



# Leonard Bernstein (20th Century Composers)

*Paul Myers*

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This is an illustrated biography of the American conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein. Despite international fame and success, he was a man constantly struggling with inner conflicts. The best loved and most successful conductor of his generation, also a virtuoso pianist, he was adored by an international public, but suffered years of hostile criticism from the New York press. An inspiration to fellow American musicians, he was the first native American to direct a major American orchestra, and the first to conquer Europe (conducting the Vienna Philharmonic and at La Scala, Milan). His conducting style was famously flamboyant, yet he possessed a rare ability to communicate his music to the listener, who was often held spellbound. But Bernstein often dismissed conducting for its temporary character, and declared himself to be primarily a composer. Among other musicals, Bernstein wrote the world-famous West Side Story (1957), and the moving score to the film On the Waterfront, but he never enjoyed unanimous critical acclaim for his serious classical works, such as Chichester Psalms and Mass. In later years he feared that he would be remembered solely for his musicals.

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