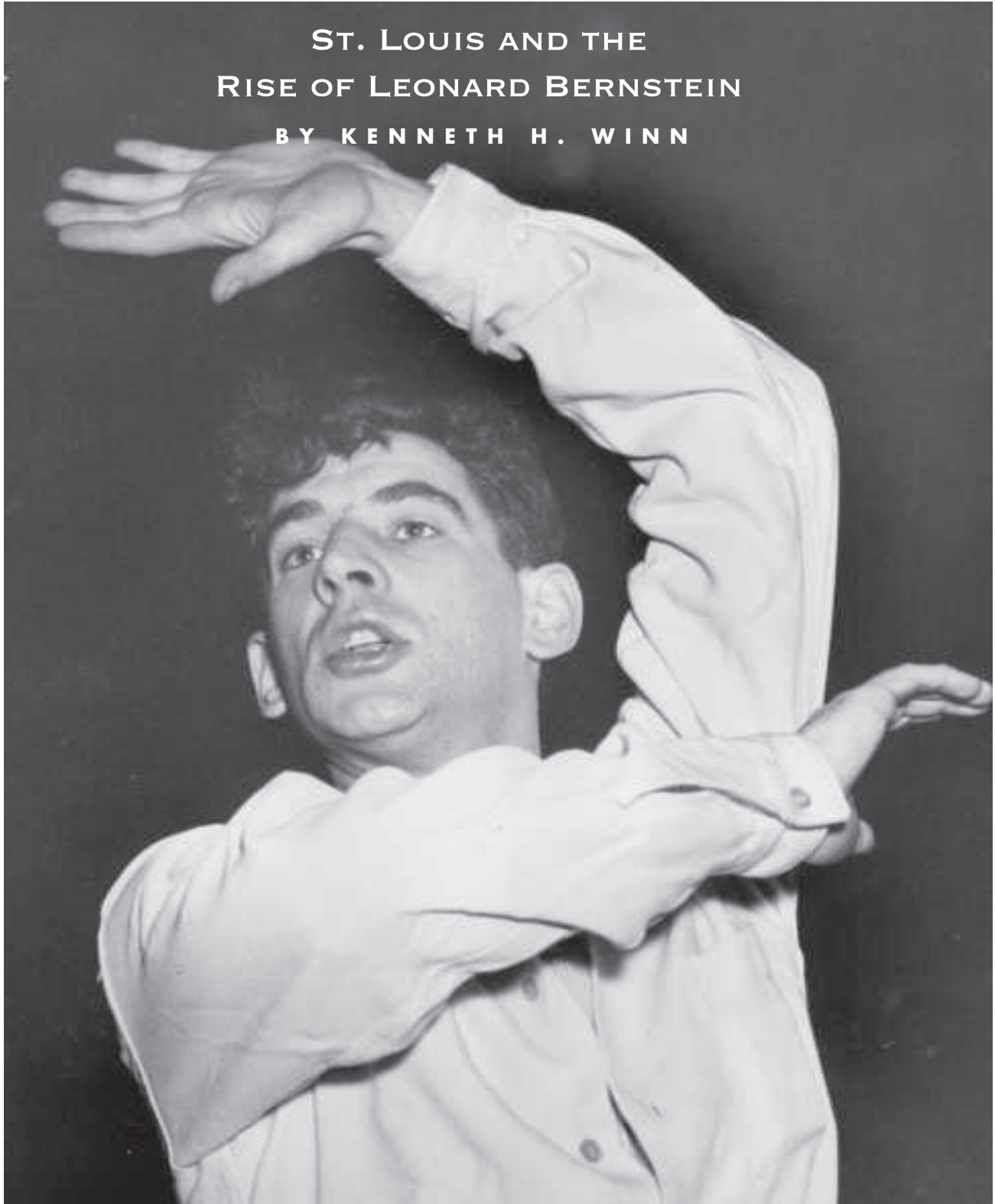


THE PIN-UP BOY OF THE SYMPHONY

ST. LOUIS AND THE
RISE OF LEONARD BERNSTEIN

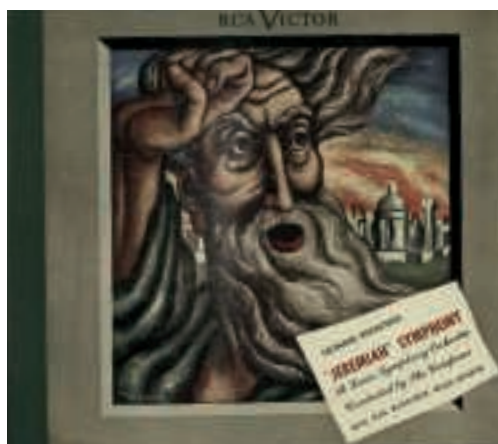
BY KENNETH H. WINN



In May 1944 25-year-old Leonard Bernstein, riding a tidal wave of national publicity, was invited to serve as a guest conductor of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra for its 1944–1945 season. The orchestra and Bernstein later revealed that they had also struck a deal with RCA's Victor Records to make his first classical record, a symphony of his own composition, entitled *Jeremiah*. Little more than a year earlier, the New York Philharmonic music director Artur Rodziński had hired Bernstein on his 24th birthday as an assistant conductor, a position of honor, but one known mostly for its menial work. His St. Louis invitation and the record agreement came in the wake of his brilliant service on May 13, 1943, as a last-minute stand in for the internationally known conductor Bruno Walter, who was scheduled to substitute for the vacationing Rodziński. When Walter suddenly fell ill, Bernstein, the orchestra's water boy, became the Philharmonic's maestro. His electric performance inspired the *New York Times* to run two stories, one of them on the front page, and then a highly flattering editorial on the following day. His triumph was even sweeter for having been carried on national radio in that pre-television era.¹

His spectacular rise had just begun. During the two weeks after his conducting debut he was interviewed by magazines such as *Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Look*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *The New Yorker*, and virtually every New York newspaper, including the *Times*, *Herald-Tribune*, *Post*, and *Daily News*. *Time* compared him to another "boy genius," Orson Welles, who had recently released his masterpiece, *Citizen Kane*. The miracle year continued into 1944 when the ballet he scored with choreographer Jerome Robbins, *Fancy Free*, received warm reviews. (Robbins would later serve as his collaborator on the musical *West Side Story*). *Fancy Free* soon spun off a successful Broadway musical, *On the Town*. Achievements led to celebrity. He appeared on the radio as a panelist on the quiz show *Information Please*, and newspapers chronicled his comings and goings on their society pages.² Topping Bernstein's rise were his romantic good looks, star-power charm, and flamboyant conducting style. He quietly liked his association with Welles, but balked at his bandied comparison to the languid crooner, Frank Sinatra. This demur aside, a widely

(Left) Bernstein rehearsing before the February 11 performance of *Jeremiah* at Kiel Auditorium. One review the next day noted Bernstein's "conquests of Broadway and Carnegie Hall." (Image: St. Louis Mercantile Library Association at the University of Missouri-St. Louis)



Jeremiah was the first of Leonard Bernstein's symphonies recorded by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra in the spring of 1944. (Image: Washington University Libraries, Gaylord Music Library)

publicized story from a New York high school newspaper, had bobbysoxers sighing over him as the "pin-up boy of the symphony." They, however, advised him to get a crew cut.³

For some of Bernstein's elders, it was too much, too fast. Many music critics were skeptical, put off by the torrent of praise. "Glamourpuss," they called him, the "Wunderkind of the Western World."⁴ They suspected Bernstein's performance was simply a flash-in-the-pan. The young conductor was riding a wave of luck rather than a wave of talent. For years his age would, in effect, serve as his last name, as in "Leonard Bernstein, 25, will . . ." One of the most suspicious

of his talent was *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* music columnist Thomas B. Sherman who, upon learning of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra's invitation to Bernstein, dwelt on Bernstein's "luck" and good "fortune," noting that events had proven "favorable." He acknowledged that Bernstein seemed to have the skill to "take up where his luck left off." He also conceded Bernstein was a "gifted" and a "good-looking young man," if "thoroughly pleased with himself." Bernstein's unexpected rise, the columnist concluded, had come in "the best traditions of romantic fiction," but if the young man seemed to have taken "both the public and the critics by storm," it was still to be seen if it really was a storm or just a drizzle.⁵

Now, in the hundredth anniversary of Bernstein's birth, things are much clearer. Bernstein went on to become the most important American conductor of the twentieth century. Within 15 years of his accidental Philharmonic debut he had become, at age 40, the youngest permanent conductor in the New York Philharmonic's history. Now, more than a quarter of a century after his death, most of his musical interpretations still retain their power. He loved music and the adulation of his audiences, and his voluminous recordings far outnumber those made by his peers. His prancing, his dancing, and his showmanship on the podium are still enjoyable to watch, as if every symphonic note moved him to ecstasy.⁶

But Bernstein was more than a conductor. His remarkable work with choreographer Jerome Robbins, from *Fancy Free* to *West Side Story*, made him the composer of enduring musicals. His more formal classical works, particularly those he wrote from *Jeremiah* in 1943 to his *Chichester Psalms* in 1965, are remarkable compositions. His best classical work has been absorbed into the canon of regularly performed American pieces. He was also an exceptional educator, demonstrated by his television series of *Young People's Concerts* (1958–1972). His educational work also included college lectures. He wrote several well-received books on music that remain in print. He



was a pianist of unusual talent. He might have made a memorable career simply as a performer. He often played piano solos while conducting the orchestra from the piano bench, just as he did in his St. Louis 1945 concerts. For all of these skills and his achievements, his admirers have frequently touted him as the Renaissance Man of American music.⁷

His significance as a conductor also lay in its symbolic value. Until Bernstein's rise, many Americans felt insecure about the country's ability to produce high-caliber classical music conductors of the quality of Arturo Toscanini, Leopold Stokowski, Serge Koussevitzky, or even Vladimir Golschmann, the Frenchman who conducted the St. Louis Symphony from the 1930s to the 1950s. Large cities like St. Louis, New York, and Boston imported talented conductors from Europe by the hundreds.⁸ They still do. Leonard Bernstein gave culturally insecure Americans something to crow about. He proved not only as good as the European imports, but better, and as his fame rose, he was routinely invited to conduct concerts with orchestras from around the world, developing in the process special relationships with highly esteemed orchestras such as the Vienna Philharmonic.

For all of the praise heaped upon him, however, Bernstein irritated, or disappointed, many people. His failure to settle down to one task frustrated erstwhile

admirers. Some people thought he should conduct less and compose classical music more, and some of his highbrow mentors, like Boston's music director Serge Koussevitzky, were not shy about expressing their displeasure. Feeling the heat, Bernstein said during his 1945 stay in St. Louis, "I am probably through with musical comedy. I have done that now. I like to do everything once, just to see what it feels like."⁹ Others said he could have been the savior of the popular musical in an age in which it was in decline. Instead of being a Renaissance Man, his critics claimed he spread himself out so thin he could never realize his full musical potential. Bernstein wearied of this criticism, which dogged his entire career. Writing in the *New York Times* he said: "I don't want to spend my life, as Toscanini did, studying and restudying the same 50 pieces of music. . . . It would . . . bore me to death. I want to conduct. I want to play the piano. I want to write for Hollywood. I want to write symphonic music. I want to keep on trying to be, in the full sense of that wonderful word, a musician. I also want to teach. I want to write books and poetry. And I think I can still do justice to them all." What some saw as showmanship, others saw as showboatmanship, and thought him vain and self-absorbed.¹⁰

There were also people with no interest in music who hated Bernstein for his politics. Bernstein had a strong cultural self-consciousness as the Jewish, gay outsider. He imbibed a heady whiff of the leftist politics of the Depression years. While never a radical, he skirted the edges of radicalism and was

(Left) The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch Everyday Magazine* noted in early 1945 that success had not changed Bernstein much, "for the young conductor and composer is concerned, rather than arrogant, over his rapid accomplishments." (Right) Bernstein (left) worked with Jerome Robbins (1918-1998) on the ballet *Fancy Free*, in which Bernstein wrote the musical score for Robbins' ballet. (Images: *Washington University Libraries, Gaylord Music Library; Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library*)

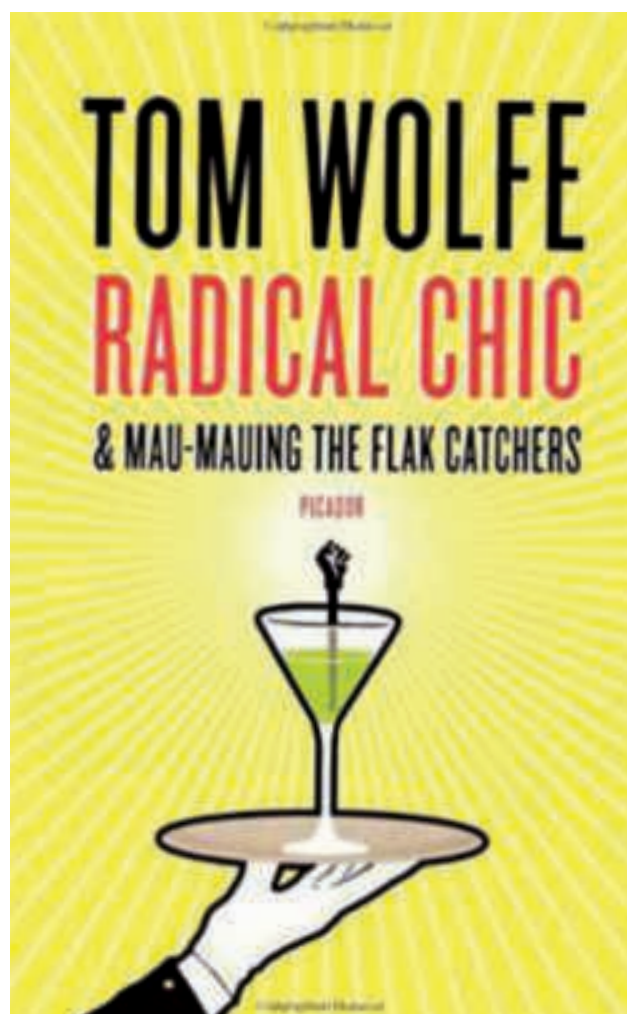


comfortable being among those who embraced it. By 1943 the FBI had begun a file on him that would total 800 pages. The bureau was, in fact, receiving a report on him at the very time he was in St. Louis. At the height of the Cold War, the State Department refused to allow him to conduct concerts overseas. In a groveling affidavit, Bernstein slavishly admitted to some past political naiveté, but emphasized his patriotism. The department relented. Later that same decade, he would play music for President Dwight Eisenhower, and he soon developed strong ties to the Kennedy family. Still, his long-term commitment to social justice for African Americans, already clear when he was a 1930s Harvard student, brought him trouble and eventual embarrassment. He began giving active assistance to African American causes in the 1940s and had strongly supported the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. The embarrassment came in January 1970 when he and his politically active wife gave a party at an ACLU fundraiser on behalf of jailed members of the radical Black Panthers. The Panthers preached self-defensive violence against white oppression and stockpiled weapons. While Bernstein later repudiated the Panthers, the party he and his wife gave on their behalf—complete with Puerto Rican maids serving canapes to New York’s “Beautiful People”—made a delicious target. Unbeknownst to the Bernsteins, the flamboyant writer Tom Wolfe had crashed the party and famously satirized the assembled socialites as indulging in “Radical Chic,” words that stuck to Bernstein.¹¹

But all of this is the epilogue to Bernstein’s St. Louis story. It explains why he matters. To understand what happened in St. Louis in 1945 and the impression he made on the city and the city on him, a brief prologue is needed.

Leonard Bernstein was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts, on August 25, 1918. His parents obtained private piano lessons for him at age ten. His teachers included Helen Coates, who later served for decades as Bernstein’s secretary. Bernstein attended Boston’s elite Latin School and then went to Harvard, where his brilliance and enormous personal magnetism were quickly recognized. One of Bernstein’s greatest skills as a young man was recruiting the assistance of older men who could help him. But, if he was an opportunist, he was a sincere one, staying friends with these patrons long after he needed their help. In 1937 Aaron Copland was already a well-established composer, just reaching the peak of his compositional power (*Appalachian Spring*, *Fanfare for the Common Man*). He was 18 years Bernstein’s senior, but after meeting Bernstein, still an undergraduate, at a party in New York City, the two became lifelong friends. Bernstein later

repaid Copland by becoming perhaps the most important champion of his work.¹² At Harvard, Bernstein studied with the eminent composer Walter Piston and studied conducting with Fritz Reiner at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. Later Reiner, as the conductor of the Pittsburgh Orchestra, gave the young Bernstein an early platform for his music. In 1940 Bernstein worked with conductor Serge



“Radical chic” was coined by Tom Wolfe in his article, “That Party at Lenny’s,” about celebrities and others with high profiles in society embracing radical causes. (Image: MacMillan)

Koussevitzky at the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s summer institute “Tanglewood” (then called the Berkshire Music Festival). Bernstein would wear the cufflinks Koussevitzky gave him at every concert he ever conducted. Another early patron was Dimitri Mitropolous, whom he met in 1937, and whom he would later succeed as the music director of the New York Philharmonic. Throughout his career he wore a medal with Mitropolous’s image under his clothes. After one performance Bernstein fell off the podium

and jabbed the medal into his chest, severely bruising it. In the audience the young conductor Leonard Slatkin, the future music director of the St. Louis Symphony, had waited—now in vain—to meet his hero after the show.¹³

Thus, if unknown to the larger world, by early 1943 the 24-year-old Bernstein was well-known and well-liked by a surprisingly large number of influential conductors and composers. The capstone to his ability to woo older men—and what would eventually bring him to St. Louis—came in the form of Artur Rodziński. Rodziński was in his first year as the conductor of the New York Philharmonic when he hired Bernstein as his assistant. Rodziński was a mercurial figure, prone to paranoia, who sometimes carried a gun in his back pocket while conducting. His relationship with Bernstein soon became fraught when he became jealous of his assistant conductor's headline-snatching fame that began to overshadow his own. At one point he even grabbed Bernstein by the throat in a hallway.

This jealousy was provoked by the freak circumstance that pushed Bernstein into prominence in 1943. Rodziński had left on vacation and the Philharmonic had invited the eminent international conductor Bruno Walter to lead the orchestra. Not long before the concert Walter fell ill with the flu. On short notice, Bernstein was told that he would have to conduct the orchestra. Ever the diligent student, Bernstein had learned the evening's concert program well. His performance blasted him from obscurity into fame.¹⁴

Bernstein quickly capitalized on his new prominence, revealing he had written a symphony: *Symphony No. 1, Jeremiah*. After his fabled performance with the philharmonic, many orchestras were interested in debuting it. Bernstein was a “hot item,” and his old teacher Fritz Reiner, now the conductor of the Pittsburgh Orchestra, half-coaxed and half-bullied him into taking his baton. The Pittsburgh Symphony debuted *Jeremiah* on January 28, 1944. The symphony is loosely based on the experience of the biblical Jeremiah. It is composed of three movements: “Prophecy,” in which Jeremiah warns Jerusalem of its ruin if the people do not turn away from idolatry and wickedness; “Profanation,” which describes the destruction of the temple and the chaos inflicted on the city by Babylon when it fails to heed the prophet's warning; and “Lamentation,” Jeremiah's mourning of his beautiful city's desolation, with a mezzo-soprano solo singing excerpts from the “Book of Lamentation” in Hebrew.¹⁵ If the work did not receive quite the rapturous acclaim of his initial conducting performance, it received positive reviews. Bernstein

soon performed the work again with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and then with the New York Philharmonic. In May 1944 *Jeremiah* received the New York Music Critics Circle's annual award for best new American symphony. When the successes of *Fancy Free* and *On the Town* followed, Bernstein was a young man very much in demand.

Aaron Copland predicted to Bernstein that he would be the most invited guest conductor of 1945. And so he was. The nation's orchestras dutifully lined

Bruno Walter (1876–1962) was a noted conductor who fled Nazi Germany and ended up in the United States in 1939. He declined to be music director of the New York Philharmonic in 1942 due to his age, but he still substituted for them, which created an opportunity for Bernstein when Walter fell ill. (Image: Library of Congress)



up, hoping to bring the boy wonder to their city. That year Bernstein would lead 14 different orchestras, including the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra twice, once at the year's start and then at its close. The first two-week residency was set for February. The visit was announced four months after *Jeremiah*'s premier and the day after the announcement of the New York Music Critics Circle's award.¹⁶

The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (SLSO), founded in 1880, is the nation's second-oldest

The Lord's command Himself on me imposed,
 No tale doest my willing heart withhold;
 Madama! Thus answer'd all my contrition!
 Thou wast my trembling, and all the sorrow
 Divorcement, farewell, yet remains all, etc.

SYMPHONY, "JEREMIAH"—Leonard Bernstein

(Born in Lawrence, Massachusetts, August 25, 1918)

First Performance: Pittsburgh, January 28, 1944, with the composer conducting and Jennie Tourel as soloist.

Mr. Bernstein supplied the following notes on the occasion of the first performance of his work:

"In the summer of 1939 I made a sketch for a Lamentation for Soprano and Orchestra. This sketch lay forgotten for two years, and in the spring of 1942 I began a first movement of a symphony. I soon realized that this new movement, and the Scherzo that I planned to follow it, made logical concomitants with the Lamentation. Thus the symphony came into being, with the Lamentation greatly changed, and the soprano supplanted by a mezzo-soprano. The work was finished in December, 1942, and is dedicated to my father.

"The Symphony does not make use to any great extent of actual Hebrew thematic material. The first theme of the Scherzo is paraphrased from a traditional Hebrew chant, and the opening phrase of the vocal part in the Lamentation is based on a liturgical cadence still sung today in commemoration of the destruction of Jerusalem by

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In early 1945, Bernstein as guest conductor also performed as a piano soloist for the first time in St. Louis. (Image: Missouri Historical Society)

symphonic orchestra after the New York Philharmonic.¹⁷ Over the years it had evolved into a strong second-tier orchestra. RCA Victor Records had begun recording its performances in the 1920s. The Paris-born Vladimir Golschmann had become its music director in 1931. He and his gregarious wife had found a welcoming place in St. Louis society. If Bernstein was considered a human explosion on stage, Golschmann, with his unusually long baton in hand, was regarded as the essence of conducting elegance. Over the years Golschmann had moved the SLSO forward, winning the orchestra greater national recognition. Musicians of international renown appeared with the orchestra. Guest performers included Sergei Rachmaninoff, Jascha Heifetz, Sergei Prokofiev, Vladimir Horowitz, Isaac Stern,

and Arthur Rubenstein, among others. World War II inadvertently created the openings for St. Louis Symphony guest conductors when the symphony agreed to "loan" Golschmann, part of the year, to the Cleveland Orchestra while its own conductor served in the military.¹⁸

Notice of Bernstein's coming to St. Louis in February 1945 caused great excitement. There had been nothing like it in the city's classical music life. Skeptics like Thomas Sherman aside, St. Louisans even vaguely interested in classical music were anxious to see Bernstein for themselves. An orchestra press release and the attendant publicity hyped his dramatic 1943 appearance with the New York Philharmonic and 1944 New York Music Critics Circle's award for *Jeremiah*.¹⁹ St. Louisans would receive large doses of Bernstein even before his arrival. His musical, *On the Town*, which had opened in New York on December 28, 1944, received a favorable full-page syndicated review in the *St. Louis Star-Times*, noting: "Leonard Bernstein's score is unhackneyed without being high-brow. . . ."²⁰ The St. Louis Ballet Theatre, supported by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, presented his and Robbins' ballet, *Fancy Free*, in January 1945, only weeks before Bernstein's arrival. The *Star-Times* gave it a spacious and friendly review, noting approvingly that its "juke box score tears jazzily along, with an occasional dip into circus music." The review made much of the fact that the ballet's musical composer would soon be in the city.²¹ Predictably, however, Sherman hated the ballet: "Bernstein's score was rhythmically eccentric and strongly percussive. The melodic material was very slight and rather cheap. It was descriptive only on the surface of things."²²

Bernstein's first public appearance with the symphony was scheduled for February 10. Part of being a conductor, at least an American conductor, is an endless round of socializing and promotion, often with people and at events not of one's own choosing, constantly smiling and being pleasant. Bernstein sometimes complained of obligatory dinners and dull conversation in St. Louis, as he did elsewhere, but he was a born socializer and could turn on the charm when he needed to. The Women's Association of the St. Louis Symphony Society invited its members to have tea with Bernstein and Jennie Tourel, the mezzo-soprano who accompanied him.²³

All of that was duty. More important to Bernstein was the cultivation of the local press—something at which he excelled. While this was careerist calculation, it was also a genuine pleasure. Bernstein truly enjoyed hanging out with reporters, even as he skillfully turned them into his friends. Positive

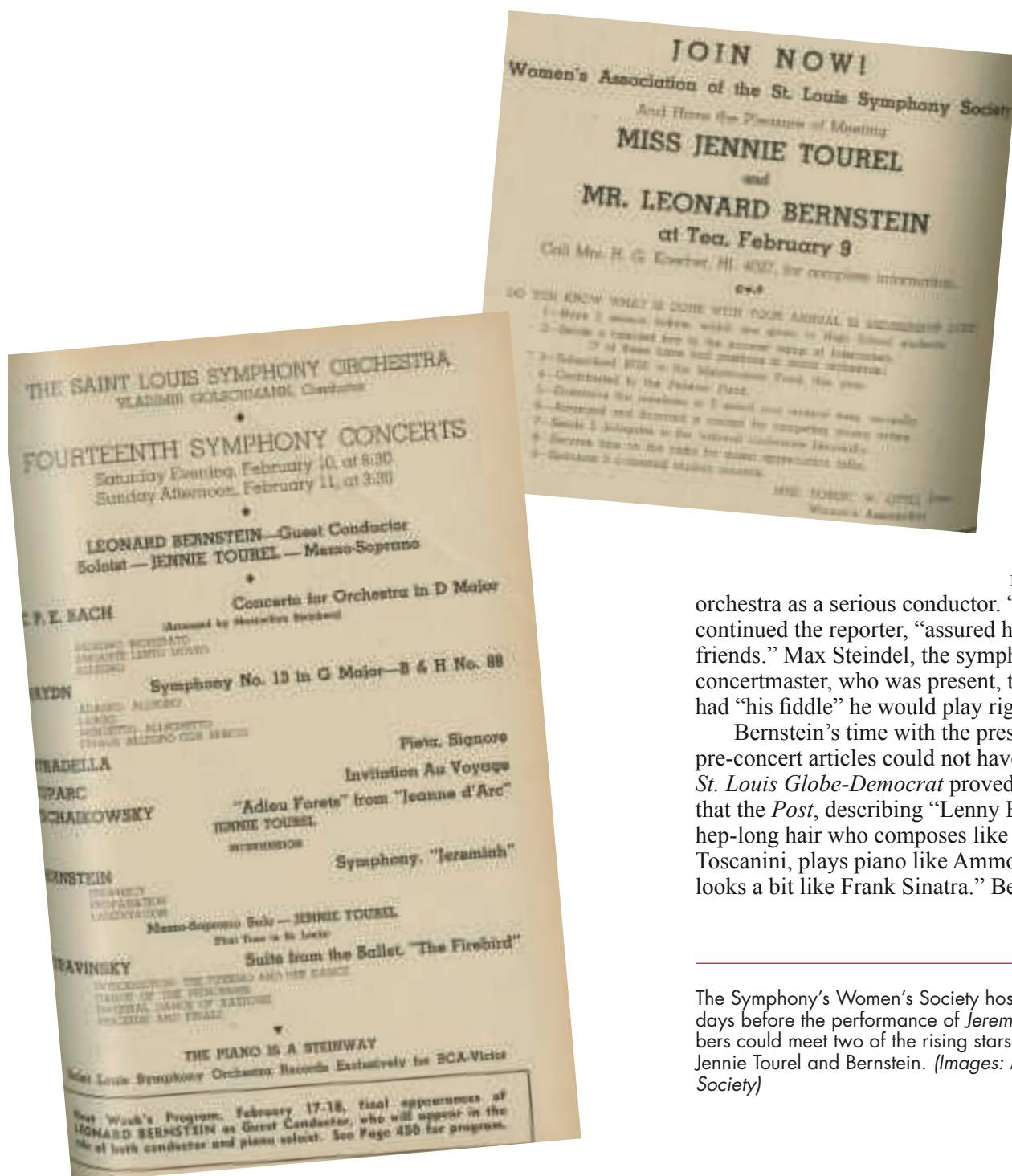
newspaper stories inevitably followed, carrying the flattery he craved. He pointedly wanted to be taken as a serious musician. No more *On the Towns*. It was strictly serious stuff from now on. But he also did not want to seem like a stiff. He resisted the conventional conception of a conductor as an aloof demi-god who inhabited a celestial sphere inaccessible to mere mortals. Bernstein knew he had been lucky to have success so early, so he worked to demonstrate his humility. He knew some reporters suspected he would prove an arrogant prig. How many of them were ready to write nice words about a tiresome poseur half their age?

The SLSO facilitated Bernstein's seduction of the press by putting him up in a luxury suite with a piano at the New Jefferson Hotel, which was originally built for the well-to-do guests attending the 1904 World's Fair. To woo over potential critics, Bernstein eschewed the traditional pre-concert press conference and invited reporters to join him in his rooms. In place of the traditional question-answer session, Bernstein created a "clubby" atmosphere in which "the young maestro let down his long hair." With the barest feint of reluctance he was persuaded to sit down at the piano, play a bit of the Haydn on an upcoming program and some Debussy, and then move into the "fun" stuff. According to a *Star-Times* reporter, Bernstein "started having as

good a time as everyone else," playing "exciting renditions of such gut-bucket arias as 'Joe Turney's Blues,' 'Weeping Willow's Blues' and 'Chip's Boogie Woogie.' And these were not polite, pseudo-symphonic versions," the reporter gushed, but "done in authentic backroom style." After a while Bernstein declared the raucous playing needed to stop or he would ruin his reputation with the

orchestra as a serious conductor. "But everyone," continued the reporter, "assured him he was among friends." Max Steindel, the symphony's first cellist and concertmaster, who was present, told Bernstein if he had "his fiddle" he would play right along with him.

Bernstein's time with the press was well spent. The pre-concert articles could not have been warmer. The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* proved even more exuberant than the *Post*, describing "Lenny Bernstein [as] the hep-long hair who composes like Mozart, conducts like Toscanini, plays piano like Ammons and Johnson and looks a bit like Frank Sinatra." Bernstein, the article



The Symphony's Women's Society hosted a tea just two days before the performance of *Jeremiah*, in which members could meet two of the rising stars in classical music, Jennie Tourel and Bernstein. (Images: Missouri Historical Society)

said, had given an “uproarious press conference . . . that sent the enchanted press from here to there.”²⁴ The story that appeared in the *St. Louis Star-Times* was equally enthusiastic, and accompanied by a large photograph of Bernstein pounding out the “Weeping Willow Blues.”²⁵ Though unsigned, the story was probably written by William Inge, soon a Pulitzer-prize-winning playwright. Bernstein and Inge rapidly struck up a friendship and socialized when the young conductor was in town. Though Inge’s articles were not out of sync with those of other reporters, he would subsequently write the kind of reviews of which performers dream.²⁶ In the end, Bernstein largely proved successful in being understood on his own terms. In a fawning profile the *Globe-Democrat*’s Harry Burke wrote that the fair-haired boy of the symphony turned out to be just a “bewildered brunette,” as puzzled by his mysterious luck as anyone else.²⁷

After the press conference ended, Bernstein hit the jazz clubs with friends and probably some of the reporters as well. He was very happy. If St. Louisans were excited to see Bernstein, Bernstein was very excited to see them, and he liked the orchestra. Writing on February 8 to his personal assistant, Helen Coates, he began talking about the New Jefferson Hotel: “Such a gay suite, and a fascinating city! The orchestra is responding ff [fortissimo], and I am having a good time—perhaps too good. Much jazz, so you can see from the papers. This is a very jazz-conscious town. But the ‘Blues Picture’ is good, isn’t it.” He later ends, “Keep your fingers crossed for the concerts.”²⁸

That first concert was on Saturday evening, February 10, 1945, with a repeat performance Sunday matinee. As the huge crowd of concertgoers waited for the show to begin, they could flip through their programs and discover a handsome and dreamy photograph of Bernstein floating above a Baldwin piano, “a magnificently sensitive” instrument that he found “completely satisfying to me, both as a pianist and conductor.” The program’s brief Bernstein biography cited his now familiar list of early triumphs, and added yet another wistful studio profile of Bernstein staring so soulfully into very high clouds—or probably a less distant ceiling—that he probably strained his neck posing.²⁹

Right before the concert began Bernstein, nervous yet exuberant, wrote Coates a hasty letter, concluding, “I’m just off to the first concert. It’s very exciting.” The first half of the first concert would reassure any music traditionalist. Bernstein conducted a fairly conventional mix of baroque and romantic works: a C. P. E. Bach concerto, Haydn’s Thirteenth Symphony, and Jennie Tourel singing some short pieces. But if the first half of the concert was fairly conservative, it was the second half, in which Bernstein conducted his *Jeremiah* that most people had come to see. The concert ended

with a rousing suite from Igor Stravinsky’s *The Firebird*.³⁰ As the last notes of *The Firebird* went down, the audience’s roar went up. The concert received thunderous approval. After the concert an adrenalized Bernstein penned yet another letter to Coates. This one merely said, in large exuberant script, “Doesn’t this beat them all?”³¹

Bernstein’s conducting was not only a popular success but a critical one as well. Virtually everything met with approval. Harry Burke, the columnist for the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, confessed that, given the mindless excitement over Bernstein’s golden-boy reputation, he had initially toyed with headlines like “‘fakery fails,’” but if he had come to scorn he left to praise. *Jeremiah*, he said, may have been expressed hebraically, but its humanity touched his Irish-American soul. And yes, the touted showmanship was there: Bernstein “dances the music. That is true. But he doesn’t do a dance for the hearers of that music. There isn’t a gesture but evokes its authentic response from an orchestral choir—and from the hearer. . . . He possibly forgets himself. But he never forgets, and you will not forget the music he conjures from his orchestra.”³² Inge wrote in the *Star-Times*: “The Opera House at Kiel Auditorium has witnessed few concerts as profoundly stimulating as those conducted by 26-year-old Leonard Bernstein.” He gave very high praise to *Jeremiah*. He especially singled out Jennie Tourel for praise for her emotive singing in the symphony’s third movement. After that, “nothing but superlatives can be used for the rest of the program.” Stravinsky’s *Firebird* suite, he said, “was the most dramatic and exotically colored performance the reviewer ever has heard.”³³ High praise indeed. Probably the greatest surprise came from the *Post*’s Thomas Sherman. Writing under the headline, “Bernstein Brilliant Conducting His Work,” Sherman said, “The focal point of the evening’s concert, in which Bernstein and the orchestra had the notable assistance of Jennie Tourel, the Russo-French contralto, was the conductor’s own *Jeremiah* symphony. Even if this had been the only number on the program it would have established Bernstein’s qualifications, both as a creative and an interpretive artist, beyond any shadow of a doubt. His direction of the rest of the program made his gifts as a conductor all the more apparent, though his judgment was sometimes open to question.” While he also praised Bernstein’s interpretations of Bach and Haydn, if the conductor had any notable flaw in his conducting, it was his mad love of emotional intensity. (This was something Bernstein would be accused of for decades.) Sherman concluded, however, it was this obsession with power that made Stravinsky’s *Firebird* such a good match for him, noting that his

“dynamic and subtly colored performance brought an enthusiastic ovation from the audience.”³⁴

Before Bernstein came to St. Louis, Thomas Sherman suspected that the young conductor was a product of mere luck, whose popularity was a transitory fad. After the first concerts he wrote a meditative column, called “Second Thoughts on Bernstein.” The St. Louis community had seen a lot of guest conductors in the absence of Vladimir Golschmann. Conductors use orchestras as their instrument in creating and molding music. “The successful performances conducted here by Leonard Bernstein were . . . not accidents . . . They were the results of knowledge and temperament expertly applied. . . .” Promotion is not usually distinguished for its accuracy, but it is possible, in this case, that the expression may have been used advisedly. For Bernstein quite obviously has magnetism for both orchestra and audience.” While Sherman said Bernstein needed to learn to keep his “natural brio” in check, he appeared to have the makings of a great career.³⁵

Like most young artists, Bernstein was very sensitive about his reviews, and he read each one upon publication. Two days after the concert he again wrote Helen Coates. He was walking on air: “Here are the reviews and they are gorgeous. Everything seems to have been a huge success with everybody. And I had the biggest audience of the season,” as, indeed, he did. “I’m having a wonderful time: dinners and parties every night . . . The orchestra is in love with me, and I think the Ravel will be terrific.”³⁶

“The Ravel” to which Bernstein referred was Ravel’s *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, which Bernstein intended as the signature piece for the next set of concerts the following weekend. The piano concerto is strongly jazz-infused, and Bernstein planned to conduct the orchestra while simultaneously serving as the piano soloist. With the exception of Beethoven’s *Egmont*, the concert was mostly modern music. In addition to the Ravel would be Roy Harris’ *Third Symphony* and Shostakovich’s rousing *Fifth Symphony*, which composed the entire second half.³⁷ Again, the program was a hit with the critics, but this time the audience simply exploded.

The *Post*’s Sherman found the concert exhilarating to the point of exhausting. Still, he gave the evening his ever-guarded approval. “The program enabled the conductor to demonstrate once again that he has tremendous driving force.” The Ravel was good, “the chief novelty of the evening,” though, while Bernstein did both well,

he wished Bernstein had stuck with either conducting or piano-playing. Sherman may have been exhausted, but not the audience, which “paid Bernstein the tribute of close attention throughout the evening and brought him back to the platform many times after each number.”³⁸ Interestingly, William Inge, too, would have liked all of that stirring music mixed with a quieter piece, but he loved the jazzy Ravel concerto as well. The huge audience’s reaction, however, fascinated him almost as much as the music itself. The Ravel concerto, he wrote, “was held together tightly and tossed at the audience with a smack. The audience liked it and insisted on the third movement being repeated,” which Bernstein obligingly did.³⁹ The young conductor was exhilarated with his whole St. Louis experience. On February 19, as he prepared to leave, he sent a postcard from St. Louis to his boyhood friend Mildred Spiegel saying, in clipped, boastful, but accurate phrases—“Conducting was wonderful, responsive orchestra, audiences wild.”⁴⁰

The two sets of concerts are what the public saw, but between them Bernstein and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra recorded *Jeremiah*

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch Everyday Magazine* noted in early 1945 that success had not changed Bernstein much, “for the young conductor and composer is concerned, rather than arrogant, over his rapid accomplishments.” (Image: Washington University Libraries, Gaylord Music Library)



for RCA's Victor Records. Leonard Bernstein had begun the symphony that was to become *Jeremiah* in 1939, during a period in which Aaron Copland was tutoring him in composition. The music lay fallow, and he completed it only after extensive rewriting, and adding what became the first movement in late 1942. Copland's influence is obvious, especially in the second movement.⁴¹



French-born conductor Vladimir Golschmann (1893–1972) served as music director for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra from 1931 until 1958. Bernstein got second-billing in this notice of forthcoming performances. (Images: Library of Congress; Missouri Historical Society)

Bernstein initially had doubts about recording *Jeremiah* with the SLSO. Just before the first St. Louis concert performance, he wrote Coates that SLSO was “not the ideal orchestra for the *Jeremiah* records, but it will do, I guess,” but, he added hopefully, “They certainly play with vigor.”⁴² Days later the orchestra recorded his *Jeremiah* over a three-day session and Bernstein quickly lost all qualms. Bernstein was right in believing that he had won over the orchestra, though things began on a peculiar note. Vladimir Golschmann, like most European conductors, employed a minimalist style. At his initial orchestral rehearsal Bernstein began with a dramatic downbeat that left the startled musicians simply staring at him in mute incomprehension.⁴³ As a young guest conductor Bernstein had already been subjected to hazing by orchestra members. Players challenged visiting conductors by talking loudly while others played, deliberately hitting wrong notes, “accidentally” missing entrances. Still, the *Post* reporter Sherman, who attended the recording sessions, lauded Bernstein as great teacher with a total mastery over the scores he conducted. Nowhere was this clearer, he said, than in teaching the orchestra his *Jeremiah*, a tricky piece of music that none of the orchestra members had ever heard: “That the rehearsals came off without loss of temper on either side was

an eloquent testimonial” to Bernstein’s control. “It was also evidence that a rapport had been established which was to have its effect at the public performance.”⁴⁴ When the recording of *Jeremiah* was complete, the orchestra members all stood and beat their instruments in tribute to his



conducting. Bernstein was so touched, he said, “I just stood on the podium and cried.”⁴⁵

There was only one fly in the recording ointment. When it came time to make the album, RCA replaced Jennie Tourel as soloist with the better-known mezzo-soprano Nan Merriman. But while Merriman was a highly talented singer, she was not Tourel’s equal, as both the *Post-Dispatch* and the *Star-Times* were soon to point out.⁴⁶ Despite this change, the whole session had gone well and left everyone pleased. RCA Victor Red Seal released *Jeremiah* in early December

1945 as three 78 rpm albums (\$3.68)⁴⁷ and promoted it extensively with full page ads in national publications, such as *Life* magazine.⁴⁸

Despite the demurs about the loss of Tourel, the album received largely positive reviews. The St. Louis music critics took a natural interest and were generally enthusiastic for the recording, but they thought it lacking compared to the live performance they had heard only months before. This was partly excused because a mass-produced record simply could not have the sound quality of a live performance. At least that was what Thomas Sherman thought.⁴⁹ An unsigned review in the *Star-Times*, after some similar minor fault-finding, concluded, “the recording is, in every way, excellent.”⁵⁰ The *New York Times* was equally flattering: “The Jeremiah Symphony is . . . a surprisingly substantial work. It is concise, direct, dramatic and eloquent.”⁵¹

Today the 1945 recording seems like a period piece: good, but an old-fashioned monaural disc. It sold reasonably well. Victor Records later reissued it under its Camden label in 1956.⁵² In 1993 St. Louis Symphony music director Leonard Slatkin chose to reissue the 1945 recording again with a group of later Bernstein compositions collective known as *Songfest*.⁵³ The 1945 recording, as well as Slatkin’s, received kind words from national publications upon its reissuance.⁵⁴ During 2017 and 2018, 74 performances of *Jeremiah* have been played or are scheduled to be played across the world.⁵⁵

In early September 1945, before *Jeremiah*’s release, Bernstein paid a second visit to St. Louis, again staying at a suite in the New Jefferson Hotel. The purpose of the trip was not performing, but business. This time he disliked his stay and was often lonely and bored. A dedicated social animal, he disparaged to Aaron Copland his company and the want of late-night revelry: “Too many people & dinners & dullards here. Nice—but what happens after midnight.”⁵⁶ A few days later he begged Copland to come pay him a visit. He did show a spark of enthusiasm, happily noting that “The St. Louis Jazz Society is taking me on a tour of old Southern jazz haunts tonight!”⁵⁷ What all of the business entailed is not clear from his correspondence, but shortly after he left, it was announced that would return again as SLSO’s guest conductor in late November and early December.⁵⁸

Bernstein was enthusiastically welcomed back to St. Louis, and the audiences were large, but the mania occasioned by his first visit was gone. There were no long newspaper profiles or queries about bobbysoxers. The ads, of course, still heralded him as the young genius of modern classical music, and

celebrated his earlier St. Louis appearances. Over the past year the newspapers and the orchestra’s promoters had updated his resume with new accolades and achievements: the Junior Chamber of Commerce, for example, named him one of the ten outstanding young men of 1944, along with Nelson Rockefeller, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, and *Time-Life* war correspondent John Hersey, who would soon pen the classic work, *Hiroshima* (1946). Bernstein had also followed Leopold Stokowski as the conductor of the New York City Symphony Orchestra (not to be confused with the Philharmonic).⁵⁹

Upon his return to St. Louis, Bernstein was restless. A few days before the first concert, he again complained of loneliness and the poignancy of the scene. He wrote to his friend David Oppenheim: “Let me hear from you in this bleak, foggy place, where, of all things, a charming southern thunderstorm is now raging. The streets are very dark and full of lonely faces. The hotel is very bright and full of lonely faces.”⁶⁰ By the concert dates he had cheered up. In the first pair of concerts, on November 30 and December 1, he conducted music by Beethoven, Carlos Chavez, Copland, and a Schumann symphony. For his second pair, December 8–9, he conducted Claude Debussy’s *La Mer*, over which he nervously fretted; music by Brahms; and he played as piano soloist on Bach’s *Fifth Brandenburg Concerto*.⁶¹

In reviewing the first pair of concerts, Thomas Sherman seemingly took pleasure that the audience size was down from the previous February, and the program more difficult. Perhaps without the carnival atmosphere he could enjoy the music. After dutifully noting his qualms, he concluded “that the concert was a success by every standard and in a way that proved once again Mr. Bernstein’s exceptional quality.”⁶² Bernstein’s friend William Inge proved even more effusive: “The word ‘brilliant’ gets a lot of tossing around in describing musical performances, but it appears so apt to Leonard Bernstein’s conducting of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra yesterday afternoon that it can’t be avoided.”⁶³

For the second pair of concerts, *Globe-Democrat* columnist Harry Burke, who had written a flattering profile of Bernstein earlier in the year, could not help but gently fault the conductor for “put[ting] too much energy in Debussy’s dreamy *La Mer*,” but called it valid—“youth must have its ‘assertive fling.’” He thought Bernstein’s work as the soloist on Bach’s *Fifth Brandenburg Concerto* was magnificent. (Bernstein “modestly” called it “immaculate.”)⁶⁴

This essay began with Thomas Sherman’s skepticism, quite Harry Burke’s opposite. Let us

end with his approval. Sherman never lost his head over Bernstein, but by December 1945, he had become a firm convert. After offering his usual commentary on each piece, he praised Bernstein's complex methodology. He appreciated the young conductor's approach to Brahms, and he noted how Bernstein showed the *Brandenburg Concerto* could be expressive without being dry. But he reserved his highest praise for Bernstein's interpretation of Debussy's *La Mer*: "Every detail was observed in the performance. Every graduation of dynamics was captured, the color combinations were right, the rhythmic as well as the dynamic accents were all in place, the whole thing was on a grand scale . . . It

was, in fact, a thoroughly satisfying and effective concert and one in which the concentration bestowed upon the young conductor by the audience was almost as great as that of the musicians."⁶⁵

Let us give Bernstein, himself, the final word. A sweet and generous correspondent to others, Bernstein had an unusual talent for complimenting himself without seeming offensive. After receiving one of these letters about his St. Louis experience, Aaron Copland said that "St. Louis seems to have accorded the familiar L.B. triumph." Two weeks later Bernstein was still basking in his golden time in the city, writing David Oppenheim, "St. Louis was a joy. What a *La Mer*!"⁶⁶

ENDNOTES

- ¹ See Olin Downes, “Bernstein Shows Mastery of Score; Youthful Conductor Carries Out an Exacting Program in Sudden Emergency,” and the unsigned article, “Young Aide Leads Philharmonic, Steps in When Bruno Walter is Ill,” both *New York Times*, November 15, 1943; Editorial, “A Story Old and Ever New,” *New York Times*, November 16, 1943. Bernstein’s rise from obscurity is probably the most chronicled aspect of his career. The biographical narrative that follows is a distillation of the many secondary works and primary sources about his sudden fame. If something is unique to a source, I have so noted it. The volume of writing about Bernstein is prodigious and generally of high caliber. Bernstein never wrote his autobiography, but he inadvertently came close. He was a remarkable life-long letter saver, as were many of his friends. This makes his collected letters very biographically illuminating. See Nigel Simeone, ed., *The Leonard Bernstein Letters* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2013). Bernstein gave the whole of his archives to the Library of Congress, which has placed much of it online: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/leonard-bernstein/about-this-collection/>. Initially restricted, the collection is now open to all researchers. The restriction was meant to benefit Humphrey Burton, a long-time associate of Bernstein’s who wrote a detailed and responsibly objective biography, *Leonard Bernstein* (New York: Doubleday, 1994). Cultural history biographer Meryle Secrest, who was denied access, nonetheless produced a biography that is well written, has its own unique sources, and is worth reading: *Leonard Bernstein: A Life* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1994). A shorter, more manageable biography, which sometimes relies heavily on other published biographies, is Allen Shawn, *Leonard Bernstein: An American Musician* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2014). Joan Peyser, an early biographer who had Bernstein’s support, never shied away from some unflattering judgments in *Bernstein: A Biography* (New York: William Morrow, 1987). Bernstein’s younger brother, Burton, a staff writer for the *New Yorker*, put together an appreciative anthology of original essays by well-known historians, musicians, and composers. See Burton Bernstein and Barbara B. Haws, eds, *Leonard Bernstein: American Original. How a Modern Renaissance Man Transformed Music and the World during His New York Philharmonic Years, 1943–1976* (New York: Collins, 2008). Jonathan Cott’s slim volume has its flaky moments, but it contains interesting material: *Dinner with Lenny: The Last Long Interview with Leonard Bernstein* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). The elaborate official Bernstein website also contains useful biographical information: <https://leonardbernstein.com/at100>. Readers who want a quick guide to the music he conducted or wrote might begin with Peter Gutmann’s “Leonard Bernstein: A Total Embrace of Music,” <http://www.classicalnotes.net/features/bernstein.html>. Diligent researchers will find much more biographical work elsewhere, including in the notes that follow.
- ² Magazines like *Life*, *Look*, and *Time* had a national readership. Even if St. Louisans missed some of the New York press, it was hard to miss Bernstein, even in small ways. The readers of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* were reminded that the conductor/composer Leonard Bernstein would be the guest expert on KSD’s syndicated show, *Information Please*, the following night at 8:30. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 28, 1944. By the time he arrived in St. Louis, the newspaper and promotional efforts had reached a saturation point.
- ³ Unsigned article, “Bernstein to Be Guest Conductor with Symphony,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 21, 1944. Unsigned article, “Symphony Conductor Get Hep, Beats Out Blues and Boogie-Woogie,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 6, 1945; Unsigned article, “‘Pin-Up Boy of Symphony’ Has a Passion of Jazz Music,” *St. Louis Star-Times*, February 6, 1945.
- ⁴ Donal Henahan, “Leonard Bernstein, 72. Music’s Monarch, Dies,” *New York Times*, October 15, 1990. <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0825.html> Rather than a standard obituary, this is a remarkable piece of long-form journalism, offering both a useful summary and a reflective evaluation of the conductor’s career.
- ⁵ Thomas B. Sherman, “Guest Conductors,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 12, 1944.
- ⁶ It was not only Sherman who had been skeptical. Bernstein’s father, Sam, had fought his son’s becoming a musician at every step: “How could I know my son was going to grow up to be Leonard Bernstein?” he said later. As quoted in Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 122. Much of his exuberant conducting was captured on film, leaving him with a permanent visual legacy, much of it available on the internet.
- ⁷ Henahan, “Leonard Bernstein, 72.” See also Bernstein and Haws, eds., *Leonard Bernstein*.
- ⁸ St. Louis did not have an American-born conductor until Leonard Slatkin became the music director in 1979. The second was David Robertson, 2005–2018. In between were Dutchman Hans Vonk, and Robertson is to be followed by the Frenchman Stéphane Denève, who officially takes up the directorship in 2019. <https://www.slso.org/en/musicians/conductors/past-music-directors/>; <http://www.stephanedeneve.com/about-stephane/>
- ⁹ Quoted in Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 138–39; Harry R. Burke, “More About Bernstein, the ‘White-Haired Boy of Symphonists,’ the Bewildered Brunette,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 15, 1945.
- ¹⁰ They similarly questioned his relations with his orchestra members. Even as the music director

- of the New York Philharmonic in the 1960s, he democratically put up with disagreements and back talk from musicians that amazed Seiji Ozawa, who served as his assistant conductor. Haruki Murakami, *Absolutely on Music: Conversations with Seiji Ozawa* (Vintage, 2017), 29–30. Later in life he was criticized for publically dressing down performers when he disliked their playing. Some musicians grumbled about his unorthodox musical interpretations, claiming that when they were supposed playing Beethoven they were really playing Bernstein. Although he could still charm when he wanted to, by the last decade of his life he had become the imperious maestro, a too long over-scheduled man who had lost patience with ordinary courtesies and inevitable obstacles, often acting imperious and entitled. Henahan, “Leonard Bernstein, 72”; Charlie Harmon, *On the Road and Off with Leonard Bernstein. My Years with the Exasperating Genius* (Watertown, Mass.: Charlesbridge Publishing, Inc., 2018).
- ¹¹ Barry Seldes is illuminating about Bernstein’s political activities. See *Leonard Bernstein: The Political Side of an American Musician* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). See especially 21, 32–33, 114–16. Bernstein confessed to some political naiveté, but he noted he had never voted for a political candidate who was not a Democrat or a Republican. The lengthy affidavit is reprinted in its entirety in Simone, *Bernstein Letters*, 299–309. Tom Wolfe, *Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers* (New York: Picador, 2009, rpt.). For Bernstein’s comments on the party and Wolfe’s book, see Cott, *Dinner with Lenny*, 85–86. Wolfe reflected on the party for Secrest, *Bernstein*, 321–23. Wolfe said that he personally had no particular interest in the Black Panthers, but rather an interest in the Beautiful People’s interest in the Black Panthers.
- ¹² Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1999), 193–94.
- ¹³ Leonard Slatkin, *Conducting Business: Unveiling the Mystery Behind the Maestro* (Milwaukee: Amadeus Press, 2012), 141–42.
- ¹⁴ Burton Bernstein provides an interesting perspective inside the family point of view of these events in *Family Matters: Sam, Jennie, and the Kids* (Lincoln, Neb.: An Authors Guild Backinprint.com Edition, 2000, 2nd ed. rev.; Originally, Summit Books, 1982), 143–51.
- ¹⁵ An English translation was provided in program for concertgoers. For more on the connection between the music and the biblical text, see Secrest, *Bernstein*, 105–7; A King James biblical translation of the text maybe found at: <https://perryjgreenbaum.blogspot.com/2017/11/leonard-bernsteins-symphony-no-1.html>. One, of course, need not know Hebrew (or King James’s English) to appreciate the singing.
- ¹⁶ Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 139–40; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 21, 1944, p. 56.
- ¹⁷ The New York Philharmonic was founded in 1842, the St. Louis Symphony in 1880, the Boston Symphony in 1881, the Chicago Symphony in 1891, the Cincinnati Symphony in 1895, and the Pittsburgh Symphony in 1895 (though the last later disbanded for 16 years); the rest of the major urban symphony orchestras were founded in the twentieth century.
- ¹⁸ Andre Kostelanetz followed Bernstein as guest conductor in 1945. The Golschmann years are covered in Katherine Gladney Wells, *Symphony and Song. The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra: The First Hundred Years: 1880–1980* (Taftsville, Vt.: The Countrymen Press, 1980), 55–79; see also the 1927 Victrola ad, noting SLSO recordings and the discography up to 1980, 217–21, and Richard Edward Mueller, “The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, 1931 to 1958,” Ph.D. Diss., Saint Louis University, 1976.
- ¹⁹ The young and seemingly vigorous Bernstein, had received a “4F” deferment from the military, but he carefully noted in programs his pleasure in playing “boogie-woogie” music for the troops, citing a performance at Fort Dix. While chronic asthma plagued Bernstein, it is very rare to find a non-conducting photograph that does not show him smoking. It would kill him in the end. Unsigned article, “Bernstein to Be Guest Conductor,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 21, 1944. Unsigned article, “Four Guest Conductors Signed for Next Season.” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 21, 1944.
- ²⁰ “And his songs. are fun,” the reporter said. “‘Come Up to My Place,’ ‘I Get Carried Away, and ‘You’ve Got Me,’ with the help of very amusing lyrics, are all show-stoppers; and there are pleasant romantic tunes like ‘Lucky to Be Me.’” Louis Kronenberser, “Along Broadway,” *St. Louis Star-Times*, December 30, 1944; Unsigned article, “Ballet in Jazz and Jive,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 10, 1944. The article includes a full page of rehearsal photographs.
- ²¹ Unsigned article, “Jive Music Accents ‘Fancy Free’ Ballet,” *St. Louis Star-Times*, January 3, 1945.
- ²² Thomas B. Sherman, “Toumanova Exciting in Ballet Dances,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 6, 1945.
- ²³ *St. Louis Symphony Program*, 65th Season, 1944–1945, 420; Saint Louis Symphony Society Records, 1897–1983, Missouri Historical Society Archives, Box 17A.
- ²⁴ Albert Ammons and Pete Johnson were African American musicians famed in the 1940s for their Boogie-Woogie piano virtuosity.
- ²⁵ Arthur W. Hepner, “Success Has Not Turned His Head,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 9, 1945, part 4, p. 1; “Symphony Conductor Get Hep,” p. 3B; “‘Pin-Up Boy.’”
- ²⁶ Many of Inge’s plays would become staples of the 1950s and later movies: *Bus Stop*, *Picnic*, *Splendor*

- in the Grass*, and *Come Back Little Sheba*, written during a stint as a Washington University professor. For a biographical sketch of William Inge and his life in St. Louis, see Lorin Cuoco and William R. Gass, eds., *Literary St. Louis: A Guide* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2000), 203–7. Bernstein loved drinking and carousing. During his stays in St. Louis he made a friend of Dr. Bertram Slaff, a young, and poorly paid, medical intern, who earned \$32.50 a month. Even before the meal, Slaff began fretting over the expense of a costly restaurant. His secret consternation deepened when Bernstein unexpectedly appeared with his friend Inge. Sensitively, Bernstein correctly intuited the pinch of such an extravagance for Slaff and paid for all, telling him he had to spend his *On the Town* royalties on something. Slaff to Secrest, July 11, 1991, in Secrest, *Bernstein*, 154.
- ²⁷ Burke, “More About Bernstein.” Bernstein was a very self-confident young-man-in-hurry, but his humility was not all fake. While he knew he was both charmed and charming, he was considerate to others. See also Murakami, *Absolutely on Music*, 29–30.
- ²⁸ Leonard Bernstein to Helen Coates, February 8, 1945, Bernstein Papers, Library of Congress.
- ²⁹ Baldwin ad, *St. Louis Symphony Program*, 65th Season, p. 466; Bernstein biography, 410. Not nearly as much fuss had been made over his supporting mezzo-soprano, Jennie Tourel. Her program biography mostly strung together positive quotes about her singing and left it at that. Tourel was born into a Jewish Belarus family in 1900. The family fled Russia following the Revolution, eventually settling in Paris. There she won fame as an operatic singer, but just ahead of the 1940 Nazi occupation, she immigrated to the United States. She rebuilt her career, singing with Arturo Toscanini and Leopold Stokowski, among others. In 1943 she included some of his “Kids Songs,” *I Hate Music*, into her well-received New York City Town Hall debut. Bernstein subsequently invited her to sing the mezzo-soprano role at the Pittsburgh Symphony debut of *Jeremiah*, and she continued to do so at its live performances thereafter. Her professional relationship with Bernstein would last decades. *St. Louis Symphony Program*, 65th Season, p. 447; on Tourel’s background, see <https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/5506600>; Peyser, *Bernstein*, 118–19.
- ³⁰ *St. Louis Symphony Program*, 65th Season, p. 427.
- ³¹ Bernstein to Coates, two letters dated February 10, 1945, Bernstein Papers.
- ³² Harry R. Burke, “Bernstein Impressive as Conductor,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 11, 1945. Four days later Burke obtained a special interview with Bernstein and published a highly flattering profile of the young conductor. Burke, “More About Bernstein.” The article notably begins by Bernstein’s dismissing his success with an “aw-shucks, it was just luck.” Bernstein then outlines an insanely ambitious catalogue of all the books, poetry, and serious music he intended to write. But Bernstein said he could not plan to specify because the most important thing was being fully in the present. Burke takes all of Bernstein’s monumental aspiration at face value.
- ³³ William Inge, “Bernstein Brilliant in Two Concerts.” *St. Louis Star-Times*, February 12, 1945.
- ³⁴ Thomas B. Sherman, “Bernstein Brilliant Conducting His Work,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 11, 1945.
- ³⁵ Thomas B. Sherman, “Second Thoughts on Bernstein,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 18, 1945.
- ³⁶ Bernstein to Coates, February 12, 1945, Bernstein Papers.
- ³⁷ *St. Louis Symphony Program*, 65th Season, p. 467.
- ³⁸ Thomas B. Sherman, “20th Century Music at Bernstein Concert: Symphony Program Proves to Be More Exciting Than Exalting,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 18, 1945.
- ³⁹ William Inge, “Bernstein Applauded on Modern Works,” *St. Louis Star-Times*, February 19, 1945.
- ⁴⁰ Leonard Bernstein to Mildred Spiegel, February 19, 1945, in Simeone, ed., *Bernstein Letters*, 583.
- ⁴¹ Curiously, Copland warned him of the perils of being pigeon-holed as a Jewish composer, like Ernest Bloch, and admonished for his addiction to musical emotionalism. He was soon compared to Bloch, foreshadowing Bernstein’s later obsession with Gustav Mahler. On Copland’s tutoring and the writing of *Jeremiah*, see Secrest, *Bernstein*, 139; Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 194, 522.
- ⁴² Bernstein to Coates, February 8, 1945, Bernstein Papers.
- ⁴³ Henahan, “Leonard Bernstein, 72.”
- ⁴⁴ Sherman, “Second Thoughts on Bernstein.”
- ⁴⁵ As quoted in Secrest, *Bernstein*, 137–38.
- ⁴⁶ Biographer Joan Peyser even wondered if Bernstein’s jealous fiancé Felicia Montealegre torpedoed Tourel’s inclusion on the album. Peyser, *Bernstein* 440–41. This seems unlikely because Bernstein would continue his professional relationship with Tourel for decades until her death. A more likely explanation is that Nan Merriman already had a Victor Records contract. Tourel might also have had a conflict, as she recorded an album for another label a couple of weeks later. On Nan Merriman, see <https://sites.google.com/site/pittsburghmusichistory/pittsburgh-music-story/classic/nan-merriman>; <http://www.latimes.com/local/obituaries/la-me-passings-20120802-story.html>.
- ⁴⁷ See the ad in *St. Louis Star-Times*, December 13, 1945.
- ⁴⁸ *Life Magazine*, vol. 29, no. 19, May 13, 1946, p. 28.
- ⁴⁹ Thomas B. Sherman, “Off the Records,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 6, 1946.
- ⁵⁰ Unsigned review, “Record Album,” *St. Louis Star-Times*, January 3, 1946, p. 16.
- ⁵¹ Mark A. Schubart, “Records: Bernstein’s ‘Jeremiah,’” *New York Times*, January 6, 1946.
- ⁵² RCA’s Camden reissue of Bernstein and the St.

Louis Symphony's *Jeremiah* is readily available on the internet. The YouTube recording includes period pictures, some with people mentioned in the essay. First movement: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQJxlCaTt8Y>; Second movement: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQvBc7jq55g>; Third movement: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQvBc7jq55g>.

- ⁵³ Bernstein recorded *Jeremiah* later in life with both the New York Philharmonic and the Israel Symphonic Orchestra, but it was not the same as the original recording. Recording methods have obviously improved over the years, but he never regarded his music, or anybody else's, as sacrosanct. Jennie Tourel got her opportunity to sing the mezzo-soprano part with the NYPO. As he aged, Bernstein was both proud of his symphony and somewhat embarrassed by it as juvenilia. Both views have merit. Other symphonic orchestras have recorded it since 1945.
- ⁵⁴ See, for example, Joseph McLellan, "Classical Recordings," *Washington Post*, June 27, 1993; Peter G. Davis, "West Side Glory," *New York*, vol. 26, no. 27, July 12, 1993, 56–57.
- ⁵⁵ <https://leonardbernstein.com/search?page=4&s=event&q=Jeremiah>
- ⁵⁶ Leonard Bernstein to Aaron Copland, dated Saturday [September 1, 1945], Simeone, ed., *Bernstein Letters*, 179.
- ⁵⁷ Leonard Bernstein to Aaron Copland, [undated, September 1945], Simeone, ed., *Bernstein Letters*, 179–80.
- ⁵⁸ Unsigned article, "Golschmann Sets First Eleven Concert Pairs," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 30, 1945.
- ⁵⁹ Associated Press, "Nelson Rockefeller Named U.S. Young Man," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 17, 1945; Unsigned article, "Leonard Bernstein Guest Conductor with Symphony," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, November 25, 1945; Unsigned Article, "Bernstein on Podium Friday and Saturday," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 25, 1945; *St. Louis Symphony Program*, 66th Season, 1945–1946, 223; Saint Louis Symphony Society Records, 1897–1983, Missouri Historical Society Archives, Box 17A.
- ⁶⁰ Leonard Bernstein to David Oppenheim, postmark November 27, 1945, Simeone, ed., *Bernstein Letters*, 189–90.
- ⁶¹ *St. Louis Symphony Program*, 66th Season, pp. 223, 267; Bernstein to Coates, December 1, 1945, Bernstein Papers.
- ⁶² Thomas B. Sherman, "Leonard Bernstein Concert a Success," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 1, 1945.
- ⁶³ William Inge, "Leonard Bernstein Brilliant as Conductor of Symphony," *St. Louis Star-Times*, December 1, 1945.
- ⁶⁴ Harry R. Burke, "Bernstein Wins Ovation in Appearance with Symphony," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, December 9, 1945; Leonard Bernstein to David Oppenheim, postmarked December 18, 1945. Simeone, ed., *Bernstein Letters*, 192.
- ⁶⁵ Thomas B. Sherman, "Bernstein Conducts in Fine Performance," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 9, 1945.
- ⁶⁶ Aaron Copland to Leonard Bernstein, Tuesday [December 4, 1945], Simeone, ed., *Bernstein Letters*, 190; Leonard Bernstein to David Oppenheim, postmarked December 18, 1945, Simeone, ed., *Bernstein Letters*, 192.