

# PRELUDE, FUGUE RIFFS

News for Friends of  
Leonard Bernstein  
Fall/Winter 2021/2022

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## MASS at 50 *Special Edition*



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# The Path to MASS

## Recollections from the First Celebrant

by Alan Titus

### THE BEGINNING

I received a call in August of 1971 that auditions were being held in New York for the opening of the new Kennedy Center, with a new work being composed by Leonard Bernstein. Was I interested in auditioning? Yes!

Auditions were held in the now-defunct Steinway Hall on 57th St. When I walked into the room where the audition was being held, LB was there along with conductor Maurice Peress. I knew Maurice, having worked with him the previous year in a production of *La Boheme* in Washington D.C. (Fate was already in action.)

I went to the tryout dressed in a jeans suit and carrying my guitar. I began with the opening bars of Harry Belafonte's rendition of "Water Boy." I realized, later, that I had presented myself exactly how LB envisioned the opening of *MASS*: a young man with a guitar. It was that first impression, I thought later, which probably clinched for me the role of the Celebrant. After a gut-wrenching week of anticipation, I was informed that I had been selected for the role of the Celebrant, and to report for rehearsals in New York.



FLETCHER DRAKE. COURTESY OF THE KENNEDY CENTER ARCHIVES

**MASS, 1971 with Alan Titus as Celebrant..**

### FIRST REHEARSALS

I'll never forget my first encounter with LB. Rehearsals began in an immense ballroom which bordered the famous Ansonia hotel on 71st Street. As we approached each other from opposite ends of the room, I burst into Wreck's refrain from *Wonderful Town*, which I had performed in high school: "Cause I could paaaass that football..." He smiled, shook my hand, and said "Let's get to work." Any nervousness on my part was dissipated by his friendliness and warmth.

We were the only ones in the room, with two chairs and a piano. I

stood waiting for him to play something on the piano, but instead he pulled up one of the chairs and straddled it. As I remained standing, he began guiding me as to how he wanted me to sing "Simple Song."

In his gruff voice, but with perfect intonation, he demonstrated the colors of the piece: the pianos, the fortes, the portamentos, the entire shape of this swingy, jazzy composition. I became totally immersed in its beauty and immediacy—as have many others after me who heard this captivating piece of music. What a blessing to have the honor to be the voice of LB.

To Our  
Readers

*The world is catching up to MASS at last.  
It's taken fifty years: but now we see  
How Bernstein's work connects us with our past,  
Shows how our souls still dream of roaming free.  
The music mirrors deepest human thoughts:  
How to be real; how to feel love, and faith;  
And listen to oneself—connect the dots.  
Some say it's Leonard Bernstein's Mahler Eighth:  
The mystery, the sheer enormous scope  
Of what he struggled to communicate—  
So mighty that one day even a Pope  
Brought MASS inside the Vatican's own gate.  
The work continues, big and brave and strong,  
To help us hear our inner Simple Song.*

On the cover:  
*MASS*, Rivinia Festival, 2019.

J.B. ■

As rehearsals progressed, the cast feverishly worked to prepare for the premiere. We had only about six weeks—a very short period of time to launch such a complicated and yet delicate creation.

LB was still working on the Celebrant's big mad scene, "Things Get Broken;" there were a mere three weeks to go, and the number was still not finished. One day LB burst into our rehearsal, pulled me aside and told me he had completed it. He invited me to come to his Park Avenue residence that night to play it through.

It was early evening as he escorted me into his studio, with its books and scores. He sat at the piano next to the wall and began screaming hoarsely: "PACEM, pacem pacem, PAAAA—CEM!!"

I stood riveted. He stopped to explain the twelve-tone row he'd used from Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* at the beginning of the number, then continued to play through the first half, as I stood there entranced, comprehending the immense power and challenge which lay before the both of us. He stopped again, halfway through, and played a certain chord over and over again—as if he had found the proverbial "lost chord." "Doesn't that sound like something out of *Parisifal*?" he yelled, then resumed where he'd left off, continuing to go "mad" in front of me. After he finished, we both looked at each other, stunned. "Jesus," I said, open-mouthed. What more could I say.

No further words were said. Quietly he ushered me out of his apartment. I took the subway to my home in Brooklyn, my head completely blank. "How am I going to do this?" I asked myself. But just as with "Simple Song," he'd guided me note by note. I didn't have to interpret anything. Whew!

(Later on, when LB and I collaborated in making the recording, we were in total sync. "Things Get Broken," this 14-minute mad scene, was completed in one take. Someone said afterwards: "A miracle.")



FLETCHER PRANCE COURTESY OF THE KENNEDY CENTER ARCHIVES

#### WASHINGTON, D.C.

The cast traveled to Washington in a big bus. The atmosphere was very tense. No one uttered a word on the entire journey; we were in the final stretch. We were housed at the Howard Johnson Motor Inn, about a five-minute walk to the JFK center. As I walked to the venue, passing the now famous Watergate Hotel, I thought to myself: "How can I reduce this nervousness?" I decided I had to separate the task from the hype. "Concentrate on the job you've got to do; you're the performer, not the audience," I said to myself. This idea seemed to work, as I calmed down a bit.

We all gathered in one of the big rehearsal rooms in the basement of the brand-new building. The cast sat down, waiting for the Maestro. He entered, spoke privately to the directorial team, and then turned to us as we waited with bated breath. He thanked us for our work, and then explained his concept of *MASS* to us.

The first words he said were: "This work has no leading role." WHAT? my brain screamed; what the heck if the Celebrant is not the leading role? I had to push back on this. After the rehearsal, I immediately

called my agent and PR rep, Peter Gravina, and explained the situation. I didn't argue about this matter directly with LB. I thought: This is what agents are supposed to do. After all, why bring any negative vibes to this project? After a week of silence, LB and the team must have agreed with my point of view; they acquiesced. Since the programs and posters advertising *MASS* had all been printed, an insert was printed for the program, and a long strip of paper was pasted across the big poster in front of the theatre, highlighting the role and my name. Ya gotta stand up for yourself sometimes.

#### OPENING NIGHT

The excitement, the dignitaries, the press, the photographers were everywhere. I got to the theatre about an hour before curtain. I felt remarkably calm, remembering that old Ethel Merman quote when a cast member asked her before the opening of *Gypsy*: "Are you nervous?" "Why?" replied Ethel; "I know my lines." I guess we also felt reassured by the imprimatur of the greatest musical minds on the planet.

My PR agent came to my dressing  
(continued on page 6)

**MASS production,  
1971.**

## Reconnecting Through Color



primary colors (red, yellow, blue) to mix the entire color spectrum. The process entailed first creating secondary colors (violet, orange, green) and then mixing again to make the tertiary colors (brown, olive, slate). Everyone first put on white vinyl gloves and then added specific amounts of the primary colors onto the palms of their gloved hands. Each person had to interact, glove to glove, with a nearby designated partner to create a secondary color, collectively producing the entire color spectrum, which was then hand-stamped onto paper.

The challenge increased when everyone was instructed to find a different “primary color” partner to make the tertiary colors. Partners had to work together to determine which color was needed, and in what quantities, to develop their tertiary color blend. Many teachers and principals had not seen or met each other throughout the pandemic. Our approach provided an engaging way to enhance introductions, create movement around the room, and use critical thinking and problem-solving skills by working together. Plus—ingeniously—glove contact is safe!

Another strategy in the summer session explored how to use the arts to define personal identity. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) anchors have always been built directly into the *Artful Learning* framework; all the arts-based skills and strategies our teachers use daily are infused with these crucial components. Since many districts require that SEL become incorporated into the school-wide culture, and *Artful Learning* Schools already employ these SEL anchors, it was time to design an artistic process that would officially demonstrate how a creativity-driven curriculum can deliver on this claim.

by Patrick Bolek

This summer, after 16 months of supplying online support, the *Artful Learning* team was finally able to reconnect “live” with our heroic educators across the country. During

the summer’s professional learning sessions, the *Artful Learning* Trainers modeled the processes described below for teachers, who could then use these strategies in the fall with their students in the classroom.

*Collaborative Color Connection* invited the participants to use only



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF PATRICK BOLEK

We began by using developmental psychologist Howard Gardner’s eight multiple intelligences as a scaffold. Teachers selected the elements their minds most connected with as learners, and they also notated the subjects they felt most passionate about when teaching in the classroom. Once all determined “how they learn,” teachers were guided to express this understanding of themselves by using Color Theory to choose their paint palette.

This creative process was inspired by master glass artist Dale Chihuly’s painting techniques. Teachers could choose between forty-five fluid acrylic paint colors for ‘throwing’ against a backdrop to create abstract expressionist metaphors of who they are. After quarantining for months, teachers found this active release of energy both stimulating and fun—and they readily saw how engaging it would be for their students to use this process to physicalize and capture their personal essence. Using mathematics, science, and technology (all elements that the students would also eventually employ), the teacher’s paintings were photographed and fabricated into massive, transparent tapestries that will adorn school entryway windows, emulating stained glass.

This project fulfills teachers’ and leadership’s request for “something of grandeur” they could create to celebrate, through *Artful Learning*, their physical return to school. The tapestries are nearly complete, and will be installed by end of October.

Finding these innovative ways to nurture and develop our relationships with each other helps build a closer-knit, more empathetic community. All accomplished artfully, of course.

### [ LEARN MORE ]

To explore more about the *Artful Learning* Program, please visit [artful-learning.org](http://artful-learning.org) ■

*Patrick Bolek is the Executive Director of Artful Learning, Inc. Email [patrick@artfullearning.org](mailto:patrick@artfullearning.org) to learn more about Leonard Bernstein’s arts and creativity learning model.*



Prelude, Fugue & Rifts Fall/Winter 2021/2022

## The Path to *MASS* (continued)



COURTESY OF SONY CLASSICAL

we came for, give us more.” The audience was enthralled. We could feel it. Afterward, when LB came out for his bow, oh God, the heavens opened; never have I heard such a roar. We were all crying our eyes out and Lenny was a mess, a puddle of tears. At that moment, I had the impulse to put my colorfully embroidered guitar strap around his neck, his Olympian laurel leaf symbolizing the gentle honor of his work. The ovation lasted for hours, it seemed.

There was one little fly in the ointment, though. During the last week of rehearsals, Roger Stevens, founding chairman of the new JFK center; director Gordon Davidson; and music director Maurice Peress were all bugging LB to make some cuts in the piece; they felt it was too long. LB resisted at first, but relented and agreed to put in the cuts for the dress rehearsal. The performance of the dress was really good; the invited audience really liked it, and we felt we had a “hit” on our hands. But... after the performance, LB said: “OK, you guys have had your f—ing fun; now restore the cuts.” Nobody in the cast really noticed if it made a difference, but when the reviews came out the day after the opening, and they were—mixed, I would say is the proper word, we all thought: Maybe the production team had been right.

But then I thought: well, why would Michelangelo want to chop off the finger or toe or arm of David? I mean, Leonard Bernstein the composer understood how a whole section had a whole structure. Why would he want to tear a piece out? That’s sacrilege. Sure, he cared about the public success. But he also wanted to see everything that he put on paper realized. Because he had a big idea. I mean, would you cut a Mahler symphony? ■

*Alan Titus is an internationally celebrated baritone, having performed in major opera houses with leading conductors through out the world.*

### Alvin Ailey dancers, 1971 production.

(continued from page 3)  
room about fifteen minutes before curtain to check on me, and said, “There are 181 critics in the audience. Be good.” Well, I knew my lines.

The atmosphere in the hall was electrifying: the anticipation of experiencing a new work created especially for this new cultural center. We could feel it, even before the Kyrie started. I took my place in the darkness on the stairs, staring into the dark hall filled with people, and nearly visualizing that big question mark emanating from the public as they listened to the disjointed, pre-recorded

voices singing the Kyrie from the four corners of the hall. I could almost hear the questions in the air: “Oh no, this is some electronic gobbledygook: are we trapped? An hour and a half of this?”

And then that moment came: spotlight, first guitar chord, and I was on. One of the most unforgettable moments of my life. I opened my mouth and the first tones came out. After two bars, I knew we had them; this was going to be fantastic. When the marching band came on, we could feel the crowd thinking: “Oh, Lenny, Lenny this is great, this is what

### MASS, 1971 rehearsal with Alan Titus, Joan and Ted Kennedy, Leonard Bernstein, and Gordon Davidson.



FLETCHER DRAKE, COURTESY OF KENNEDY CENTER ARCHIVES

# My Life with MASS

by John Mauceri

Fifty years ago, when Leonard Bernstein was in the throes of completing *MASS*, his annual two-week visit to Tanglewood had been reduced to a mere week. A single concert on a Sunday afternoon in 1971 brought him up close and personal with “this other guy’s *Mass*.” By that, Lenny meant Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*. He also watched the conducting fellows lead the student orchestra and, the next day, offer critiques of our work. And yes. I was one of those whose first encounter with Leonard Bernstein was by conducting for him.

As fate and history would have it, one year later, when *MASS* was brought back to the Kennedy Center and toured to Philadelphia and New York’s Metropolitan Opera House—with the cast and artistic team reunited—I took notes for Bernstein and then had the temerity to suggest a different kind of production from the one Gordon Davidson, Alvin Ailey, and Oliver Smith had created. It’s a window into Leonard Bernstein’s unique personality that a twenty-six-year-old could sit with him with a radical idea (about one of his works, mind you) and his response was, “Sure! Try it.”

The idea was a simple one. In my opinion, *MASS* had been too realistically staged and designed in 1971. Red and gold, the original *MASS* production looked like an extension of the Kennedy Center’s brand-new opera house, turning the stage into a basilica. The ecclesiastical aspects of the music drama were its excuse, as it were, not the work’s essence. *MASS* is about the need of humanity



BOB BARRELLA, COURTESY YALE UNIVERSITY

Leonard Bernstein and John Mauceri.

to find heroes to solve its problems and relieve its existential pain. We choose leaders and, at first, we celebrate them until they disappoint us. In the case of *MASS*, the Celebrant literally cannot answer our prayers. In a tribal frenzy, we tear him down. In the rubble, another hero (an innocent boy) emerges, and the process begins again. Amen. Fade to black.

In February 1973, *MASS* at Yale filled its Woolsey Hall—a huge auditorium that houses the Newberry Organ. That was already enough “churchiness” for us, and we built scaffolding in front of its impressive 12,641 pipes and hung banners from them in the style of pop artist Sister Corita Kent. (It says a lot about Yale’s trust in us that they let us do that. I don’t have to tell you what the organ faculty’s reaction was.) The altar was built by the Street Chorus during the opening sequences of the work—like a giant Lego set—from wooden boxes we bought from a New Haven bakery that had just gone out of business.

Graduate student William Ivey Long created costumes for the Celebrant that came from this and that. I supplied my

own clothes for Bob Picardo’s “God Said” number. And to finish the experience, the ecclesiastical chorus left the stage during the cataclysmic “*Donna Nobis Pacem*,” so that the final chorale emanated from the audience—as if the public were the congregation which, of course, it was.

And it was good (enough) brother, for our very new version of *MASS* to go to Vienna’s Konzerthaus for the work’s European premiere, and for the BBC, ORTF and PBS to videotape it and broadcast it worldwide.

The very grand original production was never filmed nor taped, sadly, and much to Lenny’s amazement, and graciousness, he said, as quoted in the *New York Times*, “[The Yale production] is much better than ours,” meaning the original production. The point here is not whether our counter-culture *MASS* was better or not. It tapped into why *MASS* matters today. Its metaphor is understood by the public, whether or not you are a practicing Roman Catholic. *MASS* tells a very human story in an international voice that is both of its time and simultaneously timeless. ■

*John Mauceri’s next book, The War on Music—Reclaiming the Twentieth Century will be published in March 2022 by Yale University Press.*



# Reflections on MASS

## Gustavo Dudamel

*Gustavo Dudamel had a conversation with Jamie Bernstein about his experience with MASS. Here follows a lightly edited version of his side of the conversation.*

**M**ASS: my God. This piece is an everything piece. To lead this work is a real privilege—because you cross through so many stages of joy, reflection, beauty. Working with this amazing music of Bernstein is always

a special moment—because you cannot do MASS all the time. It requires so many energies, so many people to make it work, that it's a piece one can do only a very few times in a life.

I think MASS is a reflection of society. It's many histories woven together. We feel connected, feel represented through the music, through its meaning. And MASS is always open: open to everything. It's not a Mass as we think of the liturgical ritual. I think it's more a ritual of the community, of our society trying to find the answers to some of our biggest questions. And by the end, we find them together: we find those answers as a community. Not as singular: as plural. That is the magic of MASS. ■

*Gustavo Dudamel is a Venezuelan musician, composer and conductor, who is the music director of the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, of the Opéra National de Paris and, since 2009, of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, which, under his direction, has secured its place as one of the leading orchestras in the world.*

Gustavo Dudamel conducts MASS.



## Wayne Marshall

**E**very opportunity to conduct MASS is a real honor. I have conducted several performances of the work, but March 2018, in the glorious setting of the Philharmonie in Paris, was the crowning glory for me. Jubilant Sykes was the Celebrant with the Orchestre de Paris, l'Ensemble Aedes, and the children's choir of the Philharmonie.

I was so happy with the way the Orchestre de Paris took this work to their hearts, and gave such a commanding performance. And both choirs were absolutely amazing - even though English was not their first language. Every member grasped the drama of the work, and I think they all had a wonderful experience.

I had worked with Jubilant Sykes before, in Washington Opera's production of *Porgy and Bess*, where he

sang the role of Jake. But this was my first time hearing him perform the Celebrant—a very demanding role not only vocally, but also in its acting challenges. Jubilant brought a unique, totally personal feel to this role, that was fascinating to hear and to watch.

It was a particular pleasure to hear the Philharmonie's magnificent Rieger organ taking on the instrument's quite central role in the piece; it was played magnificently by Thomas Ospital.

What a spectacle it was to see the vast forces on the stage of that hall in Paris! The Philharmonie is one of the most formidable performing spaces in the world; presenting MASS there was a real joy. ■

*Wayne Marshall is a British pianist, organist, and conductor and is an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE).*



## John Axelrod

**M**ASS is a masterpiece. This is not an exaggeration, as I do feel entitled to evaluate MASS because I have the experience of having conducted almost every work composed and published by Leonard Bernstein. Even today, 50 years ago since the premiere, MASS remains the most mysterious yet marvelous of Lenny's compositions. Why? Like Lenny himself, it has a bit of everything. And it takes having a wide lens of perception to conduct. Latin liturgy, rock band anthems, a marching band, dodecaphony, orchestral expressionism, a bit of Israeli rhythm here and New York swing there, a ton of voices, even a Mahlerian kids choir, and most of all the humanity of a "simple song" to sum it all up.

Conducting MASS and managing all that it requires (including the expected amplification), is a tour de force musical marathon. It breaks every boundary and yields bounteous discoveries. The Meditations provide a spiritual abstraction in the face of the tangible, like the God of Abraham. But unlike Moses who received the concrete Commandments, there are no rules in MASS. It is the perfect musical expression of what Lenny may have believed in the most: Freedom. ■

*John Axelrod is an international conductor sought by orchestras around the world, an author of three published books (including a Lenny & Me: Conducting Bernstein's Symphonies), a mentor for young musicians and a proud father.*

## Justin Brown

The production of *MASS* at the Guildhall School in London was my professional debut as a conductor. Talk about jumping in at the deep end... It was part of the London Symphony Orchestras's Leonard Bernstein Festival of 1986, and I had been engaged as assistant to the Festival Director John Mauceri, who was unavailable for much of the rehearsal period. In what with hindsight seems like an astonishingly generous gesture, not to say reckless gamble, he stepped aside to let me take over the show.

The set was a crossroads, with orchestra and audience scattered in the four corners of the hall. I was stationed at the midpoint in a kind of ice-cream cart—dignity and caution all thrown to the winds, as befits the piece. We were roughly 300 performers; rock band, winds and brass, strings and percussion were all in their separate quadrants, the choir of 140 were placed in a surround-balcony above the main action; and the Street Chorus and Celebrant had the run of the streets. I honestly have no idea how we pulled it off, but somehow, we did.

## Douglas Webster

*"I have often been asked what was the most memorable performance I've been a part of in my career, and I must say it was my first production of Bernstein's MASS."*

Before presenting *MASS* at The Vatican; before the Dallas Symphony 40th Anniversary Concert; before Carnegie Hall, or Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and twenty-odd productions, the Indiana School of Music had brought *MASS* to Tanglewood for Bernstein's 70th Birthday Gala. Five months later, the production was invited to join two other schools—The New England Conservatory and Cal Arts—for a Martin Luther King Jr. Day international live radio broadcast, on January 16, 1989.

National Public Radio told us an audience of 300 million would

LB was there of course—which should perhaps have been nerve-racking, but was anything but. He came to a couple of rehearsals, gave praise, support and advice in equal measure, and seemingly just by his presence taught us all lessons for life. (And he obviously loved it—he came to two performances, unscheduled.)

The piece itself is famously unbuttoned. I expected to be embarrassed by it—I'm English, embarrassment is our principal emotion—but that was the first of the many lessons learnt, this one quite subconsciously: you can't perform a piece of music without believing in it, without loving it. You may not think you're going to, but in the act of bringing a piece alive, it becomes (as LB would say) your child: you end up giving it unconditional love.

And bound up with that, another great lesson: play everything as if it's never been heard before, and as if it's the last performance you'll ever give. Did anyone ever live up to that more thoroughly than LB himself?

One thing was clear to all of us from early on: we were part of something extraordinary, and we wouldn't ever forget it. The incredible energy of those young performers, the spiritual guidance of the wonderful stage

be listening across the globe—even the Soviet Union, in its glasnost period—as soon as the red "On Air" light came on. "A Simple Song:" the ultimate "cold open." I got through it. Stayed mostly in tune.

We presented the "edited for broadcast" version. At the end, as the entire company was holding the final note in unison, it was my turn to end the *MASS*.

I thought of the world of 1989. Glasnost had cracked open the Soviet door. I thought of Afghanistan. (The Russians would be out within the month.) I thought of Bernstein. And with all my heart, with the fullest intention, I said, "The *MASS* is ended. Go in peace."

The red light held...

Looking into the mic, broadcasting my silence, I realized that no matter how far my career would take me, I would never sing or speak anything more important than what I had just done.



director Bill Bryden, the all-immersive in-the-round nature of the event, and of course the honor of playing it for its creator. One of the soloists, the soprano Susan Chilcott, whose subsequent stellar opera career was tragically cut short, said to me after the first performance, "we have to remember every moment of this: it'll be years before we experience anything this special again" ■

*Justin Brown is a British conductor. For twelve years General Music Director of the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, Germany, he is also Music Director Laureate of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra.*



If I did nothing beyond this moment, it was enough. My purpose for singing had been served, fully. "Go. In. Peace." I meant it. I prayed it. The light went out. And it was enough. ■

*Douglas Webster is an International vocal artist performing with symphony orchestras, opera and in solo recital. As an actor, he has appeared on Broadway, National tour and in regional theater.*

## The Bernstein Project



(as printed in the Fall/Winter 2009 Issue of *Prelude, Fugue & Riffs*)

On September 20, the Southbank Centre in London launched *The Bernstein Project*. Inspired by the life of Leonard Bernstein, this innovative project will encompass more than 30 events throughout the 2009-2010 season, drawing on Bernstein's work as a musician, humanitarian, communicator and educator and providing a multifaceted exploration of his life through concerts, films, lectures and participatory workshops. American conductor Marin Alsop is the project's Artistic Director.

*The Bernstein Project* kicked off with a day of events called *Mass Rally*. The day began with a vocal workshop that engaged the public in learning some of the music from Bernstein's *MASS*. This was followed by a performance of songs from *West Side Story* featuring pupils from local schools. Then the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain composed a tribute to Leonard Bernstein through improvisation. The day also included a showing of the film *A Total Embrace* by Nina Bernstein Simmons, and a discussion of Bernstein's life by Alexander and Jamie Bernstein. The day culminated with *Mass Gathering*, a concert that featured music from *Candide* and extracts of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* conducted by Alsop.

Alsop said, "Leonard Bernstein was a phenomenon... as Stephen Sondheim once wrote about his friend: 'Poor Lenny...10 gifts too many...' Bernstein wrote hit musicals like *West Side Story* and a great film score to *On the Waterfront*; he composed profound music, serious music, and hysterically funny light music; he conducted every great orchestra in the world and brought the Mahler Symphonies back to the Vienna Philharmonic; he was a champion at word games and puzzles and loved finding errors in the Oxford English Dictionary! He was a thinker, teacher, author, television star, provocateur, humanitarian and he was my hero. As with all true mentors, Bernstein taught me much more than a craft. On a personal level, he gave me the courage to be myself. And on a wider level, I watched him interact with young people and professional orchestras, constantly mentoring, constantly giving. He showed me—and the world—the enormous power of music and how important it is to share it with as much of humanity as is possible.

He showed us that classical music is a powerful force that can transform lives as well as inspire and move people and he lived by those principles."

*The Bernstein Project* will include a season of films curated by Bernstein biographer and former head of BBC TV's Music and Arts, Humphrey Burton. Some of the films to be screened include *The Little Drummer Boy*, a controversial 90-minute film essay on Mahler's Jewish Heritage; and *Ode to Freedom*, a performance of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* in Berlin, celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall 20 years ago on Christmas Day 1989.

There will be concerts by Southbank Centre's Resident Orchestras, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, as well as by visiting ensembles, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and the Nash Ensemble. There will also be a *West Side Story* sing-along screening.

The Project will conclude with Alsop conducting performances of Bernstein's *MASS*, on July 10 and 11, 2010. Performing forces will include a cast of young dancers and musicians from London and a specially-assembled *MASS* Orchestra led by members of the National Youth Orchestra, all of whom commence rehearsals with Alsop, Matthew Barley and Mary King in Spring 2010. ■

# Discussing MASS

(as printed in the Fall/Winter 2009 Issue of Prelude, Fugue & Riffs)

**M**usic critic Edward Seckerson and conductor Marin Alsop discuss MASS. This discussion is from a larger article about Marin Alsop that appeared in Gramophone Magazine.

**E.S.** Does Marin Alsop think it's a masterpiece?

**M.A.** "Yes, because for Bernstein nothing was ever perfect. For him there was no such thing. He rejoiced in the rough edges of spontaneity in everything he did. MASS is a piece that can and does weather human frailty."

**E.S.** Just as well. It is extraordinarily challenging to perform and in her new Naxos recording (the work's fourth), Alsop went to exceptional lengths to achieve an authentic mix of performers with a keen understanding of the style. With a little help from Leslie Stiefelman a friend at the sharp end of musical theatre—that is the Music Director on Kander and Ebb's "Chicago" in New York—some 300 young hopefuls auditioned for the all-important "street singers" at the heart of MASS. They have to be the real thing; the range of what is required of them is wild. These aren't pop songs, these are far-out-there art songs. Challenging sentiments, still more challenging vocals.

MASS polarizes opinions, MASS divides as surely as it unites. But Alsop thinks, as do I, that the open hostility that comes at it from some quarters stems from a refusal to accept the validity of different musics and cultures co-existing. Which, in short, says more about the naysayers than it does about the piece.

**M.A.** "You know, what's interesting about MASS is just how prophetic it's turned out to be. All those boundaries between genres, between different styles of music—they're gone—and it may have been less threatening to some had they remained in place,

but they didn't. Besides, the level of sophistication is dazzling throughout. Tell me that the 11-tone second Meditation, impregnated as it is with allusions to Beethoven's Ode to Joy, is not a touch of genius."

**E.S.** "A cornucopia of genius poured out with no restraint" was how *The New York Times* summed-up the musical values of MASS. Alsop goes further: "MASS is a microcosm of Bernstein's personality. If you doubt its sincerity, if you deny its integrity, then you deny everything Bernstein was."

So, was Bernstein the eternal optimist or the ever-hopeful pessimist?

**M.A.** "I don't know. It tended to be one or the other. But I think what makes MASS so very special is that it accepts our limitations as human beings and somehow transcends them. The ultimate message falls into 'the eternal optimist' camp, in that it says—you know, we are going to be ok..."

**E.S.** Bernstein's own doubts ran deep. In that last interview he gave me he expressed regret that so many of his peers had never embraced his music. Did Alsop, I wonder, agree that those musical excursions into thorny overgrown paths (his dabblings with atonality in pieces like *Jubilee Games*) were, to some extent, an attempt to gain him entrance into a club to which he didn't quite belong?

**M.A.** "Yes and no. I really think it was sheer curiosity and the need to stretch himself, musically and intellectually, that took him off on those gamesmanship of composition and sometimes the game gets better the more constraints you put on it. As you know, he premiered and championed his mentor Aaron Copland's big twelve-tone piece *Connotations*, and he did so because he passionately identified with Copland's curiosity. In a sense, twelve-tone music was symbolic for him. It represented a conflict that required some kind of resolution."

**E.S.** Just so. Only Bernstein could pull a torch song out of a tone-row. Perhaps the problem with his music in our lifetime was our inability to get any distance from it. Alsop cites John Corigliano who firmly believes that no one can judge a composer's work until the composer is dead.



©WALTER SCOTT

**M.A.** "Particularly, a composer like Bernstein, whose work was so irrevocably bound-up in who he was. Everyone was influenced, for better, for worse, by the persona of Lenny and it was that, rather than the quality of the music, that led to the skepticism and derision. The music is brilliant..."

**E.S.** More importantly, the music is his. And with that in mind, I go back to the transcripts of a 1989 interview Bernstein gave me. These words leap out at me: I'm not really needed on this Earth for another *Ring Cycle*, or another *Magic Flute*, or another whatever. Really. But nobody, for better or worse, can write my music except me.

Used by permission of Gramophone Magazine. ■

**Marin Alsop and Leonard Bernstein.**

# Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Leon Levy Digital Archives

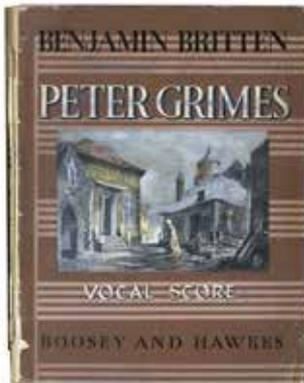
by **Gabryel Smith**

[ [LEARN MORE](#) ]

This year the New York Philharmonic celebrates the tenth anniversary of the Leon Levy Digital Archives. The Digital Archives launched in 2011 with Leonard Bernstein’s marked scores, correspondence, photographs, and programs as its cornerstone collection. Ten years on, the Bernstein trove continues to be the focus of many researchers around the world. Here are ten of our favorite LB items from the online collection.

To learn more about each of the items listed, click on the corresponding titles. To see the complete Digital Archive, click on [archives.nyphil.org](http://archives.nyphil.org).

1



## PETER GRIMES : LEONARD BERNSTEIN

Most of LB’s scores show layers of markings and annotations that denote years of interpretive study. This one, however, which LB conducted at Tanglewood in 1946 for the work’s American premiere, is unmarked except for the cover: “Peter Grimes” crossed out and “Leonard Bernstein” penciled in. Was LB identifying with the misfortunes of the misunderstood fisherman of the title role? There are many possible interpretations. In any case, it shows an early example of LB’s penchant to probe deeper into how music becomes personal and relates to the present.

2

## MAHLER GROOVES

In what has become one of the most recognizable images in the Digital Archives, the opening measures to Mahler’s Sixth are covered by a neon red bumper sticker—courtesy of the Los Angeles Mahler Society—which LB pasted over the ominous march in the lower strings and timpani. One could consider it a pep talk or a light-hearted “pick me up” before taking the emotional plunge into one of Mahler’s darkest works.

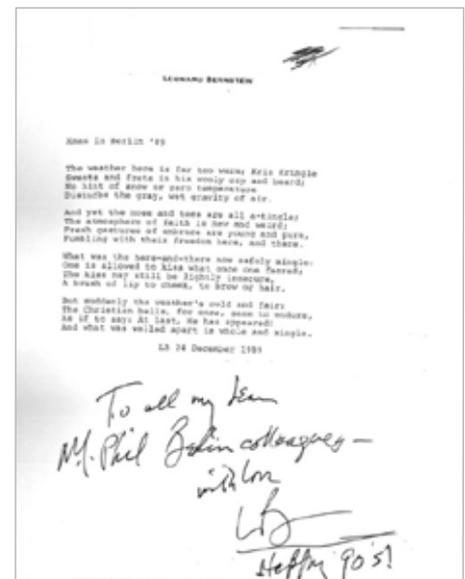


3



## RESPONSE TO A SUBSCRIBER, 1966

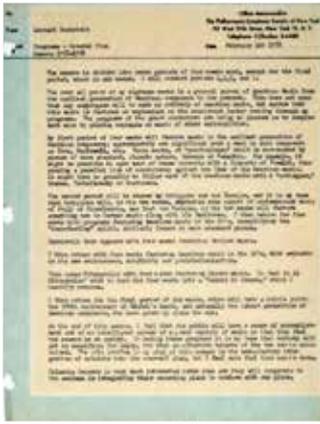
Not often do New York Philharmonic Music Directors take the time to respond personally to letters from subscribers. However, one would expect nothing less from LB in his response to this listener complaining about Webern’s Symphony op. 21. While our inboxes still receive similar messages today, LB’s sense of duty to education and unfamiliar music was not as prevalent among maestros then as it is now. We have him to thank for that.



4

## 'XMAS IN BERLIN, 1989

LB’s Beethoven Ninth performances at the fall of the wall have become legendary examples of how music can transcend politics. Amid all the activity, one can picture LB on his day off between East and West concerts taking time to write this poem for his Philharmonic colleagues who joined with German, French, British, and Russian players in an international ensemble. Our musicians still treasure this note as one of the last in LB’s long career with his orchestra.



# 5

## THE AMERICAN CONDUCTOR'S VISION

In 1958 Leonard Bernstein outlined the repertoire for his first season as Music Director in less than a page, submitting it to the Philharmonic's Music Policy Committee for review. American music is a central theme, fitting for the Philharmonic's first American-born Music Director.



# 7

## RAVEL PIANO CONCERTO

While most of scores in the Digital Archives show LB the conductor, this one shows LB the pianist and the student. The tattered cover, rehearsal dates (Apr. 27, 3pm, sharp), the fingerings in both the solo and orchestra reduction, are marks any college music student would recognize, sympathize with, and learn from.

# 6

## LB AND ORIN O'BRIEN

Lenny was known for the warmth and affection he showed the Philharmonic musicians, who still remember him as family. Here he is with bassist Orin O'Brien, the first woman musician in the Philharmonic's modern history, and whom Lenny hired in 1966. O'Brien retired in 2021 as the orchestra's senior tenured member.



# 8

## LENNY THE COLLECTOR

LB's sentimental side shows in his attachment to possessions. Whether cufflinks, composing pencils, or scores, it gives us archivists great material to work with. In some lucky instances, like the inside cover of this Stravinsky Rite of Spring score, LB documents where an item came from. That this copy was Koussevitsky's explains the re-barred measures in the Sacrificial Dance. With help from Nicolas Slonimsky, Koussevitzky was able to come up with a version that avoided constant meter changes, lending to a more straightforward conducting pattern. LB conducted this modified pattern as inherited his from mentor, even as the piece grew in popularity and orchestras became familiar with Stravinsky's constant meter changes.



# 9

## ANDRÉ WATTS—THE YOUNG PERFORMERS YPCS

It is well known that one of LB's signature achievements as Music Director was to telecast the Young People's Concerts, the first series of its kind to appear on TV. Of all the programs to come from that series, of particular note are those LB called Young Performers—conductors, instrumentalists, and vocalists of all backgrounds whose careers were launched by their Philharmonic debuts. One of those performers (pictured above), was the 16-year-old pianist Andre Watts, whose 1963 performance was the first of 102 with the Philharmonic, and counting.



# 10

## "MY GREATEST OPPORTUNITY"

One cannot compile a list of LB-New York Philharmonic highlights without including his legendary conducting debut, where the young assistant was called on last-minute to substitute for an indisposed Bruno Walter. It just so happened that the performance fell on a Sunday, meaning it was heard not only in Carnegie Hall but by millions on the radio nationwide. This signed headshot—a tradition for conductors making their Philharmonic debuts—is kept with hundreds of others in a collection that dates from the 19th century up to the present. No debut stands out quite like Lenny's.



*Gabryel Smith is the Director of Archives and Exhibitions at the New York Philharmonic.*

# Remembering Michael Morgan

1957–2021



**Michael Barrett, left, with Michael Morgan, Leonard Bernstein, and Michael Stern.**

**by Michael Barrett**

I met Michael Morgan in my 20's in 1984. He was slightly older, and had more experience than I did as a conductor, so he was someone to listen to and learn from. He had just won the prestigious Swarowsky Competition in Vienna, which meant a big cash prize and a performance at the Vienna State Opera of Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. He was talking about upcoming performances of *La Traviata*. Wow: he was already launched. Michael was all-American.

I finally got to see Michael conduct in rehearsals and performances for a program we shared with Leonard Bernstein at the New York Philharmonic in 1986. Michael, Michael Stern, and I had been invited for a week of study with Bernstein, culminating in two performances. Bernstein himself also conducted, so the concerts were sold-out, and received lots of attention from the press. The week was quickly dubbed "The Three Michaels", and it was a great experience for us. Michael Morgan conducted Strauss's *Til Eulenspiegel*,

and I was impressed with how easy it seemed for him. The music poured out of him. He wore a big smile on his face. He knew what to say to the orchestra. He was having fun!

Not long after that, I saw a documentary about Georg Solti, conductor of the Chicago Symphony. He spoke at some length about Michael, who had become an assistant there. Solti said, "Michael is a natural born leader." This was a big lesson for me since I thought of Solti as an autocratic, fierce and demanding conductor. Michael's way was to lead with joy, enjoying the pleasure of making music with colleagues. You didn't have to be scary to be effective. That was Michael's way.

His longest tenure was with the Oakland Symphony in California. It had been my home town orchestra growing up, and gave me my first live symphonic experiences, so I was happy when Michael was appointed. The orchestra had a storied past of adventurous programming with conductors like Gerhard Samuel and Calvin Simmons. Michael steered the organization beautifully for decades, shaping it to serve music as well as their community in innovative ways. I know he is missed by his orchestra and all of us who remember his high-pitched, unbridled laugh, and his musical freedom and exuberance. ■

*Michael Barrett is Music Director of the Moab Music Festival.*

## Marin Alsop leads LSO in *Candide*

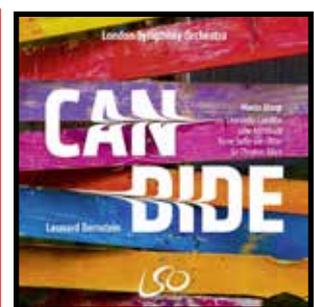
Made almost three decades after the composer's own iconic recording with the Orchestra, Alsop's new version was captured during celebratory concerts marking Bernstein's centenary year, and features an outstanding array of soloists, including Leonardo Capalbo (*Candide*), Jane Archibald (*Cunégonde*), Anne

Sofie von Otter (*The Old Lady*) and Sir Thomas Allen (*Dr. Pangloss, Narrator*).

*Release date: 15 October 2021*

[ **LEARN MORE** ]

<https://lsolive.lso.co.uk/collections/new-releases/products/bernstein-candide> ■



# IN THE news

## Candide in Münster



©OLIVER BERGER

The Sinfonieorchester Münster (Germany) and the Opernchor des Theaters Münster are presenting twelve performances of *Candide* in concert. Conducted by Stefan Veselka, with choral direction by Inna Batyuk and Boris Cepeda, this production features live videos created by Robert Nippoldt, with dramaturgy by Ronny Scholz.

Featured are Garrie Davislim as Candide and Marielle Murphy

as Cunegonde. Dr. Pangloss is performed by Gregor Dalai, and Jonas Böhm is Maximillian; Kathrin Filip is Paquette; and Nana Zeidziguri sings the role of the Old Lady. Thomas Peters is the Narrator.

Nippoldt's videos created a sensation. Christoph Schulte, writing in the Westphalian News, said of the production:

*An illustrator who draws live while an opera is taking place on*

*stage—is that possible? Oh, yes! The audience went crazy—thanks to Bernstein's sparkling music, combined with astonishing effects on the stage that reflected the almost limitless imagination of Robert Nippoldt.*

*Bernstein's Candide is a feast for the eyes and ears. Definitely go!*

For further information: <https://www.theater-muenster.com/produktionen/candide.html> ■

## An Unusual Treasure Hunt



An email recently came my way from writer and producer Miguel Esteban, about an inquiry he received from cellist Mischa Maisky. This little exchange led to a delightfully satisfying outcome. —J.B.

**Miguel Esteban:** After a concert last night featuring Mischa Maisky, he reminisced about his collaboration with your father. He recalled that one day in Vienna during rehearsals, Lenny showed him a handwritten list he had begun of other personalities whose initials were also M and M (Marilyn Monroe, etc.). I told him I was sure I could find it in Lenny's digital archives—which embarrassingly led to naught. Before I report the bad news to Mischa, do you think this is something that would have been saved and catalogued somewhere?

**J.B.** This is a very amusing inquiry! I don't doubt that my dad wrote an "MM" list—but whether it still exists, who knows. The only place that might have it is the Library of Congress, but it's a little needle-in-a-haystacky! If you really want to pur-

sue this, I can put you in touch with Mark Horowitz, head of the Music Division at the L of C.

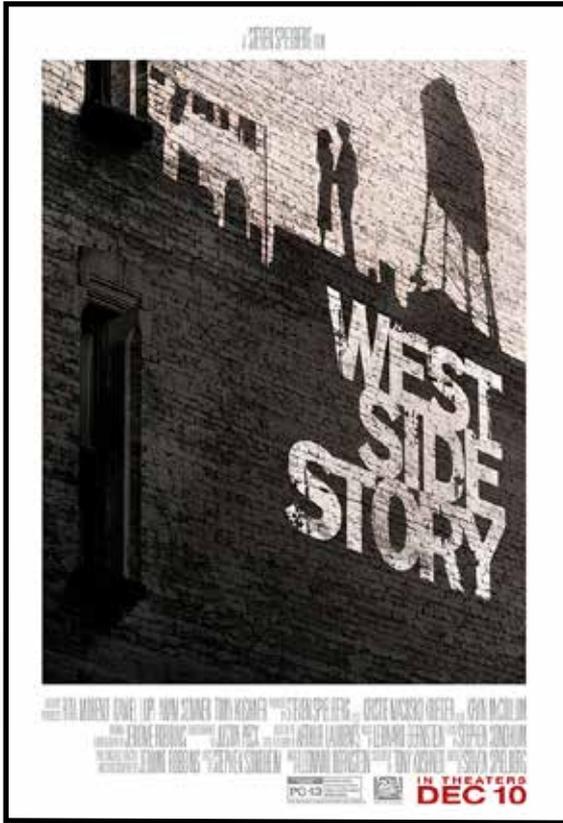
**M.E.** Mark and his team were incredibly helpful, thank you for putting me in touch. Mischa's memory served him well! He actually wrote that he was speechless that we found this—and for Mischa Maisky to be speechless is indeed a world-stops-spinning type mega-event!

**J.B.** Wow: this is truly an exceptional case of "seek and ye shall find."

**Mark Horowitz, Library of Congress Music Division:** I'm gobsmacked (a word I too rarely have the opportunity to use). It shows off how extraordinary our finding aid is, that such an unusual item was able to be found so quickly and easily out of such a vast collection. ■

# Leonard Bernstein

Something's coming, something good...



And it's the official trailer for Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story* adaptation.

Just in time for Hispanic Heritage Month, Disney and 20th Century Studios debuted a new poster and an extended look at the reimagining of the classic musical. Starring in Spielberg's movie musical are new-

comer Rachel Zegler, Golden Globe-nominee Ansel Elgort, Tony-nominee Ariana DeBose, and the iconic Rita Moreno, among others.

After a year-long delay, *West Side Story* hits theaters worldwide on December 10.

## [Note to Readers]

Dear Readers,

We hope you're enjoying the new *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs* online format. We're heartened, along with all of you, by the gradual re-opening of the performing arts, and we will keep you posted on upcoming Bernstein-related performances.

As always, we welcome your comments. You can send them to [curquhart@leonardbernstein.com](mailto:curquhart@leonardbernstein.com).

**Prelude, Fugue & Riffs** will be sent upon request.

Please send all correspondence to:

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

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