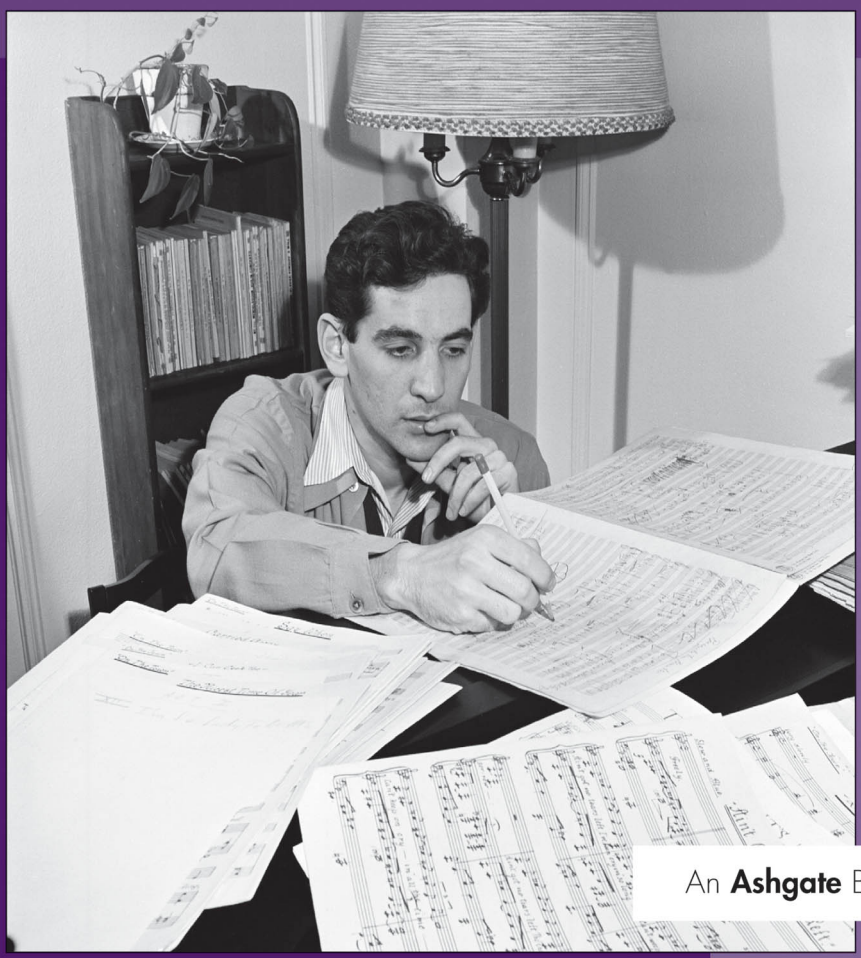
There's a Place For Us: The Musical Theatre Works of Leonard Bernstein

Helen Smith



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THERE'S A PLACE FOR US: THE MUSICAL THEATRE WORKS OF LEONARD BERNSTEIN

For Jason

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

HELEN SMITH

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A Quiet Place

Chichester Psalms

Fancy Free

Hashkiveinu

Kaddish

Yigdal

Introduction

Background and Context

Leonard Bernstein was a man filled with a love for life and all that it could offer him. His passion for music inspired him to reach out to audiences through his conducting, performing, teaching, writing, television programmes and, of course, through his compositions. He was an innately theatrical and dramatic person, extrovert and exuberant, who enjoyed the spotlight, and appeared to feed on the attention of the public. This theatrical personality was reflected in many of his own compositions, whether written specifically for the theatre, or as a piece of orchestral or chamber music. Bernstein himself noted that 'I have a suspicion that every work I write, for whatever medium, is really theatre music in some way' (prefatory note to *The Age of Anxiety*, 1949).

In the twenty years since his death, Bernstein's popularity has not waned: his musicals continue to be performed, not least on Broadway and in the West End, and his orchestral pieces still appear on the programmes of orchestras around the world. As a measure of one aspect of his legacy, in the last few years two new recordings of his *Mass* have been released, the first conducted by Kristjan Järvi and the second by Marin Alsop. A former conducting student of Bernstein, Alsop also directed performances of *Mass* in July 2010, as the culmination of a season-long 'Bernstein Project' at the South Bank Centre in London. Other recent celebrations have included 'Bernstein: The Best of All Possible Worlds', a series of concerts and lectures presented by the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall in 2008, and an international festival and conference titled 'Leonard Bernstein: Boston to Broadway' hosted by Harvard University in 2006. On the academic front, scholarly attention remains focussed on Bernstein's compositions for the stage: in December 2009 Nigel Simeone's in-depth study of *West Side Story* was published, and Carol J. Oja's survey of the theatre works will appear soon as part of the Broadway Masters series for Yale.[1]

There is a duality in Bernstein's music, a tension between the highbrow and the lowbrow, paralleled by the dichotomy between the two most prominent sides of his musical persona: the conductor and the composer. The conflict dogged Bernstein throughout his life, as he was constantly moving between the two professions, and when engrossed in one would feel that he should be giving more time to the other. As Bernstein's biographers tell,[2] his life was certainly lived to the full, and

[1] Gottlieb's insightful and fascinating memoir *Working with Bernstein* was also published in 2010.

[2] Burton 1994; Myers 1998; Peyser 1987; Secrest 1994; Seldes 2009.

often ran into excess. It seems that he loved life so much that he wanted to cram as many experiences as possible into his time, and this led to problems in his professional life, as he tried his hand at many different aspects of musical creation, presentation and education, which was a cause for concern for him, even in 1946: 'It is impossible for me to make an exclusive choice among the various activities of conducting, symphonic composition, writing for the theatre, and playing the piano. What seems right for me at any given moment is what I must do' (1982, p. 103). Yet this struggle in styles and ideals is integral to the sound of Bernstein's music, which endeavours to embrace both sides of his personality.

My book aims to survey the musical theatre works of Bernstein as a whole, and, through consideration of the musicals, operas and theatre piece, to observe how both his compositional technique and his approach to composing developed and evolved. I have chosen these works as I believe that the musical theatre works in particular provided the ideal outlet for Bernstein's aspirations and passions, allowing him to contribute to the development of American opera, a genre that he considered important. This survey will concentrate on eight works: the musicals *On the Town* (1944), *Wonderful Town* (1953), *Candide* (1956), *West Side Story* (1957) and *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* (1976); the operas *Trouble in Tahiti* (1951/2) and *A Quiet Place* (1983); and the theatre piece *Mass* (1971); see Table I.1. These compositions span nearly 40 years, almost the whole of Bernstein's composing career, and so encompass the majority of his musical life, and the changes and growth that occurred within.

Such a study of musical theatre works, as opposed to orchestral or chamber music, or other genres of composition, is complicated by the fact that the composer is only one part of a team behind the finished product. Lyricists, librettists, choreographers, directors and producers all have a stake in the work, and so share in the creative process. With this in mind, it is difficult to isolate the contribution that the composer has made, and even then it is a certainty that he will have been, at least, influenced by others; at worst he may have been forced to change his work to fit in with a larger scheme. Despite this, I still consider Bernstein to be totally and individually responsible for the music for each show; no matter what may have happened in the period between original idea and opening night, it is Bernstein who is given sole credit, even when other composers have been involved in the processes (Sondheim and Schwartz are both composers in their own right, yet only contributed lyrics to *West Side Story* and *Mass*). Songs, scenes and whole concepts may come and go between run-throughs, tryouts and the actual opening performance of a work, and even then it may still evolve. Issues may be confused further if there are changes in the personnel, as happened with *Candide* and *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, forcing more alterations in the libretto, lyrics and music. However, it would be reasonably safe to assume that all people involved in a show would wish it to be successful and so work together to create the best outcome; whether or not this is achieved is another matter, as shall be seen later. As far as is possible, I have based my analyses on the productions as they were first seen in

Bernstein's musical theatre productions

	Source	Book	Lyrics	Tryouts/preview	Première	D Music
own	Jerome Robbins	Betty Comden Adolph Green	Comden and Green	13 December 1944 Boston	28 December 1944 Adelphi Theatre NY	George Max Go
n Tahiti			Leonard Bernstein (LB)		12 June 1952 Brandeis University	Elliot Si LB
ul Town	Ruth McKenney	Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov	Comden and Green	19 January 1953 New Haven	26 February 1953 Winter Garden NY	George Lehman
	Voltaire	Lillian Hellman	Richard Wilbur, John LaTouche, Dorothy Parker, Hellman and LB	29 October 1956 Boston	1 December 1956 Martin Beck Theatre NY	Tyrone Samuel
e Story	Shakespeare and Robbins	Arthur Laurents	Stephen Sondheim and LB	19 August 1957 Washington	26 September 1957 Winter Garden NY	Jerome Max Go
	Roman Catholic liturgy		RC liturgy, Stephen Schwartz and LB		8 September 1971 John F. Kennedy Centre, Washington	Gordon Maurice
ania		Alan Jay Lerner	Lerner	24 February 1976 Philadelphia	4 May 1976 Mark Hellinger Theatre NY	George Gilbert Roland
Place			Stephen Wadsworth and LB		17 June 1983 Houston Grand Opera	Peter Ma John De

their premières, and looked at original published librettos; any departures from this approach will be detailed when discussing the associated musical theatre work.

The following chapters attempt to explore connections and relationships both within and between the different works, looking at the changing techniques Bernstein employed and the various influences on each of them. Rather than a blow-by-blow examination of each work, I will consider pertinent issues and details within individual shows. Each chapter begins with a consideration of the background and context[3] before going on to look at specific details from each work. There are certain recurring ideas, principally the concepts of motifs, structures and forms, and pastiche, the importance of which will be discussed in the relevant chapters.

Bernstein's Life and Compositions up to *Fancy Free* (1944)

Bernstein's parents were Jewish immigrants: his father Sam and mother Jennie had both travelled to America from Russia when they were children, and had married in the US in 1917. Leonard, originally named Louis but always called Leonard by his family, was born on 25 August 1918 in Lawrence, Massachusetts. His sister and brother, Shirley and Burton, were born in 1923 and 1932 respectively, completing the Bernstein family. Despite a tense home environment, Bernstein began to flourish when his father's younger sister Clara gave the family a piano in 1928: the love affair with music had begun, and for Bernstein it would never end. In 1929 he began attending Boston Latin School and in 1932 he gave his first public performance as a pianist, playing in a concert arranged by his piano teacher, Susan Williams. Although Sam had initially been reluctant to encourage his son's musical abilities, he now began taking Bernstein to classical concerts, and allowed him to change piano teachers to help develop his playing; Helen Coates, his new tutor, would remain part of Bernstein's life, first as teacher and later as his secretary, until her death in 1989. The piano played a pivotal part in Bernstein's life, and the majority of his early compositions were for the instrument, or included a piano part: in 1937 he produced a Piano Trio and *Music for Two Pianos*, and in 1938 he completed *Music for The Dance Nos. 1 and 2*, and a Piano Sonata (music from these juvenile compositions would reappear later in several of his mature works).

Bernstein's musical studies took him to Harvard in 1935,[4] and, although the education provided there was more theoretical than practical, Bernstein created his own opportunities for creativity; in 1939 he wrote and conducted the music for a production of *The Birds* by Aristophanes. His conducting debut was witnessed by Aaron Copland, whom he had met in 1937, and who had become Bernstein's

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[3] The subtitle for the first section in each chapter is taken from the first words heard in each show at its première.

[4] 1935 is also the year of Bernstein's first significant composition, a setting of Psalm 148 for voice and piano.

friend and mentor. Another composer who moved into the young musician's sphere that year was Marc Blitzstein. For his final project at Harvard, Bernstein produced Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock*, and invited the composer, who duly attended, and the two formed a friendship that lasted until the older composer's death in 1964. It is significant that a distinctly American voice can be heard in the music of both Copland and Blitzstein, and their influence on Bernstein will be explored later.

From Harvard, Bernstein moved to the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, guided there by Copland and Dimitri Mitropolous, who had befriended the young conductor in January 1937, and had immediately spotted Bernstein's potential. At Curtis, his studies included conducting with Fritz Reiner and piano with Isabelle Vengerova, but he continued with his composing, producing a Violin Sonata and Four Studies for two clarinets, two bassoons and piano; the latter was broadcast in 1940 together with pieces by Samuel Barber and Oscar Levant. In 1941 Bernstein's music again featured in a Harvard production; this time it was incidental music for Aristophanes' *The Peace*.

The summers of 1940 to 1942 were spent at the Berkshire Festival at Tanglewood, as part of Serge Koussevitzky's conducting class for the first two years, then acting as his assistant in the third season; it was at Tanglewood in 1946 that Bernstein conducted the American première of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes*, and he would later join the staff himself. Away from the festival, Bernstein remained at Curtis continuing his studies until May 1941, and after his graduation he spent some time in Key West, where he began to work on his Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, and also played piano in concerts around Boston. In September 1942 he moved to New York, and earned his living by playing piano for dance classes and transcribing jazz pieces for the piano. He also had time to compose: the autumn of that year saw him begin writing the song cycle *I Hate Music* and, more significantly, his first symphony, *Jeremiah*. The last movement of this had originally been written in the summer of 1939, shortly after Bernstein had met Blitzstein, but now he rushed to add two more movements so that it could be entered for a competition at the New England Conservatory, before the 31 December deadline. The symphony did not win, but this competition sparked a change in Bernstein's fortunes, as 1943 was the year that his conducting career began to flourish, closely followed by widespread recognition for his composing.

Chapter 1
On the Town

'I feel like I'm not out of bed yet'

In the 1920s and 1930s, American culture began to develop an identity of its own, distancing itself from the influence of its European forebears. America was now capable of producing great works of literature, art, theatre, film and opera, each with a clear and distinct native voice. On the musical stage, new works by American composers including Jerome Kern, Oscar Hammerstein II, Irving Berlin, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart succeeded the Austro-German-influenced romantic operettas of émigré composers such as Sigmund Romberg and Rudolf Friml, and in their quest for a sense of national individuality, detached from the sway of the Old World, musicians looked to their own dance and popular music heritage for inspiration and ideas. In time, musicians working in 'serious' genres, including Paul Whiteman and George Gershwin, absorbed the jazz music that had become the new vernacular musical language and created a bridge between the highbrow and the lowbrow. The influence of this new style spread into other fields, and in 1922 John Alden Carpenter wrote the music for a 'jazz pantomime' based on George Herriman's *Krazy Kat*, a cartoon character originally created for the American press; Carpenter later followed this with the ballet *Skyscrapers* (1923–24), a lively depiction of New York using the new rhythms. It was in this environment, as American artists aimed to create American works for the American public, that new organizations were established to help fulfil these aims. One such group was the Ballet Caravan, set up in 1936 by Lincoln Kirstein with the intention of generating American ballets, distinct in style from European dance, which had previously dominated the genre. In Kirstein's own words, 'The Caravan will continue to collaborate with younger American designers and musicians to find a direction for the classic dance … rooted in our contemporary and national preferences' (quoted in Cohen 1998, vol. 2, p. 279).

One of the most successful productions by the Ballet Caravan came in 1938, with the ballet *Filling Station*, choreographed by and starring Lew Christensen to music by Virgil Thomson. *Filling Station*, set in a gas station attended by the unassuming character of Mac, was described by George Balanchine as 'not only one of the first modern ballets on a familiar American subject, but one of the first ballets to employ American music, scenery, and costumes by an American, and American dancers' (Balanchine and Mason 1978, p. 235). Thomson's music included waltzes, a tango, and music based on popular dances of the time,

particularly the syncopation of the jazz/ragtime-derived rhythms: ♩ ♫‿♫ ♩, and ♪♩ ♪♪♩ ♪.[1] The drive for an identifiable national style of ballet, instigated by groups such as the Ballet Caravan, also led to the commission of Copland's *Billy the Kid* later in 1938, and to the setting up of other professional companies and schools focussed on the development of an American style. The young dancer Jerome Robbins was a member of one such company, the Ballet Theatre group in New York, and he also had aspirations to become a choreographer. He had an outline for a ballet on an American theme, and in the search for a suitable composer Robbins was directed to Leonard Bernstein's door by Oliver Smith, a designer who went on to work closely with the pair for many years (Robbins, interviewed by Burton 1996).

By 1944, a year had passed since Bernstein had composed any major orchestral music; his *Jeremiah* symphony had been completed in December 1942, and the composition of the smaller-scale song cycle *I Hate Music* had occupied him during the first half of 1943. The remainder of the year had been dedicated to conducting, following Bernstein's appointment as Assistant Conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in August, and his well-documented, and well-received, substitution for the indisposed Bruno Walter on 14 November 1943. Bernstein's willingness to write ballet music is unsurprising given the success enjoyed in the field by prominent composers including Stravinsky, and more particularly by his friend Copland, whose aforementioned *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo* (1942) had both proved very popular with the American public. However, for Bernstein and Robbins, neither of whom had had any previous experience of choreographing or composing for Broadway, the creation of a ballet was quite a gamble. Luckily, the collaboration paid off and the audience attendance for *Fancy Free*, which opened on 18 April 1944 at the Metropolitan Opera, broke box offices records (Burton 1994, p. 128). The overall effect of the production certainly appeared to please the critics: 'The music by Leonard Bernstein utilizes jazz in about the same proportion that Robbins's choreography does … It is a fine score, humorous, inventive and musically interesting. Indeed, the whole ballet, performance included, is just exactly ten degrees north of terrific' (Martin 1944, p. 27). The rest of the programme at the Metropolitan Opera included excerpts of more traditional ballet from Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker* (Martin 1944, p. 27), the classical sounds of which could only have served to emphasize the contemporary nature of Bernstein's work.

Fancy Free featured three sailors, familiar characters at a time when America was playing its part in the conflict of the Second World War. The ballet followed their shore leave in New York, each hunting for a female companion to enliven the 24 hours before they are recalled to the ship: 'they meet first one, then a second girl, and … they fight over them, lose them, and in the end take off after still a third' (Bernstein 1946). The contest to impress the girls takes the form of a dance

[1] The first of these can be found in the movements 'Mac's Dance', 'Big Apple' and 'Finale', and the second also appears in 'Mac's Dance' and in the 'Introduction'.

competition between the three men, who individually display their prowess in a galop, a waltz and a danzón; the music for all three being derived from the previously encountered themes, from the opening 'Enter Three Sailors'.[2] The music throughout the ballet is characterized by its energy, and a jukebox playing a blues-style pop-song (of Bernstein's composing) called 'Big Stuff' establishes the atmosphere before the curtain rises.

Bernstein's usage of jazz elements in *Fancy Free* reflects the sounds of the city, 'urban jazz, which is the essence of American popular music' (Bernstein 1969, p. 177), and contrasts with the cowboy music that influenced Copland's ballets. *Fancy Free* was not alone in using jazz – Bernstein's Clarinet Sonata of 1942 showed some level of the same influence, and was described by the *Boston Globe* as containing some 'jazzy, rocking rhythms' (quoted in Secrest 1994, p. 103, no author given). Neither did the *Jeremiah* Symphony escape the touch of jazz, although its presence is not overt, as the composer himself explained: 'The scherzo of my *Jeremiah* Symphony, for example, is certainly not jazz; and yet I am convinced I could never have written it if I had not had a real and solid background in jazz' (Bernstein 1982, p. 119).

This background was derived, in part, from three of Bernstein's main musical influences – Hindemith, Copland and Stravinsky. These men had already incorporated the sounds of jazz into their music, especially during the 1920s, when the genre was seen as a raw expression embodying the feelings of the time. Although it was absent from his early ballet scores, Copland utilized jazz to depict urban cityscapes in two of his works in the 1920s: *Music for the Theatre* (1925) and the Piano Concerto (1926). In both of these orchestral pieces, Copland created symphonic jazz to reflect the excitement of the city, and contrasted this with the slower and more seductive sound of the blues: 'Copland uses such styles metaphorically, in order, if not actually to portray New York, at least to impart a sense of life in a great American metropolis' (Pollack 1999, p. 134).[3] Bernstein was very familiar with Copland's work, and he had used sections of the Piano Concerto to illustrate points about jazz rhythms in his 1939 BA thesis at Harvard (Bernstein 1982, pp. 74–81). The older composer had advised the younger on his thesis; Bernstein wrote to Copland in November 1938:

> I will try to show that there is something American in the newer music, which relies not on folk material but on a native spirit, (like your music, and maybe Harris' and Sessions' – I don't know), or which relies on a new American form, like Blitzstein's. Whether this is tenable or not, it is my thesis, and I'm sticking to it.

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[2] These dances are variations not only in the musical sense, but also in ballet terms, where the word indicates a solo dance (Chujoy and Manchester 1967, p. 940).

[3] The lively music of these pieces contrast with the music Copland wrote to portray New York in *Quiet City* (1930), which is more subdued and restless than excited.

> Now how to go about it? It means going through recent American things, finding those that sound, for some reason, American, and translate that American sound into musical terms. I feel convinced that there is such a thing, or else why is it that the Variations [Copland's *Piano Variations*] sound fresh and vital and not stale and European and dry? (Quoted in Burton 1994, p. 50)

To which Copland replied:

> You sound as if you were very much on the right track anyhow both as to ideas and composers' names. Don't make the mistake of thinking that *just* because a Gilbert used Negro material, there was therefore nothing American about it. There's always the chance that it might have an 'American' quality despite its material. Also, don't try to prove *too* much. Composing in this country is still pretty young no matter how you look at it. (Quoted in Burton 1994, p. 51)

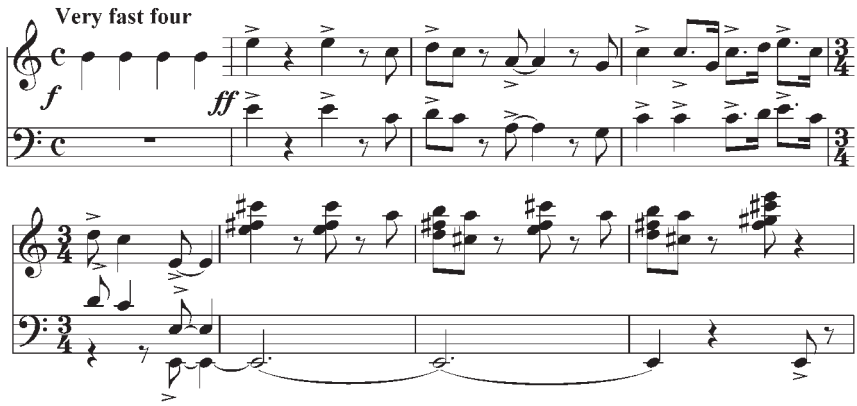
To Bernstein, the rhythms in Copland's Piano Concerto embodied what he called a 'great development of Negro rhythms by an American into an independent idiom' (Bernstein 1982, p. 74), and the influence of Copland's music is certainly in evidence in *Fancy Free*.

Like Copland, Bernstein used symphonic jazz to reflect the atmosphere of the city. His ballet has an immediate rhythmic exuberance, with cross-rhythms, syncopations and changes in time signature that add an edginess and restlessness to the music, reflecting the enthusiasm and vigour of the sailors and of the metropolis itself. There are seven sections to the work: 'Enter Three Sailors', 'Scene at the Bar', 'Enter Two Girls', 'Pas de Deux', 'Competition Scene', 'Three Dance Variations' and 'Finale'. The rhythmic vitality is seen at the outset, in the syncopation of the opening bars of the first section, 'Enter Three Sailors'. This melody recurs at various points and in different guises throughout the ballet, and already by its second appearance in b. 6, the tune has changed rhythmically from the first presentation at b. 2 (see Example 1.1).

In his analysis of *Fancy Free*, Laird describes Bernstein as making 'obvious Latin and jazz references here, with a swinging melody that includes syncopation in the second measure approaching the *tresillo* rhythm (3+3+2) of the *rumba*, and the third measure [b. 4] with dotted eighths and sixteenths meant to swing like Count Basie's orchestra' (Laird 2002, p. 33). There is also an interesting rhythmic twist in the second dance variation, with its changing time signatures that are most uncharacteristic of the waltz that lies at its basis: $\frac{3}{8}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$; the shifting accents and syncopations of both sections of Bernstein's music are reminiscent of Copland's Piano Concerto.

The influence of jazz on Bernstein's music is apparent not only in the use of rhythm, but also in the harmonic and melodic language employed. Use of the blues scale can be found at various points in the score, including the opening of the third section, 'Enter Two Girls'. Here a semitone clash between C♯ and C♮ played simultaneously (the major and minor third of the chord together) creates the effect

Example 1.1 *Fancy Free*, 'Enter Three Sailors', bb. 1–8



of a blue note. Bernstein described the use of the scale in his thesis, and mentions specifically the use of both flattened and natural notes on the third and seventh degrees of the blues scale, where

> the actual note of the scale is somewhere between the natural tone and the flatted [*sic*] tone … It is for this reason that when swing is played on the piano – which, being a mechanically exact instrument, cannot produce quarter-tones and the like – the pianist must resort to such impressionistic approximations as [playing both notes together (shown by Bernstein in musical examples)]. (Bernstein 1982, pp. 53–4)

The effect can also be found in the 'Pas de Deux', where the tune from the opening song, 'Big Stuff', returns as the main musical material. In the first phrase, we find the flattened and natural fifths in close proximity to each other (F♯ and G), a flattened third (E♭), and a flattened seventh (B♭) in the accompaniment that is raised again in the following bar. Bernstein was selective in his employment of jazz elements in *Fancy Free*, utilizing the scale and the rhythms of the vernacular music, but combining these with forms and techniques of development that stemmed from his classical training:

> From its very opening, the symphonic treatment of jazz is clearly taken beyond Gershwin and Copland. The changing metres and cross accents look Stravinskian on paper, but, without using jazz structures or improvisation, the aural impression is one of the sounds of the big band era and the nervous energy of jazz. (Schiff 2001, p. 445)

Bernstein began integrating jazz into his own music at a time when the genre was changing in function as people danced less and listened more; it was

metamorphosing from a commercialized art to an intellectual art. But Bernstein had grown up with the sounds of jazz, and had worked for a time at Harms-Witmark, notating music from recorded improvisations of famous jazz musicians (Burton 1994, p. 103). He had also turned his own hand to performing, and had certainly impressed Copland, who wrote: '[Bernstein] is also a whizz at the piano – including jazz style' (Burton 1994, p. 102). So in his inclusion of such elements, Bernstein was not only following the lead of those composers important to him, but also embracing a significant part of his own musical experience.

It was the stage designer Oliver Smith who suggested that the success of *Fancy Free* could be built upon by expanding the ballet into a musical (Burton 1994, p. 129). Work on *On the Town* began in June 1944, only two months after the première of the ballet. Jerome Robbins again choreographed, and Bernstein suggested that Betty Comden and Adolph Green be brought in to work on the book and lyrics. He had known the nightclub performers for about five years,[4] and on occasion had played piano for their satirical group, The Revuers, at the Village Vanguard in New York (Burton 1994, p. 102.). There is a sense of innocence and simplicity about the show, almost certainly a result of the show being the first foray onto Broadway for the collaborators. *On the Town* feels like the result of a group of friends writing the show they wanted, rather than aspiring to create a commercial success. Jerome Robbins later remembered,

> We just went ahead and did what we felt we wanted to do. We weren't asking ourselves, 'What would be far out here?' We were just pouring it out the way we wanted to see it, that's all … And you have to remember that we were all very naïve and had no Broadway experience. (Quoted in Guernsey 1985, pp. 5 and 6)

Despite all the enthusiasm, excitement and drive, the show still needed a steadying hand, and this was provided by the experienced Broadway director George Abbott. It was Abbott that took the raw material created by the team and shaped it into a viable show, making some quite drastic cuts and changes along the way (as will be discussed later). The friends set a 'credo' for themselves when they began work, which Betty Comden wrote down on a yellow legal pad, stating how the show was to be 'integrated': the book, lyrics, music and dancing should all 'tell the story … The show was the important thing, not any individual element' (Comden, interviewed by Burton 1996). Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!*, which had enjoyed great success the previous year, was considered an integrated musical, and itself built on an approach to dance on the stage which had begun eight years earlier. Rodgers and Hart's *On Your Toes* (1936) not only introduced ballet into the Broadway musical comedy, but also made this dance integral to the plot, as it carried the drama forward to its climax in the final scene.

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[4] Bernstein had actually first met Green in 1937 at summer camp at Pittsfield in northwest Massachusetts, where they had worked together on a production of *The Pirates of Penzance* (Burton 1994, p. 38).

Oklahoma! subsequently included important dance scenes that explored the psyche of the show's heroine as she slept, the concept of the dream ballet giving the opportunity to 'do in dance what the script and score could not do in words and music' (Mordden 1999, p. 77). Rodgers and Hammerstein's show had important repercussions on Broadway, raising the function of dance from visual spectacle to a narrative device: 'there were some wonderful side effects as well, not least in a new sophistication in the composition of dance music. Indeed, *Oklahoma!* made dancing so integral to the … well, the integrated musical that high-maestro choreography became the fourth Essential' (Mordden 1999, p. 79).

However, the dance music that was created for *On the Town* was different from any that had been heard before. Bernstein outlined this in his programme notes for the *Three Dance Episodes* that he extracted from the musical for concert performance two years later:

> It seems only natural that dance should play a leading role in the show *On the Town*, since the idea of writing it arose from the success of the ballet *Fancy Free*. I believe this is the first Broadway show to have as many as seven or eight dance episodes in the space of two acts; and, as a result, the essence of the whole production is contained in these dances … That these are, in their way, symphonic pieces rarely occurs to the audience actually attending the show, so well integrated are all the elements by the master-direction of George Abbott, the choreographic inventiveness of Jerome Robbins, and the adroitness of the Comden-Green book. (Bernstein 1945)

Such use of symphonic music in a musical comedy was not to be repeated by Bernstein: 'Lenny didn't do that again really, not quite in that way, because *West Side Story* [which also employs symphonic methods] is a serious story, and this was mostly lighthearted' (Comden, interviewed by Burton 1996). The combination of elements obviously appealed to a great many people, as following its première on 13 December 1944, the show was a success, enjoying 463 performances in its initial Broadway run (Suskin 1992, p. 350). One review talked of the music being 'excellent. [Bernstein] has written ballet music and songs, background music and raucously tinny versions of the blues. The music has humour and is unpedantic; Mr Bernstein quite understands the spirit of *On the Town*' (Nichols 1944, p. 11).

The only aspect of *Fancy Free* that remained in the new musical was the trio of sailors, again beginning 24 hours' shore leave. In *On the Town* they are intent on seeing the sights, but are waylaid by amorous females: Chip, the innocent country boy, is seduced by Hildy, a rather insistent taxi-driver, and the clown of the group, Ozzie, falls for the anthropologist Claire. Gabey, the dreamer among the boys, decides he has to find Ivy Smith, who has been featured as 'Miss Turnstiles for June' on posters in the subway. He finds her in Carnegie Hall,[5] loses her again, and

[5] Carnegie Hall is where Jerome Robbins found Bernstein when looking for a composer for *Fancy Free* (Burton 1994, p. 126).