



## BERNSTEIN

### Thirteen Anniversaries

Piano Sonata • Seven Anniversaries

Music for the Dance No. II • Non Troppo Presto

Alexandre Dossin, Piano



|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <b>Sonata for the Piano (1938)</b>                    | <b>17:13</b> |
| 1 Movement I  | 5:58         |
| 2 Movement II   | 11:15        |
| <b>Seven Anniversaries (1943)</b>                     | <b>12:00</b> |
| 3 I. For Aaron Copland                                | 1:31         |
| 4 II. For My Sister, Shirley                          | 1:19         |
| 5 III. In Memoriam: Alfred Eisner                     | 2:51         |
| 6 IV. For Paul Bowles                                 | 1:24         |
| 7 V. In Memoriam: Nathalie Koussevitzky               | 2:16         |
| 8 VI. For Sergei Koussevitzky                         | 1:50         |
| 9 VII. For William Schuman                            | 0:49         |
| <b>Thirteen Anniversaries (1988)</b>                  | <b>25:12</b> |
| 10 I. For Shirley Gabis Rhoads Perle                  | 1:36         |
| 11 II. In Memoriam: William Kapell                    | 0:27         |
| 12 III. For Stephen Sondheim                          | 1:51         |
| 13 IV. For Craig Urquhart                             | 1:05         |
| 14 V. For Leo Smit                                    | 0:36         |
| 15 VI. For My Daughter, Nina                          | 2:45         |
| 16 VII. In Memoriam: Helen Coates                     | 3:09         |
| 17 VIII. In Memoriam: Goddard Lieberson               | 1:06         |
| 18 IX. For Jessica Fleischmann                        | 2:34         |
| 19 X. In Memoriam: Constance Hope                     | 3:27         |
| 20 XI. For Felicia, On Our 28th Birthday (& Her 52nd) | 1:43         |
| 21 XII. For Aaron Stern                               | 2:41         |
| 22 XIII. In Memoriam: Ellen Goetz                     | 2:12         |
| <b>Music for the Dance No. II (1938)</b>              | <b>4:20</b>  |
| 23 Movement I   | 1:21         |
| 24 Movement II  | 1:18         |
| 25 Movement III                                       | 1:41         |
| 26 <b>Non Troppo Presto (1937)</b>                    | <b>2:24</b>  |

## Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

### Piano Music

Given that he lived a life full of big gestures, it is difficult to think of Leonard Bernstein as a composer of miniatures. But though he was an artist who – like his hero Gustav Mahler – ‘embraced the world’, he also had many friends, family members, intimate acquaintances and loved ones whom he celebrated throughout his career in brief piano vignettes. These were collected into four sets of *Anniversaries*, published in 1944, 1948, 1964 and 1989. This programme features the first (*Seven Anniversaries*) and last (*Thirteen Anniversaries*) of these sets, along with a sonata and other works written in his youth but not published until much later (in the case of *Non Troppo Presto* and *Music for the Dance No. II*, 20 years after his death).

Bernstein composed the imposing *Sonata* which opens this recital during his late teens. Although it doesn't sound like 'typical' Bernstein, it features several musical techniques which the mature composer would employ to varying degrees. These include asymmetrical rhythms, syncopation, polytonality and intricate counterpoint. It is very much a youthful, even boastful, piece. The opening, marked *Cadenza*, leads to three ponderous chords that seem to establish a G minor tonality, although any sense of tonal stability or intent is quickly abandoned. After the initial cadenza idea returns, Bernstein initiates a *Scherzando* of constantly shifting metres in which two lyrical ideas attempt to take hold but are soon overwhelmed by more playful, percussive passages.

The second movement initially focusses on a melodic line floating over a steady semiquaver rhythmic pulse (grouped 3+3+2). More florid figuration supplants the melodic idea until the first half of the movement climaxes in two full-keyboard tone clusters (played with both arms). Bernstein works through a new, contrapuntal figure (with fugal elements) before reprising the G-minor idea of the first movement. The simple, unadorned coda bears two intriguing directions: 'wandering (no rhythm: no phrases)' and 'The time values indicated in this cadenza are only approximate to what is physically correct.'

The *Sonata* is officially dated 1938, but Bernstein played at least a portion of it at a reception for Dimitri Mitropoulos in January 1937. The distinguished conductor was impressed, telling the aspiring composer: 'You have everything to make you great; it is up to you only to fulfil your mission.' When published in 1979, it bore a memorial dedication to Heinrich Gebhard. Bernstein was studying piano with Gebhard in Boston when he wrote the piece.

*Seven Anniversaries* began life as *Partita* – five movements composed in 1942: *Prelude*, *Gavotte*, *Sarabande* (*In Memory of N.K.*), *Passacaglia* and *Gigue*. The work had grown a movement and been rechristened *Six Pieces* when Bernstein played it on radio station WNYC in 1943. By 1944, when Bernstein played the piece at a benefit concert for the Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, it had reached its final, seven-movement form and published title.

The dedicatees include three fellow composers. The piece for Aaron Copland features plainspoken, diatonic harmonies and phrases with wide, generous spaces between treble and bass. Paul Bowles' character is captured by a restless left-hand phrase – repeated five times – beneath more varied ideas in the right hand. William Schuman is represented by an assertive *agitato* which begins and ends with a single line. A playful movement for his sister in ABA form precedes a more enigmatic tribute to a Harvard roommate, Alfred Eisner, who had died of cancer in 1941. The solemn memorial to the widow of Bernstein's beloved mentor, Boston Symphony conductor Sergei Koussevitzky, displays a typical Bernstein harmonic piquancy. He also used it as the elaborate peroration at the end of his *Jeremiah Symphony*. The composer recorded movements II, V and VII in 1943 as 'fillers' for a 78 rpm album featuring his *Clarinet Sonata*; he recorded the complete work for RCA Victor in 1947.

The final set of *Anniversaries* incorporates material written over a longer span of time, from the 1960s through to the 1980s. Some of it had origins in earlier pieces, and

a great deal was recycled in later works. The first two movements were originally entitled *Moby Dyptich*, composed for Tony Kuerti in 1981. When they were transplanted, note-for-note, into the *Anniversaries*, they were dedicated as memorials. The first is for Shirley Gabis, whom the 22-year-old Bernstein had met when she was 16 and who remained a lifelong friend (she later married composer George Perle). Pianist William Kapell, who died in a tragic plane accident in 1953, is remembered in the second. Two other masters of the keyboard are honoured in the cycle as well: Leo Smit (known for his interpretation of Aaron Copland's piano music) and Claudio Arrau. It was at a post-recital reception for Arrau on February 6, 1946, that Bernstein met his future wife, Felicia Montealegre; when incorporated into *Thirteen Anniversaries*, the dedication of the piece was changed to 'For Felicia, On Our 28th Birthday (& Her 52nd)'. The lyrical *Andantino* for fellow composer (and lyricist of *West Side Story*) Stephen Sondheim was composed on the occasion of his 35th birthday; Bernstein quoted it in the first version of his opera *Quiet Place*.

Bernstein was, of course, a prolific recording artist. Two *Anniversaries* are connected to his work with Columbia Records: a sprightly gavotte for long-time producer (and label head) Goddard Lieberson, and a quirky *allegretto* for the daughter of Ernest Fleischmann, director of CBS Masterworks in Europe. The composer recycled the latter piece as *Leah's Dance* for his ballet *Dybbuk*. The score of the tenth movement, composed in memory of publicist Constance Hope, contains two quotations from Edgar Allan Poe's *To One in Paradise* over recitative-like passages. The flowing melody of the twelfth, dedicated to Bernstein's friend Aaron Stern, was incorporated into *Opening Prayer* (written for the re-opening of Carnegie Hall in 1986). It was later added to his *Concerto for Orchestra* (aka *Jubilee Games*).

At least three of the dedicatees from Bernstein's final set of *Anniversaries* were individuals who were especially close to him. Helen Coates, his first piano teacher and his loyal secretary for decades, is remembered in a moving

elegy which also served as *Meditation No. 1* in *Mass*. (Coates and Montealegre are the only individuals to have two *Anniversaries* dedicated to them: both were also honoured by movements in *Four Anniversaries*, published in 1948.) The piece for his daughter Nina opens with a rising half-step which serves as a motto throughout for her name. Craig Urquhart, his personal assistant from 1986 until his death in 1990, is represented by a graceful dance first sketched in the 1960s.

The final works on this programme date from the same period as the early *Sonata*. Both were dedicated to pianist Mildred Spiegel, a close friend of Bernstein from his high school days and a fellow student of Heinrich Gebhard. She and Bernstein were often piano duo partners, and he composed his *Piano Trio* for her group, the Madison Trio. The manuscript of *Music for the Dance No. II*, dated June 14, 1938, bears the dedication, 'For Mildred on her 22nd Birthday in friendliest affection.' *Non Troppo Presto*, written a year earlier, is also dedicated 'To Mildred – with all my heart.' The manuscript is untitled but the piece is probably *Music for the Dance No. I*. The music of both works is rhythmic and sparse – two-part textures predominate. Harmonies are occasionally harsh and brittle; there is little sense of the diatonic lyricism which would later infuse the composer's most popular works.

Although his output for piano was modest in scale and size, Leonard Bernstein was never far from the instrument. He was a skilled solo and concerto player, and a superb accompanist. His first published work was not one of his own compositions but rather a keyboard arrangement of Copland's *El Salon Mexico*. The closeness of his relationship with the keyboard was perhaps described most revealingly in a lyric he penned for the song *First Love (for My Mother, March 1986)*: 'My First Love, Jennie B., Eighty-eight, young to me. My second love is eighty-eight too. Eighty-eight keys that sing to you ...' The melody of *First Love*, which later became the *Nachtspiel* of *Arias and Barcarolles*, was first published as the last of *Thirteen Anniversaries*.

Frank K. DeWald

## Alexandre Dossin



Acclaimed by international critics, the Brazilian-born Alexandre Dossin has already firmly established himself as a pianist of the first rank. He was awarded both the First Prize and the Special Prize at the Martha Argerich International Piano Competition. Other awards include the Silver Medal and Second Honourable Mention in the Maria Callas Grand Prix and both the Third Prize and Special Prize at the Mozart International Piano Competition among many international and national accolades received throughout his career. Conductors with whom he has performed include Charles Dutoit, Isaac Karabchevsky, and Michael Gielen, with orchestras including the Buenos Aires Philharmonic, Brazilian National Symphony, Mozarteum University Symphony, and the Tchaikovsky Conservatory Symphony Orchestras. Alexandre Dossin is a graduate of the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, where he studied with Sergey Dorensky. He received the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Texas at Austin, where his teachers were William Race and Gregory Allen. Currently on the faculty at the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance, he maintains an active performing, teaching, and recording career. His recordings for Naxos include acclaimed releases of Verdi and Russian transcriptions by Liszt (8.557904, 8.572432) and two discs of Kabalevsky piano music (8.570976, 8.570822). [www.dossin.net](http://www.dossin.net)

Leonard  
**BERNSTEIN**  
(1918-1990)

**Piano Music**

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|---|--------------|
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| <b>3-9</b> Seven Anniversaries (1943)           | <b>12:00</b> |
| <b>10-22</b> Thirteen Anniversaries (1988)      | <b>25:12</b> |
| <b>23-25</b> Music for the Dance No. II (1938)* | <b>4:20</b>  |
| <b>26</b> Non Troppo Presto (1937)*             | <b>2:24</b>  |

**\*WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING**

**Alexandre Dossin, Piano**

A detailed track list can be found on page 2 of the booklet.  
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**AMERICAN CLASSICS**

Known for his large-scale compositions, Leonard Bernstein also wrote for his own instrument, the piano. The sequence of four *Anniversaries*, published between 1944 and 1989, are brief, deftly evocative vignettes written to celebrate his many friends, colleagues and family members. The early *Piano Sonata* is imbued with youthful self-confidence, and explores certain compositional techniques to which he was to return in more mature works. The rhythmically incisive *Music for the Dance No. II* is another important early work.

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Playing  
Time:  
**61:05**