

Notes on the Program by DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

Symphony No. 1 for Mezzo-Soprano and Orchestra, "Jeremiah" (1939, 1942)
Leonard Bernstein

(Born August 25, 1918 in Lawrence, Massachusetts;
died October 14, 1990 in New York City)

Late in 1942, just as he was gaining prominence on the American music scene, Bernstein decided that writing a large symphonic piece would not only help establish him as a concert composer but also might give him opportunities to appear as a conductor with a number of orchestras. He learned that the New England Conservatory of Music was just then sponsoring a composition contest, and that Sergei Koussevitzky, music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and his chief mentor, would be a judge. The competition became the spur for Bernstein to create his Symphony No. 1. Three years before, he had sketched a *Lamentation* for voice and orchestra on a biblical text from *Jeremiah*, and in the spring of 1942, he set down some ideas for the opening movement of a symphony on the same subject. With the contest's New Year's Eve deadline looming close, he reworked the earlier music as the symphony's outer movements, and inserted between them a scherzo, completing the piano score in ten days and the orchestration (with the help of a small coterie of friends, working round the clock, serving as scribes and copyists under his direction) in just three. The score was finished too late for delivery by mail, so Bernstein, true to form, got on the train to Boston and handed in the work in person two hours before midnight. Though the omens all seemed good for another Bernstein triumph, Koussevitzky did not care for the "Jeremiah" Symphony, and the work did not win the competition. A year later, however, Fritz Reiner, his teacher at Curtis and then music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony, arranged for Bernstein to premiere the composition with his orchestra on January 28, 1944 with mezzo-soprano Jennie Tourel. Both Symphony and conductor drew raves from the critics: "unusual profundity of thought and a clear manner of expression and presentation"; "we have rarely heard music of modern vintage of such honest and absorbing expression"; "[in conducting,] his cues are clean, his demands from the orchestra are within reason, his careful molding of phrase and line, admirable...." Koussevitzky invited Bernstein to make his long-sought Boston Symphony debut with the "Jeremiah" Symphony the following month, and Bernstein introduced the work to New York in March at a Carnegie Hall concert with the Philharmonic to benefit a Palestine relief agency. The "Jeremiah" Symphony won the New York Music Critics Circle Award for the best new American work of the season. Bernstein recorded the score with the St. Louis Symphony for RCA Victor shortly thereafter, his first of three recordings of the work.

In a 1994 biography of the composer, Meryle Secrest gave the following background about the historical Jeremiah: "Jeremiah, son of a priestly family, preached in Jerusalem from 628 to 586 B.C. under Josiah and his successors. He lived during a transitional period when the old Assyrian empire, of which Israel was a part, was crumbling and being replaced by the neo-Babylonian empire; there were periodic invasions of his country. His preachings centered around the sins of idolatry and false worship, and predicted that Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed unless there was a real commitment to reform and a return to the spirit of religion, not merely adherence to its rituals. Tradition has it that he was by temperament introspective and reticent, but felt compelled to condemn what he considered to be the evils of the age. He made some powerful enemies and was imprisoned several times. Jeremiah's message contained a new emphasis on the importance of a personal relationship with God, and his confessions contain dialogue with the Deity that question divine judgment, and even accuse God of having betrayed him."

Bernstein found in the writings of the ancient prophet an expression of what he called "the crisis of our century, a crisis of faith." Several of Bernstein's pivotal works — *Jeremiah*, *The Age of Anxiety*, *Kaddish*, *Mass* — confront the issue of what resolution, or renewal, or at least comfort, can be found after faith is shattered, as symbolized in the "Jeremiah" Symphony by the destruction of the Temple following the prophet's warnings. Bernstein explained the work's expressive progression: "The intention is not one of literalness, but of emotional quality. Thus the first movement (*Prophecy*) aims only to parallel in feeling the intensity of the prophet's pleas with his people; and the scherzo (*Profanation*) to give a general sense of the destruction and chaos brought on by the pagan corruption within the priesthood and the people. The third

movement (*Lamentation*), being a setting of poetic text, is naturally a more literary conception. It is the cry of Jeremiah, as he mourns his beloved Jerusalem, ruined, pillaged and dishonored after his desperate efforts to save it. The faith or peace that is found at the end of *Jeremiah* is really more a kind of comfort, not a solution. Comfort is one way of achieving peace, but it does not achieve the sense of a new beginning, as does the end of *The Age of Anxiety* or *Mass*.”

Concerning the thematic sources of the work, the composer noted, “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 Babylon. Other resemblances to Hebrew liturgical music are a matter of emotional quality rather than of the notes themselves.” In a preface to the corrected 1992 edition of the score, however, Jack Gottlieb, the composer’s long-time associate and spokesman, found richer resonances of traditional Jewish musical practices in the Symphony than Bernstein indicated: “Actually, the composer was not aware that there was more influence of liturgical motives upon the music than he consciously knew. This is certainly a testament to his upbringing as a Jew both in the synagogue and at home, particularly through the example of his father, Samuel [to whom the score is dedicated].

“The opening theme of the first movement (*Prophecy*),” Gottlieb continued, “is derived from the High Holy Days liturgy, heard for the first time as part of the *Amidah* (*‘standing’*) prayers, or eighteen blessings. This compilation of fixed benedictions, recited at all services, Sabbath or holiday, with varying interpolations, probably constitutes the second most important Jewish prayer after the monotheistic creed of *Sh’ma Yisrael* (*‘Hear, O Israel’*). This theme nourishes the growth of the entire movement.

“The scherzo (*Profanation*) theme from the second movement that Mr. Bernstein refers to is based on cantillation motives used during the chanting of the Bible on the Sabbath, especially the *Haftara* (*‘concluding’*) portion. The motives are well-known to those who chant Bible passages in preparation for Bar Mitzvah.

“In the third movement (*Lamentation*), the ‘liturgical cadence’ the composer mentions is a sequence of motives derived from the *kinnot* (*‘dirges’*) chanted on *Tisha B’Av* (the Ninth Day of the month of Ab), an observance of mourning for the lost Temple. These *kinnot* are, of course, sung to the words of the biblical *Lamentations of Jeremiah*, and Mr. Bernstein uses motives as chanted by Ashkenazic (*‘Germanic’*) Jews. Other subconscious sources include various penitential modes, as well as free cantorial improvisation. Significantly, the conclusion of the *Lamentation* recalls the *Amidah* theme from the first movement, indicating that the foreboding prophecy has been fulfilled.”

from “The Lamentations of Jeremiah”

CHAPTER 1.1-3

Echa yashva vadad ha-ir
Rabati am
Hay’ta k’almana;
Rabati vagoyim
Sarati bam’dinot
Hay’ta lamas.

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!

Bacho tivkeh balaila,
V’dim’ata al lecheya;
En la m’nachem
Mikol ohaveha;
Kol reeha bag’du va,
Hayu la l’oy’vim.

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.

Galta Y’huda meoni,
Umerov avoda;
Hi yashva vagoyim,
Lo matsa mano-ach;
Kol rod’feha hisiguha

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

Ben hamitsarim

Within the narrow passes.

CHAPTER 1.8

Chet chata Y'rushalyim
(Echa yashva vadad ha-ir
... k'almana.)

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

CHAPTER 4.14-15

Na-u ivrim bachutsot
N'go-alu badam,
B'lo yuchlu
Yig'u bilvushehem.

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

Suru tame kar'u lamo,
Suru, suru al tiga-u ...

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

CHAPTER 5.20-21

Lama lanetsach tishkachenu ...
Lanetsach taazvenu ...
Hashivenu Adonai elecha ...

Wherefore dost Thou forget us forever,
And forsake us for so long a time? ...
Turn Thou us unto Thee, O Lord ...

Requiem Mass in D minor, K. 626 (1791)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(Born January 27, 1756 in Salzburg;
died December 5, 1791 in Vienna)

In early July 1791, while he was busy composing *The Magic Flute*, Mozart received a letter testifying to the glories of his music and alerting him that he would be having a visitor with a proposal on the following day. The letter was unsigned. The visitor, "an unknown, grey stranger," according to Mozart, appeared on schedule and said that he represented the writer of the letter, who wanted to commission a new piece — a Requiem Mass — but added the curious provision that Mozart not try to discover the patron's identity. Despite the somewhat foreboding mystery surrounding this venture, Mozart was in serious financial straits just then and the money offered was generous, so he accepted the commission and promised to begin as soon as possible. *The Magic Flute* was pressing, however, and he also received another commission at the same time, one too important to ignore, for an opera to celebrate the September coronation in Prague of Emperor Leopold as King of Bohemia — *La Clemenza di Tito*, based on one of Metastasio's old librettos — that demanded immediate attention.

Mozart worked on the *Requiem* as time allowed. From mid-August until mid-September, he, Constanze and his pupil Franz Süssmayr, who composed the recitatives for *Tito*, were in Prague for the opera's premiere. When they returned to Vienna, Schickaneder pressed Mozart to put the final touches on *The Magic Flute*, which was first staged on September 30th. Mozart's health had deteriorated alarmingly by October — he complained of swelling limbs, feverishness, pains in his joints and severe headaches. On November 17th, with the *Requiem* far from finished, he took to his bed. He became obsessed with the *Requiem*, referring to it as his "swan-song," convinced that he was writing the music for his own funeral. He managed to complete only the *Requiem* and *Kyrie* sections of the work, but sketched the voice parts and the bass and gave indications for scoring for the *Dies irae* through the *Hostias*. On December 4th, he scrawled a few measures of the *Lacrymosa*, and then collapsed. A priest was called to administer extreme unction; at midnight Mozart bid his family farewell and turned toward the wall; at five minutes to one on the morning of December 5, 1791, he died. He never knew for whom he had written the *Requiem*.

Constanze, worried that she might lose the commission fee, asked Joseph Eybler, a student of Haydn and a friend of her late husband, to complete the score. He filled in the instrumentation that Mozart had indicated for the middle movements of the piece, but became

stuck where the music broke off in the *Lacrymosa*. Süßmayr, to whom Mozart had given detailed instructions about finishing the work, took up the task, revising Eybler's orchestration and supplying music for the last three movements. Süßmayr recopied the score so that the manuscript would show one rather than three hands, and it was collected by the stranger, who paid the remaining commission fee.

The person who commissioned Mozart's *Requiem* was Count Franz von Walsegg, a nobleman of musical aspirations who had the odious habit of anonymously ordering music from established composers and then passing it off as his own. This *Requiem* was to commemorate Walsegg's wife, Anna, who had died on February 14, 1791. The "grey stranger" was Walsegg's valet, Anton Leitgeb, the son of the mayor of Vienna. Even after Mozart's death, Walsegg went ahead with a performance of the *Requiem*, which was given at the Neukloster in the suburb of Wiener-Neustadt on December 14, 1793; the title page bore the legend, *Requiem composito del Conte Walsegg*. A few years later, when Constanze was trying to have her late husband's works published, she implored Walsegg to disclose the *Requiem*'s true author. He did, and the score was first issued in 1802 by Breitkopf und Härtel.

It is difficult, and perhaps not even advisable, to dissociate Mozart's *Requiem* from the circumstances of its composition — the work bears the ineradicable stamp of otherworldliness. In its sublimities and its sulfur, it appealed mightily to the Romantic sensibility of the 19th century, and continues to have a hold on the imagination of listeners matched by that of few other musical compositions. Manifold beauties of varied and moving expression abound throughout the work. The words of Lili Kraus, the Hungarian pianist associated throughout her career with the music of Mozart, apply with special poignancy to the wondrous *Requiem*: "There is no feeling — human or cosmic, no depth, no height the human spirit can reach — that is not contained in his music."

I. Introitus: Requiem (Chorus and Soprano)

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Te decet hymnus, Deus, in Sion,
et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem.
Exaudi orationem meam.
Ad te omnis caro veniet.

Rest eternal grant them, O Lord;
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
There shall be singing unto Thee in Zion,
and prayer shall go up to Thee in Jerusalem.
Hear my prayer.
Unto Thee all flesh shall come.

II. Kyrie (Chorus)

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Lord have mercy.
Christ have mercy.
Lord have mercy.

III. Sequenz

1. Dies irae (Chorus)

Dies irae, dies illa
solvat saeculum in favilla,
teste David cum Sibylla.
Quantus tremor est futurus,
quando Judex est venturus
cuncta stricte discussurus!

This day, this day of wrath
shall consume the world in ashes,
so spake David and the Sibyl.
Oh, what great trembling there will be
when the Judge will appear
to examine everything in strict justice!

2. Tuba mirum (Soloists)

Tuba mirum spargens sonum
per sepulchra regionum,
coget omnes ante thronum.
Mors stupebit et natura,
cum resurget creatura
judicanti responsura.

The trumpet, sending its wondrous sound
across the graves of all lands,
shall drive everyone before the throne.
Death and nature shall be stunned
when all creation rises again
to stand before the Judge.

Liber scriptus proferetur,
in quo totum continetur,
unde mundus iudicetur.
Iudex ergo cum sedebit,
quidquid latet apparebit,
nil inultum remanebit.
Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?
Quem patronum rogaturus,
cum vix justus sit sicurus?

A written book will be brought forth,
in which everything is contained,
from which the world will be judged.
So when the Judge is seated,
whatever is hidden shall be made known,
nothing shall remain unpunished.
What shall such a wretch as I say then?
To which protector shall I appeal,
when even the just man is barely safe?

3. Rex tremendae (Chorus)

Rex tremendae majestatis,
qui salvandos salvas gratis,
salva me, fons pietatis!

King of awesome majesty,
who freely saves those worthy of salvation,
save me, fount of pity!

4. Recordare (Soloists)

Recordare, Jesu pie,
quod sum causa tuae viae,
ne me perdas illa die.
Quaerens me, sedisti lassus,
redemisti crucem passus;
tantus labor non sit cassus.
Juste iudex ultionis,
donum fac remissionis
ante diem rationis.
Ingemisco tamquam reus,
culpa rubet vultus meus,
supplicanti parce, Deus.
Qui Mariam absolvisti
et latronem exaudisti,
mihi quoque spem dedisti.
Preces meae non sunt dignae,
sed tu bonus fac benigne,
ne perenni cremer igne.
Inter oves locum praesta
et ab hoedis me sequestra,
statuens in parte dextra.

Recall, dear Jesus,
that I am the reason for Thy time on earth,
do not cast me away on that day.
Seeking me, Thou didst sink down wearily,
Thou hast saved me by enduring the cross;
such travail must not be in vain.
Righteous judge of vengeance,
award the gift of forgiveness
before the day of reckoning.
I groan like the sinner that I am,
guilt reddens my face,
Oh God, spare the supplicant.
Thou, who pardoned Mary
and heeded the thief,
hast given me hope as well.
My prayers are unworthy,
but Thou, good one, in pity
let me not burn in the eternal fire.
Give me a place among the sheep
and separate me from the goats,
let me stand at Thy right hand.

5. Confutatis (Chorus)

Confutatis maledictis,
flammis acribus addictis,
voca me cum benedictis.
Oro supplex et acclinis,
cor contritum quasi cinis,
gere curam mei finis.

When the damned are cast away
and consigned to the searing flames,
call me to be with the blessed.
Bowed down in supplication I beg Thee,
my heart as though ground to ashes:
help me in my last hour.

6. Lacrymosa (Chorus)

Lacrymosa dies illa
qua resurget ex favilla
judicandus homo reus;
huic ergo parce Deus.
Pie Jesu, Domine,
dona eis requiem.
Amen.

Oh, this day full of tears
when from the ashes arises
guilty man, to be judged:
Oh Lord, have mercy upon him.
Gentle Lord Jesus,
grant them rest.
Amen.

IV. Offertorium

1. Domine Jesu Christe (Chorus and Soloists)

Domine Jesu Christe, rex gloriae, Libera animas omnium fidelium defunctorum de poenis inferni et de profundo lacu. Libera eas de ore leonis, ne absorbeat eas tartarus, ne cadant in obscurum; sed signifer sanctus Michael representet eas in lucem sanctam, quam olim Abrahae promisisti et semini ejus.	Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory, deliver the souls of the faithful departed from the pains of hell and the bottomless pit. Deliver them from the jaws of the lion, lest hell engulf them, lest they be plunged into darkness; but let the holy standard-bearer Michael lead them into the holy light, as Thou didst promise Abraham and his seed.
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2. Hostias (Chorus)

Hostias et preces tibi, Domine, laudis offerimus, tu suscipe pro animabus illis, quarum hodie memoriam facimus: quam olim Abrahae promisisti et semini ejus.	Lord, in praise we offer to Thee sacrifices and prayers, receive them for the souls of those whom we remember this day: as Thou didst promise Abraham and his seed.
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V. Sanctus

1. Sanctus (Chorus)

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth! Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis!	Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts! Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory to God in the highest!
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2. Benedictus (Soloists)

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini! Hosanna in excelsis!	Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Glory to God in the highest!
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VI. Agnus Dei (Chorus)

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona eis requiem. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona eis requiem sempiternam.	Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world, grant them rest. Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world, grant them eternal rest.
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VII. Communio: Lux Aeterna (Soprano and Chorus)

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine, cum sanctis tuis in aeternam, quia pius es. Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis.	May eternal light shine upon them, O Lord, with Thy saints forever, for Thou art good. Lord, grant them eternal rest, and let perpetual light shine upon them.
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