



MERCURY OPERA ROCHESTER
PRESENTS

The Tender Land

by Aaron Copland

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14
& SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2007

CALLAHAN THEATER AT NAZARETH COLLEGE ARTS CENTER





presents

The Tender Land

by Aaron Copland

an opera in three acts with libretto by Horace Everett,
in the reduced orchestration by Murray Sidlin

Gerard Floriano

Artistic Director & Conductor

Steven Daigle

Stage Director

Scenery designed by Steven Daigle & Ian Fallon

Lighting designed by Nic Minetor

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There will be two intermissions.

Scene

Place: A lower-middle-class farm in the American mid-west

Time: Springtime during the depression era

Synopsis

Act I: The day before graduation – late afternoon

The isolated world of a rural family turns around the graduation of its elder daughter. Yet, she is unsure of her place in that world. It is invaded by a threat and then an actuality of two outsiders who excite in the girl dreams of a larger life. The boys are accepted into the community as harvesters.

≈ 15 Minute Intermission ≈

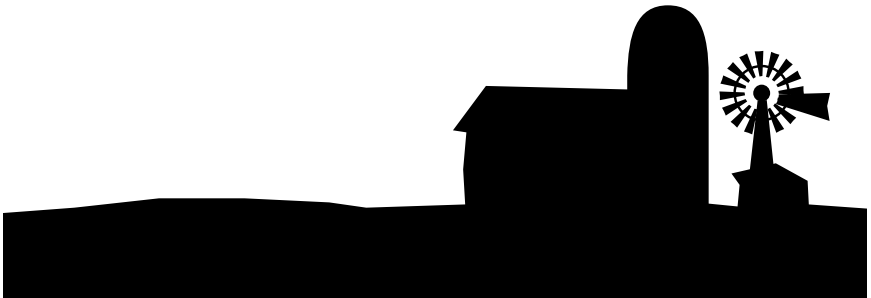
Act II: Later that evening

At a party on the eve before graduation, one of the boys falls in love with the girl. The match is discovered by the grandfather and the boys are ordered away. The boy and girl plan an elopement at daybreak.

≈ 10 Minute Intermission ≈

Act III: Later that night, then graduation day – dawn

The boy, attached by fears of responsibility abetted by forebodings of his companion, flees. The girl's anticipation of fulfillment turns to despair when she finds the boys gone. She is consoled by her family who remind her of graduation and the pattern of her life. But she realizes that the time has come to break that pattern and assert her own being. Though accepting, the mother dies not recognize the woman her daughter has become. And as the girl goes to find her own life, the mother turns to her younger daughter knowing that one responsibility has ended and another has begun.



Cast

Laurie Moss , the older sister.....	Ina Woods
Ma Moss , the mother of the two girls	Korin Kormick
Beth Moss , the younger sister	Marguerite Frarey
Grandpa Moss	Sam Sommers
Top , a drifter	Andrew Bawden
Martin , his friend.....	Adam Ulrich
Mr. Splinters , the postman	Robert Strauss
Mrs. Splinters , his wife.....	Sheila Sullivan Buck
Mrs. Jenks	Lisa Rosenbauer
Mr. Jenks	Max Denler
Child	Alexander Christie

Neighbors, Friends, and Party Guests

Sheila Sullivan Buck, Kathy Damann, Max Denler, Pat Fussell, Bill Hearne, Lindsay Holmes, Robert Holmes, Mary Menzie, Nathan Oakes, Charles Palella, Gary Rawls, Lisa Rosenbauer, Dennis Rosenbaum, Lynn Zicari

Orchestra

Violin I Lee Wilkins, <i>concertmaster</i> Geoffrey Jones	Viola Joanne Lowe Janeen Wilkins	Bass Jeff Weeks	Bassoon John Hunt
Violin II Sherry McCarthy Betsy Sprague	Cello Lisa Caravan Sandra Halleran	Flute Diane Smith	Piano Arthur Williford
		Clarinet Margaret Quackenbush	

Production Staff

Artistic Director & Conductor.....	Gerard Floriano
Stage Director	Steven Daigle
Assistant Stage Director.....	Jacob Allen
Stage Manager	Lindsay Baker
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Lighting Design	Nic Minetor
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Chorus Master.....	Gerard Floriano
Principal Coach/Accompanist.....	Arthur Williford
Wardrobe Designer & Coordinator.....	Nellica Rave
Props.....	Holley Shafer
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Tax-deductible contributions by check or credit card are gratefully accepted by Mercury Opera Rochester, 26 Gibbs Street, Rochester, NY 14604, and also at our website at www.mercuryoperarochester.org.

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Biographies



Gerard Floriano, *Artistic Director/Conductor*

Conductor Gerard Floriano is equally accomplished in both the operatic and orchestral arenas. As Artistic Director of Rochester Opera Factory and Co-Artistic Director of Mercury Opera Rochester, he conducted critically acclaimed performances of **Cavalleria Rusticana**, **Pagliacci**, **Die Fledermaus**, **Suor Angelica**, **L'Amico Fritz**, **Elixir of Love**, **Die Entführung aus dem Serail**, **Amahl and the Night Visitors** and Kern's theatrical masterpiece **Show**

Boat. Writing about **L'Amico Fritz**, Rochester Democrat & Chronicle music critic John Pitcher wrote "Floriano proved to be nothing less than a virtuoso conductor... He led his fine orchestra with color, precision and a welcome degree of sweep... ushering in a New Age of Good Opera" in western New York. Dr. Floriano has led the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and made his Carnegie Hall conducting debut with the Greater Buffalo Youth Orchestra. A regular guest conductor in Europe, he has led performances in Krakow, Warsaw, Prague, Barcelona, Florence and Leipzig. Dr. Floriano is acclaimed as an innovative programmer and dedicated educational conductor. Under his leadership, the Greater Buffalo Youth Orchestra has become a premiere training orchestra for the most talented young musicians in western NY. Dr. Floriano is Director of Choral Activities at the SUNY Geneseo and Resident Conductor at the Brevard Summer Music Festival, where in the summer of 2007, he conducted a production of Bernstein's **Candide**. He is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music.



Steven Daigle, *Stage Director*

Steven Daigle's experience as a stage director encompasses a range of repertory for the lyric theater stage. Extensive directing credits include the complete spectrum of grand opera, light opera, and Broadway musical fare: including **La Rondine**, **Susannah**, **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, **Dialogues of the Carmelites**, **Il Turco in Italia**, **La Bohème**, **Le Nozze di Figaro**, **Candide**, **Porgy and Bess**, **The Merry Widow**, **Gianni Schicchi**, **Sweeney Todd**, **My Fair Lady**, **Man of La Mancha**, **South Pacific**, and **Annie** and

many more in companies as diverse as Ohio Light Opera Company, Eastman School of Music, The Lyric of Atlanta, Oberlin Conservatory, Louisiana State University, Florida State Opera, and Mercury Opera Rochester, among many others. Articles and reviews of Daigle's work have been published in Opera News, Opera London, American Record Guide, Gramophone, Fanfare, Classical Singer, and Opera Now. With the Ohio Light Opera Company since 1990, in 1999 he was appointed Artistic Director for the company. Mr. Daigle presently is Associate Professor and Head of the Opera Program at the Eastman School of Music, where he has served on the faculty since 1997. Mr. Daigle directed Mercury Opera Rochester's productions of Donizetti's **L'Elisir d'Amore** and Bellini's **Norma**.



Andrew Bawden, *Top*

Baritone Andrew Bawden, originally from Illinois, is a Bronze Tablet Scholar and graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and is also a certified Alexander Technique teacher. His opera performances include roles in **Die Zauberflöte**, **La Traviata**, **The Impresario**, **Gianni Schicchi**, **Madame Butterfly**, Bernstein's **Trouble in Tahiti**, and most recently in his debut with Opera Vivente of Baltimore as Ceprano in **Rigoletto**. His solo oratorio engagements include the Duruflé *Requiem*, Händel's *Messiah*, the Saint-Saëns *Christmas*

Oratorio, Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass*, Mozart's *Mass in C minor*, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, and Brahms' *A German Requiem*. Mr. Bawden is the recent grand prize winner of the first Rochester Oratorio Society "Classical Idol" competition. Future engagements include Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra in October 2007. Mr. Bawden is a graduate student at the Eastman School of Music.



Marguerite Frarey, *Beth Moss*

Marguerite Frarey is thrilled to be performing in ***The Tender Land***, her second production with Mercury Opera (she previously appeared in ***Show Boat***). She is a 9th grade drama major at Rochester's School of the Arts (SOTA), and a graduate of Geva Theatre's Summer Academy 2005 and 2006. Favorite credits include ***A Christmas Carol*** (Belinda Cratchit) and ***Inherit the Wind*** (Melinda) at Geva; ***Secret Garden*** (Mary) and ***The Miracle Worker*** (Helen) at Rochester Children's Theatre; ***Great Expectations*** (Young Estella) at Blackfriars Theatre; and

Cinderella (Cinderella), ***To Kill a Mockingbird*** (Scout), and ***Fiddler on the Roof*** (Chava) at SOTA. Marguerite would like to thank everyone involved in this production, both on stage and off, for all of their time and effort, as well as Joan Floriano, her voice teacher, and Louis.



Korin Kormick, *Ma Moss*

Mezzo-soprano Korin Kormick was a regional finalist in the 2005 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and third-place winner in the 2006 Friends of Eastman Opera Voice Competition. She has portrayed Katisha in ***The Mikado***, Ma Moss in ***The Tender Land*** and Diana Trapes in ***The Beggar's Opera*** with the University of Louisville Opera Theatre. In addition to appearing in Mercury Opera Rochester's staging of ***Norma*** earlier this year, Ms. Kormick is a frequent performer with Kentucky Opera, where she has appeared in

past productions of ***Eugene Onegin***, ***Tosca***, ***La Traviata***, ***Carmen***, ***Little Women***, and ***Madama Butterfly***. She will portray the title character in Gian-Carlo Menotti's ***The Medium*** as part of the Eastman Opera Theatre in January 2008. Future engagements include Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra in October 2007. Her wide range and unique vocal qualities also make her a highly sought interpreter of new music. In May 2005, she created the role of Helen Thomas in the world premiere of Danielle Post's opera ***Chasing a Precedent*** as part of the Kentucky Opera VISIONS program; that same month, she sang the part of Susan in the concert reading of *After Eurydice* by Carrie L. Page. A graduate of Centre College with a dual degree in Music and French, Ms. Kormick also has a Master of Music degree from the University of Louisville, and is currently a DMA student at the Eastman School of Music.



Sam Sommers, *Grandpa Moss*

Lyric Bass Sam Sommers has considerable experience in the operatic repertoire, having performed the roles of Olin Blich in ***Susannah*** at the Ft. Worth Opera, Rocco in ***Fidelio*** at the Denver Opera, Sarastro in ***Die Zauberflöte*** with Opera Illinois, *Ninth Symphony* by Beethoven with the Boulder Philharmonic, and Verdi *Requiem* with the Littleton Colorado Symphony. Mr. Sommers has performed numerous other roles at the Ft. Worth Opera, Opera Illinois, the Aspen Music Festival, and Brooklyn College. His credits include: Colline, Nick

Shadow, Commendatore, Peter Quince, Figaro (Mozart), Bartolo (Mozart), Antonio, Sarastro, Il Dottore, Il Bonze, Die Sprecher and Second Armed Man. During his years of study Mr. Sommers received fellowships with the Aspen Opera Theater, was an Artist in Residence with Opera Colorado, and was a fellowship recipient at the International School of Vocal Arts in Chiari, Italy. Mr. Sommers has been heard in numerous oratorio concerts at Grace Church

in New York City including Handel *Messiah*, Bach *St. John Passion*, Faure *Requiem*, and Mozart *Requiem*. He is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music. Mr. Sommers, his wife Ruth Ferguson, and their two daughters live in Rochester.



Robert Strauss, Mr. Splinters

Robert Strauss, tenor, is no stranger to Mercury Opera audiences, having recently performed the role of Pedrillo in the company's production of Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. He has sung Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Nemorino (*L'Elisir d'Amore*), Prologue/Peter Quint (*The Turn of the Screw*), Mayor Upfold (*Albert Herring*), Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*), Jack Point (*The Yeomen of the Guard*), Tony (*West Side Story*), Anthony Hope (*Sweeney Todd*), and Archibald Craven (*The Secret Garden*). He has also toured Italy performing opera scenes and arias from the standard Italian operatic literature with the Centro Studi Italiani Opera Festival. In 2005, Strauss directed the New York State premiere of *Felice*, an opera by Benton Hess at Nazareth College, and has acted as stage director and music director for numerous productions. Strauss teaches voice at Nazareth College, SUNY Fredonia, and the Eastman Community Music School. He recently completed the Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance and Literature at West Virginia University, and holds degrees from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and State University of New York College at Fredonia.



Adam Ulrich, Martin

Adam Ulrich is a versatile tenor whose repertoire spans opera, oratorio, musical theater, and art song. This past summer Mr. Ulrich sang the title role in Bernstein's *Candide* at the Brevard Music Center. Other recent roles include George Gibbs in the Southeastern premiere of Ned Rorem's *Our Town* and Tigrane in Handel's *Radamisto*, both with the A. J. Fletcher Opera Institute. In October, Mr. Ulrich will be singing Gastone in *La Traviata* with Piedmont Opera in Winston-Salem, NC. A native of the Rochester area and graduate of SUNY Geneseo, Mr.

Ulrich has appeared in concert with the Geneseo Symphony Orchestra, the Western New York Chamber Orchestra, and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. Past opera credits include *Acis and Galatea* (Acis), *La Bohème* (Parpignol), and *Die Fledermaus* (Dr. Blind). Favorite musical theatre roles include Anthony (*Sweeney Todd*), Edward Rutledge (*1776*), and Hero (*A Funny Thing...Forum*). He is currently a fellow at the A.J. Fletcher Opera Institute at the North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem, NC, where he is studying with Marilyn Taylor and pursuing a Master's degree in Vocal Performance.



Ina Woods, Laurie Moss

Soprano Ina Woods recently received her BM from the Eastman School of Music where she studied privately with Professor Carol Webber. Eastman related performances include *L'enfant et les Sortilèges* (Princess), *Cendrillon* (cover/ensemble), scenes from both *Candide* (Cunegonde) and *Into the Woods* (Little Red Riding Hood). In 2006 she joined director Steven Daigle and the Los Angeles Operetta Foundation as Tilly in the West Coast premier of Kalman's *Marinka*. With the Full Circle Opera Project, under the direction of Stephanie

Vlahos, Ina has played the role of Polly Peachum in Britten's arrangement of *A Beggar's Opera*, John Styx in Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*, and the title roles in both *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and *Cendrillon*. Last year, Ina was named the first recipient of the Renee Fleming Scholarship. She now lives in New York City and will return upstate in October to play Julie Jordan in Oswego Opera's production of *Carousel*.

Jacob Allen, *Assistant Director*

Originally from Oxford, Maine, Jacob Allen holds a B.Mus. in Voice performance and a BA in Theatre from Lawrence University and is currently a candidate for the M.Mus. in Opera Stage Direction at the Eastman School of Music. Recent directing credits include **The Dinner**, **Suor Angelica**, **Gianni Schicchi**, **Side by Side by Sondheim**, **You're A Good Man Charlie Brown**, **The Last Five Years**, and **Little Shop of Horrors**. Also an avid performer, Jacob has been seen extensively throughout the Midwest and New England and recent roles include Le Mari in **Les Mammelles de Tiresias**, Baron Douphol in **La Traviata**, John Sorel in **The Consul**, Sir Roderic in **Ruddigore**, Charles Kringas in **Merrily We Roll Along**, Evelyn Oakleigh in **Anything Goes**, Simon Stride in **Jekyll and Hyde**, Fred Graham in **Kiss Me, Kate**, Father in **Children of Eden**, and Leontes in **The Winter's Tale**.

Lindsay Baker, *Stage Manager*

Lindsay Baker is pleased to join Mercury Opera Rochester for this production, her second with Mercury Opera Rochester, following last season's **L'Elisir d'Amore**. In addition to her work as the production stage manager of Eastman Opera Theatre, Ms. Baker has stage managed for the Ohio Light Opera and Rochester Opera Factory. Lindsay is also a director, playwright/composer, music director, performer and teacher. Local professional associations include Roberts Wesleyan College Community Theatre, Rochester Shakespeare Players, Irondequoit Theater Guild's Summer Performing Arts Camp, Downstairs Cabaret Theater and the BOCES #1 EMCC School of Performing Arts. Her musical **Pride and Prejudice** (co-written with Amanda Jacobs) based on Jane Austen's classic was premiered by Ohio Light Opera last summer and will be appearing on Broadway in 2008. Ms. Baker received her B.A. in theater and music from St. Olaf College (Northfield, MN) and trained at the O'Neill National Theater Institute (Waterford, CT) and Moscow Art Theater (Russia).

Ian Fallon, *Set Designer*

Ian Fallon earned degrees in Design and Technical Theatre from SUNY Brockport and has designed sets for productions of Mattel Toys and Sonnenberg Gardens. This is his second design for Mercury Opera, following last season's production of **L'Elisir d'Amore**. Mr. Fallon works extensively in set construction and design for Eastman Opera Theatre, and is currently the resident Technical Director for the Nazareth Arts Center.

Nic Minetor, *Lighting Designer*

Lighting designer/director for theater, film and TV, Nic Minetor has been resident designer for more than 40 productions of Eastman Opera Theatre, including **Candide**, **La Bohème**, **The Medium**, **Dialogues of the Carmelites**, and **Sweeney Todd**, and many Opera Theatre of Rochester and Geva Theatre productions, including **A Christmas Carol**. This is his sixth production with Mercury Opera Rochester. His work is also seen at NTID, SUNY Brockport, Elmira and Nazareth Colleges.

Nellica Rave, *Wardrobe Coordinator*

Resident Costume Collection Manager for Mercury Opera Rochester, Nellica Rave is pleased to be working with the company on this production. Ms. Rave has been designing costumes nation-wide for twelve years. She has her MFA in Costume Design from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Favorite projects include designing **West Side Stories** for New World Theater, **Blithe Spirit** for Pioneer Valley Summer Theater, and costume shop for the Paralympics Opening Ceremonies in 2002. She has worked locally for the JCC, Eastman Opera Theatre, RIT, Irondequoit Theatre Guild and TYKES. This is Ms. Rave's fifth production with Mercury Opera Rochester, where she is also the resident Costume Collection Manager.

Matthew Scheidt, *Technical Director/Production Manager*

A native of Rochester, Matthew Scheidt has been building scenery and working in production management for Eastman Opera Theatre for the last six years. He has worked in the local theatre scene for over 15 years as stagehand and audio engineer. Mr. Scheidt has built the sets for Mercury Opera Rochester's productions of **L'Amico Fritz**, **L'Elisir d'Amore**, and **Abduction from the Seraglio**. This is his fourth production with the company as Technical Director and Production Manager.

Arthur Williford, *Accompanist*

Pianist Arthur Williford, originally from Houston TX, has been studying composition at the Eastman School of Music for the last four years, but has always remained an active pianist, accompanist, and chamber musician. He is the recipient of several prizes from the Eastman School's composition department, and was recently nominated for Eastman's schoolwide Accompanist Prize. Mr. Williford is pursuing a career in collaborative piano. This marks the fourth production of Mercury Opera Rochester that Mr. Williford has accompanied.

Director's Note

Copland played several of his songs from an abandoned folk musical called 'Tragic Ground' for Erik Johns and showed him 'Let us now praise Famous Men,' which he much admired. The book centered on the lives of sharecroppers during the Great Depression. From this material came the basic idea for the libretto: two outsiders invading the lives of a rural community and the life-changing consequences that such a visit might provoke. As Copland and Johns' collaboration continued, the opera's title changed from *Pickett Fence Horizon to Graduation Harvest* and to *The Tender Land*. Copland's run-in with the McCarthy Committee and the political climate leading up to the opera's premiere had a substantial impact on the storyline. Set in the 1930s, two drifters are wrongly accused of molesting a local child. Copland and Johns originally included a rape and murder scene that was later dropped. On another level, the opera explores the role of women in 1930's and their changing roles in the 1950's. As with Ma Moss many families were left without fathers after World War II, leaving a grandparent to become the surrogate father. To Ma Moss, graduation represents a better life for her daughter. At the end of the opera Laurie leaves the protective life of the farm. As Ma Moss watches Laurie go, her final statement to her younger daughter Beth is not one of total despair, but one of instruction, hopefulness and admiration for Laurie's decision to leave.

In Mercury Opera's production, the set only suggests the Moss farm. This set, the "Technicolor" lighting and the "real" characters that play within them fuse some of the qualities in Copland's score – complex rhythms and harmonic sonorities with speech and folk-like melodies. Copland and Johns do not address Laurie's fate after her departure. In this production, the opera represents a flashback into the sixteen hours that had a profound influence on Laurie's life. At the beginning of the opera the time is the mid 1950s. Laurie, successful and now in her thirties, is dressed in mourning clothes. Returning for Ma Moss' funeral she enters the farm. She begins to recall her graduation day in the 1930s that changed her life forever.

—Steven Daigle

Production Notes

In 1952, Copland accepted a \$1000 commission from Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II to compose an opera for television. Copland worked out the scenario jointly with “Horace Everett,” the pseudonym for his friend Erik Johns, who had been a professional modern dancer. The libretto that the two created was inspired by photographs of a dignified-looking sharecropper mother and daughter from Walker Evans and James Agee’s 1941 book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Although the television production ultimately fell through, Copland’s opera *The Tender Land* received several productions in 1954-55, including a prominent premiere at the New York City Opera, but few performances followed. In the mid-1980s, with Copland’s enthusiastic agreement, conductor Murray Sidlin refitted the orchestral accompaniment for thirteen instruments, permitting the singers’ voices to be more easily heard. Sidlin’s version is used in the present performances and is particularly suited to the intimacy of the Callahan Theater.

Though the composer set out to create a vernacular opera, emphasizing naturalistic dialogue, he also allowed moments to expand for greater musical development and intensity. The work opens with a song for Ma Moss, alone, busily working, a bit like Aunt Eller churning her butter at the beginning of *Oklahoma!* (1943). Other musical numbers are likewise what we might call “audible songs,” i.e., ones that the characters *know* they’re singing: the pseudo-hymn “The Promise of Living,” which incorporates the Revivalist song “Zion’s Walls” in its middle section, and two numbers during the party for Laurie’s high-school graduation: “Stomp Your Foot upon the Floor” and the folk song “I Was Goin’ A-Courtin’.” In addition, Copland and Johns found imaginative ways of creating *songlike* moments that one nonetheless understands as, in fact, being “spoken” by the characters. When Laurie asks the two drifters where they have come from, they do a joking, almost “barn dance”-style duet full of bragging and evasion: “We’ve been here, we’ve been there. That’s where we’ve been and that’s where we’re goin’.” Similarly, when the drifters offer their help to Grandpa Moss, the deal is clinched with a contract-negotiation-trio, full of formal back-and-forths. But the recurring phrase “Hire a stranger” nonetheless leaves a troubling worry in the air. Can an outsider be trusted? Or, seen the other way, is this farm community too insular and suspicious to welcome fully an earnest, well-intentioned newcomer?

When Laurie makes a speech at her graduation party, she fears that “I say it all wrong.” Yet the aria that we have heard is not rambling at all but filled with the eloquent sounds of a heart that opens and—to some soaring high notes—declares its yearnings: “The closer I feel to our land, the more I wonder what those other lands are like.” Laurie grows up in front of our eyes and ears, making one small decision, then bigger ones. She wins our affection and admiration, even as Ma Moss, half-uncomprehending, turns her somewhat controlling attentions to her younger daughter Beth. All this may have something to say to each of us, whether or not we have ever lived on a farm.

Dramatic tensions in the opera are presented economically. The tensest moment comes when Grandpa Moss accuses the two drifters, Martin and Top, of having molested two young women in nearby farms. Though the charges are quickly disproven, the episode surely brought to mind for the 1950s audiences the witchhunts that Senator Joe McCarthy was launching at the time against supposed “Communists.” In May 1953, Copland himself was interrogated for two hours by McCarthy and Roy Cohn in the Senate Office Building, though he managed to avoid being blacklisted.

Copland wrote in his memoirs that he regretted never having followed up *The Tender Land* with a true “grand opera.” Still, *The Tender Land* does evoke weighty themes – not by broad, emphatic gestures, but rather by suggestion and sometimes devastating understatement.

Written by Ralph P. Locke, Professor of Musicology at the University of Rochester’s Eastman School of Music. Professor Locke recently published his two interviews (1970, 1972) with Aaron Copland.



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