

**SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
A JACOBS MASTERWORKS CONCERT
Steven Sloane, conductor**

November 16 and 17, 2018

NOAM SHERIFF *Lenny (United States Premiere)*

AARON COPLAND *Suite from Appalachian Spring*
Very slowly
Allegro
Moderato: The Bride and her Intended
Fast: The Revivalist and his Flock
Allegro: Solo Dance of the Bride
Meno mosso
Doppio movimento: Variations on a Shaker Hymn
Moderato: Coda

CHARLES IVES *The Unanswered Question*

INTERMISSION

LEONARD BERNSTEIN *Symphony No. 2: The Age of Anxiety*
The Prologue
The Seven Ages
The Seven Stages
The Dirge
The Masque
The Epilogue
Orli Shaham, piano

BERNSTEIN AT 100: A CENTENNIAL NOTE

Leonard Bernstein would have turned 100 this year (how is that possible?), and the San Diego Symphony continues its celebration of his life and career begun last April with a program of music by Bernstein and others closely associated with him. This concert opens with, in its American premiere, the final work of Noam Sheriff, who worked with Bernstein in Israel. It continues with music by one of Bernstein's closest friends, Aaron Copland, and by Charles Ives, whom Bernstein called "The George Washington and Abraham Lincoln of our music." (It was Bernstein who premiered Ives' Second Symphony in 1951, half a century after it was written.) And it concludes with music by Bernstein himself: his great – and too seldom-heard – Second Symphony. Its subtitle, *The Age of Anxiety*, announces a theme that would drive much of Bernstein's music: the plight of humankind in a difficult century.

***Lenny* (United States Premiere)**

NOAM SHERIFF

Born January 7, 1935, Tel Aviv

Died August 25, 2018, Netanya

Noam Sheriff, one of the most respected musical figures in Israel, passed away this last August at the age of 83. He studied composition with Paul Ben-Haim and Boris Blocher and conducting with Igor Markevitch, and he made his career as composer, conductor and teacher. As a composer, Sheriff is best known for his large-scale works for vocal soloists, chorus and orchestra that make use of traditional Jewish music. He also composed operas, ballets, works for chamber orchestra, chamber music and vocal music. As a conductor, he was music director of the Israel Chamber Orchestra and Haifa Symphony Orchestra, and – beginning in 1990 – he taught at the Rubin Academy Music in Tel Aviv, serving as its director from 1998 to 2000.

Sheriff achieved fame as a 22-year-old when Leonard Bernstein led his *Festival Prelude* at the opening of the Mann Auditorium in Jerusalem, and Bernstein would remain an important figure for Sheriff across his entire career. (In a remarkable coincidence, Sheriff died on what would have been Bernstein's 100th birthday.) In his introductory note for *Lenny*, his last completed work, Sheriff explained his connection to Bernstein:

Lenny is an orchestral work in which I try to describe the personality of the incomparable Leonard Bernstein. *Lenny*'s legacy still shines in the firmament of music. Renaissance man, flamboyant and aristocratic – a man of the people and everything one could aspire to as a musician. There is not another Leonard Bernstein.

In October 1957, Leonard Bernstein premiered my *Akdamot Le'Moed* (*Festival Prelude*) at the Israel Philharmonic Mann Auditorium inauguration in Tel-Aviv. It was

the first time ever that a work of mine was publicly performed and I became a known composer overnight (I was 22 at the time). During the rehearsals, Leonard Bernstein did not ask me anything about my music – he knew my score by heart. He chose the piece himself from a multitude of scores presented to him at an anonymous competition. The only thing he told me was “Noam I know your music and I know how to play it.”

Leonard Bernstein or “Lenny” as many called him is no longer with us. More than a mentor, Lenny was a close friend. If he were here, I would have told him “Lenny, I know your music, I know how to perform it, and I know how to draw your portrait in sound.” This short work is in the lighter vein and makes for rather easy listening but when you delve into it, you will find many things Lenny cherished and loved throughout his life. Blessed be his memory.

-Noam

Sheriff

Suite from *Appalachian Spring* [full orchestra version]

AARON COPLAND

Born November 14, 1900, Brooklyn

Died December 2, 1990, North Tarrytown, NY

Aaron Copland’s *Appalachian Spring* has become such a classic that it is surprising to learn that this ballet took shape rather haphazardly. Copland and Martha Graham had long wanted to work together before that opportunity came in 1942 when music patron Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge commissioned three new dance works from Graham and gave the choreographer her choice of composers. One of those Graham chose was Copland, and they set to work. But their plans were unclear. It was wartime and Graham wanted a specifically American subject, but her initial thought of something that would include spoken text, an Indian girl, and the Civil War did not appeal to Copland. And so the composer went ahead with only a general sense of Graham’s evolving scenarios.

Copland began composition in June 1943 in Hollywood, where he was working on a film score, and completed the ballet the following summer in Cambridge, while teaching at Harvard; the orchestration was completed in Mexico. Graham was delighted with Copland’s music and adapted her choreography to fit his score. (She in fact chose the title *Appalachian Spring* just weeks before the first performance, taking it from Hart Crane’s poem *The Bridge*). For his part,

Copland conceived this music specifically for Martha Graham rather than for her constantly-evolving plot-lines: “When I wrote *Appalachian Spring*, I was thinking primarily about Martha and her unique choreographic style, which I knew well. Nobody else seems quite like Martha: she’s so proud, so very much herself. And she’s unquestionably very American: there something prim and restrained, simple yet strong, about her which one tends to think of as American.” Copland’s working title for this music was simply “Ballet for Martha” (and it still says that on the score’s title page).

The premiere, at the Library of Congress in Washington on October 30, 1944, was a great success, and Copland’s score was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the New York Music Critics Circle Award the following year. Because the pit at the premiere was so small, Copland originally scored *Appalachian Spring* for an ensemble of only 13 instruments: three woodwinds (flute, clarinet, bassoon), double string quartet, contrabass and piano. In the spring of 1945, he arranged a suite from the ballet for full symphony orchestra, deleting about eight minutes from the original ballet; the version heard at these performances is a 2016 revision of that suite requested by the Copland Fund (see end-note).

A note in the score outlines the subject of *Appalachian Spring* as Graham and Copland finally evolved it: the ballet tells of “a pioneer celebration in spring around a newly-built farmhouse in the Pennsylvania hills in the early part of the last century. The bride-to-be and the young farmer-husband enact the emotions, joyful and apprehensive, their new domestic partnership invites. An older neighbor suggests now and then the rocky confidence of experience. A revivalist and his followers remind the new householders of the strange and terrible aspects of human fate. At the end the couple are left quiet and strong in their new house.”

This scenario is rather simple, but the story is timeless, and Copland’s wonderful music – glowing, fresh, strong – catches its mood perfectly. The action is easily followed. The opening section, which introduces the characters one by one, outlines the main theme of the ballet – a simple rising-and-falling shape – within a quiet haze of sound, and out of this bursts the general gathering: Copland portrays this with a jubilant A-Major explosion that suggests country fiddling. A hopping little episode for woodwinds is the dance of the Bride and her Intended, who look forward to their life together (there is a dark interlude here – not all of life will be happy). Suddenly the revivalist and his flock appear and help celebrate the wedding with a barn dance. The Solo Dance of the Bride, marked *Presto*, is her attempt to convey her complex feelings on

this day, and this leads to one of the most striking moments in *Appalachian Spring*: Copland has a solo clarinet sing the Shaker melody “’Tis the Gift To Be Simple,” and there follow five variations, each a vision of the married couple’s life together. The last is stamped out triumphantly, and then, over prayer-like music from the strings, the Bride goes to take her place among her neighbors. The young couple is left together, “quiet and strong” as the ballet fades into silence on the music from the very beginning.

The Unanswered Question

CHARLES IVES

Born October 20, 1874, Danbury, CT

Died May 19, 1954, New York City

Ives led one of those double lives that seem quintessentially American. In his workday routine, he was a shrewd Yankee businessman (at the time of his retirement, Ives & Myrick was the largest insurance firm in the country), but the private Ives was a different person altogether, a visionary artist who created soundscapes never before imagined. And *The Unanswered Question* is one of his most original (and pleasing) creations.

In the summer of 1906, the 32-year-old Ives was living in an apartment that looked out over Central Park and working for the Mutual Insurance Company. That summer, he sketched two brief works that he at first regarded as companion-pieces, though he later separated them. One of these, scored for orchestra, would eventually become *Central Park in the Dark*, while the other, written for much smaller forces, would become *The Unanswered Question*. Ives sketched this music in 1906, but he was not in a hurry to finish it. He set the score aside for a quarter of a century, came back to it in the 1930s, revised it slightly, and published it in 1940.

The Unanswered Question is visionary music. Ives conceived it on three separate musical planes – this music is performed by three different groups of instruments that are separated physically, play entirely different music, and seem at first to have nothing to do with each other. The first is a body of strings, whose music is floating, serene, ethereal – their music proceeds as if unaware that anything else is happening onstage. There is next a solitary trumpet, which intones the same questioning phrase six times. And finally there is a quartet of flutes, who form the one active (or reactive) part of this music. The flutes seem to mull over the trumpet’s challenge, dispute among themselves and grow more agitated as they do. In this strange musical

landscape, the quartet of flutes shows us ourselves in ways that are provocative, amusing and sometimes uncomfortable.

The Unanswered Question has become Ives' most frequently-performed work. Somehow this gentle music – built on the intersection of three completely different musical worlds – touches a deeply responsive chord in audiences. Ives himself gave *The Unanswered Question* two subtitles – “A Contemplation of a Serious Matter” and “A Cosmic Landscape” – and in a note in the score he talked about his intentions in this music:

The strings play *ppp* throughout with no change in tempo. They are to represent “The Silences of the Druids – Who Know, See and Hear Nothing.” The trumpet intones “The Perennial Question of Existence” and states it in the same tone of voice each time. But the hunt for “The Invisible Answer,” undertaken by the flutes and other human beings, becomes gradually more active, faster and louder through an *animando* to a *con fuoco*. This part need not be played in the exact time position indicated. It is played in somewhat of an impromptu way; if there be no conductor, one of the flute players may direct their playing. “The Fighting Answerers,” as the time goes on, and after a “secret conference,” seem to realize a futility, and begin to mock “The Question” – the strife is over for the moment. After they disappear, “The Question” is asked for the last time, and “The Silences” are heard beyond in “Undisturbed Solitude.”

Symphony No. 2: *The Age of Anxiety*

LEONARD BERNSTEIN

Born August 25, 1918, Lawrence, MA

Died October 14, 1990, NYC

W.H. Auden published *The Age of Anxiety* in 1947, and it was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry the following year. This 80-page poem, which Auden described as a “baroque eclogue,” details a night shared jointly by a woman and three men in wartime New York City. (An “eclogue” was originally a pastoral, but Auden uses it in the sense of its being an extended conversation in verse). The four characters meet in a bar, discuss their shared search for meaning in a world devoid of faith, and go on to the woman’s apartment for an all-night party and continuing discussion. The poem ends at dawn as two of the characters come to an acceptance of faith.

Leonard Bernstein read the poem when it appeared and was immediately in its thrall, explaining that “The essential line of the poem (and of the music) is the record of our difficult and problematical search for faith.” The search for faith and meaning would be a consuming theme for Bernstein throughout his life and would shape many of his subsequent works, including the *Kaddish* Symphony and the Mass. Bernstein called Auden’s poem “one of the most shattering examples of pure virtuosity in the history of the English language” and resolved to write a piece of music inspired by it. But the composition of that music proved difficult. In the years following World War II Bernstein was a *wunderkind* conductor in demand all over the world, and he maintained a frenetic schedule conducting orchestras in Palestine, Europe and the United States. In a note in the score, Bernstein says that *The Age of Anxiety* was composed in “Taos, in Philadelphia, in Richmond, Mass., in Tel Aviv, in planes, in hotel lobbies, and finally... in Boston.” As usual, Bernstein worked right up to the last minute, completing the orchestration on March 20, 1949, only 19 days before the premiere on April 8, 1949. On that occasion, Serge Koussevitzky led the Boston Symphony Orchestra, with the 30-year-old composer as piano soloist. Bernstein dedicated the score “in tribute” to Koussevitzky, who was then completing his quarter-century tenure as music director in Boston.

Bernstein called the new piece *The Age of Anxiety*, but gave it the subtitle “Symphony No. 2 for Piano and Orchestra (after W.H. Auden).” That complexity of titles points to the mixed identity of this music, which is part symphony, part piano concerto and part tone poem. And that mixed identity produces questions: can one understand Bernstein’s *The Age of Anxiety* without knowing Auden’s? What is the relation between the poem and the symphony? Does the symphony “tell” the events of the poem? Bernstein at first insisted that one had to know the poem in order to understand his music, but he later backed away from that statement, realizing that the music could (and *should*) stand by itself. And so the score may be approached in several ways. Those who know Auden’s poem may recognize a relation between poem and music (though Auden himself felt that such connections were “rather distant”). Those who don’t know the poem may still take pleasure in the music itself: in the seriousness of its topic, in the verve of the writing (particularly for the piano, which careens stylistically between jazz and what Bernstein himself described as a “Brahmsian romanticism”) and in the drama of its six movements. Bernstein confessed that he was “willing to plead guilty” to the charge of “theatricality” in this score, saying that he had “a deep suspicion that every work I write, for

whatever medium, is really theater music in some way..." But the music does not "tell" the events of Auden's poem, and despite many evocative moments that *seem* to describe events, it is better to understand *The Age of Anxiety* as Bernstein's reaction to reading Auden's poem than as the effort to reproduce it in sound.

And yet the parallels are intriguing. The structure of the symphony is very close to that of the poem: Bernstein kept Auden's division into two parts, each consisting of three scenes, and there are themes that seem to stand for each of the four characters and the topics of their discussions. In the brief *Prologue*, the characters are introduced and begin their conversation. A pair of quiet clarinets outline what will be the fundamental theme of the entire work, and a long descending scale from solo flute draws us "into the realm of the unconscious, where most of the poem takes place." The solo piano's noble version of the opening theme introduces *The Seven Ages*, which will be a series of seven variations for piano and orchestra as the characters discuss life. Once again, a long descending scale (this time in the piano) leads to the opening of *The Seven Stages*. Here a powerful theme for English horn and violas is punctuated by fierce octaves from the piano, and a further set of seven variations follows as the characters embark on what the composer described as a "dream-odyssey." The variations grow more animated, and Part One concludes with what Bernstein called "a hectic, though indecisive, close."

Part Two begins with *The Dirge*, which takes place as the four take a cab to the girl's apartment; along the way, they lament the loss of God (here called "the colossal Dad") who can supply order and take responsibility. The music begins as the piano unfolds a twelve-tone theme, perhaps suggestive of a lack of order or of any controlling hierarchy; this in turn is answered by fierce dissonances from the orchestra. The piano tries to restore order with a simple melody marked *dolce* and even embarks on a spirited cadenza, but the dissonances return to overpower everything, and the music fades into *The Masque*. Here the four party throughout the night at the girl's apartment, and Bernstein writes this as a "jazz" movement, scoring it only for piano, percussion, and basses. This is quite a brilliant movement, and the party breaks up at *The Epilogue*. This begins with fiercely dissonant chords from the whole orchestra, answered by a pianino (a small upright piano) in the orchestra, which blithely tries to continue the party, even as it is surely over. Now a change of mood passes through the orchestra. A solo trumpet, marked *dolcissimo e nobile*, rings out through this disorder, and a strong string chorale recalls the very beginning. A note of hope arrives on a quiet woodwind theme (marked "with purity"), and as

faith is affirmed, the music grows in confidence. In the original 1949 version, Bernstein had excluded the solo piano from this section (except for one triumphant chord) to underline the protagonist's detachment from the events of the symphony. But he came to regret that choice, and in 1965 he revised the final pages of the symphony, giving the solo piano an important role as *The Age of Anxiety* rises to a full-throated statement of faith.

-Program notes by Eric Bromberger

PROGRAM HISTORY by Dr. Melvin G. Goldzband, San Diego Symphony Archivist

These performances of Noam Sheriff's *Lenny* represent the American premiere of this work. Aaron Copland's beautiful Suite from the ballet *Appalachian Spring* was first played here under the direction of Charles Ketcham during the summer season of 1976, and he repeated it two years later. Its tenth outing at these concerts was during the 2015-16 season, when Jahja Ling led the performance. (Incidentally, the Orchestra presented a performance of the original 13-instrument version of *Appalachian Spring* during the "Our American Music" Festival in January 2017, led by UCSD's Steven Schick.)

The current performance of Ives' *The Unanswered Question* is that composition's ninth outing at these concerts. It was initially played here under Robert Shaw's direction during the summer season of 1956, and was most recently heard at these concerts under the direction of Jahja Ling, who led it here in the 2012-13 season.

Leonard Bernstein's Second Symphony, actually a piece for orchestra with extensive piano solo, was first played by the San Diego Symphony under the direction of Robert Shaw during the 1990-91 season. Jeffrey Kahane was the piano soloist. This weekend's performances mark the second presentation of this work by the San Diego Symphony.