

LEONARD BERNSTEIN

b. August 25, 1918 – d. October 14, 1990

“This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before.”

Leonard Bernstein fell in love with music as a young boy. After receiving his undergraduate education at Harvard University, he attended the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Studying under famous international conductor Fritz Reiner, Bernstein received the only “A” Reiner ever awarded.

After Bernstein distinguished himself at Tanglewood, the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s Summer Venue, the New York Philharmonic named him assistant conductor. He was thrust into the limelight when he substituted for the lead conductor. The nationally broadcast show earned him instant recognition and helped launch his career.

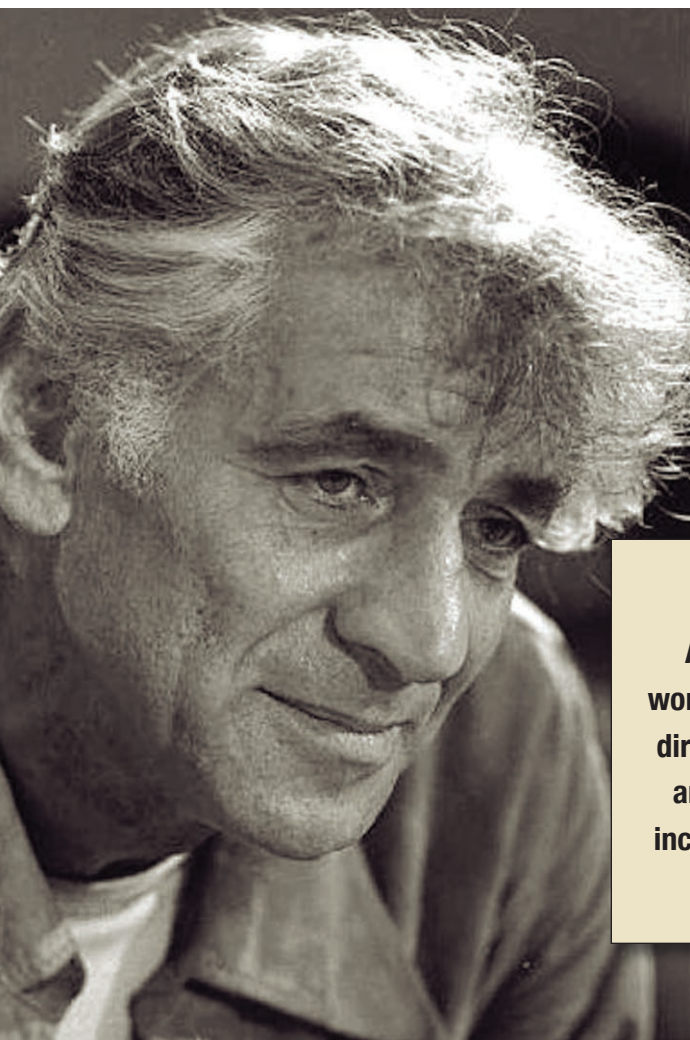
Bernstein’s first major work, Symphony No. 1 “Jeremiah” (1943), received New York Music Critics’ Circle acclaim as the best new American orchestral work of 1943-1944. In 1956 and 1957, Bernstein composed “Candide” and “West Side Story,” respectively.

Named Music Director in 1957, Bernstein led the New York Philharmonic from 1958-1969. While with the Philharmonic, he worked on the “Young People’s Concert Series” for CBS. CBS ran 53 segments of this series from 1958 to 1972. It remains the longest running set of classical music programs on commercial television.

An avid proponent of world peace, Bernstein toured Athens and Hiroshima during a 1985 “Journey for Peace” tour commemorating the victims of World War II. Celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Bernstein conducted a performance of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 in East Berlin on Christmas Day. He reworded the “Ode to Joy” as “Ode to Freedom.”

In addition to performing his own works, Bernstein masterfully conducted works of Beethoven, Brahms, Shostakovich, Mahler, Aaron Copland and George Gershwin. In addition to musicals and compositions, he also wrote two operas, “Trouble in Tahiti” and “A Quiet Place,” and the score for the Academy Award winning film “On the Waterfront” (1954).

Numerous European cities, including Oslo and Vienna, have honored Bernstein with keys to the city. The London Symphony Orchestra named him Honorary President in 1987. Named Laureate Conductor of the Israel Philharmonic in 1988, Bernstein was Laureate Conductor of the New York Philharmonic until his death.



Leonard Bernstein was the first American-born conductor to earn worldwide recognition. He was musical director of the New York Philharmonic and composed Broadway musicals, including “West Side Story.” Bernstein won nine Grammy Awards.

