

Montgomery Philharmonic

Intersecting with the Community

HOME

ABOUT

CONTRIBUTE

CONTACT

GALLERY

MEMBERS

Montgomery Philharmonic 2018 - 2019 Our 13th Season : They Changed The World

Concert 2, December 1 and 2, 2018, 4 PM: At the Intersection

Beethoven | Bernstein | Bass

About Leonard Bernstein -

Leonard Bernstein was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts. As a boy, he took piano lessons and attended the Garrison and Boston Latin Schools. At Harvard University, he studied with Walter Piston, Edward Burlingame-Hill, and A. Tillman Merritt, among others. Before graduating in 1939, he made an unofficial conducting debut with his own incidental music to “The Birds,” and directed and performed in Marc Blitzstein’s “The Cradle Will Rock.” Then, at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, he studied piano with Isabella Vengerova, conducting with Fritz Reiner, and orchestration with Randall Thompson.

In 1940, he studied at the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s newly created summer institute, Tanglewood, with the orchestra’s conductor, Serge Koussevitzky. Bernstein later became Koussevitzky’s conducting assistant. He was appointed to his first permanent conducting post in 1943, as Assistant Conductor of the New York Philharmonic. On November 14, 1943, Bernstein substituted, with only a few hours’ notice, for the ailing Bruno Walter at a Carnegie Hall concert, which was broadcast nationally on radio, receiving critical acclaim. Soon orchestras worldwide sought him out as a guest conductor.

In 1945, he was appointed Music Director of the New York City Symphony Orchestra, a post that he held until 1947. After Serge Koussevitzky died in 1951, Bernstein headed the orchestral and conducting departments at Tanglewood, teaching there for many years. In 1951, he married Chilean actress and pianist Felicia Montealegre. He was also visiting music professor and head of the Creative Arts Festivals at Brandeis University in the early 1950s.

Bernstein became Music Director of the New York Philharmonic in 1958. From then until 1969, he led more concerts with the orchestra than any previous conductor had. He subsequently held the lifetime title of Laureate Conductor, making frequent guest appearances with the orchestra. More than half of Bernstein’s over 400 recordings were with the New York Philharmonic.

Bernstein traveled the world as a conductor. Immediately after World War II, in 1946, he conducted in London and at the International Music Festival in Prague. In 1947, he conducted in Tel Aviv, beginning a relationship with Israel that lasted until his death. In 1953, Bernstein was the first American to conduct opera at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan—Cherubini’s “Medea” with Maria Callas.

Bernstein was a leading advocate of American composers, particularly Aaron Copland. The two remained close friends for life. As a young pianist, Bernstein performed Copland’s “Piano Variations” so often that he considered the composition his trademark. Bernstein programmed and recorded nearly all of Copland’s orchestral works, many of them twice. He devoted several televised “Young People’s Concerts” to Copland, and gave the premiere of Copland’s “Connotations,” commissioned for the opening of Philharmonic Hall (now David Geffen Hall) at Lincoln Center in 1962.

Although Bernstein’s conducting repertoire encompassed the standard literature, he may be best remembered for his performances and recordings of Haydn, Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann, Sibelius, and Mahler. Particularly notable were his performances of the Mahler symphonies with the New York Philharmonic in the 1960s, sparking a renewed interest in the works of Mahler.

In 1985, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences honored Bernstein with the Lifetime Achievement Grammy Award. He won eleven Emmy Awards in his career. His televised concert and lecture series started with the Omnibus program in 1954, followed by the extraordinary Young People’s Concerts with the New York Philharmonic in 1958, which extended over 14 seasons. Among his many appearances on the PBS series “Great Performances” was the 11-part acclaimed “Bernstein’s Beethoven.” In 1989, Bernstein and others commemorated the 1939 invasion of Poland in a worldwide telecast from Warsaw.

World peace was a particular concern of Bernstein’s. Speaking at Johns Hopkins University in 1980 and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York in 1983, he described his vision of global harmony. His “Journey for Peace” tour to Athens and Hiroshima with the European Community Orchestra in 1985 commemorated the 40th anniversary of the atom bomb. In December 1989, Bernstein conducted the historic “Berlin Celebration Concerts” on both sides of the Berlin Wall as it was being dismantled. The concerts were unprecedented gestures of cooperation; the musicians represented former East Germany, West Germany, and the four powers that had partitioned Berlin after World War II. Bernstein supported Amnesty International from its inception. To benefit the effort in 1987, he established the Felicia Montealegre Fund in memory of his wife, who died in 1978. In 1990, Bernstein received the Praemium Imperiale, an international prize created in 1988 by the Japan Arts Association and awarded for lifetime achievement in the arts. Bernstein used the \$100,000 prize to establish The Bernstein Education Through the Arts Fund, Inc. before his death on October 14, 1990.

- **Born:** August 25, 1918, Lawrence, Massachusetts
- **Died:** October 14, 1990, New York, New York
- **Nationality:** American
- **Father:** Samuel Joseph Bernstein, a hairdressing supplies wholesaler
- **Mother:** Jennie (née Resnick)
- **Wife:** Felicia Montealegre, Chilean actress and pianist (m. 1951, d. 1978)
- **Children:** Jamie, Alexander, and Nina
- **Grandchildren:** Jamie, Alexander, and Nina
- **Compositions:** 3 ballets, 3 operas, 7 Broadway Musicals, 7 works of incidental music for plays, 3 film scores, 20 original works for orchestra including 3 symphonies, 11 major choral works, 13 chamber works, 17 works for voice, 14 works for solo piano

Chichester Psalms (1965) – Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990)

In December 1963, Leonard Bernstein received a letter from the Very Reverend Walter Hussey, Dean of the Chichester Cathedral in Sussex, England, asking him to compose a work for the cathedral’s music festival in 1965: “The Chichester Organist and Choirmaster, John Birch, and I, are very anxious to have written some piece of music which the combined choirs could sing at the Festival to be held in Chichester in August, 1965, and we wondered if you would be willing to write something for us. I do realize how enormously busy you are, but if you could manage to do this we should be tremendously honoured and grateful. The sort of thing that we had in mind was perhaps, say, a setting of the Psalm 2, or some part of it, either unaccompanied or accompanied by orchestra or organ, or both. I only mention this to give you some idea as to what was in our minds.”

The timing of this letter was perfect, because Bernstein had planned a composing sabbatical during the 1965 season. Dr. Hussey explained that the combined choirs of the cathedral would be 70 to 75 male voices and that he had access to a string orchestra, a piano, a chamber organ, and harpsichord, and could possibly get a brass choir together for the piece. He also said that if it had a hint of *West Side Story* in it, then he would be delighted. In the end, Bernstein recycled music from *West Side Story* and an uncompleted musical, *The Skin of Our Teeth*.

The three-movement work was written originally for boy treble or countertenor, solo quartet, choir, and orchestra. [Part 1](#) used Psalms 100 and 108, with the number 7 playing an important role. This section is in 7/4 meter, uses the interval of a 7th in parallel motion many times between the tenor and baritone voices, and uses the interval of a 7th in the melodic figures. [Part 2](#) used Psalms 2 and 23. The liturgical meaning of this part is further reinforced by the fact that Bernstein stated explicitly that the part for countertenor be sung only by a male voice and never by a woman. He did this to suggest that Psalm 23, a “Psalm of David,” was to be heard as if it were being sung by the boy David himself. [Part 3](#) used Psalms 131 and 133. This third section and the finale section use motifs from the introduction to unify the piece and the harmonies dissolve eventually to a unison note on the last note of text. The text is sung in Hebrew and the mood is affirmative and often serene.

Text of *Chichester Psalms*-

Instrumentation – countertenor, soprano soloist, mezzo soprano soloist, tenor soloist, baritone soloist, SATB choir, organ, harp, percussion

Artifacts –

[About the Chichester Psalms on the Leonard Bernstein Website](#)

[Bernstein Festival at Chichester](#)

[Leonard Bernstein Archival Website](#)



Bernstein Conducts Bernstein: Kaddish & Chichester Psalms

Bernstein: Chichester Psalms

Bernstein: Chichester Psalms - Symphony No. 3 "Kaddish"

SHOP. CONNECT. ENJOY.



amazon

Privacy

[Leonard Bernstein: Chichester Psalms/Symphony 1&2](#)

[Bernstein Conducts Bernstein: Kaddish & Chichester Psalms](#)

[Leonard Bernstein: American Original](#)

YouTube.com Links –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Yhnm14DW9g>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1axC7k1fP9Q>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXmXnmbomzA>