

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Uncovering Classics Series

LEONARD BERNSTEIN'S MASS



Resource pack for schools (KS3/4)

Bernstein MASS: A Theatre Piece for singers, players and dancers

To mark Leonard Bernstein's centenary year in 2018, Southbank Centre staged a performance of Bernstein's legendary piece MASS, directed by Jude Kelly and conducted by Marin Alsop. The performance, which took place in Royal Festival Hall, had a cast of around 400 young participants including: National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, Chineke! Junior Orchestra, Southbank Centre's Voicelab, Avanti House Secondary School, The Choir With No Name, Finchley Children's Music Group, Millennium Performing Arts, Streetwise Opera, Tring Park School for the Performing Arts, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, and Woven Gold. The visuals were designed and produced by Yeast Culture and Lilian Baylis Technology School.

The celebrant was played by Paulo Szot. With a large number of young performers taking part, Southbank Centre's Education team worked with a Year 9 music class and 12 ambassador students from Lilian Baylis Technology school to uncover this masterpiece, find out why Bernstein wrote it and explore its relevance today. The result of this project is a series of videos documenting their journey which teachers can use alongside this PDF pack to explore this masterpiece.

Introduction and overview



Welcome to our Bernstein's MASS Uncovering Classics resource pack. We hope you will find the films and this resource pack an exciting springboard to spark your exploration of the piece.

To start, please watch the documentary video (11 minutes) and read this sheet. You can then use the short 3-minute video chapters that accompany this pack to support your lessons. The three chapters are:

- Bernstein: Musician, Activist, Composer
- The Music of MASS
- Mood of the Nation: Politics, power, protest

Accompanying this pack to support your lessons. This pack contains key facts, interviews and suggested activities for each of the three chapters. To support your work in the classroom we have picked key curriculum links for KS3 / 4 Music that these exercises help to achieve. The curriculum links can be found at the end of this pack.

Other resources you may need are:

- A score of the piece if you are planning to look at music and text
- A recording of Leonard Bernstein's MASS. We suggest working with the Naxos recording, performed by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and conducted by Marin Alsop, which can be found online. With it you will be able to access a digital booklet containing lyrics and tracks for each piece.
- We also recommend using this website, where you can explore more about the composer and his works: leonardbernstein.com

We hope this pack will aid you to:

- Support your study of MASS (you may be planning a local visit to a performance)
- Spark imagination and exploration in the classroom by using an artistic medium to explore a subject area (e.g. music, politics, history)
- Launch an in-depth study which can either feed into one discipline or across several subjects
- Bring interviews with artists to your classroom study as a support to your topic work

About Leonard Bernstein

- Leonard Bernstein (1918 - 1990) was an iconic figure of American music. He was the first – arguably the only – celebrity classical composer of the television age. Born in Massachusetts to Jewish-Ukrainian parents (his father was a hair products salesman), he possessed a musical talent that won him a place at Harvard
- After graduating he worked for a New York comedy troupe and took conducting lessons from Serge Koussevitsky at Tanglewood music festival. He made his major conducting debut with the New York Philharmonic in 1943 when Bruno Walter came down with the flu and 'Lenny' had to step up last minute for a live broadcast performance.
- He was a political activist, a self-styled liberal intellectual with a mission to create a new genre-spanning dramatic form that would be fit for the times. 'Maybe opera is not exciting enough a word,' he mused.
- He was world-famous as a conductor, an educator and a composer of concert and theatre music. He flitted between symphony halls and Broadway; he modelled himself on his hero Mahler while his televised lectures introduced millions of Americans to classical music.
- He recorded prolifically – more than 400 releases, including definitive accounts of Mahler's symphonies – and he composed across a purposefully wide range of forms. Major works include the symphonies Jeremiah (1942) and Kaddish (1963), three ballets, the opera Candide (1956), the hit musical West Side Story (1957) and MASS (1971)

Based on programme notes written by music critic Kate Molleson, 2018

Activity 1: Research, Listen and Feedback

Choose a list of Bernstein's works and split the class into groups to research one per group.

Suggested works: On the Town, West Side Story, Candide, MASS

Each group could:

- Look up a synopsis for the work
- Find, listen to and analyse some sound recordings or video clips from the piece
- Ask the group to discuss what they think the composer was saying with the piece, and what they think the moods, voices and sounds of the piece are
- Consider whom Bernstein was speaking for in the piece
- Create a presentation to feed back to the other groups
- Once all groups have presented back have a class discussion about common themes you have identified across Bernstein's work



Bernstein believed that music could serve as activism and that by tackling political, cultural and aesthetic issues head-on, artists could give voice to a social zeitgeist.

Music critic Kate Molleson, 2018



'Bernstein... moved comfortably between high art and pop culture, not confined by stylistic boundaries.'

Conductor Marin Alsop

'Leonard Bernstein had incredible virtuosity both as a conductor and a composer. He also wanted to communicate with everybody. He played jazz in nightclubs, he got involved in all the political movements of the 1960s and he really believed in education. He felt people could prosper if they supported each other, shared each other's stories and understood each other's dilemmas. Across his work, you can see he's not interested in hierarchy, whether of characters or genre. He just believes that humans have wonderful potential and he wants every person to have that realised.'

Bernstein had no snobbery about genre. He loved pop music, jazz and the blues. MASS contains all of these, alongside marching bands. It honours a popular tradition of artistic cross-pollination. It doesn't suggest that the most important thing is to understand classical music.'

Interview with Southbank Centre's Artistic Director
Jude Kelly, director of MASS

The Music



Key Facts:

- Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis asked Bernstein to write a piece for the 1971 inauguration of Washington DC's new Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Bernstein responded with a new vision of what commemorative music could look and sound like.
- Collaborating with the composer-librettist Stephen Schwartz, he devised what he called a 'Theatre Piece for singers, players and dancers' which reflected the state of America at the time.
- The piece references pop, classical, jazz and blues and features a marching band to illustrate the different elements of American culture.
- 'Bernstein chose the format of the Roman Catholic Mass (honouring the fact that JF Kennedy was the first Catholic President of America) but instead of a straightforward, musical setting of the Latin liturgy, he created a broadly eclectic theatrical event by placing the 400-year-old religious rite into a tense, dramatic dialogue with music and lyrics drawing on a 20th-century vernacular, using this dialectic to explore the crisis in faith and cultural breakdown of the post-Kennedy era.'

Quote from leonardbernstein.com

Based on programme notes written by music critic Kate Molleson, 2018

Synopsis:

- The Mass is led by the Celebrant (a catholic priest), who represents both religion and leadership in America. He is accompanied a boys or children's choir, seated choir, treble soloists and musicians. At the opening of the piece we hear him sing 'Simple Song', a song of worship to God.
- The Street Chorus (musically referred to as a troupe) are his congregation and represent the voice of youth in America, questioning authority and God. As the celebrant leads them through the Mass, the chorus challenge his teachings in a series of Jazz/rock interruptions using contemporary language.
- Tension grows between the Celebrant and the Street Chorus throughout the piece. It features a series of solos in which they share their crises and losses of faith and demand peace and answers from the authority figure, the Celebrant. The piece comes to a climax with the invocation Agnus Dei in which the Street Chorus are joined by the full forces of the massed choirs and musicians.
- Faced by their increasing demands, the Celebrant eventually suffers a breakdown of faith, and throws the sacraments to the floor in epic solo 'Things get broken'.
- The breakdown creates a moment of catharsis in which we hear the reprise of 'Simple Song', from the treble soloists (children) gradually joined by more and more voices from the street chorus, choirs and musicians. It's a moment of resolution, peace and reaffirmation of faith.

About MASS

- 'Though MASS challenges divine authority, exposing its contradictions and questioning religion's relevance to contemporary life, it ultimately serves as a reaffirmation of faith and hope for universal peace'
Quote from leonardbernstein.com
- The structure is broadly based on a formal rite, the Tridentine Mass, with Latin text and solemn hymns, but that structure soon gets bombarded with a wild array of countercultural probes.
- Ceremonial music is interrupted by blues, rock, gospel, folk, Broadway, jazz, Middle Eastern dances and snatches of lush orchestral meditations (these contemporary voices represent a diverse community)
- The questioning of faith is a Jewish approach to debating with God that has a long history. Bernstein uses a congregation of disaffected youth (the Street Chorus) armed with kazoos and rock 'n' roll songs to challenge the dogma of the church.

- In purely musical terms, the whole piece could be heard as an argument between tonality and atonality. From the very opening notes (a pre-recorded 12-tone 'Kyrie Eleison' played over four speakers), the formal ecclesiastical sections sound like modernist parody, while the 'people' respond in wholesomely appealing tonal song. What wins out is a blazing D-major chorale ('Almighty Father') sung by the entire forces – a God-fearing advocating for peace.

**Based on programme notes by music critic
Kate Molleson, 2018**

'I still don't quite know where its true home should be. Is it the Vienna State Opera or a high school auditorium? Perhaps both.'

- Leonard Bernstein on MASS

Musical Groups and Sounds in Mass:

- **Celebrant** Central character who is a Catholic priest leading the traditional Mass. At the opening of the piece we hear his 'Simple Song' in which he offers a folk melody to God.
- **Street chorus (troupe)** Young congregation members / singers and dancers. They question their leadership, God and their purpose and demand peace from the celebrant. They bring jazz / rock sounds to the piece as a contemporary counter to the traditional music of the Catholic Mass.
- **Treble soloists** Alter boys / girls who assist the Celebrant.
- **Seated chorus** Singers of the Catholic Mass.
- **Mass chorus** Seated across the auditorium, this group emerges out of the audience as a flash mob at the climax of the piece during 'Agnus Dei', singing 'Dona nobis pacem' (Grant us peace).
- **Children's chorus** Singers of the Catholic Mass. Their voices represent hope and innocence.
- **Marching band** The marching band features near the beginning of the piece, functioning to represent the sound of America.
- **Orchestra & rock / pop band** The orchestra and pop and rock band sit as one on the stage. They begin by supporting the two contrasting sounds of tradition and modern culture, Bernstein weaves their music together in a series of conflicts and resolutions throughout the piece, until they eventually find harmony.



In some respects, Leonard Bernstein's MASS plays with the very idea of an orchestra or a choir. A musical ensemble can be a group of total strangers, who might, when they first pick up their instruments to try to play, simply be an incoherent mass. Then, gradually, the group moves towards blended harmony. Without taking away anyone's individuality, it begins to create something using everyone's talent and potential. The orchestra is the symbol of human cooperation.

Performers from all walks of life are coming together to showcase their talents, challenge themselves and share in Leonard Bernstein's musical vision of a world in which harmony is gradually realised.

Jude Kelly CBE
Artistic Director, Southbank Centre
Director of MASS

Activity 2: Listen and Respond

For this section teachers can get really creative about how they advise the class to listen and respond. On the next page, please find a track breakdown, in which each track is listed alongside a synopsis and a box where students can enter descriptive notes. Ask students to work in pairs or as a class to listen and respond to the different voices and genres throughout the piece. In this exercise, students can explore and expand musical language.

Traditional authority versus contemporary voice:

Listen to the classical Mass – the sound of church and authority.

Tracks:

Thrice-Tuple Canon: Dominus vobiscum, Prayer for the Congregation (Chorale: 'Almighty Father') Gloria Tibi, Credo

Listen to the Street Chorus questioning their own faith and the voice of authority:

Tracks:

'Easy' 'I don't Know' 'Half of the People' 'God Said'

Compare and contrast the different musical styles, language and effects of the traditional Mass and the interruptions of the Street Chorus.

The journey of the Celebrant throughout the piece

Listen to the character journey of the Celebrant as he moves through hope, praise, despair and resolution, using excerpts from the following pieces:

Simple Song
Gloria tibi
Credo
Our Father
Agnus Dei
Things Get Broken
Mass: Pax: Communion "secret song"

For both listening activities think about how the composer has used different voices, genres, juxtapositions and harmonisations of styles to create the piece. How effective is this mixture, and why?

Listening Guide

Track	Action	Add your description: consider musical style, mood, tempo, dynamics, language
Antiphon: Kyrie Eleison	Pre-recorded 12-tone 'Kyrie Eleison' played over four speakers placed in the corners of the audience.	
Responsory: Alleluia	A jazzy, pre-recorded responsory completes the Devotions before Mass.	
Prefatory Prayers (Kyrie Rondo)	The stage is suddenly flooded with people as a festive Street Chorus enters with marching band to sing the prefatory prayers, joined by the Celebrant and Boys' Choir.	
In nomine Patris	The Celebrant recites 'In the name of the Father' and a third pre-recorded tape features the Choir and Boys' Choir repeating the incantation as the Acolytes enter, carrying ritual objects, and the Choir files into the pews and sits.	
Prayer for the Congregation (Chorale: 'Almighty Father')	A Prayer for the Congregation is sung by the Choir in a quiet chorale.	
Epiphany	Pre-recorded instrumental	
Confiteor	The Confession begins with an agitated 'Confeitor' sung by the Choir.	
Trope: 'I Don't Know'	The service is interrupted by the first trope, accompanied by rock band, in which a Street Singer questions the value of confession.	
Trope: 'Easy'	The service is interrupted by the second trope, accompanied by rock band, in which a Street Singer again questions the value of confession.	
Meditation no. 1	The Celebrant offers absolution and invites the congregation to pray; an orchestral interlude offers time for reflection.	
Gloria tibi	A group of boys rush up to the Celebrant with bongo drums and sing an exultant 'Gloria Tibi.'	
Trope: 'Half of the People'	The Street Chorus responds with a trope, questioning the relevance of the Church in the midst of so many lost souls.	
Trope: 'Thank You'	In the next trope, a soprano sings longingly of a former time when she felt gratitude toward God. The Street Chorus starts to reassert their cynicism.	
Meditation no. 2	The Celebrant again invites them to pray, and all are silent during an instrumental meditation.	
Epistle: 'The Word of the Lord'	In the Epistle, the Celebrant reads a Bible passage, followed by contemporary letters read by congregants. Together, they reflect on the notion that the powerful may imprison dissenters, but they 'cannot imprison the Word of the Lord.'	
Gospel-Sermon: 'God Said'	A Preacher and the Street Chorus parody the Creation story and contemporary human beings who distort God's commands to justify their own selfish needs and desires. They halt their dance when the Celebrant reappears, now even more elaborately robed.	

Track	Action	Add your description: consider musical style, mood, tempo, dynamics, language
Credo	A recording of the Choir singing a dispassionate, mechanical recitation of the Credo (I believe).	
Trope: 'Non Credo'	The Credo is interrupted by the Street Chorus singing a series of tropes expressing their sense that God is absent from the world and has no understanding of them. The men vent their anger that God could choose when to live and die, but that they have no choice ('Non Credo').	
Trope: 'Hurry'	A woman implores Jesus to hurry and come again as he said he would.	
Trope: 'World Without End'	Another woman sings of the world falling apart.	
Trope: 'I Believe in God'	Finally, an angry rock singer gives up on a seemingly absent God and instead, puts his faith in music.	
Meditation no. 3: De profundis, part 1	The Celebrant resumes control of the service by imploring everyone to pray. The Choir sings a supplication to God in a setting of Psalm 130, as altar boys bring the Celebrant the vessels for Communion.	
Offertory: De profundis, part 2	For the Offertory, the Boys' Choir and Choir complete the psalm, singing of God's kindness and redemption, as the Celebrant blesses the sacred Communion objects. He exits, and the ensemble dance around the holy objects with fetishistic passion.	
The Lord's Prayer, Our Father	The Celebrant re-enters wearing a cope, and the ensemble backs off in silence and exits. Alone, the Celebrant recites the Lord's Prayer a capella, without accompaniment.	
Trope: 'I Go On'	The Celebrant sings hauntingly of persevering through times of trouble and doubt. Two altar boys assist him in the washing and drying of his hands, and he rings the Sanctus Bell.	
Sanctus	The Boys' Choir rush on stage singing, to which the Celebrant, Choir and Street Chorus join in, singing in English, Latin and Hebrew.	
Agnus Dei	As the Celebrant tries to consecrate the bread and wine for the Eucharist, the Street Chorus interrupts, singing the 'Agnus Dei' and becoming fixated on the phrase, 'Dona nobis pacem' ('Grant us peace'). They take over the service, singing a full-blown rock-blues protest song, violently demanding peace, joined by the Choir and instrumentalists. The Celebrant tries to continue with the Eucharist but finally the anarchy is too much for him to bear; at the climax of their protest, he hurls the raised sacraments to the floor, breaking the Chalice and Monstrance. There is a stunned silence, and all but the Celebrant fall to the ground, petrified.	
Fraction: 'Things Get Broken'	In an extended aria, the Celebrant breaks down completely, scorning his beliefs, defiling the altar, and stripping himself of his vestments. He berates the congregation for their silence and inability to act without him, parodying back to them the 'crying and complaining' of their tropes. Exhausted and embittered, he relinquishes his sacred office and leaves.	
Pax: Communion ('Secret Songs')	After a sustained silence, a flute is heard, followed by the pure and innocent sound of a boy soprano, intoning the earlier 'Simple Song' of the Celebrant. One by one, the congregants discover a renewed sense of faith and join the boy's song, embracing one another. Gradually, the Street Chorus, Choir, and instrumentalists all join in and pass the peace throughout the ensemble. Finally, the Celebrant reappears, dressed simply as at the beginning, and joins the boy in a canon, reminded of the simple joy of gathering together in praise. The entire company reprises the lush chorale 'Almighty Father,' asking for God's benediction, as the Boy's Choir passes the peace to the audience. After all of the discord, the chorale ends with a unison 'Amen'	
The Mass is ended go in peace	The Mass concludes with the line, 'The Mass is ended; go in peace.'	

Mood of the Nation:

Politics, Power, Protest



Mass was first performed in 1971 and reflected the mood of the American nation at the time following a crisis of faith in the leadership of the country.

Key facts:

1955 –1975	Vietnam War. Americans were called up for conscription via a lottery system. People felt powerless in the face of a war they did not necessarily always agree with.	May 1970	Kent State shootings. students were shot dead and nine injured by Ohio National Guard.
Nov 1963	President John F Kennedy was assassinated. For many, Kennedy held the hopes of the American nation; his death left the country shocked.	By the late 1960s, the country had become polarized over US involvement in the Vietnam War. A powerful anti-war movement swept the nation. Young people felt powerless over conscription and violence against their protests as in the Kent state shooting of 1970. A restless youth culture hungered for a trustworthy government and for spiritual authority that reflected their values. MASS gave them a voice. (Quote from leonardbernstein.com)	
April 1968	Assassination of Martin Luther King, Civil Rights leader who advocated non-violent activism.		



In the late 1960s, there was a great questioning and mistrust of authority; a feeling that the best had gone before. In the United States when John F Kennedy died, there was a terrible sense of losing leadership of the kind that one needed, and instead being left with people whose intentions you felt were suspect. We have a situation at the moment where young people, in particular, feel as if the establishment has let them down, and that rather than safeguarding the future, it has stocked its own treasure chest. You can debate the truth of this, but the fact is that it's what people feel. There are frightening schisms emerging all over the world. MASS is about the desperate desire for a simple solution to disharmony.

At the very beginning of the piece, the celebrant declares, 'Sing God a simple song' but in a way, there's no simple song to sing. In the end, we need great leadership, but great leadership has to understand that it can't be tyrannical or entitled; it has to share responsibility with everyone. I think there is an existential crisis at the moment in America. If you're going to be the 'leader of the free world' you have to be able to say that your values can stand scrutiny.

**Interview with Southbank Centre's Artistic Director
Jude Kelly, director of MASS**

Activities

Research on protest:

Split your class into two or more groups.

- Group 1: Research protests that were happening in 1960s/ 1970s America (think about civil rights, women's rights, speeches from Martin Luther King, Kent State shootings in the 1970s). Ask your students to think about who the protests were aimed at and if they were effective.
- Group 2: Research protests in America and the UK now – what issues are the subject of protests today? Name some recent campaigns, marches and rallies. Ask your students to think about what the protests are trying to achieve, who they are aimed at and if they are effective.
- Ask the groups to present back to each other and have a class discussion about similarities and differences between the protests of the 1960s and 70s and the present day.
- Group class discussion: what makes an effective protest? How do we effect the decisions leaders are making in our country?
- Ask your students to explore what changes they would like to make in society and how they could make these opinions heard by the authorities.

Music Activity

In groups, ask students to devise their own version of MASS.

- What musicians are politically active today? Find some samples of their music.
- What are the different styles of music people are listening to today? Whose voices do they represent in society?
- Which authority figures could you put in the place of the Celebrant in your version of MASS? What style of music would they use and which singer could you imagine in this role?
- What style of music would the street chorus use in your version of MASS? Which artists use this style?
- How might the two styles of music find harmony in the end?

Composition activity

- Using inspiration from the piece and working in small groups choose to either write a protest song or a song of resolution and harmony.
- For groups working on protest songs, think about a cause that you all agree on and how you could best convey your message musically and lyrically.
- For groups working on a song of resolution and harmony, think about the sounds of the two opposing sides and how you might resolve to bring them together in harmony.



Curriculum links

Music KS3

Subject aims and learning outcomes

- perform, listen to, review and evaluate music across a range of historical periods, genres, styles and traditions, including the works of the great composers and musicians
- listen with increasing discrimination to a wide range of music from great composers and musicians to develop a deepening understanding of the music that they perform and to which they listen, and its history.

Music KS4

Subject aims and learning outcomes

- engage actively in the process of music study
- broaden musical experience and interests, develop imagination and foster creativity
- develop awareness of a variety of instruments, styles and approaches to performing and composing
- recognise contrasting genres, styles and traditions of music, and develop some awareness of musical chronology
- develop as effective and independent learners with enquiring minds
- engage with and appreciate the diverse heritage of music, in order to promote personal, social, intellectual and cultural development

Musical contexts

- the effect of purpose and intention (e.g. of the composer, performer, commissioner) on how music is created, developed and performed in different historical, social and cultural contexts
- the effect of audience, time and place (e.g. venue, occasion) on how music is created, developed and performed in different historical, social and cultural contexts

Compose

- make use of musical elements, techniques and resources to create and develop musical ideas with technical control and coherence; freely as the composer chooses, and responding to a brief or commission supplied by others
- compose music that develops musical ideas, uses conventions, and explores the potential of musical structures and resources

Appraise

- Analyse and evaluate music in aural and/or written form, using knowledge and understanding of musical elements, musical contexts and musical language to make critical judgements about repertoire within the Areas of Study
- use knowledge and understanding of musical elements, musical contexts and musical language to analyse unfamiliar music (i.e. individual pieces of music that have not been stipulated within the specification)
- make critical judgements about music, using appropriate musical vocabulary
- formulate critical judgements, which will be achieved by attentive listening (rather than just hearing) and aural perception

Musical elements

Teachers working with a score can use MASS to look at musical elements in particular:

- texture; how musical lines (parts) fit together including simple textural combinations (e.g. unison, chordal and solo)
- tempo, metre and rhythm including pulse, simple time, compound time, and basic rhythmic devices (e.g. dotted rhythms)

Resource pack produced by Southbank Centre's Learning team. Email schools@southbankcentre.co.uk

Credit: Kate Molleson - Programme Notes on MASS

Interviews - Southbank Centre creative team with Jude Kelly and Marin Alsop

Quotes and sections reference from: leonardbernstein.com/works/view/12/mass-a-theatre-piece-for-singers-players-and-dancers