

GUSTAV MAHLER
WIEN 3
SYMPHONIE N^o. 1.

1. Satz.



Gustav Mahler.

Langsam. Schleppend. Wie ein Naturlaut. zu 2. Più mosso. zu 2.

1. 2. Flöte.
Piccolo (3. Flöte.)
1. Oboe.
Engl. Horn (3. Ob.)
1. Clarinette in B.
2. Clarinette in B.
Bassclarinette in B.
(3. Clar.)
1. 2. Fagotti.
1. Violine.
2. Violine.
Viola.
Violoncelle
zu drei
gleichen Theilen.
Contrabässe
zu drei
gleichen Theilen.

Langsam. Schleppend. Più mosso.

sempre ppp

Langsam. Schleppend. Più mosso.

Anmerkung für den Dirigenten: Dieses tiefste *a* muss deutlich *pp* gespielt werden.

Bernstein and Mahler: Channeling a Prophet

BY JAMES M. KELLER

On February 7, 1960, music lovers of an up-and-coming generation seated themselves in front of television sets across the United States to catch the latest of Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts with the New York Philharmonic, and for the first time in that series' history they were treated to a program that spotlighted a single composer: Gustav Mahler. With figures like Beethoven or Brahms hovering in the wings, the choice of Mahler for such an honor was surely provocative in 1960, when few concertgoers would have thought to include him on the A-list of great composers.

Mahler's copy of his First Symphony, used by the composer the last time he conducted the work in New York, 1909. The score remained in the Philharmonic's Library after his death and was used by Bruno Walter in 1933 and Bernstein in 1959. The markings on this page are Bernstein's and his initials are in pencil at the bottom left corner.

It was an act of devotion and bravura by Bernstein, who in one fell swoop was harnessing together the prestige of the New York Philharmonic and the technological reach of television broadcasting to reposition Mahler in the pantheon of composers. The event itself was a small part of a large initiative, the New York Philharmonic's

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Mahler Festival of 1960. But if the concerts of that festival made the case for Mahler to mature concertgoers, the Young People's broadcast proposed the argument where it might achieve an especially long-lasting effect. In that broadcast Bernstein introduced Mahler to young and receptive viewers whose musical

tastes were very much in formation—and those viewers would reward him by continuing to associate the names of Mahler and Bernstein as inseparable through succeeding decades.

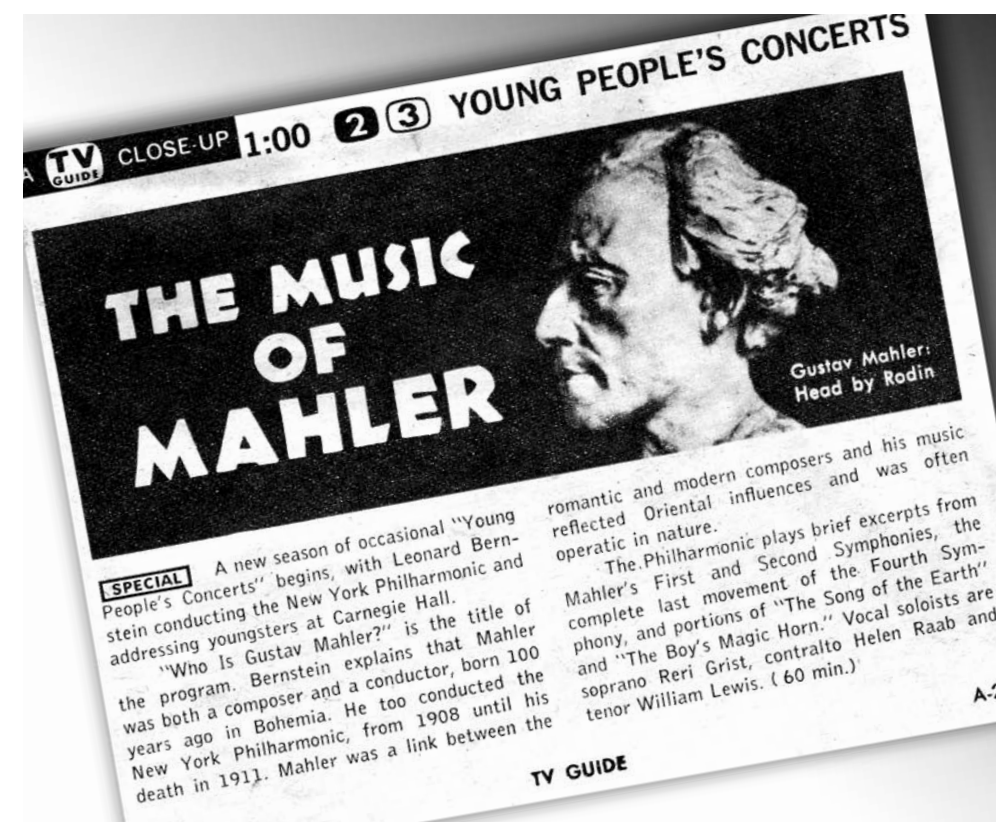
“Now, I’ll bet there isn’t a person in this whole Carnegie Hall who knows what that music is,” Bernstein declared to his young viewers after conducting the New York Philharmonic in the opening of Mahler's Fourth Symphony. “You see, Mahler isn’t one of those big popular names like Beethoven or Gershwin or Ravel, but he’s sure famous among music lovers. In fact we’re playing an awful lot of Mahler these days right here at the Philharmonic; there’s one of his pieces on every program for at least two months. And the reason is that this year is his hundredth birthday.”

The Double Men

By the time the hour was through, Bernstein had walked his young listeners through further excerpts from the Fourth Symphony, Second Symphony, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* and *Das Lied von der Erde*. It was hardly childish fare by any reckoning, but Bernstein insisted that he had no qualms about presenting it because “you already know more about Mahler than most people do, and you’ll understand also all the doublenesses, those fights in him, all those things we’ve talked about today.” One of “those things” was how Mahler struggled to balance the competing demands of composing and conducting. “They say that anyway a conductor’s head is too full of everyone else’s music, so how can he write original stuff of his own?” Bernstein observed, immediately dismissing the argument. “But still I admit it’s a problem to be both a conductor and a composer; there never seems to be enough time and energy to be both things. I ought to know because I have the

same problem myself, and that’s one of the reasons why I’m so sympathetic to Mahler: I understand his problem. It’s like being two different men locked up in the same body; one man is a conductor and the other a composer, and they’re both one fellow called Mahler (or Bernstein). It’s like being a double man.”

Bernstein’s identification with Mahler was by that time well advanced, as was his intimate familiarity with the composer’s music. Bernstein’s own relationship to his Judaism was apparently no less complicated than Mahler’s had been, and there is no overlooking the extent to which this shared legacy helped fuel his identification with Mahler. He was fond of quoting Mahler’s famous statement (or overstatement): “I am thrice homeless, as a native of Bohemia in Austria, as an Austrian among Germans, and as a Jew throughout all the world. Everywhere an intruder, never welcomed.” Bernstein was fond of amending Mahler, too. In *The Little Drummer Boy*, a Mahler documentary he made in 1984, the music of “Der Tambour’sell” segues into a close-up of Bernstein as a “talking head,” riffing fancifully in the first person: “When they ask me who I was I tell them I was a little German-Czech-Moravian-Jewish-Polish-Austrian boy named Gustav Mahler.” Much of what follows displays a similar merg-



A television listing for the Young People's Concert that posed the question: “Who Is Gustav Mahler?” By program’s end, a new and receptive generation nationwide would know the answer.



Wearing a favorite sweatshirt while rehearsing the Philharmonic in Philharmonic Hall.

ing of personas, which can come across as unsettling. And yet there is no doubting Bernstein's sincerity, any more than one would care to doubt the sincerity of his famously unbuttoned, highly idiosyncratic interpretations of Mahler's music. Although he encountered serious criticism for what came to be viewed as an extreme approach to Mahler, Bernstein defended his interpretations as both informed and authentic. He would explain in his 1971 film *Four Ways to Say Farewell*, a lecture-performance about the Ninth Symphony, with the Vienna Philharmonic:

I have tried in the past in performances of this and other Mahler symphonies to underplay early climaxes, to save, also for my own sanity and for the sake of the orchestra's, so they don't give their all and have nothing left. It's impossible with Mahler. You have to give everything you have emotionally to bar 39 and eight bars later even more. ... All Mahler symphonies, all Mahler works, for that matter, deal in extremes: extremes of dynamics, of tempo, of emotional meaning. When it is there, it is extremely there. When it's thick and rich, it's thicker and richer than anything in *Götterdämmerung*. When it is suffering it is suffering to a point that no music has ever suffered before.

The notations he inscribed (I know not when) on the score of that symphony that resides in the New York Philharmonic Archives evoke precisely the emphasis on extremes—and on his beloved dualities—that informed his Mahler interpretations from the outset. At the top of the third movement, for example, his markings include “Nasty/hilarious,” “spastic/sophisticated,” “sour/‘pious.’ ”

A Mahler Missionary

Bernstein's identification with Mahler, the man, was born of intimate familiarity with the composer's scores. His formative years as a musician had placed him in the orbits of numerous figures who qualified as Mahler champions, including Artur Rodzinski, a forceful Mahler advocate whose Philharmonic performances of the Second Symphony Bernstein had followed as the assistant conductor and understudy in December 1943; Bruno Walter, who had served as the composer's amanuensis from 1901–11 and whose eleventh-hour cancellation afforded Bernstein his high-profile Philharmonic conducting debut, which was broadcast, in November 1943; Fritz Reiner, Bernstein's conducting professor at the Curtis Institute, whose credits included the English premiere of *Kindertotenlieder*, in 1924; Serge Koussevitzky, who had led the American premiere of the Ninth Symphony, in 1931, and served as Bernstein's mentor at the outset of his conducting career; and Dimitri Mitropoulos, who made the first-ever studio recording of the First Symphony, in 1940 with the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, and was Bernstein's predecessor as the Philharmonic's Music Director, serving together with him as co-conductor for the 1957–58 season.

Bernstein first conducted Mahler's music at the season-opening concert of the New York City Symphony Orchestra at City Center, on September 22, 1947, the first of a pair of performances he led as that group's music director. His not-very-modest selection for the event was the *Resurrection* Symphony—still an “occasion” whenever it is programmed, and certainly one in 1947. The critic Irving Kolodin, writing the next day in the *New York Sun*, welcomed the piece as “the most bump-tious, empty noise ever contrived.” From the outset, then, Bernstein found himself playing both offense and defense in the Mahler arena, conducting the composer's works in the spirit of a devout and energetic acolyte, often in the face of incomprehension or downright hostility.

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Mahler: New York's Own

The New York Philharmonic Archives possesses a roster of Bernstein's Mahler performances compiled from its own records, documentation from numerous other orchestras, and the tour books of Helen Coates (Bernstein's one-time teacher and for many years his secretary). The list chronicles 342 performances of Mahler's symphonic works conducted by Bernstein in his hyperactive career. Because the list does not mention his 1947 City Center concerts we can be assured that it is not exhaustive, but it seems to come close to being complete. It charts what may be taken as the peregrinations of a missionary who was intent on spreading Mahler throughout the concertgoing world, from New York to Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Vancouver, Tokyo, Seoul, Sydney, Jerusalem, Rome, Milan, Lucerne, Salzburg, Vienna, Leipzig, Berlin, Munich, Amsterdam, Paris, London, Edinburgh, Stockholm, and dozens of points in between.

But New York far outnumbers any other city when it comes to Bernstein's Mahler performances, hosting 148 of the 342 concerts; and in a further forty-three performances Bernstein was conducting the New York Philharmonic in tour engagements. In other words, more than half of Bernstein's performances of symphonic works by Mahler took place in New York or in other cities with the New York Philharmonic. By way of comparison, he led thirty-five such performances in Israel (Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, and several other locations) and thirty-three in Vienna—the two (distant) runners-up.

When Bernstein set about "claiming ownership" of Mahler—and, looking back from the distance of nearly a half-century that seems not to be an overstatement—he did so from his base in New York. This was possible, in part, because New York was by that time enjoying esteem as one of the unarguable cultural capitals of the post-war world. But there were other reasons that New York should have been the center of Bernstein's campaign. Mahler himself had been the New York Philharmonic's Principal Conductor from 1909 until his death in 1911, and his successors had included such preeminent Mahlerites as Willem Mengelberg and Walter, not to mention Rodzinski and Mitropoulos. New York's Mahler tradition had continued unbroken since the composer's time. In contrast, even such European Mahler hotbeds as Vienna and Amsterdam had lagged, in part because of the suppression of the Jewish composer's music during the years of Nazi domination and occupation.

Music lovers who came of age in the 1960s often assume that Bernstein all but rescued Mahler's scores from the dustbin, single-handedly restoring a corner of the repertoire that had fallen into desuetude. But by the time Bernstein's 1960 Mahler Festival got underway, Mahler's music had passed across the Philharmonic's music

stands in no fewer than one hundred sixty-six different performances under the direction of fifteen different conductors—not counting Bernstein, who prior to the festival had led the Philharmonic in only the third movement of the First Symphony during a Young People’s Concert in February 1959. By 1960 all of the major Mahler works had a place in the Philharmonic’s repertoire, and much of his

oeuvre had a long history with the Orchestra. The First Symphony was introduced to Philharmonic audiences by Mahler himself in 1909 and had returned in eleven seasons since. The Second was also introduced in 1908 (by Mahler); the Third in 1922 (the first of several Mahler works Mengelberg would

introduce); the Fourth in 1904 (even before Mahler’s Philharmonic tenure, by Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony Society, which would merge with the Philharmonic in 1928); the Fifth in 1926 (by Mengelberg, not counting the first movement only—the “Trauermarsch”—conducted in 1911 by Josef Stransky as a memorial to Mahler); the Sixth in 1947 (by Mitropoulos); the Seventh in 1923 (by Mengelberg); the Eighth in 1950 (by Leopold Stokowski); the Ninth in 1945 (by Walter); *Das Lied von der Erde* in 1929 (by Mengelberg); *Kindertotenlieder* in 1910 (by Mahler); and *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* in 1916 (by Walter Damrosch and the Symphony Society, following Mahler’s conducting of an excerpt—plus a song from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*—in 1910).

Becoming the Mahler Conductor

The Mahler Festival that Bernstein organized for the winter of 1960—the centennial tribute that included the Young People’s Concert about the composer—was nonetheless a major and unaccustomed undertaking, not least because it effectively introduced Bernstein to Philharmonic audiences as a Mahler conductor. The 1959–60 season was Bernstein’s second at the helm of the New York Philharmonic; he was losing no time declaring his commitment to Mahler before his New York audience, but he did so modestly, in a way that could not be construed as overly possessive or greedy. In fact, the lion’s share of the conducting went to Mitropoulos, who led the First, Fifth, and Ninth Symphonies, as well as Ernst Krenek’s version of the slow movement of the Tenth. Walter returned to the Philharmonic at the age of eighty-four to preside over *Das Lied von der Erde*. As the

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Third, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Symphonies were not programmed, Bernstein was left with a portion less ample than he could have claimed: the Second and Fourth Symphonies, *Kindertotenlieder*, and a song set comprising three items from the *Rückert-Lieder* and one from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. It is perhaps not a coincidence that Bernstein’s repertoire on this occasion largely overlapped with the works Mahler himself had conducted during his years in New York, which were limited to the Symphonies No. 2 (with the New York Symphony Society) and—with the Philharmonic itself—Nos. 1 and 4, *Kindertotenlieder*, and a couple of songs (though not the same ones Bernstein selected).

Bernstein kept a demure presence even in the program books for the 1960 Mahler Festival. One might have expected to find an appreciative essay from the Music Director in all of the Festival programs; most, instead, contained relevant essays, reprinted or newly written, from such figures as Krenek, the music analyst

Bernstein affixed this bumper sticker to the first page of his score of the Mahler Sixth Symphony.



Donald Francis Tovey, the musicologist Dika Newlin, and the psychoanalyst Theodor Reik (musing on *Kindertotenlieder*), in addition to a 1910 interview with Mahler himself and a recent one with his widow, Alma Mahler Werfel, by then residing in New York.

The programs for the concerts in which Bernstein conducted the Fourth Symphony include a justificatory piece titled “Why a Mahler Festival?” by the Orchestra’s program annotator Howard Shanet, doubtless voicing a viewpoint that Bernstein espoused, but not carrying Bernstein’s byline. The only program contribution from Bernstein accompanies the Second Symphony. The essay, titled “The Double Mahler,” is presented as “adapted from Mr. Bernstein’s television script for his Young People’s Concert,” and, true to its title, it emphasizes the dualities to which Bernstein found himself so sympathetic in “this strange double man”: “Mahler the conductor and Mahler the composer,” “Mahler the sad grown-up and Mahler the innocent child,” “Mahler the Jew and Mahler the Christian,” and so on.

Robert F. Kennedy’s funeral at St. Patrick’s Cathedral, New York City. Bernstein led members of the Philharmonic in the Adagio from Mahler’s Fifth Symphony, 1968.



The Philharmonic’s Mahler Festival was widely reported by the New York press, though nearly all of the coverage took the form of single-concert reviews rather than commentary about the festival as a whole. Reading through the files of relevant clippings one gets the impression that the critical community viewed the event as interesting but not really extraordinary; most reviewers applauded what they heard, and those who didn’t almost always revealed that their reaction involved a distaste for Mahler rather than any grievous shortcomings in the performances. One critic who was eager to discuss the festival as a festival was Jack Diether, who on March 13, 1960, wrote perceptively in *The New York Times*: “If the ‘Mahler Centennial Year’ had occurred just ten or fifteen years ago, a nine-week Philharmonic festival would have been quite unthinkable here. Yet such a festival, under Leonard Bernstein and Dimitri Mitropoulos, has this season brought swelling cheers and cries for more. One reason is that this is simply one aspect of the growing concern of people with the fundamental problem of existence in our equivocal age, seemingly so close to both ultimate realization and ultimate annihilation.” Diether’s relating Mahler’s music to the existential concerns of life in 1960 was concordant with Bernstein’s own inclinations, and before long Bernstein would be voicing such an explicit connection himself.

What Mahler Foretold

In April 1967 Bernstein published a famous essay titled “Mahler: His Time has Come” in the record-review magazine *High Fidelity*. Here we find Bernstein revisiting the familiar themes of Mahlerian duality, now expressed in some of the most passionate prose he would ever commit to paper and working up to a sweeping historical pronouncement:

This is what Mahler meant when he said, “My time will come.” It is only after fifty, sixty, seventy years of world holocausts, of the simultaneous advance of democracy with our increasing inability to stop making war, of the simultaneous magnification of national pieties with the intensification of our active resistance to social equality—only after we have experienced all this through the smoking ovens of Auschwitz, the frantically bombed jungles of Vietnam, through Hungary, Suez, the Bay of Pigs, the farce-trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel, the refueling of the Nazi machine, the murder in Dallas, the arrogance of South Africa, the Hiss-Chambers travesty, the Trotskyite purges, Black Power, Red Guards, the Arab encirclement of Israel, the plague of McCarthyism, the Tweedledum armaments race—only after all this can we finally listen to Mahler’s music and understand that it foretold all.

A New York Post photo dated June 8, 1968, the date of RFK's funeral at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Many an eyebrow has been raised over this passage, which does strike a reader as possibly exceeding what Mahler had in mind when he said, "My time will come." Nonetheless, it would take a hard heart to deny the sincerity of Bernstein's rant, and he most assuredly felt himself entitled to it. It obviously did not strike him as inappropriate to justify Mahler's music from his own historical perspective even while all but ascribing that position to Mahler, who had departed this earth long before any of those events took place. By that time Bernstein, with the help of the New York Philharmonic, had effectively melded his identity with that of Gustav Mahler. He had grown comfortable in his role as avatar, and he had ensured that he and Mahler would remain connected in posterity.

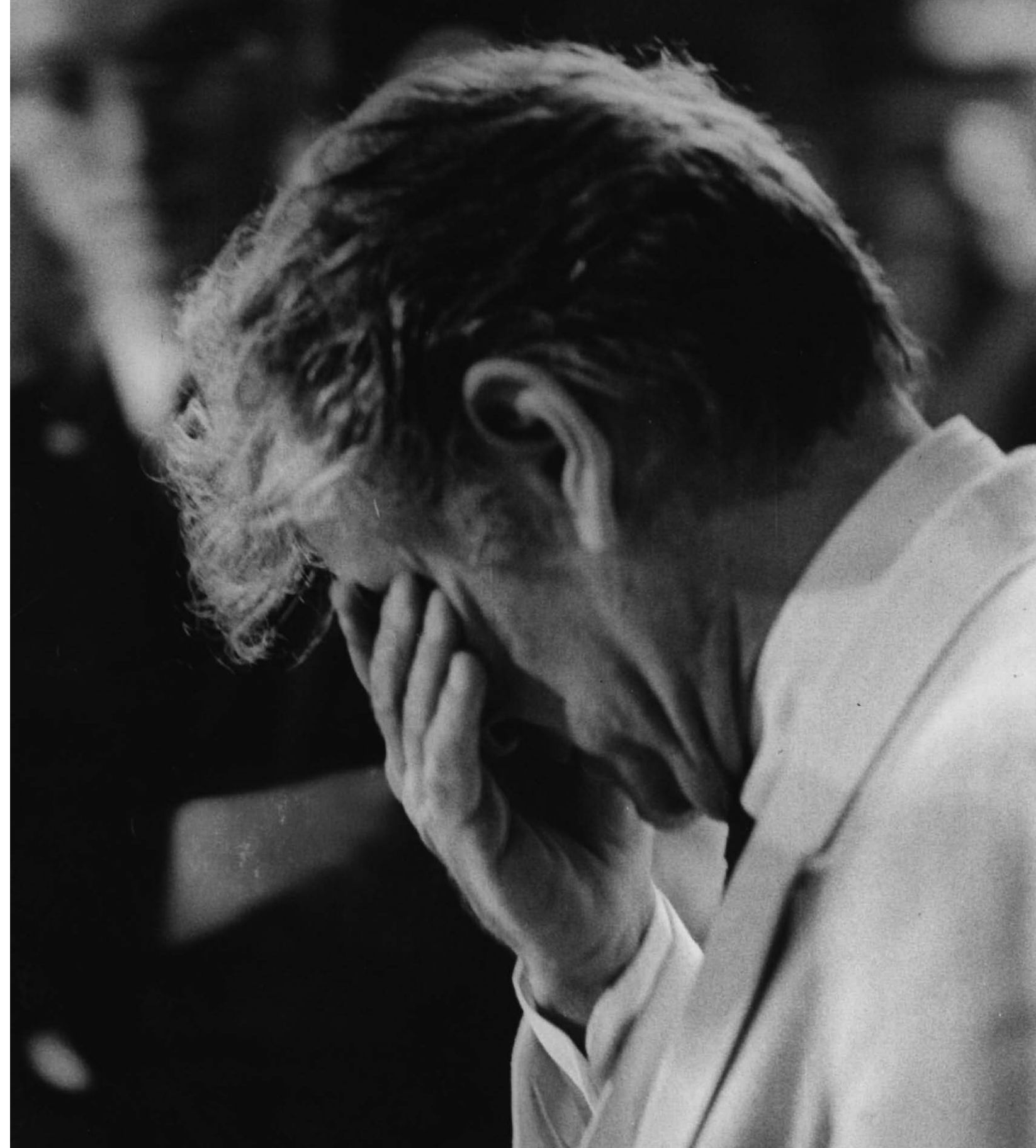
But let us return to the New York Philharmonic's Mahler Festival: even in 1960 the idea of such a festival was not novel in New York. Several critics made note of an earlier Mahler festival, which had taken place in the city in 1942. The

organizer and conductor for that tribute had been Erno Rapee, a Hungarian émigré not widely remembered today who spent much of his career conducting theater and broadcasting orchestras. Over the course of thirteen weeks, from January to April 1942, he had conducted the Radio City Music Hall Orchestra in

Smoking ovens of **Auschwitz...**
Frantically **bombed** jungles
of Vietnam...**Murder** in Dallas...
Plague of **McCarthyism...**

a series of Sunday-afternoon radio concerts, on NBC's Blue Network, that included the Symphonies Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9, plus *Das Lied von der Erde*, in appreciation for which he was awarded the Mahler Medal of the Bruckner Society of America.

Even if it was not a wholly original idea, the 1960 festival was the moment when Bernstein staked his claim on Mahler territory, and he lost little time adding the remaining Mahler works to his repertoire at the Philharmonic: the Third Symphony in 1961; the First in 1962; the Eighth in 1963, having already included the work's first movement in the opening concert of Philharmonic (later Avery Fisher) Hall, on September 23, 1962; the Fifth in 1963; the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth in a Mahler mini-festival (this time an all-Bernstein one) in the late autumn of 1965; *Das Lied von der Erde* in 1967 (he had already essayed it in 1965 with the Vienna Philharmonic); and the Sixth Symphony that same year (his three April 1967 concerts, plus an additional broadcast, would remain his only New York Philharmonic performances of that work).



Taking Mahler Public

But concert-hall performances heard by a relatively small number of people cannot account alone for the enduring association between Bernstein and Mahler in the minds of music-lovers. While he was forging this connection on the stage he was also ensuring a role for Mahler outside the concert hall by rendering the composer’s



With his long-time record producer, John McClure, who produced the first complete cycle of Mahler symphonies released on Columbia (later CBS Records).

music at public events of overwhelming national significance. It was a major statement to play part of the Eighth Symphony at the opening of Philharmonic Hall; but fourteen months later, on November 24, 1963, Bernstein introduced the entire United States to the Second Symphony when he conducted the Philharmonic in a national telecast, from the CBS Studios in New York, as a tribute to President John F. Kennedy, who had been assassinated two days before. Notwithstanding the New York Philharmonic’s 1911 performance of the Fifth Symphony’s “Trauermarsch” as an official tribute on Mahler’s passing, the composer’s music had not gone on to assume a funerary function. Bernstein accordingly found himself justifying his choice, in a speech he delivered at a United Jewish Appeal benefit at Madison Square Garden on November 25:

Last night the New York Philharmonic and I performed Mahler’s Second Symphony—“The Resurrection”—in tribute to the memory of our beloved late President. There were those who asked: Why the “Resurrection” Symphony, with its visionary concept of hope and triumph over worldly pain, instead of a Requiem, or the customary Funeral March from the “Eroica”? Why indeed? We played the Mahler symphony not only in terms of resurrection for the soul of one we love, but also for the resurrection of hope in all of us who mourn him. In spite of our shock, our shame, and our despair at the diminution of man that follows from this death, we must somehow gather strength for the increase of man, strength to go on striving for those goals he cherished. In mourning him, we must be worthy of him.

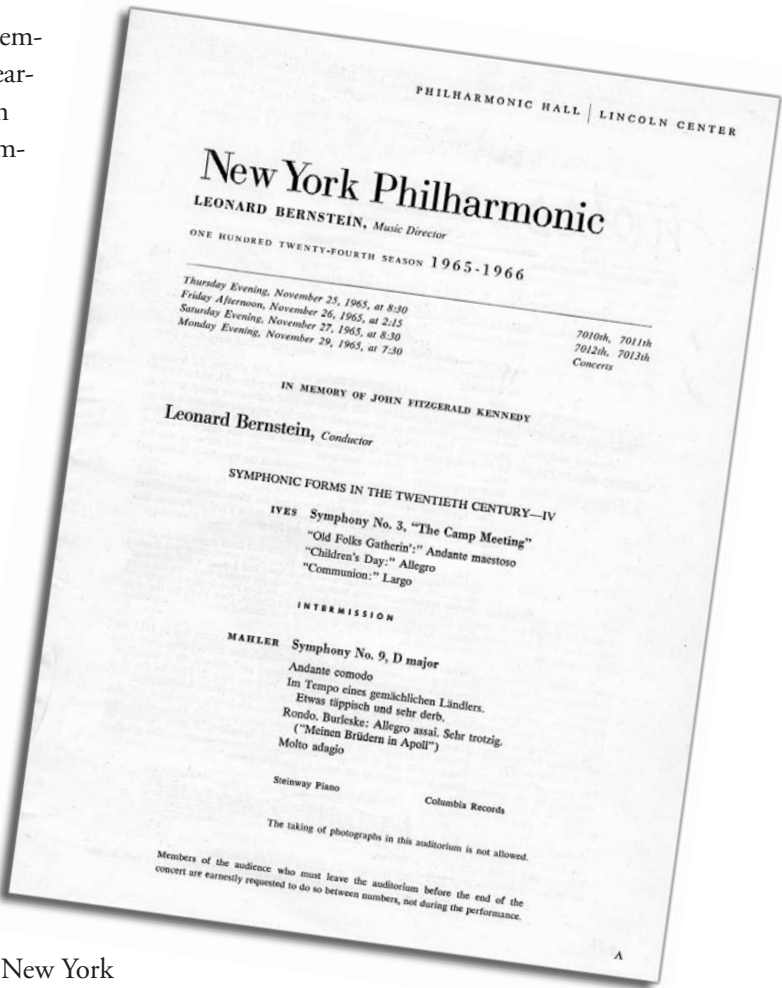
Bernstein would go on to press other Mahler movements into similar use. In November 1965 he dedicated four performances of the Ninth Symphony, including a national broadcast, to the memory of J.F.K. On June 8, 1968, Bernstein led the Philharmonic in the *Adagietto* from the Fifth Symphony in St. Patrick’s Cathedral, at the funeral of Robert F. Kennedy. Through such high-profile performances Bernstein helped inject Mahler into some of the most deeply shared emotional experiences in American history, and set the stage for a tradition that would continue. The next year,

Pierre Boulez led the *Adagietto* on March 28, 1969 in memory of President Dwight D. Eisenhower (who had died earlier that day), and on October 16, 1990, Leonard Slatkin conducted the same piece as a memorial to Bernstein himself, just two days after his passing.

Mahler for Posterity

At the same time that Bernstein was taking Mahler’s music beyond the concert hall and into the American consciousness at major commemorative events, he was also recording Mahler’s music for posterity using the latest recording technology. He had signed his first contract with Columbia Records in 1950; when his contract was up for renewal in 1959 he struck a bargain that gave him free rein in choosing repertoire. Mahler would be Bernstein’s chief priority, and the Fourth Symphony, *Kindertotenlieder*, and excerpts from the *Rückert-Lieder* had already been committed to tape (in studio sessions at the St. George Hotel in Brooklyn Heights) in February 1960, while the Mahler Festival was in progress. The Third Symphony followed in 1961 and the Second in late September 1963, both recorded at the Manhattan Center. After that Bernstein’s Mahler recordings became a showcase not only for the New York Philharmonic but also for the Orchestra’s new home at Lincoln Center. In May 1967 Bernstein’s Mahler project reached its completion with his recording of the Sixth Symphony (it having been decided that he would record the Eighth Symphony with the London Symphony rather than record the New York Philharmonic’s performance because of protracted uncertainties occasioned by choral-union negotiations in New York). Later that year CBS Records (it had changed its name from Columbia the year before) issued Bernstein’s recordings of the Mahler symphonies—the first-ever integral recording of all nine works—as a sumptuous set of fourteen long-playing records, plus a “bonus record” of interviews and reminiscences, encased in a black leather box.

The public perception of Bernstein as an unrivaled champion of Mahler was helped not only by the number and comprehensiveness of recordings he made but also by improvements in recording technology itself. By the time Bernstein’s boxed



Bernstein conducted Mahler’s Ninth Symphony in memory of President Kennedy, 1965.

set appeared, many Mahler recordings had been made, stretching back into the era of the 78-rpm record. Diether's *New York Times* article, which was principally devoted to recordings, noted: "In 1935 there was only one complete Mahler symphony listed in the record catalogues (the Second, a Victor recording on eleven shellac disks). By 1953, the fifth year of the long-playing record, all of his ten symphonies and all his published songs were available—a quite remarkable achievement. With the aid of the LP they at last began to come into their own."

The recording of the Second Symphony to which Diether was referring was made in 1935 by Eugene Ormandy and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. It was the first complete Mahler symphony recording produced in America. Whether he was aware of an earlier recording of that symphony by Oskar Fried and the Berlin State Opera Orchestra (for Deutsche Grammophon c. 1923) or the recording of Mahler's Fourth with Hidemaro Konoye and the Tokyo New Symphony Orchestra (for

An advertisement attached to the LP package proclaimed that Bernstein "has a kind of **clairvoyance** where Mahler is concerned."

Parlophone in 1930) I cannot say; but his statement probably stands as generally correct, as neither was likely listed at that time in catalogues serving the American market.

We tend not to notice limitations in technology until improvements come along, and music lovers in the 78-rpm era, who had to piece together snippets of a Mahler symphony in their imaginations, were doubtless more grateful than resentful. Nonetheless, it's hard to think of a composer whose symphonies would have been less suited to the constraints of 78-rpm platters, which needed to be changed every four or five minutes. When LPs replaced them in the early 1950s music could suddenly spin out for an uninterrupted twenty-five minutes, a span that could accommodate all but a few Mahler movements. Nearly as important was a drastic improvement in audio quality. By the mid-1960s high-fidelity was very high indeed, and the stereophonic LPs of that time could convey the extremes of dynamics and of timbral contrast that stood at the heart of Mahler—or at least at the heart of Bernstein's Mahler interpretations, which unquestionably dealt with extremes.

Testing Interpretative Limits

Bernstein's late-in-life re-recordings of Mahler's works with the Vienna Philharmonic would clarify the extent to which he would continue to test interpretive limits after leaving the music directorship of the New York Philharmonic. And yet, when he revis-

ited these works in Vienna and Amsterdam he was mostly fine-tuning what was essentially in place when he guided the New York Philharmonic through them some years earlier. Already with the release of the New York Philharmonic "complete-symphonies" set in 1967 Bernstein's public musical identification with Mahler had been rendered permanent. A sticker attached to the LP package for marketing purposes proclaimed that Bernstein "has a kind of clairvoyance where Mahler is concerned," a blurb from none other than Irving Kolodin, by then at *Saturday Review* and considerably reconciled to Mahler since his expression of indignity two decades earlier. In very little time, Bernstein's personal identification with Mahler had become received opinion in the public realm, and in the process Mahler's music had itself been catapulted to a position of esteem it had never enjoyed previously and from which it has not retreated since.

Listening to the playback at a recording session with his producer and engineers, c. 1962.

