

AMERICAN MUSIC REVIEW

The H. Wiley Hitchcock Institute for Studies in American Music
Conservatory of Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York

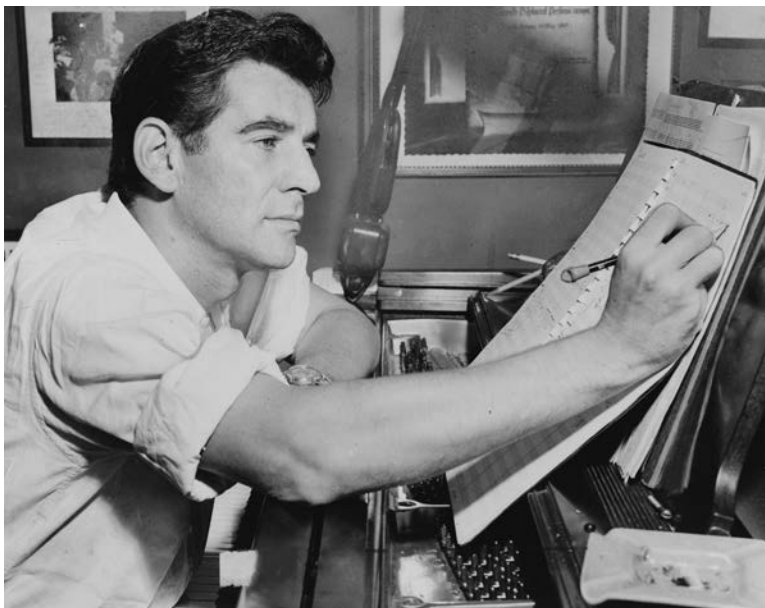
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Special Leonard Bernstein Centennial Issue

Leonard Bernstein in His Studio: A Reminiscence of the Composer's Method

Michael Barrett



*Bernstein composes at the piano, 1955
Photo by Al Ravenna, courtesy of the Library of Congress*

Located in Fairfield, Connecticut, the studio was on a secluded twenty-two acres of old growth trees, sprawling lawns, a productive vegetable garden, a large main house, a pool, and tennis court. The other studio was in New York City at the Dakota Apartments on West 72nd. The famous building was constructed in the 1880s. The local lore is that it was so named because, at that time, going that far north from downtown New York was like traveling to Dakota.

I was twenty-five when I first visited Bernstein's Manhattan workspace. I had spent the previous summer as a student of Bernstein's in Los Angeles with a dozen other young conductors and an entire orchestra of young colleagues. The teachers were Bernstein, Michael Tilson Thomas, Dan Lewis, Herbert Blomstedt,

The studio, the place where artists create the work they leave to the world, is a kind of sacred space. For Leonard Bernstein, it was his inner sanctum, where he would spend nearly all his private time studying scores, composing, conversing on the telephone, and writing letters, poetry and prose. It was also the place he usually received collaborators and had important business meetings with his manager and potential new working partners. During the day, it could be a swarm of activity full of assistants copying music and personal notes and phone messages constantly being delivered on paper notes. Post-its were quite new in 1982, when I first entered Bernstein's Manhattan studio, and to him they were indispensable.

Bernstein worked in two studios. His favored composing place was an hour drive from Manhattan at his estate named Springate.

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Leonard Bernstein in His Studio (cont.)

Joseph Gingold, and others. Our concerts at the Hollywood Bowl were billed as a kind of West Coast Tanglewood in its inaugural year.

Later that year, in the fall of 1982, I was in New York, and Bernstein (affectionately known by friends and students as “LB”) called me around midnight. “Come over. We are reading through some of my new opera I’m writing. I need another pianist.” LB knew about my piano skills since I had played some of Marc Blitzstein’s *The Cradle Will Rock* for him. Blitzstein had been a mentor to Bernstein, and LB had played that same show when he was a student at Harvard.

LB’s studio was usually most active between the hours of four p.m. (just after his breakfast) and five or six a.m. He often tried to get some sleep just as the sun was about to rise. The dead of night was when LB seemed to do most of his creative work in the last decade of his life. It was usually quiet and lonely—two important elements that seem to give his muse the space to inhabit his inner ear.

Being an upper-West Side New Yorker myself, I arrived in under half an hour. After being carefully scrutinized by the Dakota security (cautious since the fairly recent murder of John Lennon at the building’s entrance), I was led to apartment twenty-three. The apartment was on the east side of the building with an impressive view of Central Park, just above the treetops. I entered the studio with a spontaneous leap, landing on two feet with my arms in a ready, fighting position as if to say “Here I am! Bring it on!” “See? What did I tell you?” Bernstein said to his librettist, Stephen Wadsworth, meaning something like “I told you he was game.” The studio had an entire massive wall of scores, with a ladder and a ladder rack, so you could slide left and right and access the upper shelves (the Dakota has sixteen-foot ceilings). In front of the wall of scores was a huge wooden desk with all kinds of books, scores, phones, a Tiffany lamp, and scraps of post-its with little notes for everything going on in his life. Across from the desk was a couch and a few chairs and a coffee table in front. To the right of this sitting area was a small bar that was always full (mostly of cheap Ballantine’s scotch, something I would get very used to over the next seven years), and, behind that, a fireplace. To the other side, against the shuttered windows, was the piano. In

those days it was a Baldwin, though it later became a Bösendorfer.

Bernstein took pride that he had never made a commercial endorsement of any product. No commercial sellout for him! He turned down the furriers Blackgama and their six-figure sponsorship AND their \$20,000 full-length black mink coat. He turned down Mercedes and all the others. I’m a little sorry he didn’t agree to being on a Wheaties box, which might have lifted the athleticism of conductors in the eyes of Americans. One of the only companies to earn Bernstein’s support was Baldwin. The company had supported his mentor Serge Koussevitsky when he founded Tanglewood by providing instruments for the new summer home of the Boston Symphony. Baldwin continued to do so for decades.

The studio was filled, as ever, with LB’s cigarette smoke. He was smoking low tar and nicotine cigarettes and adding an Aqua Filter to each one, supposedly to create a “healthier smoke.” The ash trays were always close to overflowing and, of course, the scotch was always on hand. “Want a drink?” he asked. “No thanks. Just show me the piece!” I replied. An hour later we had roared through three arias, all singing away in our faulty and raspy bass-baritones. “The workshop is in two days. See you there.”

And so began my apprenticeship to LB. I was still a postgrad at the Hartt School of Music in Hartford, Connecticut, just an hour or so from Fairfield, LB’s preferred composing spot. His late wife Felicia had appointed the historic house with all requisite comforts and plenty of room for guests, collaborators, and family. The horse stables on the property had been converted into a music studio, with a grand piano, a porch with a beautiful dogwood tree emerging from its center, a couch (to lie down on and let music enter his semi-consciousness in a half-sleeping state), and a beautiful old stand-up desk (you actually stood at the desk) where he did his composing and orchestrating when he wasn’t scribbling furiously at the piano. This is the spot where he wrote his *Chichester Psalms*, the Third Symphony (“Kaddish”), *Arias and Barcarolles*, most of *Concerto for Orchestra*, and a good deal of his opera, *A Quiet Place*.

Leonard Bernstein in His Studio (cont.)

I was fascinated to observe how one of his small musical ideas might get discarded and eventually find a home in another piece where it felt organic and right, as if it had always been there. It was also the case for LB that small ideas, completed as piano pieces or short songs, could be expanded into larger musical ideas. I observed how a passage could become emotionally transformed and become something serious or heart wrenching where it had been in a comical context before, and vice-versa. His “trunk” music—sketches of ideas, fragments or entire pages filled with notes—was usually on hand. There were many ideas that hadn’t found a home yet and he never knew when one of these musical orphans might find a home in a new piece. He often verbally repeated Aaron Copland’s advice to him: “Never throw anything away!” You just never knew what might end up being the perfect musical idea, given the right context.

When his mother Jennie was approaching her eighty-eighth birthday, he wrote a beautiful little song for the occasion. A gentle, tender waltz, the lyric addressing his mother by name, expressing his affection for her and how, now, she shared the magic number of eighty-eight with the other great love of his life, the piano, which has eighty-eight keys. Bernstein certainly knew he had written something special. A few years later, his friend and head of the artist division of the Baldwin Piano Co., Jack Roman, passed away. There was a celebration of his life and, at the service, LB played the same poignant Schumann-esque waltz he had written for his mother, only, this time, without the birthday lyric. The modest piano solo was entitled “In Memoriam” and was used by LB throughout the scourge of the AIDS crisis as more and more friends and colleagues were claimed by the disease. I played it at his secretary Helen Coates’ memorial service at the Dakota a few years later. Finally, it found its permanent home as the last song of *Arias and Barcarolles*. The piano solo now has a descant of two voices humming in simple harmony to the beautiful melody. It is the perfect ending for a song cycle that mostly examines relationships in the American family.

“Mr. And Mrs. Webb Say Goodnight,” also from *Arias and Barcarolles*, began musical life as the Prologue of LB’s musical adaptation of Bertold

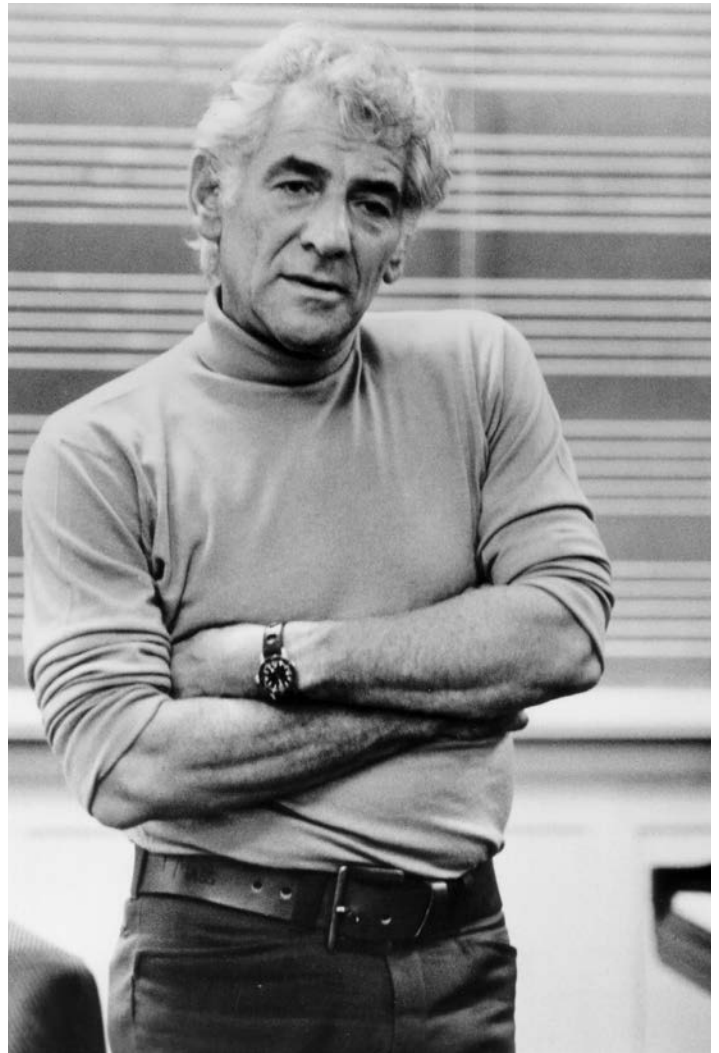


Photo by Paul de Hueck
Courtesy of the Leonard Bernstein Office

Brecht’s *The Exception and the Rule*. An unfinished project, originally involving Stephen Sondheim, Jerome Robbins, and John Guare, it was resurrected for another examination in the mid 1980s. To start the show, Jerome Robbins wanted a circus-like atmosphere to disarm the audience before plunging into the dark subject matter. LB came up with a rollicking, jolly, jig-like tune in 6/8 time. Robbins loved it, and the lyricist and playwright on the project John Guare (Steve Sondheim was now busy with other theatrical projects) was given the task of writing a lyric that fit the tune. “Just give me a dummy lyric so I don’t leave out any beats” said Guare. After three minutes he went home with “Betty Co-ed” to guide him, complete with a built-in rhyme scheme:

Leonard Bernstein in His Studio (cont.)

Betty Co-ed
Has lips of red
For every eager Harvard boy...

Thirty years earlier, Marc Blitzstein supplied the dummy lyric for the melody of what later became “Somewhere” from *West Side Story*. “There’s a place for us. A time and place for us,” penned by Stephen Sondheim, had its first vocal expression as “There Goes What’s-His-Name. Unhappy What’s-His-Name,” thanks to Blitzstein’s dummy lyric.

It was finally decided that the rambunctious music of the Prologue (known by its anagram “Poor Glue”) to the Brecht show couldn’t really bear a lyric. The words would have to come in a later section, set to another tune. The original music stood alone in order to set the tone, get the actors onstage, and establish characters. The entire project was abandoned after many months of casting and a Lincoln Center Theater workshop. But LB knew he had something fun. In “Mr. And Mrs. Webb Say Goodnight,” the “circus music” reemerged as a raucous four-hand piano piece being played by two sons of the Webbs, Malcolm and Kent. They are singing and improvising at the piano in the wee hours of the morning (“a quarter to four!” cries their exasperated mother Kenda).

The opening Prelude of *Arias and Barcarolles* also had an earlier life in a short and turgid piano solo, “Meditations Before a Wedding,” written on the eve of his daughter Jamie’s wedding to David Thomas. In “Meditations Before a Wedding,” after a quasi-improvisatory opening, an uneven groove in the left hand appears with a pattern alternating between the time signatures of 3/4 and 7/8—creating an off-balance, agitato nervousness, typical of Bernstein’s style. The lyric “I love you. It’s easy to say it and so easy to mean it, too” appears with the instruction “Not to be sung aloud.” In *Arias and Barcarolles*, the Prelude has a stormy introduction. The original meditative quality from the piano score is discarded and the storminess gives way to the nervous 3/4 + 7/8 figure, the lyric now sung aloud by a mezzo and baritone, introducing two characters (which, I believe creates some irony and danger). It suggests the relationship may well be in trouble.

The significance of this music being written in his Dakota studio the night before the wedding reminds me of Bernstein composing his opera *Trouble in Tahiti*, a story of a failing marriage, during his honeymoon.

In 1984, during the creation of his opera, *A Quiet Place*, Bernstein invited me to his country studio in Connecticut. Hans Weber, the recording engineer who made all of LBs recordings for Deutsche Grammophon, had arrived from Germany and was there to listen to playbacks of the Brahms Symphonies with the Vienna Philharmonic. Weber was legendary for his keen ears and his great knowledge of the classical canon. He had made most of Herbert von Karajan’s recordings over the decades and was held in reverence by his colleagues. This would be the final chance for LB to make any adjustments or edits before the imminent release. This time, the studio was full of cables and amplifiers and speakers. As we entered the studio, we passed an old hand-painted screen of people dressed in costumes and wearing masks. “*Un Ballo in Maschera*” said Herr Weber, and LB said “Yes it is! How did you know?” I had my Brahms scores and followed along intently during these sessions. LB, ever the teacher, pointed out beautiful details of the orchestration: “That’s a classically great example of invertible counterpoint;” “Listen to those trumpets in simple octaves. That’s unique to Brahms. It makes the entire orchestra shine.” He asked Herr Weber for a stronger bass line here and a little more impact from the timpani there. The recordings had been made from live performances and tiny flaws and audience noise clearly annoyed Herr Weber. “Ach, Husten!” [coughing] he exclaimed, shaking his head in dismay as some member of the audience marred the glorious horn solo in the Second Symphony. But his really big bugaboo was “Stampfen!,” which he pointed out repeatedly. The “stomping” was Bernstein’s own which occurred in particularly dramatic moments, like a subito forte, or a tutti exclamation after a downbeat (his stomp coming on the downbeat itself). Weber rolled his eyes, and LB shrugged his shoulders helplessly in apology. Wanting to make a contribution, I blurted out “I couldn’t hear the horns in that last passage.” Weber looked at me, shocked. A quick rewind of the magnetic tape revealed that

Leonard Bernstein in His Studio (cont.)

of course they were there, beautifully enmeshed in the texture. “Can we bring them out just a little?” LB asked, humoring me. Weber replied with “Aber natürlich!,” his usual “can do” answer.

Technology was taking a larger role in concert life, and, after the invention of commercial digital music, all kinds of new musical innovations were coming on the market. One day, a large machine arrived at Springate for installation in the studio. The latest invention from Raymond Kurzweil, the new machine could interface with the piano and take virtual dictation from a free improvisation, printing out and playing back what one had just played. This gave the musician an advantage of being able to improvise freely without trying to remember and write down what he/she had just made up. It also had the disadvantage of deciding for you what the meter was and where bar lines occurred. This ended up causing lots of work just to untangle the machine’s arbitrary decisions and Kurzweil’s machine didn’t last long. Most technology didn’t work too well for LB. His ability to break a machine within hours, or to have the latest and greatest electronic wonder just not work at all became known among the family and people in the office as the “Bernstein curse.” This didn’t prevent LB from including the DX7 (the keyboard synthesizer of choice in the 1980s) in the orchestra for *A Quiet Place*. The advantage of the DX7 was that it could cover a lot of instrumental ground. It could sound like an electric guitar, make drum sounds, and imitate a harp. This was a big space saver when trying to squeeze an orchestra into a Broadway or opera house pit. Bernstein wasn’t a novice when it came to electronic composing. *West Side Story* features an electric guitar and *Mass* begins with a quadrophonic recording. However, every time he physically got close to a musical electronic device, there was a lot of nervousness.

We were in the mostly pre-cellphone, pre-personal computer age, and we didn’t yet have Finale or Sibelius or any other software that allowed us to write music digitally. Communications were made by a land line phone, telex, or the newly-arrived fax machine. In the 1980s, LB used to send me birthday messages by telegram. Music was all copied by hand. When LB would write something, he would often hand it over to me, or his other

assistant Charlie Harmon, or Jack Gottlieb (LB’s erstwhile assistant since the late 1960s, semi-retired by the late 1980s). “Put this into fair copy,” he would say, meaning, make a clear, legible, mistake-free version. This was done on music manuscript paper, written with Alpheus Music Writers, LB’s pencil of choice. After a page or two was finished, LB would proof it, making corrections in red. These “fair copies” were xeroxed and used for rehearsals and, sometimes, even performances, until Boosey and Hawkes could get around to engraving them for publication. Getting a piece into print was an arduous task that took years. Every now and then, a newly printed score would arrive for LB’s approval, like galleys coming to a novelist from his publisher. Mistakes would often endure edit after edit, driving LB to distraction.

Life in the Bernstein studio was always exciting. LB was constantly composing and his work product mostly took the form of paper, filled with long hand and musical notation. Everything has been preserved, even drafts of sonnets, lyrics, personal notes, instructions to assistants written on post-its, personal letters (he wrote many), as well as his date book, where he scribbled down who would make good company for a dinner party that night. All these writings and sketches now live at the Music Division of the Library of Congress. A likeness of LB’s Dakota studio, lovingly archived and curated, may be seen on display at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University in Bloomington. His three grown children own the Springate property. The studio is now called the Casita and is regularly full of grandchildren, guests, and people loved by LB and his family.

Institute News, and More

Jeffrey Taylor, Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, CUNY

Leonard Bernstein has been inescapable this year. A centennial celebration that features well over 3000 concerts worldwide, dozens of CD issues, and a variety of books has led one exasperated *Washington Post* critic to write: “I’ll grant that Bernstein was a very talented person. But I am looking forward to spending some time without him.” Here in New York one would think he had been a native son: images of him dancing on the conductor’s stand of the New York Philharmonic or gazing out at the treetops of Central Park from his apartment at the Dakota made him a Manhattan institution. I hear him referred to as “Lenny” or “LB,” as if he were a close personal friend, and often by people who never met him. But far from feeling oversaturated, at the Hitchcock Institute we are convinced there is still much to learn about this passionate, deeply complex man and his music. There is particularly a need for new scholarship on Bernstein’s music and career. This issue of *American Music Review* includes some examples, and we offer it in the hopes that the important work of Bernstein study will continue long after the furor of this year has died down.

I never met “Lenny” myself. At least not in person. My first memory of him is the distinctive sound of his voice. When I was three or four I was given his recording of Saint-Saëns’s *Carnival of the Animals* (a studio version of one of his Young People’s Concerts) which featured Bernstein’s narration and performances by several young artists. As kids often do with favorite music, I listened to this record incessantly, my eyes always fixated on the cover, which featured a kind of musical Noah’s

Ark: two lions playing trumpet, two kangaroos playing clarinet, and so on. Bernstein’s script for this concert, which can be seen in the online archives of the Library of Congress, brought the music to life in a dryly amusing way that seemed a perfect fit with Saint-Saëns’s own crafty sense of humor. I particularly remember his introduction to the “Fossils” movement, where the xylophone was played by then twenty-year-old Tony Cirone—as Bernstein intoned, “no old fossil HE.” (Cirone, by the way, now in his late 70s, had an illustrious career with, among other ensembles, the San Francisco Symphony.)

Much later, in the fall of 1987, I was beginning my second year in the musicology program at the University of Michigan, and a friend suggested I sign up for the volunteer usher program at Hill

Auditorium, where students like me could hear all the concerts there in exchange for handing out programs and helping patrons to their seats. Bernstein came to Ann Arbor that September to conduct two concerts with the Vienna Philharmonic, the first featuring Mahler’s Fifth Symphony (a piece

with which he is strongly associated) and the second presenting his own “Jeremiah” Symphony, with the great Christa Ludwig as soloist. On the evening of the first concert I arrived a couple of hours early, as was required, and as I walked up to my post in the second balcony, I heard Mahler’s opening trumpet call, with the following thunderous A-major chord enveloping me in the stairwell. I don’t know if the maestro was onstage (it may have only been a sound check) but it was a thrilling moment: At the time I was just beginning to discover Mahler’s



Bernstein with composers at the University of Michigan, 1988
Photo courtesy of the University Musical Society

Institute News, and More (cont.)

symphonies, and I was about to see one of their champions and preeminent interpreters. I distinctly recall watching the concert from the orchestra (I must have snuck down to an unclaimed seat) and the performance was revelatory. With one of his most prized talents, Bernstein made the famous “Adagietto” seem a private conversation with the audience. In a sense, I “met” Bernstein then and I was deeply moved.

Just a year later Ann Arbor was chosen as one of only four North American cities to celebrate LB’s seventieth birthday. The celebration culminated with Bernstein conducting the VPO in Beethoven’s “Leonore” Overture No. 3, his own *Halil* and *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs*, and Brahms’s Fourth symphony. I was still at my post in the upper balcony, and though often the ushers scrambled to find substitutes if they had an upcoming exam or paper (everyone tried to get out of at least one of the several *Messiah* performances each December), I don’t think any of us missed this event. I distinctly remember watching the concert from the upper balcony—no unclaimed seats for this one! A colleague of mine reported that during curtain calls Bernstein had an assistant stand in the wings with a martini and a lit cigarette. Afterwards the President of the University hosted a reception with Bernstein for the composition students, some of them friends of mine, and I remember hearing about the magical atmosphere as the maestro held court, complete with cape. I imagine none of us attending these events could have guessed we would lose LB in just two years.

* * *

We are pleased to be joined by **Dr. Leann Osterkamp** as a Guest Editor for *AMR* this fall, and to include her essay in this issue. Osterkamp defended an important dissertation on Bernstein’s piano music this past spring at the CUNY Graduate Center, while finishing a complete recording of the repertory she studied, issued by Steinway & Sons Recording. She recently began her faculty appointment at Regis Jesuit High School where she is the Orchestra Director, Director of all Boys Choirs, Acapella Director, and is on the piano and guitar faculties. Aside from teaching, Osterkamp

still actively performs and does research. Coming up, she will appear in NYFOS Mainstage in February and appear in a Young Steinway Artist solo recital in Denver in March.

This may have seemed the year of Bernstein here in New York, but at the Institute we have been fortunate to host once again a wide-ranging series of talks in our Music in Polycultural America series. On 29 October the Institute’s own graduate assistant **Lindsey Eckenroth** presented “Cars and Guitars: The Sounds of Liberation?,” drawing on her dissertation work on rockumentaries that place popular musicians in specific historical and geographic contexts and explore how their music is mediated by specific genres of television and film. On 4 December we joined with the Conservatory’s Composers Forum to present **G. Douglas Barrett**, Assistant Professor of Communication Arts at Salisbury University and student of Alvin Lucier’s neurofeedback experiments such as *Music for Solo Performer* (1965). Barrett sees Lucier’s work in light of the expansion of the military-industrial complex and the large-scale labor transformations of late capitalism. And finally, on 5 December, **Elizabeth Newton** presented “The Raw and the Slick: Audio Quality in the 1990s,” discussing the early 1990s reception of “lo-fi” music by critics and audiophiles. Do intentionally “bad” recordings offer authenticity and sincerity?

HISAM College Assistant **Whitney George** continues her visibility among New York’s composers. George’s orchestration of Miriam Gideon’s opera *Fortunato* will be performed in May 2019 at the CUNY Graduate Center. The project was recently recognized by the Graduate Center’s Baisley Powell Elebash Award Committee, which is funding this premiere performance of Gideon’s one-act opera. The performance will be presented in collaboration with the Fresh Squeezed Opera Company and The Curiosity Cabinet.

“Everything’s a Mess Except Music”: Leonard Bernstein, Holocaust Survivors, and Music Making in Postwar Germany

Abby Anderton, Baruch College, City University of New York

“Everything’s a mess except music,” Leonard Bernstein wrote in 1948 during a visit to the rubble of postwar Germany.¹ In a vivid series of letters home, the twenty-nine-year-old described his three concerts in Bavaria: one with the Munich Philharmonic and two with the Representative Orchestra, an ensemble composed of Eastern-European Holocaust survivors. As the only American musician invited to conduct a German orchestra and Jewish survivor musicians, Bernstein proved to be a rare link between these groups separated by the recent genocide. While the survivor orchestra was newly formed in May 1945 and performed mainly for other refugees, the Munich Philharmonic was founded in 1893 and catered to the city’s classical music elite. Although the ensembles had radically different memberships, repertoires, and histories, it was Bernstein’s visit which unexpectedly brought them together.

In May 1948, Munich was still largely destroyed and occupied by the American Military Government. In the words Virgil Thompson, then a correspondent for *The Herald Tribune*, the metropolis was “a complete wreck, like a construction in pink sugar that has been rained on.”² Yet music-making in the city had not ceased, even in the final days of the Third Reich. In the ruined German postwar landscape, music was one of the few things that could freely traverse borders, and with the country split into Allied zones and sectors, divided by present and former political affiliations, music, too, was not free from politics. The occupiers took control of all aspects of governance. Even cultural matters were subject to supervision by a military organization called the Information Control Division (ICD), which employed American cultural officers to assist German civilians in the reconstitution of ensembles. Each musical group was required to have a military-issued license to perform, and every musician needed to obtain a work permit by filling out a series of lengthy denazification questionnaires. Bernstein recalled one American officer musing that the denazification process was simply one of “re-nazification” as the occupiers’ harsh policies merely reinforced Nazi stereotypes of Americans as culture-lacking brutes.³

In contrast to the American denazification process, occupier-supported cultural efforts in Displaced Persons (DP) camps had a decidedly different objective. The Allies were initially baffled about how to handle the DP population they inherited from the ruins of the Third Reich. The exultation of liberation was replaced by the reality that most of Europe’s DPs did not have a home to which to return, and Germany was often the last place the survivors wanted to be. Yet across Germany, Austria, Italy, these centers soon became home to the most ethnically, religiously, and linguistically diverse populations anywhere in Europe. The American Zone was home to the largest population of Jewish refugees, numbering 140,000 by 1946, and the fifteen major camps were located in the barracks of repurposed German military sites or even former concentration camps.⁴

Bernstein’s Visit

It was only at the behest of Hungarian-born conductor Georg Solti that Bernstein came to Munich in the first place. The Americans appointed Solti musical director of the Munich Staatsoper in 1946, and from the Allies’ perspective, Solti was an incredible re-education success story. It had proven difficult for the Americans to locate a competent conductor for the ensemble who was not politically compromised. Solti was not only an outstanding musician, he was one of the few Jewish conductors willing to work in postwar Germany.⁵

In May 1948, Solti invited Bernstein to conduct the Munich Philharmonic for two concerts, and he readily agreed. He planned to stop in Germany while on his way to a series of appearances in Palestine, where he had recently been appointed Chief Conductor of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra. In addition to playing with the Munich Philharmonic, Bernstein also wanted to give a concert for Jewish DPs, writing his personal assistant, Helen Coates, “I may have to hire the orchestra myself, but it’s worth it.”⁶ Fortunately, the logistics of Bernstein’s visit, including ground transportation, accommodations, and scheduling were left to music officer Carlos Moseley, who Bernstein had already met in 1947 at Tanglewood.

“Everything’s a Mess Except Music” (cont.)

As a pianist and arts administrator, he was uniquely gifted to act as the liaison between the American military, German and Jewish musicians, and the visiting Bernstein. His first hurdle was to find accommodations for the conductor; not an easy task given the scale of the city’s destruction. Unable to find a suitable hotel, Moseley rented the home of an actor friend, whom he had to pay to leave for the week, in Geiselgasteig which Bernstein dubbed “the Bavarian Hollywood.”⁷

From the moment Bernstein arrived in Munich, however, things did not exactly go according to plan. After getting off his train “in that shell-shocked Bahnhof,” as he called the station, music officer Carlos Moseley greeted him with the news that the Philharmonic was on strike over their food rations.⁸ An oboist in the orchestra had fainted with hunger, and now the musicians were refusing to appear with Bernstein unless their demands were met, namely, to receive better rations. By paying the ensemble a bribe of 115 cigarettes, Moseley eventually got the orchestra to agree to one concert with Bernstein, though not two as originally scheduled.⁹

Then there were the difficulties of transportation in and around the ruined city. When Bernstein learned the musicians were having difficulty reaching the venue, he managed to convince his contacts at the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) to help. The JDC, a relief agency for Jewish survivors, sent their trucks to ferry German musicians to and from rehearsals, an almost unheard of cooperative effort.¹⁰ And beyond the issues of rations and transport, Bernstein was worried the orchestra would be reluctant to work with him. Although he expected “great hostility,” because he was a young, Jewish-American conductor, he soon won the Philharmonic over. After a brief series of rehearsals which he conducted in German, “They seem to love me, and play with great Lust,” he wrote excitedly to Koussevitzky.¹¹

German civilians, American soldiers, and Jewish refugees attended Bernstein’s concert the following day on May 9, 1948; the audience make-up was a testament to Bernstein’s diplomacy and his music-making. Painter Samuel Bak, then a teenaged survivor living in Landsberg DP camp, was thrilled to report, “Now the Germans are

getting orders from a Jew! Isn’t it wonderful?” as he dubbed the concert, “a sort of victory.”¹² After the performance, the audience followed Bernstein outside the theater and down Prinzregentenstrasse still cheering. Well aware of what was at stake, Bernstein was elated, writing home that “I had three obstacles to overcome—youth, Americanism & Jewishness,” and that the performance “means so much . . . since music is the German’s last stand in their ‘master-race’ claim, and for the first time it’s been exploded in Munich.”¹³ To his sister, Shirley, he confided he was “Happy as hell... The concert Sunday in Munich was absolutely the End... Shrieking Germans – What a delight!,” concluding, “I really sold America to those Germans—and I’m a proud guy.”¹⁴ According to the *New York Times*, the Philharmonic was particularly pleased that Bernstein shared the applause with them in what amounted to a dozen curtain calls.¹⁵

Jewish Survivor Concerts

While the press was focused on his appearance with the Munich Philharmonic, Bernstein ultimately found his performances with Jewish survivors to be the pinnacle of his visit to Germany. When JDC Officer Lewis Gaber organized the trucks to transport the Munich Philharmonic musicians, he asked Bernstein if he would also consider appearing with a Jewish DP orchestra.¹⁶ The ensemble of Eastern-European Holocaust survivors called themselves the Representative Orchestra of the Surviving Remnant (*She’erit Hapletah*), a phrase from the book of Ezra which postwar survivor communities adopted to describe themselves.¹⁷ The ensemble formed in May 1945 as its members convalesced at St. Ottilien hospital, and began to tour the displaced persons camps in the Western zones of occupied Germany. The Representative Orchestra played for other survivors, often wearing recreations of their concentration camp uniform with their former prisoner numbers sewn on the front. While using set pieces like barbed-wire fences and oversized stars of David, the ensemble opened most of their concerts with Carl Maria von Weber’s Overture from *Der Freischütz*, and the programs consisted of Ghetto and Camp songs, and arrangements of Verdi and Puccini arias.

“Everything’s a Mess Except Music” (cont.)



Leonard Bernstein rehearsing with the Representative Orchestra, 10 May 1948

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On May 10, Bernstein and the ensemble briefly rehearsed together before performing two concerts at Feldafing (1:00 p.m.) and Landsberg (8:00 p.m.) Displaced Persons Camps. The program opened with the Overture from *Der Freischütz*. Bernstein accompanied violinist Chaim Arbeitman, a teenaged Polish survivor, who played a Tartini Sonata. Vocalist Henny Durmashkin sang “Jerusalem” and “Kalaniyot,” which Bernstein requested she sing in Hebrew instead of Yiddish.¹⁸ And Bernstein could not resist closing the concert with a solo piano version of Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*. The audience consisted of Jewish refugees, Munich Philharmonic musicians, and American aid workers, a nearly unheard-of audience constellation. German civilian visitors were not typically welcome at DP cultural events given their scarce resources and understandable distrust of the German populace. Yet Bernstein believed the attendance of the German musicians “was a kind of expiation . . . like Yom Kippur.”¹⁹

After witnessing an incredible outpouring of emotions, one JDC relief worker recalled how the audiences ran up to Bernstein and kissed him, sobbed with him, and how the conductor stayed

an extra hour talking to everyone in Yiddish.²⁰ Carlos Moseley, who was present at both Bernstein’s camp performances, recalled that it was “one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life. . . so moving and terrible in its tragedy that I had to hang on for dear life to keep from making an ass

of myself.”²¹ Bernstein seemed to agree, writing his sister the following day, “What an experience! I really can’t go into it now, but it’s heartrending. Glory on glory was piled on me, and of course I played *Rhapsody in Blue*. It all helped the morale, but it doesn’t help them get out of those rotten camps to Palestine. It’s a mess. Everything’s a mess except music.”²²

After Bernstein’s visit, the Americans imported some of his own compositions and recordings for German musicians. In July 1948, a recording of his Sonata for Clarinet and Piano was featured in a lecture at the *Amerika Haus* in Nuremberg. The Military Government also purchased recordings of the “Jeremiah” Symphony, *Fancy Free Suite*, and three of his *Seven Anniversaries* (1943) for loan to civilians.²³ Officers at the JDC asked Bernstein if he might be able to help arrange for scholarships to be awarded to DPs who were exceptional musicians. He agreed, and arranged for violinist Chaim Arbeitman (he later changed his name to David Arben) to study at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. Arben would go on to become

“Everything’s a Mess Except Music” (cont.)

Associate Concert Master of the Philadelphia Orchestra.²⁴

In the end, Bernstein’s visit was remarkable more for what happened offstage than on, as his concerts were a rare space of interaction between survivors and civilians on DP camp grounds. At the close of the Feldafing concert, the JDC awarded Bernstein a Citation of Meritorious Service in thanks “for his contribution to the welfare of the Jewish displaced persons.”²⁵ As a final gesture of gratitude, the orchestra presented Bernstein with an authentic concentration camp uniform. Bernstein sent the uniform home by airmail, instructing Coates to watch out for “a package containing a real concentration camp costume they gave me. Be particularly careful of it—it’s a great possession.”²⁶ The orchestra had given Bernstein a piece of their historical experience, one which he would never forget.

Notes

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7. Letter from Bernstein to Serge Koussevitsky, 11 May 1948, *Performing Arts Encyclopedia: The Library of Congress*, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/lbcorr.01273.0/?sp=1>, accessed 16 October 2018. (The LOC catalogue incorrectly dates the letter to 8 March 1948, probably because Bernstein decided to write “Mai” instead of “May” in the letter’s heading.) Moseley would later serve as President and Chairman of the New York Philharmonic. “Carlos Moseley, Philharmonic Manager, Dies at 98,” *New York Times*, 1 October 2012.
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10. Interview with Theodore Feder, RG 250, 2 June 1995, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archive.

“Everything’s a Mess Except Music” (cont.)

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Leonard Bernstein: Citizen Artist

Jamie Bernstein

From the time he was a young man, my father spoke out whenever he saw an injustice, or an atrocity, or a dire need. It often got him into trouble. Indeed, by the time he was able to view his own FBI file in the 1980s, it was *800 pages long*. That's because J. Edgar Hoover had been keeping tabs on that pesky Bernstein guy since the 1940s. But that was my father's way: he didn't shrink from raising his voice in protest when he thought it was necessary to speak up.

And whenever he could, he put his own music to work to express the ideas he believed in. Many of his compositions explore humanity's struggle to rise above evil.



Sledding in Central Park during Harvard winter break

Photo courtesy of the Bernstein family

My father never lost his idealism; there was a part of him that felt if he could just write a good enough melody, he might be able to heal the world. Of course, he knew this was impossible; he wasn't crazy. But the impulse to make the world a better place through his notes drove him forward as a composer. What I hear in my father's music—and what moves me the most—is that he could not and would not give up on the possibility of a better world. In fact he's dreaming that world for us, through his notes.

That dream drove him forward as a conductor, too. On 24 November 1963, he conducted Mahler's Symphony No. 2, "Resurrection," in a televised tribute to President Kennedy, who had been assassinated two days earlier. On the broadcast my father said, "This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before." I see that quote all too often these days; it's a social media favorite every time there's a terrorist incident, or a school shooting.

During the Vietnam War, my father composed his theater piece *Mass*, which channeled the angry protests of the young people in those days

who were confronting a bellicose and irresponsible government. The piece was commissioned for the inauguration of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. President Nixon was advised against attending the event; his henchmen warned that Bernstein had inserted a "secret message" in Latin to embarrass the president. The secret message turned out to be "Dona nobis pacem"—a standard line in the Catholic liturgy. It was a typical moment of Nixon administration paranoia.

But in any case, there was certainly nothing secret

about my father's anti-war stance; that's one of the reasons Leonard Bernstein's name appeared on Nixon's infamous White House Enemies List.

Leonard Bernstein lived long enough to witness the Soviet Union lose its iron grip on eastern Europe and to see the Berlin Wall come down. On Christmas Day of 1989, my father conducted a multinational orchestra, chorus, and soloists in a historic performance of Beethoven's 9th, broadcast worldwide from the newly reunified city of Berlin. For the occasion, my father changed Schiller's "Ode to Joy" text to "Ode to Freedom." The event was a

Leonard Bernstein: Citizen Artist (cont.)

magnificent expression, in my father's final year, of his lifelong commitment to using music as an engine for peace, compassion, and brotherhood—the very same goals that Beethoven himself strove to express through his own symphonies.

All my father's words, deeds, and ways of living provide a shining example to young artists today—musicians in particular—who are newly galvanized to forgo the ivory tower and, instead, share their creativity with their communities and reach out with their artistry to help make the world a better place. These young people refer to themselves as Citizen Artists. It's a beautiful name for a beautiful way to be—and without a doubt, Leonard Bernstein was Citizen Artist Number One.

He put his music-making to greater purpose whenever he could. We think of that Beethoven 9th at the fall of the Berlin Wall; we think of the songs reflecting feminism, civil rights, and gay rights within his piece *Songfest*; we think of his theatre piece *Mass*, which protested the Vietnam War; we think of his Journey for Peace concert in Hiroshima, and his Music for Life concerts to benefit AIDS research.

In the myriad celebrations for Bernstein at 100, we're not just looking backward; we're contemplating the future. This is where music is going: music in the service of others, music to heal an ailing planet, music to raise hope and neutralize hatred, music as a manifestation of love. These are the ingredients of my father's unique legacy. His 100th birthday is a wonderful opportunity for orchestras, soloists, teachers, and music fans of every stripe to celebrate Leonard Bernstein, not only as the iconic twentieth century composer that he was, but also as a template for the passionate—and *compassionate*—musician of the twenty-first century.

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Genre and Stylistic Expectations in the Musical Theater of Leonard Bernstein

Paul Laird, The University of Kansas

As a composer, Leonard Bernstein never felt constrained by expectations of genre. One of the few American composers to make meaningful contributions both in concert music and the Broadway theater, he forged his own path in terms of what type of composition he should write. Of Bernstein's three symphonies, each was programmatic and also unusual in form and conception. The first, "Jeremiah" (1942), told the story of the ancient Hebrew prophet's warnings about Israelites turning away from God, capped by a finale with a solo mezzo-soprano mournfully singing Jeremiah's *Lamentations*. Symphony No. 2, "The Age of Anxiety" (1949), inspired by W. H. Auden's introspective poem by the same name, followed the poem's structure fairly closely, but with extensive writing for solo piano, making the piece closely resemble a piano concerto. "Kaddish" (1963), the third symphony, is like an oratorio, combining three settings of an important Jewish prayer with narrator, mezzo-soprano soloist, chorus, and orchestra, addressing nothing less than the relationship between God and humans and the threat of nuclear annihilation, among other issues.

Bernstein never really could decide whether he was a conductor, composer, pianist, or music educator, pursuing all of these careers while sometimes leaning more in one or two directions. In a letter to a friend from May 1955, Bernstein, then thirty-six, actually wrote: "Some day, preferably soon, I simply must decide what I'm going to be when I grow up."¹ For example, while directing the New York Philharmonic between 1958 and 1969 and also heavily involved with television activities, he wrote only the "Kaddish" Symphony and *Chichester Psalms* (1965). He completed no musical theater works during those eleven years. *New York Times* critic Brooks Atkinson spoke for

the theatrical community in 1960 when he wrote: "Let's not speculate on how many vibrant scores the Philharmonic has deprived us of. The thought is too melancholy."² Indeed, Bernstein's forays into musical theater occurred irregularly. The success of the ballet *Fancy Free* in 1944 inspired turning its scenario into the musical *On the Town*, but

Bernstein's conducting mentor Serge Koussevitzky disliked his protégé writing popular music. Bernstein concentrated on conducting and composing concert works until the Russian conductor's death in 1951, except for incidental music he wrote for a production of *Peter Pan* in 1950. Bernstein's most active decade as a composer was the 1950s, and that included his busiest period on Broadway, completing *Wonderful Town*, *Candide*, and *West Side Story* between 1953 and 1957, in addition to incidental music for the play *The Lark*. Bernstein tried to collaborate on a musical version of Thornton Wilder's play *The Skin of Our Teeth* during his sabbatical season from the Philharmonic in 1964–65, but the effort failed. His next musical theater work was not

completed until 1971, when *Mass* helped inaugurate the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. His final Broadway musical, *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, opened in 1976 but ran for less than a week. Further attempts over the last fourteen years of his life resulted in no finished works.

The remainder of this query will look at his five Broadway musicals and *Mass* in chronological order. The genre of each of his non-operatic works (as on title pages) is considered with regard to the composer's approach to the score and critical expectations of the music. *On the Town* (1944) was a striking debut for Bernstein and his collaborators: Jerome Robbins as choreographer and Betty



Candide Playbill, 1956

Genre and Stylistic Expectations (cont.)

Comden and Adolph Green writing lyrics and the book. This was their first Broadway musical, but their mastery of the medium was immediate. They set out to write a musical comedy—the show’s advertised designation—and the result was riotously funny, but the collaborators also self-consciously adopted the type of integration praised in *Oklahoma!* from the previous year. They included even more ballet than had appeared in *Oklahoma!* and ensured that most songs contributed to the storytelling. With three sailors on leave for twenty-four hours in New York City, they made wartime realities part of the story, allowing the couples to draw close quickly and writing the serious song “Some Other Time” for late in the show, when the principals realize that there are things they have not experienced in their rushed relationships. It is a sobering moment, and along with all of the ballet and Bernstein’s sophisticated music, provides this musical comedy with an artistic soul. Some of Bernstein’s score was unusual for a musical comedy: the knowing parody of the blues in “I Feel Like I’m Not Out of Bed Yet,” the dissonance and harmonic complexity of “New York, New York,” the interplay of blues and boogie-woogie tropes in “Come Up to My Place,” the operatic parody of “Carried Away,” and the mixture of various vernacular influences and nostalgic sentiment reminiscent of Copland’s ballet scores that forms “Lonely Town,” just to consider five numbers from Act 1. Bernstein poured as much variety into the dance music for *On the Town* as he did the ballet *Fancy Free*. His contribution to his first Broadway score demonstrated that this young artist was unafraid to treat vernacular idioms in his theater scores in a similar way that he did in his concert music.

Wonderful Town (1953) demonstrates that Bernstein and his collaborators had no intention of changing their sophisticated approach to musical comedy, also this show’s designation of genre. George Abbott, who had also directed *On the Town*, turned to Comden and Green as lyricists when his first team failed to produce usable songs for the score. Comden and Green enticed Bernstein to write the music; the score had to be finished quickly before the producers lost their option on the star Rosalind Russell. They did most of their

work in five or six weeks in late 1952. The show’s development was difficult. Book writers Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov wanted to update the story from their play *My Sister Eileen* from the 1930s to the 1950s, but Bernstein, Comden, and Green desired to reference 1930s swing music. Abbott sided with his composer and lyricists and then endured a contentious time getting the show to Broadway, but the collaborative difficulties did not affect the show’s reception. Bernstein’s music contributed strongly to the overall effect and drew praise from Olin Downes, music critic for the *New York Times*, who saw the effort as a step in the development of American opera: “This is an opera made of dance, prattle and song; and speed. . . . We are coming to believe that when the American opera created by a composer of the stature of the Wagners and Verdis of yore does materialize, it will owe much more to the robust spirit and the raciness of accent of our popular theater than to efforts of our emulators, in the aesthetic brackets, of the tonal art of Bartók, Hindemith and Stravinsky.”³ The songs of *Wonderful Town* include an eclectic mixture of vernacular and concert references, heard to great advantage at the conclusion of the musical scene “Conversation Piece” with wild, operatic coloratura layered on top of a more popular, patter song; and the “Wrong Note Rag,” a comic reaction to the early twentieth-century genre that at moments verges on Stravinskian dissonances.

Candide (1956) failed in its initial run, partly because book writer Lillian Hellman and composer Bernstein never managed to agree on the work’s tone. Hellman wrote a bitter, pointed satire aimed at the United States in the throes of McCarthyism. Bernstein, however, working with several lyricists but mostly Richard Wilbur, wrote a delightful operetta score based upon European dance types and other influences far from the American vernacular characteristics that dominated Bernstein’s Broadway scores. Advertised as a “comic operetta,” *Candide*’s score in some ways was typical for its announced genre with some waltzes, but Bernstein added the schottische, gavotte, and other dances, and also entered the opera house with the aria “Glitter and Be Gay” and dramatic finale “Make Our Garden Grow.” The aria’s coloratura matches almost anything from the nineteenth-century repertory,

Genre and Stylistic Expectations (cont.)

and the finale opens with wide-ranging solos and a duet for Candide and Cunegonde, followed by a contrapuntal tour-de-force for principals and chorus. Its tone is invariably hopeful, in glaring contrast to the remainder of the show. It is one place where one must question what Bernstein intended in a musico-dramatic sense.

West Side Story carried the appellation of a “musical.” It is hard to know what an audience’s expectations might have been for a show designated a musical in 1957, but the tragedy and violence of *West Side Story* surprised many in the audience and critics. Bernstein’s iconic, well-known score demonstrated what was possible in a serious musical for later composers, combining distinctive references to various Latin dances, swing, bop, and cool jazz. In addition, he employed sophisticated compositional techniques that one would expect more in concert music: omnipresent major/minor triads of the “Prologue,” rhythmic uncertainty in “Something’s Coming,” the level of dissonance and a fugue in “Cool,” many meter changes in the “Tonight Quintet,” the strong influence of Stravinsky in the dissonance and rhythmic complexity of “The Rumble,” the argumentative counterpoint between Maria and Anita in “A Boy Like That/I Have A Love,” and the prominence of the tritone throughout the score. Bernstein’s wide compositional palette in *West Side Story* surely influenced his lyricist Stephen Sondheim in

his sophisticated Broadway scores that followed starting in the early 1960s.

One cannot consider genre as a factor in Bernstein’s musical theater output without mentioning *Mass*, which was not conceived for Broadway. In 1971 the Kennedy Center offered a huge production with over 200 singers, dancers, and musicians. The work combined a concert mass with dramatic and dance elements, several different types of vernacular music, and concert pieces for orchestra. Bernstein was the primary creator and had the final say on content, but he procrastinated to such an extent in the compositional process that he had to bring in Stephen Schwartz less than four months before the premiere to write the English texts that provide dramatic context. Schwartz also helped craft the loose plot, which includes political, religious, and philosophical commentary.⁴ Bernstein designated *Mass* as a “theater piece.” *Mass* showed Bernstein at his most eclectic with the addition of rock to the usual vernacular styles that he accessed, and the instrumental music represents a wide range indeed. Even several examples cannot illustrate the composer’s large stylistic palette in *Mass*, but these three excerpts demonstrate the contrasts inherent in the score: the pop-influenced, Broadway sound of “A Simple Song;” the rock-based “I Don’t Know;” and the orchestral “Meditation No. 2,” variations on a famous eleven-note passage from Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9. Although controversial in its



Leonard Bernstein with Carol Lawrence and the cast of West Side Story, 1957
Library of Congress Music Division

Genre and Stylistic Expectations (cont.)

premiere, *Mass* has remained in the repertory for institutions that wish to make a major musical statement, and many people find it spiritually moving.

The designation “musical play” has become a favorite among scholars to describe pieces of musical theater that are serious in content, applied today to musicals ranging from *Show Boat* to shows by Rodgers and Hammerstein and beyond. The only work that Bernstein composed to which the moniker was applied in its advertising is *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, for which Alan Jay Lerner wrote book and lyrics. They crafted an interesting score, but Lerner’s book was flawed, based on the difficult notion that the same white actors would play many presidents and first ladies and the same African American actors would play a slave couple that later became servants at the White House. Lerner and Bernstein were deeply concerned about the country’s direction and what they saw as the self-congratulatory feeling of the American Bicentennial in 1976, and they used the show to lecture audiences on racism in the United States, not the message that patriotic white Americans wished to hear at that moment. The result was a disastrous run of seven performances and no original cast recording, causing this major score mostly to disappear until it was recast as *The White House Cantata* for concert performance in the late 1990s. Bernstein’s approach to the music corresponded with the show’s satiric spirit, with parodies of patriotic tunes, references to period dances, minstrel shows, and other types of American entertainment. These were juxtaposed with songs based on familiar Bernstein tropes, like the moving, anthem-like “Take Care of This House” (an admonition to look after the White House and American democratic institutions) and the cheerfully irreverent “Ten Square Miles by the Potomac River.” The score shows that Bernstein made intelligent musical decisions to reflect and offer commentary on dramatic situations, setting some fine lyrics by Lerner.

While interacting with theatrical genres, Bernstein was the eclectic, probing composer one finds in most of his concert works. In the musical comedy, perhaps the most predictable of Broadway genres, he accessed the vernacular styles that were staples of the genre for many composers.

But he also found sophisticated elements from his concert music that he made part of the show’s humor, a distinctive approach in the popular theater seldom used by other composers, perhaps with the exception of Kurt Weill. When writing *Candide*, Bernstein followed the usual European style of operetta, but he ranged further than some composers in doing so, and also provided operatic numbers. Bernstein reserved his widest eclecticism for Broadway and brought his most sophisticated devices to the musical and musical play, *West Side Story* and *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*. The diversity in those effective scores, however, was not as broad as *Mass*, the work where Bernstein had the highest degree of creative control. *Mass* was one of his most personal statements, the likes of which would never have made it to Broadway. If one wants to get to know Bernstein the man and composer, *Mass* is required listening. Its memorable eclecticism provides crucial context for Bernstein’s Broadway scores, and a delightfully puckish commentary on the man’s complicated engagement with genre expectations in all of his works.

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3. Olin Downes, “Wonderful Time: Bernstein’s Musical Is Brilliant Achievement,” *New York Times* (10 May 1953): Section 2/7.
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Revisiting the Maestro: A New Edition of Burton's *Leonard Bernstein*

Kathy Acosta Zavala, University of Arizona

You see, you've got to work fast, but not be in a hurry. You've got to be patient, but not be passive. You've got to recognize the hope that exists in you, but not let impatience turn it into despair. Does that sound like double-talk? Well, it is, because the paradox exists. And out of this paradox *you* have to produce the brilliant synthesis. We'll help you as much as we can—that's why we're here—but it is you who must produce it, with your new atomic minds, your flaming angry hope, and your secret weapon of art. (399)

Bernstein delivered this speech in 1970 for the opening day at Tanglewood. In hindsight, the sentiments echoed a life dedicated to teaching the next generations of musicians around the world. On the centenary of Leonard Bernstein's birth, the musical world has decided to pay tribute to this American icon and remember him with nothing short of a Bernstein bash. His music has been the main focus of festivals around the world. His Sony recordings have been presented as *Bernstein's Mahler Marathon* at Lincoln Center. And works by scholars, biographers, and writers—including his eldest daughter, Jamie Bernstein's *Famous Father Girl: A Memoir of Growing Up Bernstein* (Harper, 2018)—have taken on the task of revisiting his life, accomplishments, struggles and, most importantly, his legacy. Humphrey Burton's revision of his 1994 biography, *Leonard Bernstein* (Faber & Faber, 2017), is part of this celebration, providing invaluable insights into Bernstein's life, struggles, rise to stardom, and personal life.

Burton's biography is a massive undertaking of love and dedication. Throughout the chronological format of the biography he allows the reader to develop a personal rapport with Bernstein through writings, lectures, and interviews. In addition Burton includes extensive letters to close friends and musical contemporaries, such as the conductors Mitropoulos and Koussevitzky, the composers Aaron Copland and David Diamond, and others. In the book, the letters to Helen Coates, who was Bernstein's teacher, personal secretary, and confidant for more than fifty years, are essential

to the overall understanding of Bernstein's struggles, thoughts, sexuality, relationships, and musical projects. Newspaper articles, reviews, and Bernstein's speeches are also used to construct a compelling narrative.

Burton's tone, at times ironic and comical, allows the author's voice to come through and hints at his opinions and perceptions. Comments such as "he had only himself to blame for his spreading waistline" (428) and parenthetical additions such as "in Vienna he conducted Mahler's Sixth Symphony, which made a fine (but bearded) conclusion to Unitel's Mahler cycle," (437) punctuate Burton's narrative persona.

The biography begins with an almost theatrical prologue that describes Bernstein's funeral: "Everything was orderly and quiet. It made a startling contrast with the jagged tensions of the funeral parlor scene Bernstein had imagined for the opening of his opera *A Quiet Place*." (xiii) After the opening, the book is formatted in six carefully delineated parts. In "Part One—The Education of an American Musician: 1918–1943," Burton is not shy in pointing out Bernstein's inconsistent and misguided statements about his childhood and teen years during interviews later in his life. For instance, Burton points out that Roy Harris, rather than Koussevitzky, was the first to suggest that Bernstein change his name to something more Anglo-Saxon when he was inquiring about studying at Curtis at Copland's suggestion.

In "Part Two—Rise to Prominence: 1943–1951," the biography becomes a valuable resource for study of Bernstein's compositional output. Each composition is contextually set into the narrative allowing the reader to become acquainted with extra-musical factors. Part Two, "Part Three—Something's Coming—The Composing Years: 1952–1957" and "Part Four—The New York Philharmonic Era: 1957–1969" follow the young conductor's travels across the continent, and later the world. His first encounter with Felicia Montealegre in February 1946, their almost five-year-long engagement, and their marriage and Bernstein's entrance into the world of fatherhood are chronicled. It is during these chapters that we start to comprehend two main contradictions in

Revisiting the Maestro (cont.)

Bernstein's life: a desire to be a conservative family man that conflicted with his addiction to traveling and the baton; and the tension with what Burton calls "his alternative life" as a composer and the conundrum of never allocating enough time to compose, always struggling to finish compositional projects and commissions, and leaving his works to the mercy of his incredibly busy schedule.

Comments such as "Bernstein remained as hooked on the baton as he was on nicotine" (462) permeate the last two parts of the book, "Part Five—Coming Apart: 1969-1978" and "Part Six—Anything but Twilight: 1978-1990." Bernstein's celebrity status in the press, Felicia's death, his coming out as gay, his deteriorating health, and his desire to lend support to nuclear disarmament and world peace come through in these last chapters as well. Burton describes how Bernstein's early worries from 1947 that "his work as a composer might forever be sacrificed on the conductor's altar" (155) became a driving force to establish a legacy beyond his conducting and resulted in the composition of his American opera *A Quiet Place*, which took him thirty-five years.

Burton's 2017 revised edition contains a "New Introduction," which discusses new scholarship written about Bernstein in the twenty-first century. The topical divisions include Bernstein's early music-making, his Harvard years, the early years in New York, his homosexuality, early ballets, his Broadway production in the time of war, the FBI surveillance period, the New York Philharmonic years, the legacy of the Young People's Concerts, and the 2013 publication of "Mr. [Nigel] Simeone's . . . scrupulously edited *The Leonard Bernstein Letters*." (3)

Burton's biography made me reflect on the personal correspondence that came to light in *The Leonard Bernstein Letters* addressing Bernstein's sexuality. The Felicia Bernstein letter, which has been labeled as ranking amongst "the most thoughtful and touching 'prenuptial agreements' on record" dating 1951-1952, became one of the most revealing sources in unveiling Felicia's understanding and acknowledgement of the maestro's homosexuality.¹ In it she says, "You are a homosexual and may never change—you don't admit to the possibility of a double life, but if your

peace of mind, your health, your whole nervous system depend on a certain sexual pattern what can you do?"² Another scholarly source addressing Bernstein's sexuality is Nadine Hubb's article titled "Bernstein, Homosexuality, Historiography."³ After reading these articles and letters, I wonder whether the inclusion of these new findings and perspectives could have changed the narrative in Burton's biography.

The technological advances of the twenty-first century have magnified the online resources available for further scholarship on Bernstein's life. Scholars now have access to the Library of Congress Leonard Bernstein Collection and the New York Philharmonic Archives at the touch of a button. Burton's appendix "Notes to Sources" has retained its value by providing Bernstein scholars with an encyclopedic compendium of quotes from letters, interviews, reviews, and Bernstein's professional writings. This appendix can be considered a companion to the cornucopia of letters, concert programs, reviews, and writings available online. Combined with all the new research on Bernstein, Burton's *Leonard Bernstein* has evolved from an essential biographical source to a key resource in the study of twentieth-century American music.

Notes

1. Michael Roddy, "Bernstein in Letters: Gifted, Gay and Loved by his Wife," *Reuters* (11 April 2014).
2. Nigel Simeone, ed. *The Leonard Bernstein Letters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
3. Nadine Hubbs, "Bernstein, Homosexuality, Historiography," *Women & Music*, 13 (2009): 24-42.

A New Perspective on Leonard Bernstein's Piano Music

Leann Osterkamp, Regis Jesuit High School

Pianists are familiar with Leonard Bernstein's work *Touches* for the piano because it is one of the longest works he wrote for the instrument, making it easy to program and present. It also enjoyed public fame as one of the required commissioned works of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, one of the most prestigious competitions for instrumentalists. Some of his other piano works make moderate appearances on stages throughout the world, including his Symphony No. 2, "Age of Anxiety," which is essentially a piano concerto, and some of his *Anniversaries*, short vignettes that are often used as encores in most programs.

Fewer pianists, however, are even aware of his *Sonata for Piano*, his longest solo work for the instrument, or the many other short pieces and collections ranging from his *Sabras* to *Bridal Suite*. After coming across the *Sonata for Piano* in my fourth year of conservatory study, I began to question why these terrific works for the piano were not more commonly known and performed. After all, they came from the pencil of Leonard Bernstein. After recording Bernstein's complete works for solo piano for the Steinway and Sons Label, I made this question the inspiration for my doctoral research.

Bernstein's piano music is often recycled into his other significant orchestral and theater works. The majority of Bernstein's piano works are short, often no longer than two or three pages in length, so that, when the music appears in orchestrations, it is always incorporated into a larger musical structure. When recycled, a given piano work is extended, modified, and varied, or, alternatively, the piano score can appear musically identical,



*Leonard Bernstein at the piano
Courtesy of the Leonard Bernstein Office*

serving as an independent scene or episode within the larger instrumental work. As a result, most of the piano works have essentially become musical synecdoches, representing only a part of the more well-known larger whole. Consequently, most are viewed similarly to published sketches or reductions rather than as independent progressive piano works.

The Leonard Bernstein Collection at the Library of Congress houses hundreds of boxes containing letters, photos, manuscripts, receipts, and countless other objects from the life and career of the great maestro. One of the most influential archival scholars for this collection was Jack Gottlieb.

In his lifetime, he was the Sherlock Holmes of the piano manuscripts, tracing manuscripts to their respective decade and context. However, in the publication and archival flurry of the twenty-seven years since Bernstein's death, many piano works were left undated or were inaccurately archived. In many cases, Gottlieb laid an important foundation for understanding the social, historical, and political contexts of many of the piano works but, in his lifetime, was only able to make an initial conjecture about many of their contexts and lineages.

I began my own research at the Library of Congress with a performer's perspective. I not only wanted to understand when and under what circumstances every piano work was written but I wanted to understand why. As a pianist, I believe that performers are more inclined to connect with and perform repertoire they can see a purpose behind and, in turn, audiences are more receptive to performances of works when they are able to understand the reason behind their creation. Why did Bernstein

A New Perspective (cont.)

finish some pieces overnight and spend weeks on others? Why were the *Anniversaries* dedicated to these specific people and in specific years? Why were there conflicting titles for the *Sabras*? Why did it appear that there were so many unpublished piano works in the finding aid of the Bernstein Collection that I had never heard of or seen? Why did Bernstein choose to recycle so many of his piano works in larger pieces? These were only a few of the many questions that jumped to mind as I began opening box after box.

Not only did I find many astounding unpublished piano works within the collection, but as I corrected some dates and pieced together a compositional history, I discovered just how much musicological information was packed into each tiny piano piece. In culmination, the history of the piano works demonstrated clear trends in Bernstein's compositional process. Individually, each work unveiled a riveting interesting personal side-story that showed the inseparable connection between Bernstein's personal and professional life. This article will provide a glimpse into how fruitful and illuminating the process of tracing a piano piece backwards from publication to creation can be. The relationships among *In Memoriam: Nathalie Koussevitzky*; Symphony No. 1, "Jeremiah;" *Partita for Piano*; *Seven Anniversaries*; and *Lamentation (1939)* demonstrate a purpose behind Bernstein's musical recycling, his compositional process in doing so, as well as the personal and social motivations that influenced his artistic choices.

Though it is common knowledge that the piano work *In Memoriam: Nathalie Koussevitzky* shares musical material with the "Lamentation" movement from Bernstein's Symphony No. 1, "Jeremiah," the accurate compositional dates and circumstances surrounding both works are often incorrect or not present at all.¹ The factual historical dates presented here reveal potential issues in publication error and fundamental misunderstandings behind the significance and greater meaning of both works.

Symphony No. 1 was first performed in 1944 with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Bernstein's original program note unveils the compositional process and timeline of the works while commenting on their external sources for emotional reference and programmatic understanding:

In the summer of 1939 I made a sketch for a "Lamentation" for soprano and orchestra. This sketch lay forgotten for two years, until in the spring of 1942 I began a first movement of a symphony. I then realized that this new movement, and the scherzo that I planned to follow it, made logical concomitants with the "Lamentation." Thus the symphony came into being, with the "Lamentation" greatly changed, and the soprano supplanted by a mezzo-soprano. The work was finished on 31 December 1942 and is dedicated to my father. ... As for programmatic meanings, the intention is again not one of literalness, but of emotional quality. ... The movement ("Lamentation"), being a setting of poetic text, is naturally a more literary conception. It is the cry of Jeremiah, as he mourns his beloved Jerusalem, ruined, pillaged, and dishonored after his desperate efforts to save it. The text is from the book of Lamentations.²

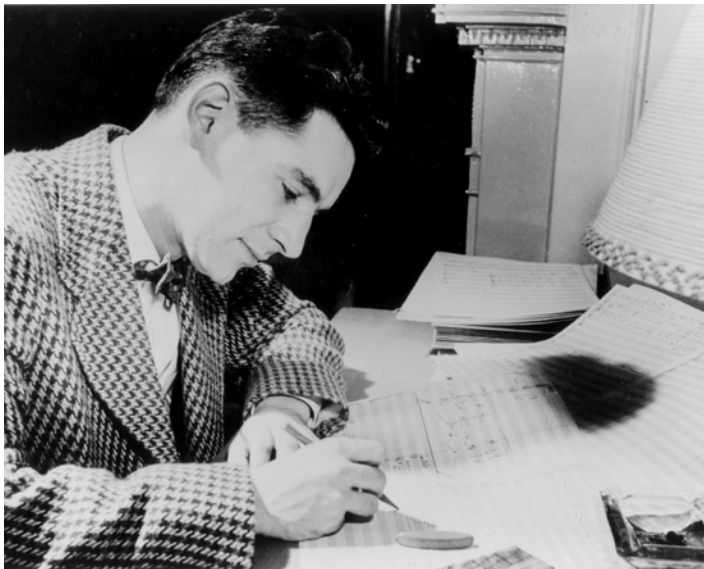
Bernstein claims that his initial sketch of *Lamentation (1939)* was not reused until the spring of 1942. Though Bernstein refers to the work as a sketch in this context, a letter sent from Bernstein to Aaron Copland on 29 August 1939 describes the piece as a finished work:³

I've just finished my Hebrew song for mezzo-soprano and orchestra. I think it's my best score so far (not much choice). It was tremendous fun. Under separate cover, as they say, I'm sending the *Lamentation* for your dictum. Please look at it sort of carefully, it actually means much to me. Of course, no one will ever sing it, it's too hard, and who wants to learn all those funny words? Eventually the song will become one of a group, or a movement of a symphony for voice and orchestra, or the opening of a cantata or opera, unless you give a very bad verdict.

There is a clear distinction between a sketch and an independent work that is part of a larger whole. Furthermore, there is a distinction between

A New Perspective (cont.)

a work intended to be part of a larger group and a work that is merely included in a larger collection for the sake of longevity and performance. In this case, *Lamentation* (1939) was conceived as an independent work that would be used as a part of a larger set merely for likelihood of performance. *Lamentation* (1939) also was intended for mezzo-soprano initially, meaning this change was not a result of the Symphony No.1, as is suggested by Bernstein's program note.⁵



Leonard Bernstein composing,
Courtesy of the Leonard Bernstein Office

In Memoriam: Nathalie Koussevitzky, which shares a substantial material with the final third movement "Lamentation" of Symphony No.1, was composed on 14 January 1942. This is the new accurate date provided on the manuscript in the Library of Congress. The published version incorrectly labels Nathalie Koussevitzky's death as 15 January 1942 and the compositional date as 1943. Nathalie actually died on 11 January 1942 and the work was composed in the three days following her death.

This piano work is known today as part of the *Seven Anniversaries* collection. The published version of *Seven Anniversaries* was not finalized until around 1943. The Library of Congress collection reveals that the anniversary set went through two significant versions before the final published rendering. One version was a set originally titled *Partita for Piano* and contained five Baroque dance pieces. *In Memoriam: Nathalie*

Koussevitzky was included in this 1942 set as "Sarabande (in memoriam of N.K.)." In the same year, the piece was included in a set entitled *Six Piano Pieces*.⁶

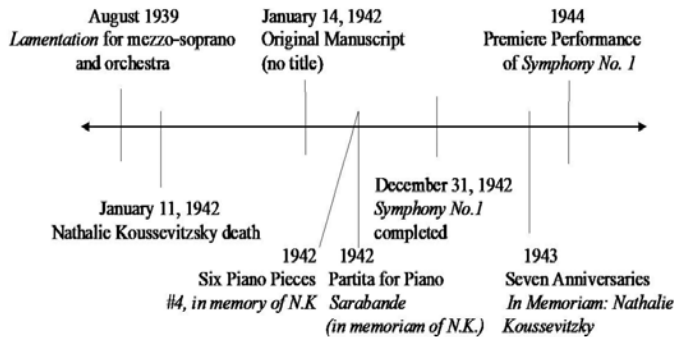
Bernstein needed to finish Symphony No.1 quickly. In 1942, he ended his formal studies at Curtis and moved to New York City to pursue the next chapter of his career. In an effort to help facilitate that process, he decided to submit his Symphony No.1 in a composition competition at the New England Conservatory. Testimony of his close friends and the fact that Bernstein finished the completed work on 31 December 1942 (the final deadline for the competition) prove that there was a significant time crunch imposed on the completion of the symphony:

Bernstein decided to enter his *Jeremiah* Symphony into a competition organized by the New England Conservatory, for which his Tanglewood conducting mentor Serge Koussevitzky was serving as chairman of the jury. He made significant changes to his song sketch, shifting the vocal part to mezzo-soprano, and in a frantic burst of activity, he worked around the clock to complete the entire symphony before the December 31, 1942 deadline. Bernstein enlisted his sister Shirley and friends David Diamond and David Oppenheim to help with copying and proofreading, and his roommate Edys Merrill hand-delivered the score to Koussevitzky's Boston home on New Year's Eve. He did not win the competition, but his *Jeremiah* Symphony would nonetheless bring him great success.⁷

Therefore, as Bernstein composed the symphony for the competition, he looked back at earlier compositions to expand and complete a three-movement symphony in the time available. *Lamentation* (1939) does not include material found in *In Memoriam: Nathalie Koussevitzky*. The final version of the Symphony No.1 "greatly changed" *Lamentation* (1939) by simply combining music from *Lamentation* (1939) with the already completed *In Memoriam: Nathalie Koussevitzky*. Perhaps Bernstein added the musical material

A New Perspective (cont.)

of *In Memoriam: Nathalie Koussevitzky* to the movement “Lamentation” to not only save time, but to also catch the emotional attention of Maestro Koussevitzky.⁸ It is interesting to consider whether the repurposing of his piano music was solely done out of time constraints, for social favoritism, or a perfect combination of both.



A timeline of repurposed and related works:
Symphony No. 1

In comparing these manuscripts and all other examples of Bernstein’s repurposing of early piano music into later orchestral manifestations, a clear compositional trend appears. Articulation and phrasing are modified during the repurposing but the musical structure and original content are maintained from the piano score. This trend gives a fresh insight into Bernstein’s compositional process and personal perspective of his piano repertoire.

A short two-page solo piano piece can tell performers and scholars many different stories about this iconic composer. Alone, *In Memoriam: Nathalie Koussevitzky* demonstrates beautiful lyricism for the piano and shows a personal connection to the Koussevitzky family. Historically, it illuminates the young maestro’s life events of the time and leads to the discovery of lost collections, such as *Partita for Piano*. Compositionally, it is one of Bernstein’s earliest examples of musical recycling and helps to create the foundation for one of his most significant compositional trends, as well as highlight some facets of his orchestration techniques (when compared to the later repurposing). Musically, it also changes current performance practice for pianists. As I recorded this work for my album, it was invaluable to understand that the piece was conceived as a sarabande, which

influenced phrasing, pacing, and rhythmic stress. Bernstein’s piano music is a fresh new portal into understanding the maestro as a composer and a social icon.

Notes

1. A representation of this is the work of Sigrid Luther, “The Anniversaries for Solo Piano by Leonard Bernstein,” (DMA diss., Louisiana State University, 1986). Not only is the death date of Nathalie misrepresented, but the order of compositional manifestations is merely hypothesized.
2. Leonard Bernstein, Program Note to Symphony No. 1, “Jeremiah” (1942), (Milwaukee: Boosey & Hawkes, 1992).
3. The completion date on the manuscript reads August 25, 1939.
4. Leonard Bernstein to Aaron Copland, 29 August 1939, in *The Leonard Bernstein Letters*, ed. Nigel Simeone (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 35.
5. Leann Osterkamp, “Leonard Bernstein’s Piano Music: A Comparative Study of Selected Works (DMA diss., The Graduate Center CUNY, 2018), 28.
6. Though it is clear that the January 14 manuscript is the initial manifestation of this specific piano work, it is uncertain whether *Partita for Piano* or *Six Piano Pieces* came first. The edits on *Six Piano Pieces* may indicate that it is the earlier of the collections.
7. Leonard Bernstein Office, “Symphony No. 1: *Jeremiah* (1942),” accessed 7 June 2017, <https://leonardbernstein.com/works/view/4/symphony-no-1-jeremiah>.
8. Osterkamp, “Leonard Bernstein’s Piano Music,” 30.