Bernstein’s First Love

By Jeanne Golan

Every family has its inherent stories. When I was twelve years old and first learning Beethoven’s Pathétique Sonata, my father began telling me one of his favorite stories from his school days at the esteemed Boston Latin School. Dad took great pride in relating how a fellow classmate performed a different Beethoven sonata by memory every Friday afternoon for the entire student body at the school assembly. The strong impression this made on my father was a combination of inspiration at seeing such an accomplishment by another scrappy first-generation Jew from Dorchester, and his first exposure to this noble opus performed so vividly. (The strength of this early impression may have led him to marry a pianist, insuring a lifetime of music in my parents’ home.) The pianist was Leonard Bernstein, and today, having spent the last several weeks immersed in listening to and viewing Bernstein at the keyboard, I am grateful for the perspective that Dad’s recollection provides.

The one word that seems to encompass Bernstein’s performances is “classical.” A classical aesthetic epitomizes proportion and clarity. For Bernstein as interpreter, this ideal would guide him in his understanding of musical scores and of the composer’s intent. For Bernstein as pianist/athlete, this ideal would lead him to develop a facility whereby a relaxed, balanced torso and supple arms support the passagework of strong but dexterous fingers. While Bernstein was a natural in both of these realms, every aspect of his training espoused classicism as an ideal. Boston Latin School and Harvard University in the 1930s were models of classical academia. His three main piano teachers all subscribed to classical principles of playing that convert the body into a graceful mechanism through which the music could be imparted to the keyboard. They were Helen Coates, the assistant of Boston’s renowned pianist, Heinrich Gebhart; Gebhart himself, and finally Isabella Vengerova at the Curtis Institute.

With Bernstein’s capacity to meld form and function, the result is pure expression. In the Shostakovich Concerto #2, the strings of flying octaves are stunningly executed, yet when placed into Bernstein’s conception of this work as one that will not give in to sentimentality, the overall effect is breathtaking. In his performance of the Ravel Concerto in G, every physical gesture serves musical intent, ranging from the dazzling passagework of the outer (continued on page 5)
Indiana University

A Thoroughly Bernstein Celebration

The Indiana University School of Music in Bloomington, IN completed their two-week celebration of Leonard Bernstein on April 24. Bernstein had a special relationship with the IU School of Music. He was the first Indiana University Fellow, and spent time there working on his opera A QUIET PLACE. He also established the Leonard Bernstein Music Scholarship. When the School of Music performed MASS at Tanglewood’s 70th birthday celebration, Bernstein said, “This is one of the best performances of anything I have seen.” To honor Bernstein in what would have been his 80th birthday year, the IU School of Music and Musical Theater Department performed as much music by Bernstein as their resources could allow, and held panel discussions about the various facets of his life and career.

Only a school of music with 1,700 students, a spectacular opera house and many concert halls could have met this challenge. Performances of Bernstein’s SYMPHONY NO. 1: JEREMIAH, CANDIDE OVERTURE and SYMPHONY NO. 2: THE AGE OF ANXIETY opened the festival with the Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by David Effron. Also on this program was the world premiere of Drip by David Mallamud, winner of the Leonard Bernstein Young Composers Competition. Dean Emeritus Charles Webb and Michael Barrett provided four-hand piano accompaniment to student singers in ARIAS AND BARCOROLLES and SONGFEST. The Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Michael Morgan, then presented a program of TROUBLE IN TAHITI and SERENADE, with faculty member Yuval Yaron as the solo violinist. In the next concert event, faculty member Jeffrey Magee narrated “Bernstein on Broadway.” Once again Charles Webb was at the keyboard accompanying students and faculty members, while Magee provided information on the songs, many of which were written for various shows but never used. We learned how they were recycled into other compositions. Jamie Bernstein Thomas, with Michael Barrett conducting the chamber orchestra and the University Singers, presented a lecture concert called “Leonard Bernstein: Politically Incorrect?” This concert featured the world premiere of five songs from a never-completed musical based on a play of Bertolt Brecht. Other concerts included chamber music (the PIANO TRIO and the SONATA FOR CLARINET AND PIANO) and recitals of all of the piano works.

And you think that was a lot? The school also hosted many interesting and provocative panels. Roger Englander, Carlos Moseley and Jack Gottlieb, who all worked on the YOUNG PEOPLE’S CONCERTS with Bernstein, were joined by Polly Kahn from the New York Philharmonic to discuss the impact of those ground-breaking television shows, and the challenge they still present to music educators today. Conductors Michael Morgan and Michael Barrett joined Craig Urquhart in a panel hosted by Dean David Woods to discuss Bernstein as teacher. Each shared how Bernstein affected their lives. Harry Kranz, Bernstein’s manager for many years, spoke with Dean Charles Webb about managing Bernstein. Kraut emphasized four “F”s in Bernstein’s life: Focus, Family/Friends, Fun and Games, and Finances. There followed a lecture-concert by Carol Lawrence, “A Love Letter To Lenny,” in which she shared her perspective of rehearsing with Bernstein. Bernstein’s biographer, Humphrey Burton, presented a lecture, “In Search of Leonard Bernstein,” which served as a prelude to the following day’s panel, “Producing a Bernstein Biography,” with Burton.
Pacific Music Festival

Celebrating the Pacific Music Festival

By Kazuyuki Tsuchihashi

The Pacific Music Festival (PMF) was founded in 1990 by Leonard Bernstein to enhance international cultural exchange and to promote the musical education of young people and the public, particularly in the Pacific region. After the original plans by Bernstein, Tilson Thomas, and the London Symphony Orchestra to give concerts and orchestral classes in Beijing were canceled because of the events in Tiananmen Square, the late Mayor Itagaki of Sapporo committed his city to establish the Pacific Music Festival. With the generous ongoing support of Nomura Securities and hundreds of other Japanese companies and citizens, it would please Leonard Bernstein to know that his dream of “another Tanglewood” is thriving as it enters its tenth season.

In the past years, over 1,000 young musicians from over forty countries have traveled to Sapporo to participate in the festival. Under the leadership of artistic directors Michael Tilson Thomas (who shared this responsibility with Bernstein in 1990) and Christoph Eschenbach (who shared the responsibility with Michael Tilson Thomas from 1991 to 1998), the Pacific Music Festival Orchestra has reached the highest standards. Over the years the faculty, whose chairman is Peter Schmidl, a member of the Vienna Philharmonic, has included members of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia Orchestra, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Empire Brass Quintet, the Houston Symphony, London Symphony Orchestra, and the Vienna Philharmonic.

The PMF Orchestra has toured throughout Japan under the direction of not only Tilson Thomas and Eschenbach but also conductors Eiji Oue, Yutaka Sado, and Wen-Pin Chien. At the PMF Orchestra home base — Art Park in Sapporo — they have been led by conductors Myung-Whun Chung, Neeme Järvi, John Fiore, Carl St. Clair, Marin Alsop, Lief Bjaland, Michael Barrett and Tetsuro Ban.

In addition to the orchestral activities there is a vocal program, founded by Paul Sperry. Emphasizing lieder and art songs initially under Paul Sperry’s direction, the vocal program has also included a summer of opera and now emphasizes baroque music. Christa Ludwig, Arlene Auger, June Anderson, Marilyn Horne, Hildegard Behrens, Larissa Gergieva, Martin Isepp, Simon Schouten and Paul Sperry have all taught in this program.

The pianist Irma Vallecillo has been the leader of the piano program since 1991. Each year, young pianists participate by performing chamber works, lieder recitals and instrumental demonstration concerts which feature the orchestral faculty in solo recitals. All faculty members coach these chamber ensembles in addition to their work with the orchestra sections.

Many of the students volunteer their time to present chamber recitals in the local schools. This program was begun by Eiji Oue and is now continued by Yutaka Sado. The children in the schools enjoy it, as is evident in the documentary made about the PMF by Alternate Currents in 1997.

Another interesting aspect for the students over the years has been the opportunity to work with living composers by performing their compositions. The composer-in-residence program dates from 1992. The composers have been: David Del Tredici, Lou Harrison, Toru Takemitsu, Tobias Picker, Yuji Takahashi and Christopher Rouse. This year’s composer will be Tan Dun.

There have been many highlights throughout the history of the festival, but one of the most emotional was the concert remembering the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. This concert took place in Hiroshima and premiered Michael Tilson Thomas’ composition Showa/Shoah that evokes the memories of all victims in World War II.

The president of the PMF Foundation, Harry Kraut said, “Leonard Bernstein would be very pleased to know that the PMF continues to prosper so many years after he founded it, that his Japanese friends have kept their promises to continue its support, and that Michael Tilson Thomas continues to pass Koussevitzky’s devotion to the ‘central line’ of music to more generations.”

Kazuyuki Tsuchihashi is an artistic administrator for the Pacific Music Festival.
The Kaddish Symphony
Yutaka Sado in conversation with Laurent Campellone

By Laurent Campellone

This article is an abbreviated version of one that first appeared in the French magazine Repertoire. Yutaka Sado conducts the Orchestre Philharmonique and Choéur et Maitrise de Radio France in a recent release of SYMPHONY NO. 3: KADDISH, with Karita Mattila, Soprano, Yutaka Sada conducts the Orchestre Philharmonique and Maitrise de Radio France in a recent release of SYMPHONY NO. 3: KADDISH, with Karita Mattila, Soprano, Opra, and Lord Yehudi Menuhin, speaker. This is an Erato recording.

I was fortunate to work as an assistant conductor to Leonard Bernstein in the last years of his life. Because of this, I was able to study Bernstein’s compositions with him, and this knowledge gave me a broad perspective. I believe the KADDISH SYMPHONY to be the most personal of Bernstein’s compositions. In the score we find all facets of his personality, his contradictions, his joy and his spirituality.

The orchestration of KADDISH is a pinnacle of colorations. Although there is a very large orchestra, each instrument has individual importance with something to say. Each note must be heard. There are sections with sparse instrumentation that nevertheless sound full. To manifest this is a hard task for a conductor.

The reason this symphony is not often performed is that in addition to the orchestra, it requires a speaker of wide virtuosity; a soprano who is able to sing delicately but with great bravura; a “boys choir” and an adult choir. The music is sometimes so difficult that even the finest players must stretch their technique, and this requires a great deal of rehearsal time. At times I, too, had to choose which of two or three simultaneous harmonies to emphasize. Complex, yes, but not for the sake of complexity. Bernstein uses many different compositional techniques ranging from the twelve-tone language to jazz to Jewish motifs and everything else in between, but the underlying harmonic structure is clear. For example, when Bernstein uses dodecaphony it is to express chaos, fear and uncontrollable violence. This clash of systems and cultures is a reflection of Bernstein’s personality.

When I was a student, I was fascinated by his wide-ranging personality. One day, he could be a very rigorous teacher; the next, he was a guru who had absolute power over our souls. Sometimes he was our chum, but then he could become inaccessible. We find all of this in KADDISH, more a self-portrait than a sound landscape. The symphony is not an oratorio nor a religious or philosophical tract, but an individual’s reflections on the solitude of humankind before God.

Some of my feelings for the score must come from certain links between the Japanese and Jewish religious experience. Both Judaism and Buddhism are characterized by constant give and take between heaven and earth, questioning and doubting. The tension and ambivalence built into twelve-tone music, organically emerging into the resolution and grounding of tonality, is the essence of KADDISH, and reflects the search for truth in our own lives.

Laurent Campellone is a conductor who writes for Repertoire Magazine and lives in Paris.

Bernstein’s Celebration, continued

(continued from page 2)

Susan Lacy (whose recent film “Reaching for the Note” has been seen on Public Television) and Peter Rosen (producer of the film “Reflections”). The panelists all spoke of the lack of scholarship by some other biographers, which was also the consensus during the question and answer period. Other panels included “Views of Bernstein from the Critical Community,” which brought together the distinguished journalists John Rockwell (New York Times), John Ardoin (Dallas Morning News), Franz Endler (Kurier, Vienna) and Norman Pelligrini (Radio Commentator), Martina Arroyo, Eli Eban, James King, Kim Walker and Ranier Deintinis joined moderator Peter Jacobi to discuss “Singing and Playing for Bernstein.” Jeffrey Magee spoke with Broadway legends Betta Comden and Adolph Green, who spoke with charismatic warmth and humor about Bernstein and their careers.

And there was more! The Music Theater Department of Indiana University presented a fully staged production of ON THE TOWN, with Betty Comden and Adolph Green in attendance. Comden and Green were also the recipients of Honorary Doctorates. Then IU returned to the event that touched Bernstein at his 70th birthday: a fully staged production of MASS. This monumental event topped off two weeks of exciting, interesting and emotionally moving events. That so many students, teachers and members of the professional musical community came together to perform and learn from Bernstein is a testament to his continuing impact on our world.
First Love, continued

(continued from page 1)

movements to the mesmerizing blues of the Adagio. In essence, Bernstein comes to embody the piece, putting himself aside as his keyboard choreography becomes the vessel through which the work breathes and evolves. In the orchestral tuttis, Bernstein's conducting is simply an expansion of his pianism. As he welcomes and guides the orchestra from the piano orchestrally. For the Mahler, he is not afraid to create harshness or distortion to capture the cruelty and despair often visited in Des Knaben Wunderhorn. The architectural quality of the Copland Piano Sonata with its big block chords is startling. In striking the opening chords, Bernstein pushes the piano toward its clangorous extreme. Yet even then, he voices these chords so that they don't simply exist as momentary events, but create consequence for this massive and complex work.

The piano served Bernstein well as he built lasting and important relationships in every arena of his life. Helen Coates became his protective and nurturing personal secretary. Aaron Copland discovered a kindred spirit when the unknown Leonard, on a dare from Copland, played the older composer's Piano Variations at a party. His crackerjack sight-reading made for rollicking four-hand sessions with his wife Felicia, music-making is infectious. As Bernstein noted in his piano composition Touches, the piano was his way of making "gestures of love, especially between composer and performer, and performer and listener."
New Recordings of Bernstein Compositions

These past few months have seen the release of several new recordings of music by Leonard Bernstein. Sony Classical has released a new recording of SERENADE, featuring violinist Hilary Hahn with The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra conducted by David Zinman. This recording has the critics raving. Virgin Records bring us an all-Bernstein disc that includes PRELUDE, FUGUE & RIFFS, FACSIMILE, SYMPHONIC DANCES FROM WEST SIDE STORY and DIVERTIMENTO with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paavo Jarvi. Pianist Alexander Frey tackles the complete works for solo piano on his Koch Recording: the PIANO SONATA, SEVEN ANNUVERSARIES, FIVE ANNUVERSARIES, TOUCHES and THIRTEEN ANNUVERSARIES. Guitarist Lucian Plessner has transcribed a collection of Bernstein compositions for solo guitar on his CPO recording: the DANCE SUITE, some ANNUVERSARIES, and parts of MASS, CANDIDE and WEST SIDE STORY. Michael Tilson Thomas has a new BMG recording with the New World Symphony of PRELUDE, FUGUE AND RIFFS as well as works by Gershwin, Milhaud, Stravinsky and others.

CANDIDE Travels to London

On April 13, the Royal National Theater premiered a new version of Bernstein’s CANDIDE, with the book adapted from Voltaire by Hugh Wheeler, in a new version by John Caird, and directed by John Caird and Trevor Nunn. The musical opened at the Olivier Theater, to enormous critical success. This version includes revised lyrics by Richard Wilbur and Stephen Sondheim, in addition to their previous efforts and the existing lyrics by John Latouche, Lillian Hellman, Dorothy Parker and Leonard Bernstein. John Napier designed this production with musical direction by Mark W. Dorrell, choreography by Peter Darling, fight direction by Malcolm Ranson and sound design by Paul Griffiths. Daniel Evans plays Candide, and making her National Theatre debut is Alex Kelly as Cunegonde. Denis Quilley plays Martin, Beverly Klein is the Old Lady, Simon Day is Maximillian and Simon Russell Beale is Pangloss.

Here is what the critics are saying:

“This is a tremendous production, bursting with energy, intelligence, imagination and the sheer infectious pleasure of creative spirit.”

John Peter, Sunday Times

“Everything conspires to bring out both wit and drama in CANDIDE.”

John Gross, Sunday Telegraph

“This may not be the best of all possible worlds, but during the National’s new production of CANDIDE, you often believe you are watching the best of all possible musicals.”

Charles Spencer, The Daily Telegraph

“You laugh, you weep, you cry. The music is fantastic — graceful, just perfect.”

Michael Covenev, Daily Mail

For further information please contact the National Theatre in London at 171-452-3333 or www.nt-online.org

Note to Readers

prelude, fugue & riffs will be sent upon request. Please send all correspondence to:
Craig Urquhart
prelude, fugue & riffs
23 Central Park West, Suite 1Y
New York, NY 10023 Fax: (212) 315-0643
e-mail: craigamb@aol.com

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We appreciate notice of any performances or events featuring the music of Leonard Bernstein or honoring his creative life and shall do our best to include such information in forthcoming Calendars.

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Executive VP: Harry J. Kraut
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May

12, 15 Hamburg, Germany: BERNSTEIN DANCES; The Hamburg Ballet; John Neumier, choreographer; Rainer Mulbach, conductor; Opera House.

20 Eugene, OR: ON THE WATERFRONT; Eugene Symphony; Mieudel Hartgh-Bedoya, conductor; Hult Center.

23, 25 Milan, Italy: SYMPHONIC DANCES FROM WEST SIDE STORY; Three Dance Episodes from On the Town; Orchestra Sinfonica G. Verdi; Yutaka Sado, conductor; Teatro Lirico.

27, 29 Rochester, NY: THREE DANCE EPISODES FROM ON THE TOWN; Facsimile, Serenade, Divertimento; Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra; Peter Bay, conductor; Eastman Theatre.

30, 31 Mill Valley, CA: WEST SIDE STORY; Mountain Play Association; James Dunn, director; Paul Smith musical director; Mount Tamalpais Theater.

June

4, 6 Chicago, IL: “There is a Garden: The Musical Genius of Leonard Bernstein;” Created and Directed by Angelica Réaux for the Chicago Opera Theater; Larry Rapchak, conductor; Athenaeum Theater.

9, 11 New York, NY: FANCY FREE; The New York City Ballet; Jerome Robbins, choreographer; State Theater.

18, 19 Munich, Germany: WEST SIDE STORY; David Sahl, conductor; Prinzregententheater Staats theater am Gärtnerplatz.

22 Vienna, Austria: SYMPHONY NO. 3: “KAD DISH” (new German translation by Elly Weiser); Tschechische Staatsphilharmonie Brünn, Gunter Theuring, conductor; August Zirner, speaker; Musikverein.

July

2 Jackson Hole, WY: ORCHESTRAL SUITE FROM CANDIDE, Grand Teton Music Festival Orchestra; Eiji Oue, conductor; Walk Festival Hall.

3 Colmar, France: MISSA BREVIS; Choral Academy of Moscow; Victor Popov, conductor; Chappelle St. Pierre.

July, continued

3 Amsterdam, The Netherlands: SYMPHONIC DANCES FROM WEST SIDE STORY; San Francisco Youth Symphony; Alasdair Neale, conductor; The Concertgebouw.

4 Hamburg, Germany: BERNSTEIN DANCES; The Hamburg Ballet; John Neumier, choreographer; Rainer Mulbach, conductor; Opera House.

5 Colmar, France: CHICHESTER PSALMS; Moscow Virtuosi, Choral Academy of Moscow; Vladimir Spivokov, conductor; Dome Church in Guebwil ler.

6 Colmar, France: Various PIANO ANNIVERSARIES; Sebastian Knaur, piano; Kohfis.

7, 8 Sapporo, Japan: SYMPHONY NO. 2: THE AGE OF ANXIETY; Pacific Music Festival International Orchestra; Eiji Oue, conductor; Sapporo Symphony Orchestra; Jean-Yves Thibaudet, pianist; Sapporo Concert Hall, Kitara Hall.

July, continued

8 Colmar, FRANCE: CLARINET SONATA; Paul Meyer, clarinet; Eric Le Sage, piano; Chappelle St. Pierre.

9, 10 Colmar, France: THREE DANCE EPISODES FROM ON THE TOWN; National Orche stre de Lille; Jean-Claude Casadesus, conductor; Church of St. Matthieu.

10 Sapporo, Japan: SYMPHONY NO. 2: THE AGE OF ANXIETY; Pacific Music Festival International Orchestra; Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor; Jean-Yves Thibaudet, pianist; Sapporo Concert Hall, Kitara Hall.

11 Lenox, MA: SYMPHONIC DANCES FROM WEST SIDE STORY; Boston Symphony Orchestra; John Williams, conductor; The Shed.

12 Osaka, Japan: SYMPHONY NO. 2: THE AGE OF ANXIETY; Pacific Music Festival International Orchestra; Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor; Jean-Yves Thibaudet, pianist; Osaka Symphony Hall.

13 Colmar, France: SYMPHONIC DANCES FROM WEST SIDE STORY; Philharmonisches Orchester Novosibirsk; Arnold Katz, conductor; Church of St. Matthieu.

14 Sapporo, Japan: THE BERNSTEIN BEAT; Sapporo Symphony Orchestra; Sei kyo Kim, conductor; Kunihiro Hashimoto, narrator; Sapporo Concert Hall, Kitara.

August

1 Lenox, MA: The Leonard Bernstein Memorial Concert; Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra; Seiji Ozawa, conductor; The Shed.

3 Hiroshima, Japan: DIVERTIMENTO; Pacific Music Festival International Orchestra; Yutaka Sado, conductor; Phoenix Hall.

6, 7 Santa Cruz, CA: MASS; Cabrillo Music Festival Orchestra and Chorus; Marin Alsop, conductor; Douglas Webster, Celebrant; Civic Center.

10 London, UK: WONDERFUL TOWN; Birmingham Contemporary Music Group; Sir Simon Rattle, conductor; Audra McDonald, Kim Criswell, Thomas Hampson; Royal Albert Hall.
Looking Ahead

Colmar International Festival

From July 3 to July 14, the town of Colmar, in the Alsace region of France, will celebrate the music of Leonard Bernstein. The 11th Colmar International Festival will honor the composer in nine different events. Artistic Director Vladimir Spivakov will conduct the Moskauer Virtuosen and the Choir Academy of Moscow in CHICHESTER PSALMS and MISSA BREVIS. The Philharmonic Orchestra of Novosibirsk will perform the SYMPHONIC DANCES FROM WEST SIDE STORY, with Arnold Katz conducting. George Cleve will lead The National Orchestra de Lille in THREE DANCES FROM ON THE TOWN. Sebastian Knauer will perform a solo piano recital featuring many of the ANNIVERSARIES in addition to chamber music programs. For further information in France, call 3-89-20-68-97.

The Bernstein Century

Sony Classical will release more compact discs of THE BERNSTEIN CENTURY series in July. Of special interest is a first-time CD release which includes a recording of Dvorak's Piano Concerto in G Minor with pianist Justus Frantz and the New York Philharmonic. Also, scheduled are the Brahms Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3, the Symphony No. 3 of Mahler, as well as Mahler's Three Rückert Songs and Kindertotenlieder with Martha Lipton, soprano, as soloist. Other New York Philharmonic performances include Piano Concerto No. 1 by Tchaikovsky with Phillipe Entremont, and includes music by Bizet and Offenbach.