



He may have been a behind-the-scenes collaborator on hit musicals like *West Side Story* and *On the Town*, but Leonard Bernstein is very much the star of the show at the National Museum of American Jewish History's moving exhibit *Leonard Bernstein: The Power of Music*, on view **through Sunday, September 2.**

Part of [Leonard Bernstein at 100](#), the two-year worldwide centennial [celebration](#) of the noted composer and conductor's 100th birthday, the exhibition features nearly 100 historic artifacts — including Bernstein's piano, conducting suit and marked-up scores — alongside family heirlooms, interactive media, original films and photographs that illustrate the life and legacy of “Lenny.”

## **LEONARD BERNSTEIN FAST FACTS**

- *Leonard Bernstein: The Power of Music* runs through September at the National Museum of American Jewish History.
- The exhibit explores the central theme of Bernstein's works: searching for a solution to the 20th-century crisis of faith.
- Highlights include Bernstein's Steinway piano and original short films about some of his greatest works.
- Admission to the exhibit and the museum will be free every Friday afternoon (1-5 p.m.) from April 6 until August 24.

The National Museum of American Jewish History is uniquely positioned to tell this compelling story of a Jewish American icon and artist whose work contains multitudes.



## Exhibition Theme

*Leonard Bernstein: The Power of Music* focuses on how Bernstein’s work (*West Side Story*, *On the Town*, *MASS* and more) was motivated and inspired by the political and social crises of his time — crises that made him reexamine his faith in God, humanity and the government.

The first artifact on display sets up the theme of the exhibition. It’s a letter from Helen Morgan, a high school humanities teacher, who asked Bernstein what he would say is a central theme within his entire body of works. He replied that, if he had to choose, the most significant theme throughout his body of works would be his search for a solution to the 20th-century crisis of faith.

The curators thought deeply about the passionate conductor, educator and musician’s reply to this letter — and conceived the entire exhibit around it.

Using approximately 100 artifacts — some

exhibited for the first time — a fantastic narrative unfolds throughout the exhibition space about how Bernstein’s faith and identity as an American Jew living through World War II, the Holocaust and the Vietnam War influenced his life’s work.

## Exhibition Highlights

The most iconic artifacts featured in the exhibit include Bernstein’s Steinway piano, his conducting suit, an annotated copy of *Romeo and Juliet* that he used to develop *West Side Story*, original scores of music and the program from his Carnegie Hall debut (at age 25!).

Interactive displays include a table topped with intricately engraved blocks where visitors can place one block at a time in a designated spot to project interesting



details about several of Bernstein's original compositions on a screen above. At a listening station, visitors can stop and don headphones to hear one of Bernstein's three symphonies in surround sound

Screening areas throughout the exhibit give visitors the chance to step aside and watch a supercut of performances and parodies of *West Side Story*, an original film about the everlasting impact of *MASS* and a candid compilation of interviews about Bernstein featuring actor Alec Baldwin, musician Wynton Marsalis and many more of his fans and mentees.

Bernstein's Jewish heritage and identity as an American Jew is articulated through many of the artifacts on display, like the mezuzah that hung in his studio and his family's Passover seder plate. A trip Bernstein took to a displaced persons camp in Germany in 1948, where he led an orchestra of Holocaust survivors, is featured prominently in video testimonies.

Bernstein might have never found a solution to the 20th-century crisis of faith, but *Leonard Bernstein: The Power of Music* shows how music helped him with his search for clarity and why this theme was ever-present in — and important to — his work and life.

The interactive called "Samples of Faith" invites further exploration of nine of Bernstein's notable works.



## Special Events

Special events will be held at the museum throughout the duration of the exhibit.

From April 6 until August 24, the museum will offer free admission to its permanent exhibits and *Leonard Bernstein: The Power of Music* on Friday afternoons from 1-5 p.m.

In partnership with The Philadelphia Orchestra and Play On, Philly!, the [Jamie Bernstein Takeover](#) (April 18-22) will feature exclusive programming that provides even more insight into Bernstein's music, career and life.

Leonard Bernstein's daughter, Jamie, will be present to hold a panel discussion and host the cornerstone event, [Late Night with Leonard Bernstein](#), on April 21.

For more about the exhibition and additional centennial celebration events going on throughout Philadelphia, [check here](#) and follow the hashtag #PhillyLovesLenny on social media.

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## *Leonard Bernstein: The Power of Music*

**When:** March 16-September 2 📅

**Where:** National Museum of American Jewish History, 101 S. Independence Mall East 📍

**Cost:** Included with general admission: \$15, adults; \$13, seniors (65 and older) and youth (ages 13-21); free, children 12 and under; free, Friday afternoons from 1-5 p.m. from April 6 to August 24

