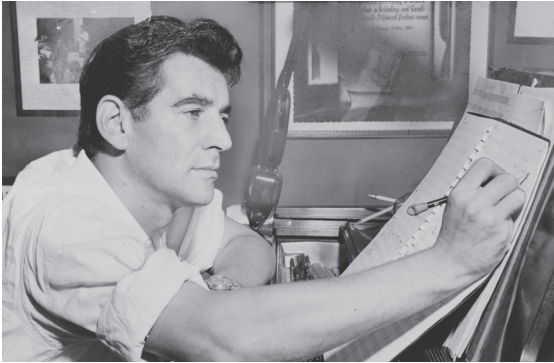


Program Notes



Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990)

Born 100 years ago, **Leonard Bernstein** was a global force for music and for good.

As a composer, performer, and human being, he transcended boundaries. He loved music of all types, high and low. He led the Israeli Philharmonic in performances in Israel during the most dangerous of times, and was music director of the New York Philharmonic during its most prosperous era. He performed for the Pope at the Vatican, and also for children on CBS as part of his renowned educational concerts. He was also a humanitarian and global citizen, delivering countless addresses on philosophical and political topics, always urging peace and understanding.

His artistry was of the highest order, such that orchestras such as the Vienna Philharmonic and the London Symphony granted him honorary membership. And as a pianist and a composer, he shaped the definition of American music in the second half of the 20th century—both in the concert hall and on Broadway. In this musical tribute, we focus on the latter.

As you take in this performance, I encourage you to reflect on one overarching idea. In today's world, we are encouraged towards specialization. Conductors conduct; composers compose; violinists, well,

Program Notes CONTINUED



play violin. Reflect, therefore, on this man who was prolific in every area of music-making, and who used that excellence to create concert experiences accessible to so many different audiences. He cared little for defining a line between the music of Broadway and the music he performed with the world's great orchestras. Isn't it incredible that a man who composed symphonies and masses is being remembered today with some of his most famous works—drawn from the orchestra pit? It is, I believe, a testament to a musician who treasured the past and was also able to envision a healthy future for classical music. A future that united the popular and the profound in a way that affected people deeply and allowed a new generation to fall in love with the orchestra.

On the Town (1944) **Three Dance Episodes**

The plot of *On the Town* follows three sailors on leave from the Navy as they enter the big city (Bernstein's beloved New York) for the first time. Their mission is a rather unsavory one, as they each search for a female companion to better enjoy their time ashore. The plot mainly serves as a vehicle for the tremendous music that accompanies these midshipmen's amorous undertakings.

The show was conceived after a ballet with score by Bernstein, *Fancy Free*, met with great success in 1944. During this dark time, Americans were looking for entertainments of this type as an escape. Thus, Bernstein was enthusiastic when pitched the idea of turning the show into a musical, but he wished to preserve the role of dance in the show's ethos. Writes the composer: "It seems only natural that dance should play a leading role in the show *On the Town*, since the idea of writing it arose from the success of the ballet... *On the Town* is concerned with three sailors on 24-hour leave in New York, and their adventures with the monstrous city which its inhabitants take so for granted."

The "Three Dance Episodes" we hear today are essentially a suite of the best-loved music from the show. The first number is "Dance of the Great Lover," and depicts one of the sailor's dreams (after he falls asleep on the subway) of sweeping a young partner off her feet. The second, "Pas de Deux," depicts a balletic duet in Central Park, where another of our protagonists seduces his mate. The tune is that of "Lonely Town," one of Bernstein's best-known

melodies. The finale of the suite will have you singing along to a set of variations based on "New York, New York... (*you know how it goes*)... it's a hell of a town!" As a native New Yorker, I agree.

West Side Story (1957)
Suite for Violin and Orchestra
Arr. William David Brohn (2000)

You may be familiar with *West Side Story* in its form as a musical, as a movie, or even in its traditional orchestral embodiment, the "Symphonic Dances." However, today, we have a special treat as we welcome back Daniel Rowland to serenade us with familiar tunes in an unfamiliar format.

This piece for virtuosic solo violin and orchestra was completed after the death of Bernstein by composer William David Brohn. Very few arrangements of Bernstein's music have been authorized, but the Bernstein estate approved this work. In the liner notes of the first recording of the piece (by Joshua Bell), Bernstein's daughter Jamie Bernstein voices her support for the piece but cautions that reactions may be mixed.

The work begins with a short duet for saxophone and flute that creates a shimmering, mystical platform upon which the rest of the work largely rests. As the piece progresses, you'll hear lots of your favorite tunes, beginning with a short reference to "Mambo." This version doesn't include the orchestra's vocal rendition of that particular lyric, so I encourage you *not* to sing along!

Other familiar tunes then begin to emerge after the entrance of the solo violin, including "I Feel Pretty," which is not included in the Symphonic Dances, "Tonight," and "America." "Maria" makes its obligatory appearance before a violin cadenza. Finally, we hear "Somewhere," before transitioning into a reprise that leads us raucously to the end of the work.

The piece offers us a beautiful tour through some of our favorite moments from this iconic work. The piece is also wildly difficult for the soloist, and it will be a wonderful treat to hear Daniel navigate through this *tour de force*.

Candide (1956)
Overture to *Candide* and "Glitter and Be Gay"
***Candide* Suite, arr. Charlie Harmon (1998)**

The final three works this evening are based on Bernstein's setting of Voltaire's *Candide*. The novella is a coming-of-age story, following a young

Program Notes CONTINUED



man introduced to the hardships of the world. Bernstein's setting is most often classified as an operetta, much in the vein of Gilbert and Sullivan. Like its composer, the work straddles boundaries, and is performed on both the Broadway stage and in the opera hall.

The overture's classical-style compositional format is part of what lends a maturity to the work overall. Composed in sonata form, the piece has become part of the standard repertoire. It begins with a motto that comes to signify battle music in the body of the work, sounding a minor seventh upward leap, followed by a major second. This tonal framework predicts B-flat Major, but the composer delightfully shifts to E-flat Major, and the game is upon us—revealing a comedy. The coda of the overture is based on the themes from "Glitter and Be Gay," so keep a close ear on the final section of the piece, because soon we will hear the same tune from our soprano!

We are thrilled to be joined by soprano Meghan Picerno who performs the most recognizable number from the show. At this point in the story, our protagonist, Candide, believes his betrothed, Cunegonde, was killed in a recent battle. Cunegonde survives and finds herself in Paris, guest to a sultan. She discovers a trove of jewels in the house and dons as many as she safely can, singing "Glitter and be Gay." At this point, Candide enters and the two young lovers are reunited. Candide then duels with the sultan, and makes an escape with his beloved.

Our program ends with the opera's suite, arranged by composer Charlie Harmon, one of Bernstein's assistants and editors. The full score is one of Bernstein's most loved and shows him at his greatest compositional prowess, inhabiting the styles of the Americas, such as tango and jazz, and combining them with Europeanisms such as the gavotte, waltz, and mazurka. Quotations within are as wide-ranging as Gilbert and Sullivan, Rossini, and Gounod. Almost all of the show's numbers are found within the suite; ending with the poignant "Make Our Garden Grow."

~ By John Devlin

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