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Leonard Bernstein: Peace and Harmony

If you've ever heard songs from the musical *West Side Story*, you've heard music created by a man known and appreciated by many music lovers. Leonard Bernstein, born August 25, 1918, in Lawrence, Massachusetts, received world-wide recognition for his classical and show music and is known in particular for performances of Haydn, Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann, Sibelius, and Mahler as well as his work on Broadway. Though he died on October 14, 1990, at the age of 72, much of his work is still being enjoyed today.

Bernstein was educated at Harvard and the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. He also spent some time at Tanglewood, a summer institute for training young conductors and musicians in conjunction with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

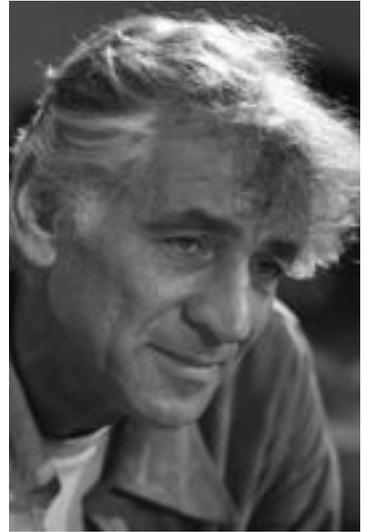
In 1943, Bernstein became assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. This was his first position as a permanent conductor. In his first time to conduct the Philharmonic, he was called on to replace another conductor, Bruno Walter, who had become ill. Bernstein was called in at the last minute, with no time to practice. Bernstein did such a good job that he began to receive praise and recognition. His first full-scale work, *Jeremiah*, was performed with the Pittsburgh Symphony in 1944 and received the New York Music Critics' Circle Award for the best American work of that year. Bernstein became the music director of the New York City Symphony in 1945.

In 1951, Bernstein married actress and pianist Felicia Montealegre. They had three children. In 1953, he became the first American to conduct an opera at La Scala in Milan, Italy.

In 1958, Bernstein became music director of the New York Philharmonic. Working with them through 1969, he did more concerts with that group than any conductor before him. In all, he made more than 400 recordings, more than half with this orchestra. His recordings won 16 Grammy Awards, and in addition he was given a Lifetime Achievement Grammy in 1985.

Bernstein was close friends with Aaron Copland and once said that Copland was his only real composition teacher. Bernstein was committed to teaching young people, and he helped found the Los Angeles Philharmonic Institute in 1982. The Institute was a summer training academy for young musicians and conductors, similar to the one Bernstein had attended at Tanglewood. He also played a key role in the formation of the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan, a similar summer training program.

During his life, he received many awards, medals, and ceremonial keys for his contribution to the music world. Along with his Grammys, these included an Emmy award, two Tony awards, and the Kennedy Center Honors



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award (in 1980).

Bernstein was particularly concerned with world peace. When his wife passed away in 1978, he established an Amnesty International fund in her name to honor her. The fund benefited those working for human rights. He also showed support for peace when he conducted two concerts played in East and West Germany in 1989, just six weeks after the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. Musicians from both East and West Germany, as well as from all over the world, participated in a show of cooperation and celebration of freedom.

In all, Bernstein had an impact on causes important to him and also helped form the American public's view of classical music. He left a legacy of peace and harmony that continues to this day.

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Questions

1. What is the name of one of the musicals for which Leonard Bernstein is known?

- _____ 2. Aaron Copland was one of Leonard Bernstein's close friends.

A. true
B. false

- _____ 3. With which orchestra did Bernstein spend the most years?

A. Boston Symphony Orchestra
B. Los Angeles Philharmonic
C. Pittsburgh Symphony
D. New York Philharmonic

4. Which large-scale work was performed by the Pittsburgh Symphony?

- _____ 5. Which of the following causes was not listed as important to Bernstein?

A. world peace
B. the appreciation of classical music
C. animal rights
D. the musical education of young people

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6. Bernstein was the first American to conduct an opera at La Scala in _____.

7. How old was Bernstein at the time of his death?

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The Sound of Their Music: Biography of Rodgers and Hammerstein

Caption: Richard Rodgers (on left) with Oscar Hammerstein

Richard Rodgers was born in 1902 and died on December 30, 1979. Oscar Hammerstein II was born in 1895 and died in 1960. Considered the "most consistently fruitful and successful partnerships in American musical theater," the duo of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein blessed the world with entertaining music. If you've ever seen a Broadway musical, chances are you've heard some of their work. They had a major impact on the music of America. Their music and writing partnership has been called the greatest of the 20th century.



Before partnering with Hammerstein, Rodgers first worked with Lorenz Hart. However, Hart developed a problem with alcohol, and Rodgers approached Hammerstein about forming a partnership. When Hart was unavailable to work on *Oklahoma!*, Rodgers and Hammerstein officially began working together. Hammerstein would first write lyrics, and then Rodgers would then write music.

Oklahoma! was based on a stage play called *Green Grow the Lilacs*. The new version introduced more depth and used music and dance as an integral part of the storyline rather than as a side attraction. There was also no emphasis on having a major star as part of the musical. Instead, they concentrated on making the story the star of the show. The musical began performances in 1943 and was presented 2,212 times before closing in 1948. It was made into a film in 1955.

Other notable pieces the gentlemen produced were *State Fair*, *Cinderella* (for television), and *The Sound of Music*. This musical ended up running longer than any other musical in London theater and was also the last project the gentlemen did together. It was eventually made into an Oscar-winning movie, and even today, *The Sound of Music* is performed to the delight of audiences all over. Hammerstein also brought new life to the "operetta" by writing *Show Boat* with Jerome Kern, dealing with such issues as racism, alcoholism, and gambling. In all, the team wrote nine musicals that include (in addition to the ones already mentioned) *Carousel*, *South Pacific*, and *The King and I* as their most successful among a few others. They also helped to produce other musicals that they did not write, including *Annie Get Your Gun*.

Rodgers and Hammerstein were recognized several times for their contribution to music, several of which came after their deaths. In all, their musicals won 42 Tony Awards, 15 Academy Awards, 2 Grammy Awards, 2 Emmys, and 2 Pulitzer Prizes. In 1990, Broadway's 46th Street theater was renamed the Richard Rodgers Theatre. In 1999, a postage stamp was issued in their honor. In 1995 and 2002, various celebrations of their music were held in honor of the anniversaries of their births. Their music continues to live on in many theatrical performances done by both professional and amateur groups. It's quite possible you've seen one!

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The Sound of Their Music: Biography of Rodgers and Hammerstein

Questions

_____ 1. Rodgers wrote music, and Hammerstein wrote lyrics.

- A. false
- B. true

_____ 2. In their partnership, which happened first?

- A. the writing of the music
- B. the writing of the lyrics

_____ 3. Which of the following was the first musical Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote?

- A. *Cinderella*
- B. *Oklahoma!*
- C. *State Fair*
- D. *Show Boat*

_____ 4. Rodgers and Hammerstein made sure to hire major stars to ensure the popularity of their musicals.

- A. false
- B. true

5. Why might Rodgers have broken off his working relationship with Lorenz Hart?

6. How many Tony Awards did Rogers and Hammerstein's musicals win?
