

wrote of his experiences in a chapter of his book *The Joy of Music*, showing that he was unprepared to have portions of the music summarily cut, changed into a different order than he first supposed, or even simply turned down in volume just as a theme was reaching its emotional heights.

In 1955, he adapted the music he had produced for the film into his own vision, a continuous 20-minute suite of symphonic music. It begins with a haunting and eloquent horn theme which is allowed to grow in emotional depth. It makes a transition into a "barbaro" section with very prominent percussion, related to the dehumanizing conditions on the docks. The film's love theme is followed by a scherzo-like Allegro, and the suite concludes with a tragic development of the opening theme. It is not necessary to know the film to understand or appreciate this score, which can easily be taken simply as a portrait of life in New York City. As such, it is one of the most distinctive (and most unjustly overlooked) great symphonic portraits of an American scene.

BERNSTEIN CONDUCTS



HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

Symphonic Dances From

WEST SIDE STORY

Symphonic Suite from

ON THE WATERFRONT

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC



Mastered in DSD256

In 1957 Leonard Bernstein, together with choreographer Jerome Robbins and lyricist Stephen Sondheim, created the work which was to assure his reputation as a composer: *West Side Story*. A modern-day, big-city adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, this "social music drama" moves the tragic tale of the lovers of Verona to the once-impoverished west side of Manhattan. *West Side Story* was premiered in Washington DC in August 1957 and repeated the following month in New York, where its success ensured a run of almost two years (772 performances) and a national tour. In 1960, Bernstein drew from it an orchestral suite of *Symphonic Dances* which follows the principal episodes of the drama.

The score brings together the musical's most famous songs ("Somewhere," "Maria"), dances ("Mambo," "Cha-cha," "Rumba") and orchestral sections ("Meeting Scene"), from the opening confrontation of the Jets and Sharks ("Prologue") to the recapitulation of the "Finale." With a kaleidoscopic range of moods and emotions, the suite is a marvel of stylistic diversity and compositional skill. Especially notable are the score's rhythmic intricacies, as classical techniques (i.e. fugue) blend with dance rhythms and jazz syncopations. Yet the most prominent

ingredient appears in the opening melodic figure of "Maria" (C-F sharp-G) with its characteristic tritone interval. Bernstein pinpointed this as the kernel of the entire score: "...The three notes pervade the whole piece, inverted, done backwards. I didn't do all this on purpose. It seemed to come out in 'Cool' and as the gang whistle [in 'Prologue']". The same three notes." Indeed, like the musical, the suite ends on a tense, unresolved, and haunting chord containing the same interval.

The *Symphonic Dances* were premiered at a "Valentine for Leonard Bernstein" gala concert by the New York Philharmonic (a fund-raiser for the orchestra's pension fund) under the direction of Lukas Foss on February 13, 1961. The suite remains one of Bernstein's most popular works.

The great American conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein produced his only original film score for one of the prestigious projects of American film, Elia Kazan's film *On the Waterfront* (1954). The film, starring Marlon Brando and Eva Marie Saint, tells the story of union corruption on the docks of New York in searing, personal terms. Bernstein produced one of the great scores in Hollywood history, but never consented to do another film project. He

BERNSTEIN CONDUCTS

Symphonic Dances From

WEST SIDE STORY

Symphonic Suite from

ON THE WATERFRONT

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

- 1 Symphonic Dances From West Side Story 20:55**
- 2 Symphonic Suite From On The Waterfront 19:31**

Released by Columbia Records 1961