Leonard Bernstein’s Musical Identities
Amount Requested: $12,900

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**Background:** By any measure, Leonard Bernstein was one of the greatest musicians of the twentieth century. Both composer and conductor, performer and educator, “serious” and “popular” musician, his musical talent seemed to know no bounds. As Paul Laird’s Bernstein bibliography demonstrates, there is no shortage of writings on Bernstein, a testament to the place he holds in the popular imagination. But the plethora of biographies, reviews and other journalistic writings appropriate for a lay audience stand in a near inverse relationship to the attention Bernstein’s music has received from scholars. This is not to suggest that there is a complete absence of scholarly work. Musicologists including Nadine Hubbs, Carol Oja and Elizabeth Wells have published cultural studies that examine the social meaning of Bernstein’s works—particularly the theater works. Others, including Laird, have produced sketch studies. Even authors such as Barry Seldes have contributed research that details Bernstein’s political activities. However, music analytical studies that seek to elucidate Bernstein’s compositional language are scarce. Jack Gottlieb’s dissertation, though an important first step, is now nearly 50 years old, and few music theorists have taken up the topic since. Thus, no book-length study dedicated to Bernstein’s own compositions exists. *Leonard Bernstein’s Musical Identities* is designed as a study that will fill this lacuna in the musical-analytical literature within the field of music theory.

**Significance:** The reasons that music theorists have shied away from the analysis of Bernstein’s music are multifold. Though an ancient discipline that can trace its history back at least to Pythagoras, in its current North American iteration music theory is only about 60 years old. As a discipline having grown up in the post-World War II academy, music theory values positivistic and structuralist approaches to its epistemological pursuits, devaluing that which is not normative, testable, or verifiable. As a result, music theorists remain interested in modernist composers whose atonal, serial and twelve-tone music lends itself to mathematically-inspired methodologies including set theory, group theory and graph theory. In turn, they have ignored composers whose music is not easily explained with such approaches, as well as historical, social, political and other contextual information that might inform an analysis of a musical composition, believing these factors are largely the purview of musicologists. The tension between musicology and music theory came to a head in the 1990s when “new musicologists,” inspired by trends in critical studies and literary theory, began questioning the importance of music theoretical study altogether. Interpreting this as a threat to their very existence, music theorists dug in their heels, clinging even more tightly to their positivistic and structuralist roots.

During this time, music theorists largely ignored issues of race, gender, and high versus low culture in music, topics that had enriched the work of many musicologists. Thus, a composer such as Bernstein, whose musical language is intimately bound up with these issues, remains the domain of the musicologists. This fact alone is regrettable, but even more unfortunate is that as a result, music theorists have yet even to consider, much less to engage with, Bernstein as a music theorist. From his Young People’s Concerts to monographs such as the *Joy of Music* to his Norton Lectures at Harvard, Bernstein produced an incredible amount of music theory—and this does not even include the plethora of unexamined analytical material to be found in his sketches, annotated scores, commentaries and correspondence. In short, those scholars who claim to care most about the music proper (as opposed to its contexts) have failed to thoroughly investigate how one of the greatest musical minds of the twentieth century thought about music. *Leonard Bernstein’s Musical Identities* would remedy this situation, and perhaps open paths to new dialogues about the place of music theory in the academy in general.
Methodology: All my scholarship to this point has focused on how primary sources including musical sketches, annotated scores, music-theoretical writings, analyses, correspondence, diary entries—documentary evidence that is often ignored or dismissed by many music theorists—can inform and condition “objective” musical analysis. In this study, I will focus on such sources in Bernstein’s legacy to provide the context that will guide my own analyses of Bernstein’s works. In his Norton Lectures, Bernstein said that, “Music is not only a mysterious and metaphorical art; it is also born of science. It is made of mathematically measurable elements: frequencies, durations, decibels, intervals. And so any explication of music must combine mathematics with aesthetics.” Methodologically I will take up this charge, blending accepted approaches to musical analysis with consideration for the cultural and aesthetic issues the music presents.

Outcome: This study would culminate in a monograph called Leonard Bernstein’s Musical Identities. The book will contain six chapters, each of which will be a self-contained essay that addresses one particular issue. Chapter One, “Musical Universals?: Bernstein’s Tonality,” delves into the many writings in which Bernstein offers a passionate defense of tonal music. I will show how Bernstein’s understanding of tonality, gleaned not only from these writings but also from his many analyses and conductor’s scores, elucidate his own approach to tonality (and atonality). Chapter Two, “So Easily Assimilated?: Race, Rhythm, Bernstein and Chomsky,” draws on two primary sources: Bernstein’s undergraduate thesis at Harvard, “The Absorption of Race Elements into American Music,” and his lecture, “Musical Syntax,” given as part of the Norton Lectures at Harvard nearly 35 years later. (The title refers to the song, “I Am So Easily Assimilated,” from Bernstein’s musical Candide.) In the Norton Lecture, Bernstein proposes a “Chomskian” musical syntax (after the writings of Noam Chomsky), which clearly derives from a Western understanding of musical time. I will reconsider this syntax in light of his earlier study to show how Bernstein attempts to assimilate what he terms “race elements” (by which he largely means elements derived from African-American, Native American and Latin musics) into a Western musical framework to create his distinctive rhythmic language. This context will then serve to shed light on the ways Bernstein interprets race musically in his own compositions. Chapter Three is entitled “Ehrt eure deutschen Meister, dann bannt ihr gute Geister: Bernstein, Mahler and Vienna.” The text in the title translates as, “Honor your German masters, then you preserve good spirits,” an excerpt from Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, an opera by Richard Wagner, a favorite of the Nazi party. The text is displayed prominently on the edifice of the Wienerkonzerthaus, one of the major concert halls in Vienna. On the front of the building at street level only two composers are memorialized: not the expected “German masters,” but rather, Gustav Mahler and Leonard Bernstein. In this chapter I reexamine the kinship Bernstein felt with Mahler and the effect this had on his musical language. Both were composer/conductors who were celebrated more as conductors than as composers in their lifetime; both were known for their work with the Vienna Philharmonic; and both had to confront anti-Semitic bias. Mahler converted to Catholicism in order to be allowed to conduct in Vienna. Bernstein did not have to confront such a choice, but he did have to overcome the prejudice of the members of the orchestra who thought of Mahler’s symphonies as Scheissemusik. From Mahler, Bernstein learned to infuse his musical language with Jewish rhythmic, melodic and harmonic elements, while still holding on to those influences of composers that were celebrated by a Nazi regime. Thus, I conclude the chapter with a reflection on the meaning of the Jewish elements in the larger context of Bernstein’s style in general. Chapter Four, “Where They Really Don’t Want To Be At All” (a lyric from Bernstein’s song, “I Hate Music”), revisits the often expressed notion that while Bernstein was a successful theater composer (as evidenced by West Side Story, Wonderful
his “serious” music, including symphonies, ballets, chamber music and operas, will not stand the test of time, principally because of the intermingling of various folk, jazz, rock and other popular influences that abound. I will show that rather than employing these references for mere effect, Bernstein actually blurred the “class” distinctions of his musical material, integrating the “popular” influences into his musical language—a language that served him well both in “serious” and “popular” contexts. In Chapter Five, “(Gender) Trouble in Tahiti,” I address Bernstein’s two operas, Trouble in Tahiti and A Quiet Place, for which he wrote both the libretto and the music. Both operas focus on American suburbanites, Sam and Dinah. In the first opera we discover that they are not entirely comfortable in their “little white house.” In the second opera it is 30 years later, Dinah has died in a car accident, and their son Junior, who was only mentioned in the first opera but did not actually sing, has come home for the funeral. We learn in the opening bars of A Quiet Place that Junior is a “queer who skipped the draft.” Bernstein himself grappled with his personal issues of gender conformity and his expression of sexuality, and before the composition of A Quiet Place, left his wife in order to live as an openly gay man. In this chapter I will explore the musical elements Bernstein employs that gender his representations of Sam and Dinah in Trouble in Tahiti, and those he supplies in A Quiet Place to do the same for their gay son. I will use these as case studies to discuss representations of gender across Bernstein’s oeuvre. Chapter Six, “The Age of Anxiety of Influence” (a reference to the title of the second symphony, “Age of Anxiety”), recounts the myriad quotations and semi-quotations found throughout Bernstein’s scores, quotations taken freely from “high” and “low” art music of all kinds. Bernstein once asked, “What are you [as a composer] if not the sum of all that’s come before?” In this vein, I will consider whether Bernstein was a strong composer (in the Bloomian sense), or, as some of his critics have charged, nothing but a derivative copycat.

Objectives and Timeline: Much of the annotated scores, analyses, sketch material and correspondence I need to consult for this project is unpublished. Thus, my principal objective for this project is to undertake archival research in the Leonard Bernstein Collection at the Library of Congress. I have considerable experience with such research. I have published articles on the music of Arnold Schoenberg and Elliott Carter that resulted from the investigation of primary sources, and I am currently completing my first book, a documentary study of Schoenberg’s program notes and analyses of his own music, which required extensive archival research. The manuscript of this book will be sent to the publisher in January 2012.

During Summer 2012 I will be preparing my tenure file for external review, as well as teaching a graduate course during the Summer II session. In Fall 2012 I will complete an article submitted for publication in Spring 2012 that will bolster my tenure case. During this time I can also begin to read the primary and secondary sources that relate to the Bernstein project. As a semester leave pre-tenure is something not customarily granted by the School of Music, I am requesting funds to pay an adjunct to teach two courses for me in Spring 2013 so that I can continue to study sources and properly prepare for the extensive research I plan to undertake at the Library of Congress in Summer 2013. In Fall 2013 I can begin working on Chapters 1 and 2 in earnest. In Spring 2014 I will continue with Chapters 3 and 6. In Summer 2014 I will focus on Chapters 4 and 5, and should be in position to send a proposal to a publisher.

I should also mention that 2018 will mark the centenary of Bernstein’s birthday. I forecast that this book would appear in print in advance of the festivities surrounding this occasion, allowing me to market myself as an expert in the field related to all things Bernstein, and bringing positive attention to the university.
EDUCATION
Ph.D., Music Theory, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, 2007
  Dissertation: Issues of Presentation in Schoenberg’s Atonal Period Vocal Music: Three Case Studies
  Adviser: Dave Headlam

M.M., Music Theory and Composition, University of Louisville, 2000
  Thesis: An Analysis of Elliott Carter’s Fifth String Quartet
  Adviser: Anne Marie deZeeuw

B.M., Music Education, Summa Cum Laude, University of Kentucky

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY
Assistant Professor of Music Theory, University of South Carolina, 2007–present
  Affiliate Faculty in the Women’s and Gender Studies Program, the EURO Studies Program and the International Studies Program

PUBLICATIONS
  • “After the Harvest: Carter’s Fifth String Quartet and the Late Late Style.” Music Theory Online 16.3 (August 2010).
  • Liner notes for Gustav Mahler: Das Lied von der Erde (Arnold Schönberg-Reiner Riehn Chamber Orchestra Transcription). Timothy W. Sparks, tenor; Ellen Williams, mezzosoprano; Duraleigh Chamber Players; Scott Tilley, conductor. Centaur Records CRC 3044, 2010.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS – Selected
• “‘Atonal’ Motives, the Presentation of the Musical Idea, and Historically Sensitive Analysis.” Paper presented at “Music Theory and Interdisciplinarity,” VIII. Congress of the Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie, (Eighth Congress of the Society for Music Theory in Germany, Austria and Switzerland), Graz, Austria, October 11, 2008.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS, SEMINARS AND LECTURES – Selected
• “Whistling in Schwarzenbergplatz: Schoenberg’s Search for an Audience.” Invited presentation for “Schoenberg in Words: Teachings, Writings, Correspondence—A Symposium in Honor of Nuria Schoenberg Nono,” University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, September 23, 2011.
• Preconcert Lecture for “Bernstein: MASS.” University of Colorado at Boulder Opera, Denver, CO, April 26, 2011.
• “After the Harvest: Carter’s Fifth String Quartet and the Late Late Style.” Invited presentation for the Musicology and Music Theory Colloquium Series, College of Music, University of Colorado at Boulder, Boulder, CO, March 1, 2010.
• “The Sum of Everything That’s Happened Before: Leonard Bernstein’s Tonality.” Presentation for the University of South Carolina Composition Seminar, November 20, 2009.
• “The Sketches for Elliott Carter’s Fifth String Quartet.” Invited presentation for the University of Zagreb Music Academy, Zagreb, Croatia, June 29, 2009.

HONORS AND AWARDS – Selected
• Research Opportunity Program (ROP) Grant from the University of South Carolina to pursue research for the book Arnold Schoenberg: Program Notes and Musical Analyses (1904-1951), 2009
• Avenir Foundation Grant, Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna, 2008
• Patricia Carpenter Emerging Scholar Award, Music Theory Society of New York State, 2007
• Fulbright Grant for study and research at the Arnold Schönberg Center, the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, and the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna, Austria, 2005
BIBLIOGRAPHY – Selected

_____.”The Symphonic Form is Dead, And Other Observations by a New Elder Statesman.”
_____.”Jazz Forum: Has Jazz Influenced the Symphony?” *Esquire* 27 (February 1947): 46ff.
57–62.
Flinn, J. Wesley. “Layers of Tonality in the Third Movement of Leonard Bernstein’s Chichester
_____.*The Music of Leonard Bernstein: A Study of Melodic Manipulations*. D.M.A. Thesis:
University of Illinois, 1964.
Keiler, Allan. “Bernstein’s The Unanswered Question and the Problem of Musical Competence.”
1983.
McClary, Susan. *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, & Sexuality*, 2nd. ed. Minneapolis: University of
Oja, Carol. “West Side Story and The Music Man: Whiteness, Immigration, and Race in the US
Wells, Elizabeth. *West Side Story: Cultural Perspectives on an American Musical*. Lanham, MD:
Scarecrow Press, 2011.
**BUDGET**

Buyout of two courses in the School of Music in Spring 2013  $6000

Research Trip to Library of Congress in Summer 2013

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<th>Item</th>
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**Total requested**  $12,900

I have not secured, nor have I sought, other sources of funding for this project. It is my hope that this grant could serve as seed money, and were I to need additional funding to complete the project, that I would be able to apply elsewhere for that.

*The Library of Congress charges $.50 per black and white copy ($1 for .pdf).*