NYP 18-35, America, the Beautiful

(THEME MUSIC & OPENING BILLBOARD)

AB: ...and THIS week:

(MUSIC: UP and UNDER)

AB: ...we feature a trio of works by American composers. This is Alec Baldwin. Thanks for choosing to spend some time with us as we present Marc Blitzstein’s rarely-heard Airborne Symphony. The broadcast will also feature the Lincoln Portrait by Aaron Copland with William Warfield as narrator...and we’ll begin shortly with music of Charles Ives. Leonard Bernstein will conduct...The New York Philharmonic This Week.

(SLIGHT PAUSE)

AB: We open with the Holidays Symphony by Charles Ives. The piece was written over the course of 16 years, from 1897 to 1913. Each movement corresponds to a different holiday and its related season. So “Washington’s Birthday” represents Winter, Decoration Day corresponds to Spring, The Fourth of July relates to Summer and Thanksgiving and Forefathers’ Day reflects the Fall.
AB: Each of the four movements is intended to reflect a grown man’s memory of his childhood holidays. For Ives, this included recollections of his father and his hometown of Danbury, Connecticut.

The music is typically kaleidoscopic Ives, with several familiar song quotations and almost ceaseless key changes and unusual harmonic combinations. Each of the four movements can be presented individually, but they also combine for a very nostalgic and entertaining whole, which is how we present it now. This is the Holidays Symphony by Charles Ives. Leonard Bernstein conducts...The New York Philharmonic.

(MUSIC)

AB: Music of Charles Ives. That was the Holidays Symphony. The New York Philharmonic was conducted by Leonard Bernstein.

Each of the movements was recorded by Bernstein and the orchestra during separate sessions that took place between 1963 and 1968. Not long thereafter, Columbia records made the decision to consolidate all four tracks to a single disc so that the work could be enjoyed as a whole.
Copland was commissioned to write the next piece on our program by André Kostelanetz for the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. Dubbed, *Lincoln Portrait*, Copland began work on it shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In an effort to write a piece that would lift spirits and boost patriotism, Copland employed words from Abraham Lincoln's speeches and letters, interwoven with his own connecting descriptions of the 16th president of the United States. The result is a work that is powerful and inspirational in its simplicity and directness—much like the great president himself.

Copland advised that quote, “The Speaker is cautioned against undue emphasis in the delivery of Lincoln’s words. The words are sufficiently dramatic in and of themselves, and need no added ‘emotion’ in order to put them across to the audience.”
AB: You’re sure to recognize Lincoln’s words, of course, but do also keep your ears open for quotations of songs popular during Lincoln’s time. These include Stephen Foster’s “Camptown Races” and the traditional “Springfield Mountain.”

Here, now, is Copland’s Lincoln Portrait. William Warfield is the narrator and Leonard Bernstein conducts...The New York Philharmonic.

(MUSIC)

AB: William Warfield was the narrator there, in the Lincoln Portrait by Aaron Copland. The New York Philharmonic was conducted by Leonard Bernstein.

(SLIGHT PAUSE)

AB: Our broadcast will continue shortly with music of Marc Blitzstein. I’m Alec Baldwin and you’re listening to The New York Philharmonic This Week.

(ID)
AB: Our broadcast concludes now with a recording of
Marc Blitzstein’s Airborne Symphony.

This piece was commissioned by the United
States Air Force circa 1943. Blitzstein
completed in 1946...but by that time, of course,
the war was over. Though this fact caused a
certain spirit of urgency to be absent from the
premiere in New York City on April 1, 1946,
critics were mostly kind to the symphony and
the conductor on that occasion, Leonard
Bernstein, never lost his affection for the
work.

Bernstein made at least two recordings of it,
spaced about 30 years apart. We’re going to
hear the one he made on October 18, 1966 at
the old Philharmonic Hall (now, of course,
David Geffen Hall) at Lincoln Center in New
York City.
Scored for orchestra, piano, vocal soloists, chorus and narrator, the piece more closely resembles an oratorio than a traditional symphony. No matter how you perceive it, though, we simply hope you’ll enjoy it. This is Marc Blitzstein’s Airborne Symphony. Orson Welles is the narrator with tenor Andrea Velis; and baritone David Watson. Leonard Bernstein conducts the Choral Art Society AND...The New York Philharmonic.

(MUSIC)

That was the Airborne Symphony by Marc Blitzstein. The New York Philharmonic and the Choral Arts Society were conducted by Leonard Bernstein. Also featured on the recording were tenor Andrea Velis; baritone David Watson; and narrator Orson Welles. The recording is commercially available on Sony Classical as part of the Bernstein Century Series.

(FADE OUT)
We present another program of Philharmonic Firsts on our next New York Philharmonic broadcast. This is Alec Baldwin. Please join me as we explore a variety of works that received first performances by the orchestra, including works by Beethoven, Stravinsky, and Tan Dun. Leonard Bernstein, Zubin Mehta, and Kurt Masur will conduct...the New York Philharmonic This Week.