

program notes

BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

Fanfare for the Common Man for Brass and Percussion **(1942)**

AARON COPLAND ■ 1900-1990

In the first volume of his autobiography (*Copland, 1900 through 1942*, St. Martin's/Marek, 1984), Copland recounted the genesis of his popular *Fanfare for the Common Man*: "Eugene Goossens, conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, had written to me at the end of August [1942] about an idea he wanted to put into action for the 1942-43 concert season. During World War I, he had asked British composers for a fanfare to begin each orchestral concert. It had been so successful that he thought to repeat the procedure in World War II with American composers. [Goossens' additional requests inspired a total of ten fanfares from such other notable musicians as Creston, Cowell, Piston, Thomson, Milhaud and Gould.] Goossens wrote: 'It is my idea to make these fanfares stirring and significant contributions to the war effort, so I suggest you give your fanfare a title, as for instance, 'A Fanfare for Soldiers, or for Airmen or Sailors.' After I decided on *Fanfare for the Common Man* and sent the score to Goossens, I think he was rather puzzled by the title. He wrote, 'Its title is as original as its music, and I think it is so telling that it deserves a special occasion for its performance. If it is agreeable to you, we will premiere it 14 March [sic] 1943 at income tax time....' [The income tax deadline was changed to April after

the war.] I was all for honoring the common man at income tax time. I later used the *Fanfare* in the final movement of my Third Symphony."

Porgy and Bess: A Concert in Songs for Soprano, Baritone and Chorus

GEORGE GERSHWIN ■ 1898-1937

ARRANGED BY ROBERT RUSSELL
BENNETT ■ 1894-1981

Gershwin's music drama about the crippled African-American Porgy and his determined love for Bess is among the most popular and widely performed of all American operas. "This, Gershwin's last serious work," wrote David Ewen, "possesses that richness, vitality and variety of melody, that vigor of rhythm, that spontaneity and freshness we associate with Gershwin's best music. Of all Gershwin's serious works, it is the only one to reveal compassion, humanity and a profound dramatic instinct. Its roots are in the soil of African-American people, whom it interprets with humor, tragedy, penetrating characterizations, dramatic power and sympathy." Beside its musical significance, *Porgy and Bess* also occupies an important place in the social maturation of our land — its premieres in Charleston, South Carolina, where the story is set, and Washington, D.C. were desegregated both on the stage and in the audience for the first time in the histories of those cities. Gershwin, who spent an entire summer in a African-American community near

Charleston collecting material and ideas for his work, would have been proud that *Porgy and Bess* was the cause for such a significant step in our national life.

Porgy and Bess is set in the 1930s in Catfish Row, an African-American tenement in Charleston. The curtain rises on Clara singing a lullaby (*Summertime*) to her child. Crown quarrels with Robbins during a crap game, kills him and escapes. Robbins is mourned by his wife, Serena (*My Man's Gone Now*). Crown's girl, Bess, finds refuge with the cripple Porgy, who loves her devotedly. They sing of their happiness (*I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'* and *Bess, You Is My Woman Now*). During a picnic on Kittiwah Island, Sportin' Life, the local dope peddler, describes his cynical attitude toward religion (*It Ain't Necessarily So*). Crown, who has been hiding on the island, confronts Bess and persuades her to stay with him. Having fallen sick, she returns to Porgy, who nurses her back to health. During a storm, Crown returns to Catfish Row. Porgy strangles his rival. The police suspect Porgy and arrest him. Sportin' Life tempts Bess to accompany him to New York with some of his "happy dust." Released from jail a few days later, Porgy finds Bess gone. Undaunted, he sets off in his goat cart to follow her (*Oh, Lawd, I'm On My Way*).

In 1941, Fritz Reiner, Music Director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, requested that Robert Russell Bennett, the dean of American Broadway arrangers, prepare an orchestral synopsis of *Porgy and Bess*. Bennett's *A Symphonic Picture* became the most popular orchestral version of the music from Gershwin's opera, and in 1956 he expanded his arrangement as "A Concert in Songs" to include soprano and baritone soloists and chorus performing many of the score's most memorable selections.

Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story* (1957)

LEONARD BERNSTEIN ■ 1918-1990

West Side Story was one of the first musicals to explore a serious subject with wide social implications. More than just the story of the tragic lives of ordinary people in a grubby section of New York, it was concerned with urban violence, juvenile delinquency, clan hatred and young love. The show was criticized as harshly realistic by some who advocated an entirely escapist function for the musical, depicting things that were not appropriately shown on the Broadway stage. Most, however, recognized that it expanded the scope of the musical through references both to classical literature (*Romeo and Juliet*) and to the pressing problems of modern society. Brooks Atkinson, former critic of *The New York Times*, noted in his book *Broadway* that *West Side Story* was "a harsh ballad of the city, taut, nervous and flaring, the melodies choked apprehensively, the rhythms wild, swift and deadly." Much of the show's electric atmosphere was generated by its brilliant dance sequences, for which Jerome Robbins won the 1957-1958 Tony Award for choreography. In 1961, Bernstein chose a sequence of dance music from *West Side Story* to assemble as a concert work, and Sid Ramin and Irwin Kostal executed the orchestration of these "Symphonic Dances" under the composer's direction. Bernstein said that he called these excerpts "symphonic" not because they were arranged for full orchestra but because many of them grew, like a classical symphony, from a few basic themes transformed into a variety of moods to fit the play's action and emotions. *West Side Story*, like a very few other musicals — *Show Boat*, *Oklahoma!*, *Pal Joey*,

A Chorus Line, Sunday in the Park with George, Rent, Hamilton — is a work that gave an entirely new vision and direction to the American musical theater.

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After the dance in the gym, the Sharks' girls discuss the relative merits of life in their native Puerto Rico and their new home in *America*.

Olympic Hymn for Chorus and Orchestra (1976, 1981)

LEONARD BERNSTEIN

In 1981, Bernstein, long active in social and political causes, was asked to write an anthem for the opening ceremony of the International Olympic Congress in Baden-Baden, Germany on September 23rd. It was a crucial moment in the history of the Olympics, since 65 countries had boycotted the Games in Moscow a year before to protest the Soviet war in Afghanistan and the Games in Los Angeles were just three years away. The speakers for the gathering included Pope John Paul II, UN General Secretary Kurt Waldheim and Prince Philip of the United Kingdom. For the music, Bernstein reworked the stirring finale (titled *To Make Us Proud*) of *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, the musical he wrote with Broadway veteran lyricist Alan Jay Lerner for the United States Bicentennial Year in 1976. The show ran for just seven performances (“Well, you remember the Titanic ...” was Lerner’s wry summation), but Bernstein valued the music highly enough to use it for his *Olympic Hymn*, which sets a text by the noted German writer Günter Kunert (b. 1929) that embodies the spirit of the Games: *Give an example that applies to all: Fight as friends, not as foes.*

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ALLENTOWN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

APRIL 14 AND 15, 2018
8:00 P.M., SYMPHONY HALL

P R O G R A M

DIANE M. WITTRY MUSIC DIRECTOR/CONDUCTOR

/ , SOPRANO

/ , BARITONE

ALLENTOWN SYMPHONY CHORUS

EDUARDO AZZATI, DIRECTOR

Fanfare for the Common Man
for Brass and Percussion

AARON COPLAND

Porgy and Bess: A Concert in Songs
for Soprano, Baritone and Chorus

GEORGE GERSHWIN
Arr. Bennett

Introduction and Summertime
A Woman Is a Sometime Thing
Overflow
My Man's Gone Now
The Promised Land
I Got Plenty O' Nuttin'
Bess, You Is My Woman Now
Oh, I Can't Sit Down
It Ain't Necessarily So
There's A Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon for New York
Oh Lawd, I'm On My Way

I N T E R M I S S I O N

Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*

LEONARD BERNSTEIN

Prologue — Somewhere — Scherzo — Mambo — Cha-Cha —
Meeting Scene — "Cool" Fugue — Rumble — Finale

America from *West Side Story*

LEONARD BERNSTEIN

Olympic Hymn for Chorus and Orchestra

LEONARD BERNSTEIN