Welcome to the Young People’s Concerts! 

Who was Leonard Bernstein? Conductor, educator, composer, pianist, idealist, father — Bernstein was many things to many people. And what better place than a Young People’s Concert for a new generation to discover the man who elevated this long-running series to a new level of popularity with live television broadcasts. Plus, we’re celebrating his 100th birthday! Bernstein’s music was as varied as his life, from an opera and symphonies to Broadway shows. We will hear some of each as we pay tribute to a musician perpetually inspired by New York City!

THE PROGRAM

ALL-BERNSTEIN PROGRAM

Overture to Candide
Selections from Three Dance Episodes from On the Town
The Great Lover
Times Square: 1944
The Masque, from The Age of Anxiety, Symphony No. 2
Profanation, from Symphony No. 1, Jeremiah
Selections from West Side Story
Maria
Balcony Scene
I Feel Pretty
Mambo

LEONARD SLATKIN Conductor
MAKOTO OZONE Piano
MIKAELA BENNETT Soprano
MILES MYKKANEN Tenor
JAMIE BERNSTEIN Speaker
THEODORE WIPRUD Host
HABIB AZAR Stage Director

CAN YOU IDENTIFY EVERYTHING IN AND AROUND LEONARD BERNSTEIN’S STUDIO?

Look on the back page to see whether you’re right.

BERNSTEIN’S STUDIO
Leonard Bernstein (1918–90)

Conductor, pianist, composer, author, and educator, Leonard Bernstein was only 25 years old when he rocketed to world fame in 1943 as a last-minute substitute conductor for a New York Philharmonic broadcast. Fifteen years later, he would become music director of the Philharmonic and he would go on to conduct the Orchestra in 1,244 concerts and more than 200 recordings. Bernstein was greatly admired for his diverse musical talents: he composed hit Broadway shows as well as symphonies and concertos; he conducted the world’s best orchestras and recorded more music than any conductor before or since; and he opened up the world of music for adults and kids through television — then a new medium — in a variety of programs including the Young People’s Concerts. Bernstein was passionate about music and worked tirelessly to instill that passion in people of all ages and backgrounds.

“People often say that Leonard Bernstein was a born teacher, but actually it’s more accurate to say that he was a born student who just couldn’t wait to share what he learned.”

Jamie Bernstein

CONDUCTOR
“‘What Bernstein possessed that was very special was a kind of excitement and exhilaration. He loved every note he conducted… He was alive every minute.’”

Orin O’Brien
Bass,
New York Philharmonic

EDUCATOR
“Bernstein was a born teacher, but actually it’s more accurate to say that he was a born student who just couldn’t wait to share what he learned.’’

Jamie Bernstein

COMPOSER
“My father was the kind of composer who would listen to all kinds of music and then everything he ever heard would somehow go in the hopper and come out in his own music.”

Jamie Bernstein

CONCERT HOST
“My father took me to a Young People’s Concert when I was nine years old. Leonard Bernstein started talking to me about how excited he was about the music, and he was animated and jumping around and having a great time and I turned to my father and I said, ‘Oh, that’s what I want to do—I want to be a conductor.’”

Marin Alsop
Music Director,
Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

Based on a book written in 1758 by the French writer Voltaire, Bernstein’s operetta Candide tells the story of two lovers — Candide and Cunegonde — who travel the world looking for each other. They encounter one piece of bad luck after another and try to figure out what it all means. The Overture to Candide reflects the optimism of the title character who, despite his troubles, always keeps a positive attitude. The overture was given its concert premiere by the New York Philharmonic in 1957 and was instantly popular: nearly 100 orchestras performed the work within two years!

“Audiences at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1944 were so wild about Bernstein and Jerome Robbins’s new ballet, Fancy Free, the composer and choreographer were inspired to develop the ballet into a Broadway musical, On the Town. Three sailors have 2½ hours to explore New York City — the musical portrays their fanciful adventures set against the backdrop of World War II. “The Great Lover,” the first of three orchestral episodes from the show, is about the romantic dreams of one of the sailors, Gabey, who falls for a picture of “Miss Turnstile of the Month” on display in a subway station and decides to search for her. In “Times Square: 1944,” all the sailors on leave gather together for a whirlwind night of dancing and fun! Bernstein’s The Age of Anxiety, Symphony No. 2 was inspired by, and titled after, a poem by W. H. Auden. The poem tells the story of four people in a New York City bar who are thinking about the meaning of their lives and what the future has in store for them. The four characters search frantically for answers to their questions, but find none. After drowning in their sorrows for a while, they decide to go to the Masque — a huge party at someone’s house. The solo piano is accompanied by lots of percussion, such as the xylophone and celesta (an instrument with a piano shape and a music box sound). The jazzy, dance-like rhythms lift everyone’s spirits.

In Symphony No. 1, Jeremiah, a tribute to Bernstein’s Jewish roots, we hear the composer’s serious and philosophical side. The second movement, Profanation, is based on a traditional Hebrew chant from the Torah used in the Bar Mitzvah ceremony. Listen to how Bernstein transforms that chant through jazzy, dynamic rhythms and brass and percussion outbursts to dramatize the disbelief that the prophet Jeremiah, and his predictions, faced.

West Side Story stemmed from an idea to create a musical retelling of Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet set on Manhattan’s Upper West Side — where David Geffen Hall stands today. The musical portrays young love set against the cultural and ethnic differences of two rival gangs: the Italian-American Jets and Puerto Rican Sharks. Bernstein reflects the cultural diversity in the story through a fusion of symphonic and jazz music and Latin-beat dances. West Side Story remains an important milestone in American musical theater today.

“Fathers often say that Leonard Bernstein was how unafraid he was to be silly.”

Jamie Bernstein

FATHER
“‘One thing I always loved about my father was how unafraid he was to be silly.”’

Jamie Bernstein

Photographs courtesy of the New York Philharmonic Archives
In Bernstein’s words...

“I can’t live one day without hearing music, playing it, studying it, or thinking about it.”

“Two things are necessary for great achievement: a plan and not quite enough time.”

“If I don’t become Brahms or Tchaikovsky or Stravinsky when I’m conducting their works then it won’t be a great performance.”

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

“If you like music at all, you’ll find out the meanings for yourselves, just by listening to it.”