

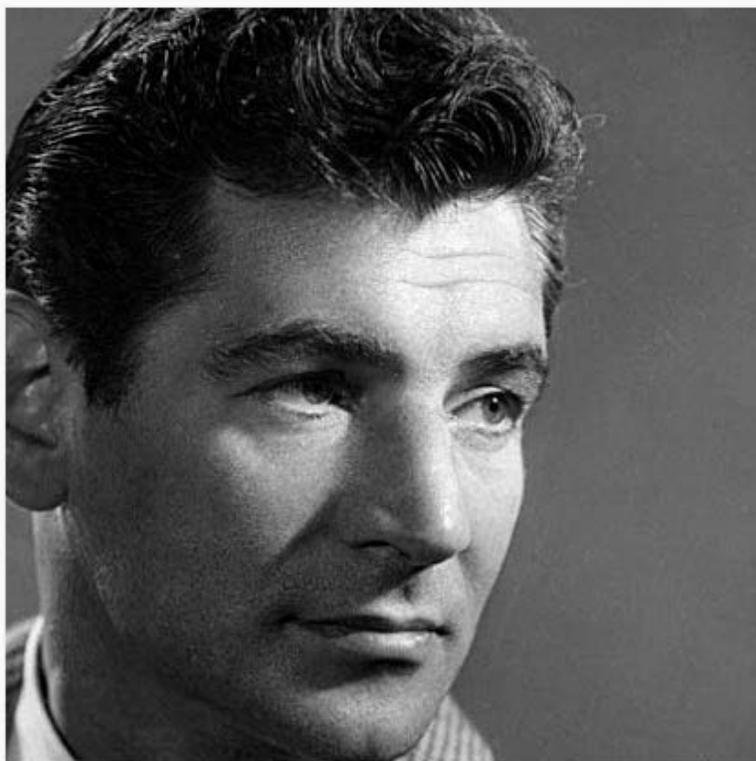
## NMAJH and Curtis celebrate Bernstein's 100th in Philly

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This year marks Leonard Bernstein's 100th birthday, and some Philly arts and culture institutions are teaming up to celebrate his centenary with eye- and ear-opening firsts.

We know Bernstein best for works such as *West Side Story*, but his 1951 opera, *Trouble in Tahiti*, also became an important cultural touchstone. It satirized the outwardly perfect and inwardly tumultuous family life of a suburban couple in 1950s America. But things got darker in the mid-1980s, when Bernstein revisited the same fictional family 30 years later, as a death calls them home, with 1983's *A Quiet Place*.



*A young Leonard Bernstein, in the years following the 'Trouble in Tahiti' premiere. (Photo via Wikimedia Commons.)*

## **Bernstein's last stage work**

In 1980, Bernstein teamed with 30-year-old writer Stephen Wadsworth in their joint inspiration for a sequel to *Trouble in Tahiti*, while they were both grappling with tragic losses in their own lives. The work would combine vernacular speech and music with relatable middle-class woes, performed through a mix of American musical theater and contemporary opera styles that was unusual and polarizing at the time.

*A Quiet Place* premiered in Houston in 1983 as a one-act opera on a double bill with *Trouble in Tahiti*. Original conductor John Mauceri thought Bernstein and Wadsworth could revisit the two works again. They developed a new version of *A Quiet Place* that incorporated *Trouble in Tahiti*, creating one opera with the family's complete arc, alternating between past and present and becoming a map of a changing U.S. culture from the 1950s to the '80s.

The revised *A Quiet Place* debuted successfully at La Scala in 1984 and went on to the Kennedy Center before returning to Europe. It got its New York premiere in 2010 with New York City Opera and is enjoying a resurgence of interest now, with the growing trend for performances incorporating multiple genres.

“It sounds like no other work by me or by anybody else I know of,” [Bernstein said](#) of his only full-length opera and final stage work. “It has a special language and sound all its own. The American language has never been treated in this particular way before.”

## **‘A Quiet Place’ in Philly**

Now, a new chamber adaption of Bernstein's original music by Garth Edwin Sunderland gets its U.S. premiere in Philly, with [three performances](#) at the Kimmel's Perelman Center (March 7, 9, and 11). The Curtis Opera Theatre mounts the show in partnership with the Kimmel, directed by Daniel Fish. Corrado Rovaris, the music director at Opera Philadelphia, conducts members of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra.

And on Thursday, March 1, at 7:30pm, the Curtis Institute, Opera Philadelphia, and the National Museum of American Jewish History (NMAJH) team for a special conversation at NMAJH (Fifth and Market Streets): [Bernstein, Identity, and A Quiet Place](#). Panelists Ivy Weingram (curator of a new Bernstein exhibition coming to NMAJH), Mikael Eliassen (artistic director of the Curtis Opera Theatre and artistic advisor to Opera Philadelphia), Grammy-winning Philadelphia composer Jennifer Higdon, director Daniel Fish, and cast member Ashley Milanese (Curtis Opera Theatre member and Opera Philadelphia Emerging Artist) will discuss how Bernstein's own identity shaped *A Quiet Place*, a significant departure from his better-known works. The event is free and open to the public, but [advance registration](#) is required.

## **The Power of Music**

Finally, local Bernstein fans can really go in depth with the first large-scale museum exhibition on the 20th-century musical giant's life, Jewish identity, and social activism. “Visitors will find

an individual who expressed the restlessness, anxiety, fear, and hope of an American Jew living through World War II and the Holocaust, Vietnam, and turbulent social change,” says NMAJH.

[Leonard Bernstein: The Power of Music](#), running March 16 through September 2, explores Bernstein’s “Jewish identity and social activism in the context of his position as an American conductor and his works as a composer.” The show offers interactive multimedia installations and historic artifacts including Bernstein’s piano, an annotated copy of *Romeo and Juliet* used in creating *West Side Story*, and many objects from his personal studio.



*Above: Ivy Weingram, curator of Leonard Bernstein: The Power of Music, will appear on a special panel at NMAJH on March 1. (Photo courtesy of NMAJH.)*