

1 NYP 18-47 Bernstein Centenary: The Year 1958

2 (MUSIC EXCERPT)

3 (ACTUALITY: Bernstein debut)

4 AB: Jamie Bernstein describing the circumstances that
5 catapulted her father, Leonard Bernstein, to
6 stardom in 1943.

7 Bernstein would go on to do many incredible things,
8 of course. And he wore many hats at the
9 Philharmonic in subsequent years: as a composer, as
10 an assistant conductor, as a guest conductor, and
11 as principal conductor. But in 1958, Bernstein's
12 relationship to the New York Philharmonic got about
13 as deep as it gets when he became the orchestra's
14 Music Director at age 40.

15 This was a big deal. But what else was happening
16 in the world at that time?

17 I'm Alec Baldwin. Thanks very much for joining us
18 as we continue to celebrate *100 Years of Bernstein*
19 on the New York Philharmonic This Week.

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AB: For this episode, we take a deeper look at the year 1958 and recall some of that year's most important events and musical colors. These include the farewell of the Philharmonic's music director, Dimitri Mitropoulos; the arrival of its new musical director, Leonard Bernstein; the premiere of a work by Aaron Copland; the United States concerto debut of the great pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy; and the coming of the Cuban Revolution, which began in full force on the last day of 1958. And for those keeping score at home, you might be interested to know that your host was born on April 3rd of that year. But I digress...

(ACTUALITY)

AB: On January 2, 1958, Leonard Bernstein conducted his first concert as Joint Principal Conductor of the New York Philharmonic. He shared this title with Dimitri Mitropoulos for the 1957-58 season. At that concert, Bernstein conducted the New York Philharmonic in a program quite similar to that of his legendary debut 15 year earlier. As before, it opened with the Overture to Manfred by Robert Schumann:

(MUSIC)

AB: That music heralded the start of a great career when a 25-year-old Leonard Bernstein conducted it on last-minute notice in November, 1943. That was the Overture to Manfred by Robert Schumann. The New York Philharmonic was conducted by Leonard Bernstein. But this recording was captured during Bernstein's first concert as Joint Principal Conductor of the Philharmonic in January, 1958.

(ACTUALITY)

Two months later, Bernstein's predecessor, Dimitri Mitropoulos, made his last two recordings with the Philharmonic after eight engaging, but sometimes controversial years in the post.

Mitropoulos was greatly revered as an artist. He had a prodigious knowledge of music and an extraordinary memory. Many people felt he was a true genius in his flair for color and characterization. He also was a major pioneer of contemporary music. And he was also a vital early champion of Mahler at a time when the composer's works were seldom heard. On the other hand, some people were critical of his somewhat "loose" approach to the standard repertoire.

72 AB: Be that as it may, the New York Philharmonic's
73 discography gives us ample evidence of the
74 virtuosity, wide range, and intense tone colors
75 Mitropoulos could achieve. This is abundantly
76 clear in the next work on our program, *Transfigured*
77 *Night*, by Arnold Schoenberg:

78 (MUSIC)

79 AB: *"He puts his arms around her strong hips. Their*
80 *breath comingles in an airy kiss. Two people walk*
81 *on through the high, bright night."*

82 Those are the closing lines of Richard Dehmel's
83 poem that inspired the music we just heard:
84 *Transfigured Night* by Arnold Schoenberg. The New
85 York Philharmonic was conducted by Dimitri
86 Mitropoulos. That performance effectively brought
87 his tenure as Music Director of the New York
88 Philharmonic to a close in March, 1958. Leonard
89 Bernstein would succeed him in the post for the
90 next 11 years.

91 AB: 1958 also saw the world premiere of the Variations
92 for Orchestra by Aaron Copland. Commissioned by the
93 Louisville Symphony Orchestra, The Philharmonic
94 gave the New York premiere of the work on December
95 6, 1958. Newly-minted Music Director Leonard
96 Bernstein conducted the New York Philharmonic:

97 (MUSIC)

98 AB: Variations for Orchestra by Aaron Copland. The New
99 York Philharmonic was conducted by the composer's
100 dear friend, Leonard Bernstein. It was presented
101 as part of a focus on North American music during
102 Bernstein's first year as Music Director of the New
103 York Philharmonic.

104 We're looking back at the year 1958—the year
105 Bernstein assumed that post. I'm Alec Baldwin and
106 you're listening to The New York Philharmonic This
107 Week.

108 (PAUSE)

109 AB: This radio series wouldn't be possible, but for the
110 incredibly rich treasure trove of resources in the
111 Philharmonic's archives. From 1984-2018, Barbara
112 Haws served as the orchestra's archivist and
113 historian and was caretaker to an impressive
114 collection of recordings, manuscripts, scores,
115 financial records, program books and more. Here she
116 is with Jon Tolansky to speak about this unique
117 collection:

118 (INTERVIEW)

119 AB: Jon Tolansky in conversation with the
120 Philharmonic's long-time archivist and historian,
121 Barbara Haws.

122 (SLIGHT)

123 AB: In 1958, The United States and Soviet Union signed
124 their first accord since the end of World War II.
125 The Lacy-Zaroubin Agreement paved the way for the
126 exchange of knowledge and persons in the cultural,
127 technical and educational fields. This eventually
128 led to the great pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy
129 becoming one of just a few Soviet artists allowed
130 to travel from the CCCP to the United States.
131 After making his recital debut at Carnegie Hall, he
132 went on to thrill Philharmonic audiences with a
133 performance of Prokofiev's Second Piano Concerto.
134 We hear that music now. Leonard Bernstein
135 conducts...the New York Philharmonic.

136 (MUSIC)

137 AB: Recorded at Carnegie Hall on November 29, 1958 that
138 was the Piano Concerto No. 2 by Sergei Prokofiev.
139 The soloist was a 21-year-old Vladimir Ashkenazy in
140 his concerto debut. The New York Philharmonic was
141 conducted by its 40-year-old Music Director,
142 Leonard Bernstein.

143 (ACTUALITY)

144 AB: Just five weeks later, on the very last day of
145 1958, a dramatic turn of events made headlines:

146 (ACTUALITY)

147 AB: In Cuba, military forces loyal to Batista's ruling
148 dictatorship were overthrown by Fidel Castro and
149 his army. The Cuban Revolution was fully underway
150 and Castro's army would take over Havana just nine
151 days later.

152 But despite immense changes to the island nation's
153 lifestyle and culture, the Cuban music tradition
154 remains a vital force. So we thought it would be
155 appropriate to close this overview of the year 1958
156 with a work that celebrates the spirit of Cuban
157 music as it was in the 1930s.

158 This is the Cuban Overture by George Gershwin.
159 Zubin Mehta conducts...the New York Philharmonic:

160 (MUSIC)

161 AB: Cuban Overture by George Gershwin. The New York
162 Philharmonic was conducted by Zubin Mehta.

163 (SLIHT PAUSE)

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166 AB: 1958 also saw the advent of the microchip. Elvis
167 was drafted into the Army. Van Cliburn won the
168 first International Tchaikovsky Competition. And
169 the Philharmonic made its first tour to South
170 America. The opening concert was conducted by who
171 else? Leonard Bernstein.

172 AB: I'm Alec Baldwin. Thanks very much for listening
173 to 100 Years of Bernstein...on the New York
174 Philharmonic This Week.

175 PROMO:

176 AB: Next time, on the New York Philharmonic This Week:

177 We wrap up our celebration of the Bernstein
178 centenary with the first of two Playlist programs.
179 This is Alec Baldwin. Please join me as we present
180 the many sides of Bernstein with a wide variety of
181 recordings ranging from Bach to Brubeck. It's 100
182 years of Bernstein...on the New York Philharmonic
183 This week.