



BERNSTEIN

Symphony No. 1

'Jeremiah'

Concerto for

Orchestra

'Jubilee Games'

Helen Medlyn, Mezzo-Soprano

Nathan Gunn, Baritone

**New Zealand
Symphony Orchestra**

James Judd

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

Symphony No. 1 'Jeremiah' • Concerto for Orchestra 'Jubilee Games'

Leonard Bernstein's legendary 1943 Carnegie Hall debut leading the New York Philharmonic, stepping in at the last moment for an ailing Bruno Walter, surely ranks as one of the watershed events in the history of American music. It was against this background that the *First Symphony* ('Jeremiah') of Leonard Bernstein was first heard. Though initial sketches were begun in 1939 after Bernstein had moved to New York upon completion of his Harvard studies, it was a competition sponsored by the New England Conservatory of Music in 1942 that spurred the young composer to complete the work. Bernstein discovered that one of the chief judges was to be Sergey Koussevitzky, the legendary music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra as well as mentor to the fledgling conductor. The piano score was completed in a mere ten days after learning of the competition. Amazingly, Bernstein enlisted the help of his sister Shirley and several friends, who completed the ink copy of the score while he orchestrated, keeping him primed with pots of coffee. The orchestration was completed in three days and nights. As it was too late to post the completed score by the 31st December deadline, Bernstein boarded a train to Boston and delivered it in person, only hours before the final deadline.

The symphony, however, was not selected as a winning entry, but what surely helped with its premiere as well as its subsequent popularity no doubt had to do with the well-documented event of 14th November, 1943: Leonard Bernstein's New York Philharmonic debut at Carnegie Hall, fronting one of the world's venerable musical institutions. That the event has gone down in history as a critical moment in the chronicle of American music is most certainly due to the tremendous life that Bernstein breathed into the music, an interpretative passion and intensity that would mature over the years. The press lost no time in underscoring the fact that Bernstein's debut was the first time an American-born conductor led the

Philharmonic. Overnight, he became the talk of the music world. Bernstein was only 27.

Not surprisingly, interest in his symphony sprung from various corners. The first performance was conducted by Bernstein with the Pittsburgh Symphony, at the invitation of its director, Fritz Reiner, on 28th January, 1944. Koussevitzky invited Bernstein to lead the Boston Symphony Orchestra in *Jeremiah* shortly thereafter, and the New York Philharmonic followed with four performances in the spring. In what was to be one of many whirlwind years for Bernstein, the symphony would win the New York Music Critics Circle Award for 1944.

The composer stated that his symphony was about a crisis in faith, an issue that would concern him for life. The biblical Jeremiah preached in Jerusalem some six centuries before Christ, centring his message on religious reform in a time of confused morality. The *Prophecy* first movement sets the tone of slow, solemn contemplation found throughout the entire work. The scherzo movement, *Profanation*, gives a feeling of the destruction of Jerusalem during the tumultuous times of the prophet. The final *Lamentation* is the literal cry of Jeremiah, lamenting the pillaged city. This movement, composed years earlier, captivated initial audiences as the horrors of the Nazi Final Solution were being revealed. One of Bernstein's many works that embrace Jewish themes, the piece was dedicated to Samuel Bernstein, the composer's father, who helped impart his faith to his son. The work uses the Ashkenazic Hebrew pronunciation of the *Book of Lamentations*. In *Jeremiah* it is certainly possible to see parallels between the prophet and the young composer/conductor/pianist, taking brave and unpopular positions despite the risk.

As it very nearly book-ends a long and illustrious career, *Jubilee Games* makes for an appropriate companion. Furthermore, it represents another affirmation of the composer's Jewish faith. By 1986 Bernstein had certainly become one of the world's most

celebrated musicians. That year the Israel Philharmonic celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with an extended tour of two continents. On the programme was a new work in two movements entitled *Jubilee Games*, commissioned by the orchestra the previous year. Bernstein commented that he hoped “one day to add another movement or two”. *Opening Prayer*, for baritone solo and orchestra, was written to commemorate the gala reopening of Carnegie Hall in December of the same year and was later appended to *Jubilee Games*. Bernstein was still not satisfied and composed *Seven Variations on an Octatonic Theme* in early 1989. In the tradition of Bartók’s great work, Bernstein directed the first performance of his newly-titled *Concerto for Orchestra*, in four movements, in Tel Aviv the following April.

The innovative first movement, *Free-Style Events*, involves a greater degree of improvisation than in any other Bernstein piece, and quotes the Old Testament, from *Leviticus*, in which Moses says:

And Thou shalt number seven Sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years... shall be unto thee forty times nine years... And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim Liberty throughout the land.

Orchestral players underscore the significance of the number seven (*sheva* in Hebrew) by whispering or shouting the number seven times. Later, an exclamation of *hamishim* (fifty) is followed by fanfare signals from

the brass, imitating the motifs prescribed to the shofar, the traditional ram’s horn used to mark the fiftieth year as a holy year. Several of these fanfares are heard on pre-recorded tapes. The theme and variation movement, smartly titled *Mixed Doubles*, is slow and sparse, contrasting tone colours with pairs of instruments invoking the second movement of Bartók’s work.

Bernstein further utilised numerical association in *Diaspora Dances*, opening in 18/8 time, and alluding to the practice of assigning numerical values to the Hebrew alphabet. The word *hai* equals the number eighteen and, translated, means “life”. He said that this unique celebration of the Hassidic spirit ranged “from the Middle East back to Central European ghettos and forward again to a New York-ish kind of jazz”. The final movement, now with the title *Benediction*, makes use of a melody first employed nearly a half-century before, in one of Bernstein’s *Anniversaries* for piano solo. The movement, and thus the work, closes with a brief blessing from the baritone, providing a fittingly appropriate traversal of Bernstein’s Jewish faith from first to last:

*May the Lord bless and keep you.
May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and
be gracious unto you.
May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and
give you peace.*

Sean Hickey

Helen Medlyn

In 1989, British-born mezzo soprano Helen Medlyn began her professional career at Auckland's Mercury Theatre appearing in operas, musicals and plays until the theatre's closure in 1992. Since then, her Australian work has included appearances in the Sydney Opera House for Opera Australia, with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Opera Queensland, the State Opera of South Australia and the Canberra Symphony Orchestra. In New Zealand she has been a regular guest artist with the Auckland Theatre Company, NBR New Zealand Opera, the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the New Zealand Festival, the New Zealand Chamber Orchestra and the Auckland Philharmonia. She made her American debut in 2002 with the Eugene Symphony, has understudied Brangaene for the English National Opera's *Tristan and Isolde*, and more recently made her debut in Osaka, with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

Nathan Gunn

Nathan Gunn is recognised as one of America's most exciting young baritones. He has appeared in many of the world's most prestigious opera houses including the Metropolitan Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Seattle Opera, the Houston Grand Opera, the Dallas Opera, the Opera Company of Philadelphia, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the Paris Opéra, the Glyndebourne Festival, and La Monnaie in Brussels. His many rôles include the title-rôle in *Billy Budd*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, Marcello in *La Bohème*, Harlekin in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, Prince Andrei in *War and Peace*, and the title-rôle in *Hamlet*. Equally at home on the concert platform, Nathan Gunn has appeared with the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, and the Rotterdam Symphony Orchestra. A frequent recitalist, he was featured in John Wustman's seven-year series, *The Songs of Franz Schubert*, which concluded in 1997 on the 200th anniversary of Franz Schubert's birth and included performances of *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*. He has also been presented in recital by Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, the Wigmore Hall in London, Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels, the 92nd Street Y in New York, Cal Performances at Berkeley, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Vanderbilt University, and the University of Chicago. An alumnus of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artists Program, Nathan Gunn is also the winner of the 1994 Metropolitan Opera National Council Competition, the 1998 ARIA award, and a 1997 Tucker Foundation Career Grant. He received his Bachelor's Degree in Music from the University of Illinois, where he studied with William Miller and John Wustman.

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra is the country's national orchestra and enjoys a lively profile both inside and outside New Zealand. International quality concerts performed by major artists to well-filled halls are testament to the orchestra's developing reputation, with programmes of traditional and contemporary repertoire. The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra gave its first public performance in March 1947 and its first (and current) Music Director was appointed in 1999. The orchestra plays more than a hundred performances each year; these include seasons of major symphonic repertoire in seven centres and also a wide range of special programmes. The orchestra is involved in education projects, performs family and schools concerts, accompanies opera and ballet productions and records for television, films (including *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Fellowship of the Ring*) and radio. It commissions and performs New Zealand music and has a long recording history, which has seen it move into the world market and win international awards. The orchestra also administers the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra Chamber Orchestra, which has its own series, and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra National Youth Orchestra. Highlights of the orchestra's tours outside New Zealand are the much-celebrated visit to Seville to perform at the 1992 Expo with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa under the baton of Conductor Laureate Franz-Paul Decker. More recently there have been the performances at the Summer Sydney Olympic Arts Festival in 2000, the televised Millennium Concert with Kiri Te Kanawa at Gisborne, which was screened world-wide, and recent recordings such as the high-flying Libburn *Three Symphonies*. The orchestra continues to collaborate with conductors and soloists of the highest international distinction.

James Judd

The Music Director of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, British-born conductor James Judd, stands at the forefront of a new period of artistic growth for his orchestra. In addition to embarking on a sizable series of recordings with the orchestra for Naxos he has brought the orchestra international acclaim through appearances with the New Zealand Symphony at the 2000 Summer Sydney Olympic Arts Festival as well as a specially televised Millennium Concert with Kiri Te Kanawa as soloist. A graduate of London's Trinity College of Music, James Judd came to international attention as the Assistant Conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra, a post he accepted at the invitation of Lorin Maazel. Four years later he returned to Europe after being appointed Associate Music Director of the European Community Youth Orchestra by Claudio Abbado, an ensemble with which he continues to serve as an honorary Artistic Director. Since that time he has appeared with the Berlin Philharmonic and the Israel Philharmonic, and has conducted in the great concert halls of Europe, including the Salzburg Mozarteum and Vienna's Musikverein. He has also made guest appearances with such prestigious ensembles as the Vienna Symphony, Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig, Prague Symphony, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, the Monte-Carlo Symphony Orchestra and the Mozarteum Orchestra of Salzburg. As an opera conductor he has appeared with the English National Opera, conducting productions of *Il trovatore*, *La traviata*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Rigoletto*, and *Le nozze di Figaro*, and at the Glyndebourne Opera Festival with Rossini's *La Cenerentola*. He continues to conduct all of the major British ensembles, including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra, and the English Chamber Orchestra. He was co-founder of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, which he has led on tours throughout the United States, the Far East and Europe. In North and South America James Judd is a frequent and much-admired guest conductor, having appeared with the orchestras of St Louis, Montreal, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Utah, Vancouver and Ottawa, and for some fourteen years served as Music Director of the Florida Philharmonic Orchestra. His many successful recordings for Naxos include works by American and English composers.

3 Ēicha

PEREQ 1, 1-3

Ēicha yashva vadad ha'ir
Rabati am
Hay'ta k'almana;
Rabati vagoyim
Sarati bam'dinot
Hay'ta lamas.

Bacho tivkeh balaila
V'dim'ata al leḥēiya;
Ēin la m'naḥēm
Mikol ohaveiha;
Kol re'eha bag'du va;
Hayu la l'oyevim.

Galta Y'huda mē'oni
Umērov avoda;
Hi yashva vagoyim,
Lo matz'a mano'aḥ;
Kol rod' feha hisiguha
Bēin hamitzarim.

PEREQ 1, 8

Ḥet hat'a Y'rushalayim...
Ēicha yashva vadad ha'ir
...almana.

PEREQ 4, 14-15

Na'u ivrim baḥutzot
N'go'alu badam;
B'lo yuchlu
Yig'u bilvushēihem.

Suru tamē! kar'u lamo,
Suru, suru! al tiga'u...

PEREQ 5, 20-21

Lama lanetzaḥ tishkaḥēnu...
Lanetzaḥ ta'avzēnu...

Hashivēnu Adonai ēlecha...

From "The Lamentations of Jeremiah"

CHAPTER 1, 1-3

How doth the city sit solitary,
That was full of people!
How is she become as a widow!
She that was great among the nations,
And princess among the provinces,
How is she become tributary!

She weepeth sore in the night,
And her tears are on her cheeks;
She hath none to comfort her
Among all her lovers;
All her friends have dealt treacherously with her.
They are become her enemies.

Judah is gone into exile because of affliction,
And because of great servitude;
She dwelleth among the nations,
She findeth no rest.
All her pursuers overtook her
Within the narrow passes.

CHAPTER 1, 8

Jerusalem hath grievously sinned...
How doth the city sit solitary
...a widow.

CHAPTER 4, 14-15

They wander as blind men in the streets,
They are polluted with blood,
So that men cannot
Touch their garments.

Depart, ye unclean! they cried unto them,
Depart, depart! touch us not...

CHAPTER 5, 20-21

Wherefore dost Thou forget us forever,
And forsake us so long time?...

Turn Thou us into Thee, O Lord...



AMERICAN CLASSICS

Written in the composer's early twenties, Bernstein's *Jeremiah Symphony*, inspired by the Biblical prophet, is his first large-scale orchestral work. Bernstein himself stated that the symphony was about a crisis in faith, symbolized by the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Composed for the 50th anniversary of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, in 1986, the *Concerto for Orchestra 'Jubilee Games'* represents another affirmation of Bernstein's Jewish faith. However, whereas the *Jeremiah Symphony* exudes youthful passion and intensity, the *Concerto for Orchestra* involves a greater degree of improvisation and experimentation. As with many of Bernstein's works, it ends with a benediction and a plea for peace.

Booklet notes in English

*Sung texts in Hebrew transliteration and English translation

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(1918-1990)

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Helen Medlyn, Mezzo-Soprano *
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Symphony No. 1 'Jeremiah' *

25:06

- | | | |
|---|---------------|-------|
| 1 | Prophecy | 7:43 |
| 2 | Profanation | 6:29 |
| 3 | Lamentation * | 10:54 |

Concerto for Orchestra 'Jubilee Games' †

29:58

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 4 | I Free-Style Events: Allegro con brío, gíocoso | 7:27 |
| 5 | II Mixed Doubles: Theme | 1:26 |
| 6 | Variation 1 | 1:01 |
| 7 | Variation 2 | 0:26 |
| 8 | Variation 3 | 0:39 |
| 9 | Variation 4 | 1:17 |
| 10 | Variation 5 | 0:33 |
| 11 | Variation 6 | 2:18 |
| 12 | Variation 7 | 1:15 |
| 13 | Coda | 1:45 |
| 14 | III Diaspora Dances: Vivace | 5:37 |
| 15 | IV Benediction: Moderato, invocando † | 6:13 |

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from 13th - 15th August 2002

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(www.timsmithpainter.com)

American flag, folk artist, 1880s

Playing
Time:
55:04

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