



## LEONARD BERNSTEIN: THE POWER OF MUSIC Exhibition to Feature 100 Artifacts in Philadelphia

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Leonard Bernstein, 1956. © Made available online with permission of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Friedman-Abeles, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

The National Museum of American Jewish History (NMAJH) announces [Leonard Bernstein: The Power of Music](#), the first large-scale museum exhibition to illustrate the famed conductor and composer's life, Jewish identity, and social activism.

The exhibition will feature approximately 100 historic artifacts—from Bernstein's piano and conducting suit to family heirlooms—along with original films and immersive sound installations.

Taking place during the worldwide centennial celebration of Bernstein's birthday, [Leonard](#)

[Bernstein](#): The Power of Music will be on view March 16 - September 2, 2018.

Audiences may be familiar with many of Bernstein's works, notably *West Side Story* (1957), but not necessarily how his approach to music was informed by the political and social crises of his day. Bernstein used the arts to express the restlessness, anxiety, fear, and hope of an American Jew living through World War II and the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and turbulent social change that shook his faith: in God, in humanity, and in government. The exhibition will focus on this theme in Bernstein's work—what he referred to as his "search for a solution to the 20th-century crisis of faith." It will explore how he confronted this "crisis" by breaking racial barriers in his casting decisions for *On the Town* (1944), addressing America's changing ideas about race and ethnicity in *West Side Story*, and giving a voice to the human rights crisis during the Vietnam era in his provocative theater piece, *MASS* (1971), as examples.

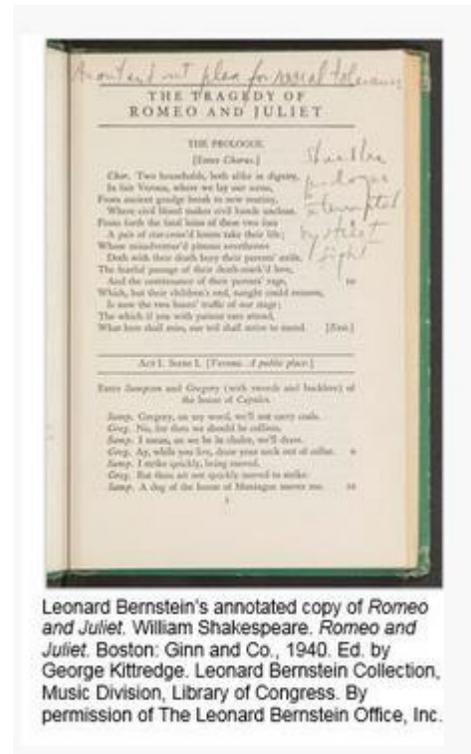
Ivy Weingram, NMAJH Associate Curator and curator of [Leonard Bernstein: The Power of Music](#), says, "[Leonard Bernstein](#) is remembered as a passionate, larger-than-life personality—a charismatic conductor, devoted educator, and skilled musician. This exhibition will delve into

his memorable works while also exploring a lesser known side of Bernstein-the second-generation American Jew who inspired social progress, both on and off the stage. As our nation continues to confront issues of race, religion, and what it means to be an 'American', Bernstein's music takes on new, personal meanings for every audience that experiences it."

[Alexander Bernstein](#), [Leonard Bernstein](#)'s son and member of the exhibition's Advisory Committee, shares, "I think it is so extraordinary that the National Museum of American Jewish History is putting on this exhibition about my father and his life as a Jewish American icon. While the Museum looks back at great figures in American Jewish history, it also is so actively looking forward. My sisters and I are very conscious of bringing our father's legacy to a new generation, and the Museum is doing a fantastic job of that."

The exhibition will bring together approximately 100 original artifacts, some never-before-exhibited in public. Artifact highlights include Bernstein's piano, an annotated copy of *Romeo and Juliet* used for the development of *West Side Story* (originally imagined as *East Side Story*), the program for his [Carnegie Hall](#) debut, his conducting suit, his easel used for studying scores and composing, and much more. Bernstein's Jewish heritage, so deeply ingrained in him by his parents and so intricately woven through his life and work, will be conveyed through a number of artifacts, including the mezuzah that hung in his studio, the Hebrew prayer book he carried with him when he traveled, his ketubah (Jewish marriage contract), his family's Passover seder plate, and the Talmud (book of Jewish law) given to Bernstein by his father.

The exhibition will also feature a variety of films, sound installations, and interactive media. Visitors will hear from Bernstein himself through archival recordings and documentary footage, alongside interviews with those who knew him best. Film clips of Bernstein conducting, his visit to Israel in 1967, and excerpts of *West Side Story* will highlight key moments in Bernstein's life and career. A state-of-the-art multimedia interactive will invite visitors to explore how Bernstein wove elements of synagogue music into his compositions for film, Broadway, and orchestra. To communicate the significance of Bernstein's visit to a Displaced Persons camp in Germany during Spring 1948-where he led an orchestra of Holocaust survivors-the Museum will display video testimonies from those who participated in this little-known moment in Bernstein's life. Lastly, an original film will convey the enduring impact of Bernstein's *MASS*, re-contextualizing the monumental composition by combining it with contemporary examples of the power of music.





Leonard Bernstein with his parents, Jennie & Samuel Bernstein, c. 1921. Leonard Bernstein Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress.

[Leonard Bernstein](#) (1918 - 1990) was born in Massachusetts to Jewish immigrant parents. He learned the Hebrew Bible and Talmud from his father, and the family belonged to a Conservative synagogue that featured approaches to worship and liturgy that were progressive for their day. He began private piano lessons at age 10 and studied at the prestigious Boston Latin School, Harvard University, the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, and the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. Within months of graduating with a conducting diploma, he led the Boston Pops, and famously made his [Carnegie Hall](#) conducting debut at the age of 25. In January 1944, Bernstein premiered Jeremiah, his first of three symphonies. Dozens of additional original works, many of which drew on his Jewish heritage, followed. Along with his two additional symphonies, Bernstein composed numerous works for concerts, theater, film, and ballet. In 1958, Bernstein took the helm as Music Director of the

[New York Philharmonic](#) Orchestra—the first American born-and-trained conductor to hold this position. In addition to his Young People's Concerts with the [New York Philharmonic](#), Bernstein taught at Tanglewood, Harvard, and [Brandeis University](#).

[Leonard Bernstein](#): The Power of Music received generous support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which awards grants to programs demonstrating the highest scholarship and excellence. The exhibition will be complemented by public and educational programs, to be announced at a later date. For more information, visit [NMAJH.org/Bernstein](https://www.nmah.org/Bernstein).

The National Museum of American Jewish History, located on historic Independence Mall in Philadelphia, brings to life the more than 360-year history of Jews in America. Tracing the stories of how Jewish immigrants became Jewish Americans, the Museum invites visitors of all backgrounds to share their own stories and reflect on how their histories and identities shape and are shaped by the American experience. An open door for all, NMAJH honors the past and contributes to a better future by sharing the power of imagination and ideas, culture and community, leadership and service, in ways that turn inspiration into action.

The National Museum of American Jewish History is located at [101 South Independence Mall East](#) at the corner of Fifth and Market Streets in Philadelphia. Museum hours are Wednesday to Friday, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10:00 am - 5:30 pm. The Museum will also be open Tuesday, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm during [Leonard Bernstein](#): The Power of Music. Museum admission is \$15.00 for adults, \$13.00 for senior citizens and youth, free for children 12 and under, Museum Members, and active military with ID; reduced prices available if purchased online. Connect with the Museum on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Pinterest](#). For more information, visit [NMAJH.org](https://www.nmah.org) or call 215.923.3811.