



There's a Place For Us: The Musical Theatre Works of Leonard Bernstein

Helen Smith

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Leonard Bernstein was the quintessential American musician. Through his careers as conductor, pianist, teacher and television personality he became known across the US and the world, his flamboyance and theatricality making him a favourite with audiences, if not with critics. However, he is perhaps best remembered as a composer, particularly of the musical "West Side Story", and for songs such as "America", "Tonight" and "Somewhere". Dr Helen Smith takes an in-depth look at all eight of Bernstein's musical theatre works, from the early "On the Town" written by the 26-year old composer at the start of his career, to his second and last opera "A Quiet Place" in 1983; in between these two pieces he composed music for "Trouble in Tahiti", "Wonderful Town", "Candide", "West Side Story", "Mass" and "1600 Pennsylvania Avenue". These works are analysed and considered against a background of musical and social context, as well as looking at Bernstein's other orchestral, choral and chamber works. One important aspect examined is Bernstein's use of motifs in his theatre compositions, which takes them out of the realms of Broadway and into the sphere of symphonic writing. Smith provides an indispensable overview of the musical theatre works of an eclectic composer, and shows what it is that constitutes the Bernstein 'sound'.

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