By 1942 he had achieved respectability, however, and was one of 10 leading American composers from whom Eugene Goossens commissioned a fanfare. Cowell's decision to dedicate his contribution to "the forces of our Latin-American Allies" reflects his involvement with the Music Division of the Pan American Union and with the Office of War Information, where he was consulted on all music broadcast to friendly and enemy countries.

Aaron Copland was also among Goossens's top ten composers, and the *Fanfare for the Common*

*Man* is now a cornerstone of the brass repertoire. This work was first performed on 14th March 1943, and subsequently reappeared in the finale of the composer's *3rd Symphony*. The *Ceremonial Fanfare*, an arrangement of sketches which Copland had drafted in 1942 and 1944, was commissioned to celebrate the centenary of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, and was premiered there on the composer's 70th birthday.

Cowell's enthusiasm for Latin-American music was shared by Copland, who in 1932 chanced upon a dance hall called *El Salón México* while visiting the composer Carlos Chavez in Mexico City. The fast, ever-changing dance music he heard there captivated Copland, and is recalled in his composition commemorating the trip. The composer subsequently decided to orchestrate the original 2-piano version, and other transcriptions include a version for solo piano by Leonard Bernstein. Eric Crees completed his brilliant arrangement for brass on November 13th 1990, the eve of Copland's 90th birthday and just over a fortnight before the composer's death.

Although Copland regarded Bernstein as "*the* conductor who has always understood my music", the younger man was also deeply interested in jazz, and in 1949 was commissioned by Woody Herman to write a work for solo clarinet and big-band. Herman envisaged *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs* as a sequel to Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto*, but his band, *The Second Herd* folded before Bernstein had been paid or the work performed. The composer reused some of the material in his musical, *Wonderful Town*, but the original score was not performed until Benny Goodman played it in a television broadcast on October 16th 1955.

*West Side Story*, one of Bernstein's most remarkable successes, opened in New York on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1957. Although its musical language was far more sophisticated than was usual on Broadway, it was highly acclaimed both there and in London before being made into an immensely popular film. Eric Crees's very effective arrangement of seven movements from the score was first performed by the LSO Brass Ensemble in 1983.

© **John Humphries**

### **London Symphony Brass:**

**Trumpets:** Maurice Murphy; Roderick Franks; Malcolm Hall; Nigel Gomm; James Watson; Anne McAnaney; Derek Watkins

**Horns:** Hugh Seenan; Timothy Jones; William Haskins; Richard Clews; Jonathan Lipton

**Trombones:** Ian Bousfield; Simon Willis; Lindsay Shilling; Frank Mathison

**Euphonium (Tenor Tuba):** Stephen Saunders; **Bass Tubas:** Patrick Harrild; James Anderson

**Percussion:** Neil Percy; Frank Ricotti; Paul Claves; **Timpani:** Kurt-Hans Goe Dicke; Neil Percy

**Saxophones:** John Harle; David White; David Roach; Tim Holmes; Andy Findon

**Solo Clarinet:** Andrew Marriner; **Piano:** Robert Noble; **Double Bass:** Nicholas Worters

**Eric Cree** was born in London and studied at Wandsworth School, where, in the famous boys' choir, he worked with many distinguished professional orchestras and conductors. Of particular importance was the school's long association with Benjamin Britten, who wrote a solo part for him in the *Children's Crusade*. While still at school he was awarded a scholarship to study at the Guildhall School of Music, and as a student undertook an extensive period of work with the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble. Having won the MCPS's 'Joyce Dixey Award' for composition, he graduated from the University of Surrey with first class honours and joined the London Symphony Orchestra, where he spent 27 years, (20 as Co-Principal Trombone). In September 2000 he was appointed Principal Trombone at The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

As director of London Symphony Orchestra Brass for many years he regularly conducted them at the Barbican Centre and internationally. They made five CDs together: two for Collins Classics, *American Brass* (as here) and *Cathedral Brass (renamed Sacred Brass and augmented on ALC 1027)*, featuring many of his arrangements, and three world première recordings by Naxos of the complete instrumental ensemble sonatas and canzonas of Giovanni Gabrieli in his new performing editions.

Since joining Covent Garden, he has directed the Royal Opera House Brass Soloists in concert at the Floral Hall to great critical success in what promises to be a continuing series.

He has also written acclaimed arrangements for *The London Trombone Sound* and *The London Horn Sound*, for Cala Records, and has worked for many of the world's most distinguished ensembles and brass bands in concerts, recordings, television and radio broadcasts. His version

of Bernstein's *Suite from West Side Story* has been commercially recorded four times. Recent original compositions include *Silk Street Stomp* written for the Guildhall School of Music Big Band and played at a festival of youth big bands at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, *Two Antiphonal Fanfares* performed at the Lord Mayor's banquet at the Mansion House, *Frighteners' Gallop* for 8 horns commissioned by the British Horn Society, *Orage* for 16 trombones written for Bone Lab and premiered at the Dartington Summer School, *The Birth of Conchobar* for symphonic brass and percussion commissioned by the Ulster Youth Orchestra, *Three Sketches from Rackham* for flute and harp, *Flourish* for solo trombone and *Carillons* for six harps.

In order to develop and extend his work for the large ensemble, he has formed *The Symphonic Brass of London*, a hand-picked group of Britain's finest brass and percussion players who have performed at home and abroad to great acclaim.

Eric Crees is also an internationally renowned teacher and is Professor of Trombone, B.mus tutor, Conductor of Wind, Brass and Percussion at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where he was made a Fellow in 1991. He is a frequent coach at music colleges and specialist schools both in the UK and abroad as well as the National Youth Orchestras of Great Britain, Belgium, Spain, France the Ulster Youth Orchestra and the Pacific Youth Orchestra in Japan. Many of his students now hold important orchestral and teaching positions throughout the world.

He is also in great demand as a juror for international competitions such as the Donatella Flick and the Leonard Bernstein Conducting Competitions, the Narbonne International Brass Quintet and the Slokar Trombone Competitions, as well as the National, European and the All England Masters Brass Band Championships.

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**Cover image:** "Capitol Building Washington DC" © Edmund Nagele F.R.P.S.

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**American Brass ! Copland \* Bernstein \* Barber \* Ives \* Cowell**  
*London Symphony Brass; Director: Eric Creeves*

**Aaron Copland (1900-90)**

[1] Fanfare for the Common Man 3:07

**Leonard Bernstein (1918-90)**

*Suite from "West Side Story" arr. Eric Creeves*

[2] Prologue 4:17 [3] Something's coming 2:55

[4] Mambo 2:24 [5] Maria – Cha cha 1:18

[6] Scherzo 1:53 [7] America 2:40

[8] Cool – Fugue 3:55 [9] Somewhere 4:18

**Aaron Copland (1900-90)**

[10] El Salon Mexico (arr. Eric Creeves) 11:04

**Henry Cowell (1897-1965)**

[11] Fanfare for the Latin American Allies arr. Eric Creeves 1:46

**Samuel Barber (1910-81)**

[12] Mutations from Bach 4:45

**Charles Ives (1874-1954)**

[13] Variations on "America" arr. Eric Creeves 7:15

**Aaron Copland (1900-90)**

[14] Ceremonial Fanfare 3:49

**Leonard Bernstein (1918-90)**

[15] Prelude Fugue & Riffs – arr. Eric Creeves 7:44

*Recorded at the Barbican Hall, London January 1991*

*Producer: Edward Fisk; Engineer: John Timperley*