

Aaron Copland Sculpture Makes Its Home At Tanglewood



By [Andrea Shea](#) WBUR, Jun 30, 2011

BOSTON — In life the great American composer Aaron Copland played a major role at the Tanglewood Music Center (TMC) in Lenox, Mass.

Serge Koussevitzky, the TMC’s founding music director, embraced Copland’s pioneering works, performed many with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and ultimately invited him to head the composition faculty at the summer music academy. Copland held that position for 25 years. After he died in 1990 Copland’s ashes were scattered behind the Tappan House on the concert mecca’s lawn.

Twenty years later, a likeness memorializing Copland’s legacy has been unveiled on Tanglewood’s grounds. Thursday afternoon a sculpture of him became the first permanent statue ever to be installed at the BSO’s summer home.

New England artist Penelope Jencks created the piece. Reached by phone in Lenox, she recalled taking her first sturdy look at a photo of Copland as she began contemplating the sculpture’s form. Immediately she thought to herself, “Oh, he has a fabulous head! Who wouldn’t want to make a sculpture of his head?”

The commission came to Jencks through Boston Pops Laureate Conductor and Tanglewood Artist in Residence John Williams. Known most widely for his blockbuster film scores — “Star Wars,” the “Indiana Jones” films, “Jaws” — the composer contacted the sculptor after seeing her rendition of Eleanor Roosevelt at Riverside Park in New York City.

“That inspired me to invite her to help us with this project,” Williams reflected in a press release.

You can see other works by Jencks here in Massachusetts, including her Samuel Eliot Morison “Sailor, Historian” sculpture at Commonwealth Avenue and Exeter Street in Boston, and a statue of Robert Frost at Amherst College in Amherst.



The Tanglewood Music Center unveiled a new sculpture commemorating the late American composer Aaron Copland (Courtesy)



Composer Aaron Copland, right, in Los Angeles in 1976 (AP)

The Copland piece is the first in a series of three sculptures planned to honor iconic music figures from Tanglewood's past. Jencks will also create statues of Leonard Bernstein and Koussevitsky. Williams is funding the multi-year plan to make and install the new works in celebration of Tanglewood's 75th anniversary in 2012.

Jencks will be at Thursday's unveiling, but she also said she'll stick around Tanglewood to scope out and hopefully identify sites for the next two sculptures. The Copland commission touches her personally, she admitted, "because my father was also a composer." His name was Gardner Jencks.

When asked to talk further about her statue of Copland, Jencks told me she always hesitates to interpret her own work too much.

"If you say it all in words you wouldn't need a sculpture," she said.