

NAXOS

AMERICAN CLASSICS



BERNSTEIN

**Symphonies
Nos. 1 and 2**

Jennifer Johnson Cano, Mezzo-soprano
Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Piano
Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

Marin Alsop



	Symphony No. 1 'Jeremiah' (1942)	24:14
1	I. Prophecy	7:11
2	II. Profanation	6:59
3	III. Lamentation	10:04
	Symphony No. 2 'The Age of Anxiety' (1949, rev. 1965)	35:18
	Part I	
4	The Prologue: Lento moderato –	2:03
	The Seven Ages	
5	Variation I: L'istesso tempo –	0:52
6	Variation II: Poco più mosso –	1:27
7	Variation III: Largamente, ma mosso –	1:19
8	Variation IV: Più mosso –	0:55
9	Variation V: –	0:50
10	Variation VI: Poco meno mosso –	1:01
11	Variation VII: L'istesso tempo –	1:35
	The Seven Stages	
12	Variation VIII: Molto moderato, ma movendo –	1:49
13	Variation IX: Più mosso [tempo di valse] –	1:22
14	Variation X: Più mosso –	0:29
15	Variation XI: L'istesso tempo –	0:55
16	Variation XII: Poco più vivace –	0:14
17	Variation XIII: L'istesso tempo –	0:45
18	Variation XIV: L'istesso tempo [poco più vivace]	0:31
	Part II	
19	The Dirge: Largo –	6:28
20	The Masque: Extremely fast –	4:49
21	The Epilogue: L'istesso tempo	7:52

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2

Leonard Bernstein may well have understood symphonic form better than any other 20th-century composer – as a conductor, he was celebrated for his interpretations of symphonies from the beginning of the genre (Haydn) to its apotheosis (Mahler). And yet none of his three works bearing the word “symphony” in its title is in any way traditional. Each flaunts the conventions of the form – arguably in ways that only Bernstein might have conceived. All are “theatrical” works which manifest the central conflict at the root of nearly all of Bernstein’s major works. In 1977 he said, “The work I have been writing all my life is about the struggle that is born of the crisis of our century, a crisis of faith. Even way back, when I wrote *Jeremiah* [Symphony No. 1], I was wrestling with that problem.” In *Jeremiah* the crisis is joined; in the second symphony, *The Age of Anxiety*, it is discussed, probed and superficially resolved; in the third, *Kaddish*, it comes to a head and is resolved again – but with the realization that faith must be accompanied by pain.

During the summer of 1939, Bernstein composed his most ambitious work to date – a setting of text from the *Lamentations of Jeremiah* for mezzo-soprano and orchestra. In late August he sent a copy of the score to his friend and mentor Aaron Copland, to whom he wrote, “Eventually the song will become one of a group, or a movement of a symphony for voice and orchestra, or the opening of a cantata or opera.” He set the song aside until, in the spring of 1942, he began composing the first movement of a symphony for a competition organized by the New England Conservatory. “I then realized that this new movement, and the scherzo that I had planned to follow it, made logical concomitants with the *Lamentation*. Thus the symphony came into being,” he wrote at the time of the work’s premiere.

Working out of a top-floor apartment on West Fifty-Second Street in New York City, Bernstein – assisted by his sister Shirley and several friends – scrambled to finish the orchestration and prepare a fair copy to meet the December 31 competition deadline. Sadly, the jury

awarded the prize to Gardner Read’s *Symphony No. 2*. But Fritz Reiner invited the young composer to premiere the symphony in Pittsburgh, where Bernstein conducted the first performance in January 1944. The symphony was well received and went on to win the Music Critics Circle Award for 1943-44.

In his program note for the premiere, Bernstein wrote: “The symphony does not make use to any great extent of actual Hebraic 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.” Long-time Bernstein assistant Jack Gottlieb, however, asserted that the influence of liturgical motives on the symphony was greater than the composer consciously knew – “a testament to his upbringing as a Jew both in the synagogue and at home.” Bernstein dedicated the work to his father.

Jeremiah opens with a slow movement, *Prophecy*, which – in the composer’s words – aims “to parallel in feeling the intensity of the prophet’s pleas with his people.” It avoids any suggestion of traditional sonata-allegro form, using motivic development rather than themes per se to generate its musical argument. The primary cell consists of three notes – a minor second followed by a perfect fifth. It first appears in its descending form in upper woodwinds in bar 4; the ascending form debuts in basses and bassoons in bar 10. It informs virtually every melodic strand in the piece. Often it sounds anguished, but it can also be gentle – as in the flute passage over gently throbbing strings that appears midway through the movement.

Profanation is a wild scherzo that seeks to give “a general sense of the destruction and chaos brought on by the pagan corruption within the priesthood and the people.” It is rife with the asymmetrical and mixed meters so typical of Bernstein, wherein not only are the number of beats-per-measure varied, but also the number of pulses

within the beat (sometimes two, sometimes three). The motivic cell from the first movement returns, and a brief chorale-like passage heard twice in the earlier movement is refashioned into a jazzy dance motif. The concluding *Lamentation* opens with a declamatory recitative for the soloist. Bernstein described it as “the cry of Jeremiah, as he mourns his beloved Jerusalem, ruined, pillaged, and dishonored after his desperate efforts to save it.” But ultimately there is consolation in the form of a falling motif, in parallel thirds, introduced by flutes. It returns later, played on muted strings – first solo quartet, then *tutti*.

Bernstein discovered W.H. Auden’s Pulitzer Prize-winning “baroque eclogue” in six parts, *The Age of Anxiety*, in the summer of 1947. Stunned by “one of the most shattering examples of pure virtuosity in the history of the English language,” he told journalists that “almost immediately the music started to sing” to him. He set out to compose a symphony which would parallel the structure of Auden’s 80-page poem – a series of conversations (with linking narrative) between three men and a woman, set mostly in a New York City bar. He would try to limn in musical terms the principal subject of Auden’s verse: the neuroses of contemporary society (i.e. the “crisis of faith”). There would be a prominent concertante part for piano (causing some to claim the symphony is really a piano concerto in all but name).

The new work, composed over a two-year period in locations as far-flung as Israel and New Mexico, was scheduled to première in Boston in early April 1949. But January of that year found Bernstein typically overscheduled – and the finale was not yet finished. As was so often the case, he found himself torn between the desire to compose and the need to conduct. Nevertheless, he finished *The Age of Anxiety* on time; it debuted in Boston on April 8, with the composer as soloist and the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Koussevitzky – to whom Bernstein dedicated the work. A ballet by Jerome Robbins based on the symphony premiered in early 1950 at the New York City Ballet.

The opening *Prologue* is a duet for two clarinets that Bernstein adapted from music he had written for a 1939 Harvard production of Aristophanes’ *The Birds* (and later

recycled as a musical envoi to Koussevitzky.) It leads via a descending, chromatic flute bridge into *The Seven Ages*, a cycle of variations that opens with a sweetly dissonant chorale for the piano. Each succeeding variation evolves out of some aspect of the preceding one. A second bridge passage (this time on piano and extending from one end of the keyboard to the other) leads to a second set, *The Seven Stages*. The first of these opens with a passacaglia built on a six-note theme in the bass, suggesting the influence of Britten (Bernstein had conducted the American première of *Peter Grimes* at Tanglewood in 1946); the spirit of Shostakovich hovers over the more playful variations.

The Dirge, which begins the second half of the symphony, commences with a bold stroke from the pianist: a tone row. Bernstein does not use it in any strict Schoenbergian sense, but it recurs throughout to maintain a feeling of angst, in spite of the composer’s own reference to the movement’s “Brahmsian romanticism.” *The Masque* which follows is the symphony’s most individual feature, completely and unabashedly Bernstein: a jazz frolic for piano, bass, timpani and percussion based on an unused song from *On the Town*. Following the première, the music critic of *The Boston Globe* declared it “a triumph of rhythmic interplay, subtle and unexpected accents, a marvelous distillation of the movement of jazz.”

The Epilogue begins with an abrupt orchestral outburst and an unusual theatrical effect: a “pianino” in the orchestra that seems to mock the soloist’s freewheeling frenzy (Bernstein said it represented “a kind of separation of the self from the guilt of escapist living”). But solo trumpet introduces a calming motif in falling fourths, and strings begin a deeply felt *Adagio*, which ultimately builds to a powerful climax with near-cinematic fervor (anticipating Bernstein’s music for *On the Waterfront*, written five years later). In the original version of the symphony, the piano was silent throughout this movement until the very end, but Bernstein revised the work in 1965, giving a greater rôle to the keyboard protagonist.

Frank K. DeWald

PEREQ 1, 1-3

Eicha yashva vadad ha'ir
 Rabati am
 Hay'ta k'almana;
 Rabati vagoyim
 Sarati bam'dinot
 Hay'ta lamas.

Bacho tivkeh balaila
 V'dim'ata al lehëiya;
 Ein la m'nahëm
 Mikol ohaveiha;
 Kol re'eha bag'du va;
 Hayu la l'oyevim.

Galta Y'huda m'e'oni
 Umërov avoda;
 Hi yashva vagoyim,
 Lo matz'a mano'ah;
 Kol rod'fëha hisiguha
 Bein hamitzarim.

PEREQ 1, 8

Het hat'a Y'rushalayim...
 Eicha yashva vadad ha'ir
 ...almana.

PEREQ 4, 14-15

Na'u ivrim bahtzot
 N'go'alud badam;
 B'lo yuchlu
 Yig'u bilvushëihem.

Suru tamë! kar'u lamo,
 Suru, suru! al tiga'u...

PEREQ 5, 20-21

Lama lanetzah tishkahënu...
 Lanetzah ta'azvënu...

Hashivënu Adonai ëlecha...

CHAPTER 1, 1-3

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!

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.

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
 Within the narrow passes.

CHAPTER 1, 8

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

CHAPTER 4, 14-15

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

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

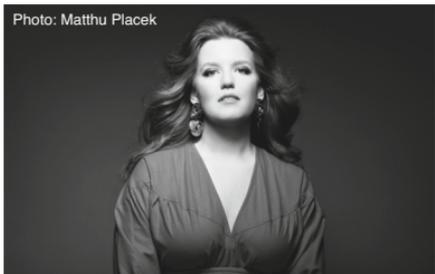
CHAPTER 5, 20-21

Wherefore dost Thou forget us forever,
 And forsake us so long time?...

Turn Thou us into Thee, O Lord...

Jennifer Johnson Cano

Photo: Matthu Placek



Mezzo-soprano Jennifer Johnson Cano is noted for her profound artistry, commanding stage presence and engaging personality. She is a 2012 Richard Tucker Career Grant and 2014 George London Award winner. She won the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in 2008, and made her Met debut during the 2009-10 season. As first-prize winner of the 2009 Young Concert Artist International Auditions, she has given debut performances with pianist Christopher Cano at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, Kennedy Center and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. She has performed at The Met as Mercédès, Emilia, Hänsel, Nicklausse, Wellgunde and Waltraute, and made her debut as Meg Page in *Falstaff* and Bersi in *Andrea Chenier*. She has appeared as Carmen and Donna Elvira with Boston Lyric Opera, Dido with Saratoga Opera and in *Orfeo* with Des Moines Opera. She has continuing relationships with the Cleveland Orchestra, New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics, and has appeared with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Kansas City Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony and Minnesota Orchestra. Her European debut was with the London Symphony Orchestra in London and Paris.

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (BSO)

Photo: Richard Anderson



The GRAMMY® Award-winning Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (BSO) is internationally recognized as having achieved a preeminent place among the world's most important orchestras. Acclaimed for its enduring pursuit of artistic excellence, the BSO has attracted a devoted national and international following while maintaining deep bonds throughout Maryland with innovative education and community outreach initiatives. The BSO made musical history in September 2007, when Marin Alsop led her inaugural concerts as the Orchestra's twelfth music director, making her the first woman to head a major American orchestra. With her highly praised artistic vision, her dynamic musicianship and her commitment to accessibility in classical music, Marin Alsop has ushered in a new era for the BSO and its audiences. In recent years, Marin Alsop and the BSO have been regularly invited to Carnegie Hall, including Alsop's debut in February 2008; a critically acclaimed appearance later the same year to perform Bernstein's *Mass*; a performance of Honegger's dramatic oratorio *Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher* in November 2011; for the opening concert in the 'Spring for Music' festival in May 2013; and in April 2016 to celebrate the BSO's 100th anniversary with the première of *The City* by Kevin Puts and Mahler's *Symphony No. 5*.



Marin Alsop

Marin Alsop is an inspiring and powerful voice in the international music scene, a music director of vision and distinction who passionately believes that "music has the power to change lives." She is recognized across the world for her innovative approach to programming and for her deep commitment to education and to the development of audiences of all ages. Marin Alsop made history with her appointment as the 12th music director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (BSO). With her inaugural concerts in September 2007, she became the first woman to head a major American orchestra. Her success as the BSO's music director has won national and international attention for her innovative programming and artistry. Her success was recognized when, in 2013, her tenure was extended to the 2020-2021 season. Alsop took up the post of principal conductor of the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra in 2012, and became music director in July 2013. She also holds the title of conductor emeritus at the Bournemouth Symphony in the United Kingdom, where she served as the principal conductor from 2002 to 2008. In the summer of 2016, she serves her 25th and final season as music director of the acclaimed Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in California. Alsop is often making history; in 2005 she was the first conductor to be awarded a MacArthur Genius award and in September 2013 as the first female conductor of the BBC's Last Night of the Proms in London.

Photo: Adriane White

Jean-Yves Thibaudet

Jean-Yves Thibaudet, considered one of the best pianists in the world, has the rare ability to combine poetic musical sensibilities with dazzling technical prowess. He has performed around the world for more than 30 years and recorded more than 50 albums, with a depth and natural charisma that have made him one of today's most sought-after soloists. Thibaudet has been nominated for two GRAMMY® Awards and won the Schallplattenpreis, the Diapason d'Or, the Choc du Monde de la Musique, a Gramophone Award, two Echo awards, and the Edison Prize. In 2016 on the 150th anniversary of Erik Satie's birth, Decca released a box set of Satie's complete solo piano music performed by Thibaudet, the foremost interpreter and champion of the composer's work. In 2010 he released *Gershwin*, featuring big jazz band orchestrations of *Rhapsody in Blue*, variations on *I Got Rhythm*, and *Concerto in F* live with the Baltimore Symphony and music director Marin Alsop. He has also had an impact on the world of fashion, philanthropy, and film. His concert wardrobe is by celebrated London designer Vivienne Westwood, and he was the soloist on the award-winning and critically acclaimed films *Atonement*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*. In 2010 the Hollywood Bowl honored Thibaudet for his musical achievements by inducting him into its Hall of Fame. Previously a Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Thibaudet was awarded the title Officier by the French Ministry of Culture in 2012.

Photo: Andrew Eccles



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BERNSTEIN: Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2

NAXOS

Playing
Time:
59:32

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Leonard
BERNSTEIN
(1918-1990)

- 1-3** **Symphony No. 1**
'Jeremiah' (1942) **24:14**
- 4-21** **Symphony No. 2**
'The Age of Anxiety'
(1949, rev. 1965) **35:18**

Jennifer Johnson Cano,
Mezzo-soprano **3**

Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Piano **4 21**

Baltimore Symphony
Orchestra
Marin Alsop



A detailed track list can be found on page 2 of the booklet. The Hebrew sung text and an English translation can be found inside the booklet, and may also be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/559790

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Cover photos: James Bartolomeo and Andrew Eccles



AMERICAN CLASSICS

Leonard Bernstein's legendary 1943 Carnegie Hall conducting début brought his name to national attention, and the event was followed a few months later by the triumphant reception of his *Symphony No. 1 'Jeremiah.'* This major symphonic statement explores a crisis in faith and employs Jewish liturgical sources, its final movement, *Lamentation*, being an anguished cry at the destruction of Jerusalem. Sharing the theme of loss of faith, *Symphony No. 2 'The Age of Anxiety'* takes W.H. Auden's poem of the same name and follows its four characters in their spiritual journey to hard-won triumph. Bernstein's *Symphony No. 3 'Kaddish'* can be heard on Naxos 8.559742.

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