

THE INCREDIBLE BERNSTEIN

LEONARD BERNSTEIN'S recent lectures on jazz and on Beethoven's Fifth Symphony have roused as much interest here on radio as they did on television in America, and certainly they demonstrate his ability as a lecturer, ability already known at Brandeis University and Tanglewood Summer Festival. But teaching is just a sideline for Bernstein, who has quite a reputation as a conductor (he was recently appointed co-conductor of the New York Philharmonic), as a pianist (who has given concerto performances at Carnegie Hall), and as a composer of serious and theatrical music.

Although Bernstein has written two symphonies, a work for solo violin, strings and percussion, a clarinet sonata and some songs, it is his theatrical works that are best known. These include the ballets *Fancy Free* and *Facsimile*, incidental words and music for *Peter Pan*, the film score for *On the Waterfront*, and the stage musicals *On the Town*, *Candide*, and *Wonderful Town*.

Wonderful Town is a musical version of the play *My Sister Eileen*, which Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov based on the book by Ruth McKenney. Betty Comden and Adolph Green wrote the new lyrics for the show. Songs from this musical, with the original Broadway cast headed by Rosalind Russell, will be played in *Theatre of Music* from the YAs, 3YZ and 4YZ on Saturday, July 27. Critics have been enthusiastic over Bernstein's work for the stage, finding it the perfect place for his strong sense of rhythm, his musical drama and wit, and his ability to write striking melodies. With less enthusiasm they have commented that he can brilliantly and easily imitate the styles of other composers and eras, from polyphony to jazz, but that he does not yet write like Bernstein. From all indications, this versatility and facility are dominant Bernstein characteristics.

Leonard's father Samuel came to New York from Russia in 1910, but by

the time Leonard was born, in 1918, the family had moved to Boston, where Samuel built up a prosperous business as a beauty parlour supplier. Young Leonard was obviously enthralled by music, but it was not until he was 10 that a piano came into the house, an old one that his Aunt Clara did not want.

Leonard immediately began piano lessons, but they were not his only interest. He was brilliant in almost every subject at school, with a top-tenth record at Boston's tough Latin School, and athletic achievements that were comparable. He went on to Harvard, majoring in music (counterpoint with Arthur Tillingham Merritt, theory with Walter Piston), but his interests again spread right across the academic boards, giving him a strong foundation for his musical tastes. He speaks five foreign languages—German, French, Italian, Spanish and Hebrew.

After Harvard Bernstein auditioned for Fritz Reiner at the Curtis Institute

of Music at Philadelphia, and was taken on as a student in conducting. That year (1940) Serge Koussevitzky took Bernstein to Tanglewood and adopted him as a musical protegee. In 1942 he became assistant to Koussevitzky with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and next year he was assistant to Artur Rodzinski with the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra. That November, Rodzinski went home, while Bruno Walter was guest conductor. When Walter was taken ill, Bernstein had to conduct the performance without rehearsal. It was an unqualified success, and he went on to make guest appearances with other orchestras throughout the United States.

At 27, he was offered the New York City Symphony as his own, and he set about making it into a great orchestra. From both the old and new repertoires he resurrected neglected and exciting works, and before he was 30 he was a big name in U.S. music. Since then he has worked with almost every major symphony orchestra from Pittsburgh to Palestine. He has conducted Italian opera at Milan (*Medea*, by Cherubini, with Maria Callas), Schumann at Munich, and Bartok at Budapest, and always to enthusiastic audiences. As usual, critics have found faults, noticeably in his ballet-style conducting (he has been labelled "The Elvis Presley of the podium"), but none could deny his



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virtuosity. He is the first U.S.-born conductor with a major international reputation.

Meanwhile, he has found time to write, to teach, to give a rare piano concerto performance, to cope with the various public duties of a celebrity, and to manage a home life. In 1951 he married a pretty Chilean actress, Felicia Montealegre, and they have two children, a daughter of five and son of two. In spite of this appearance of settling down, Bernstein has not noticeably slowed down. He seems to feel that he is still living the overture, as he told *Time* magazine. "In the next year or two, when I grow up, I'll have to decide what to do. It used to come so easy. Now I get tired."

His work certainly has at times seemed to come easy. He writes music in taxis, aeroplanes, railway stations and hotel foyers. He studies piles of scores in a couple of days. He is a phenomenal extrovert, liking to be in the centre of things. Bernstein has a formidable ability to put his life in order and his work in form, and this enables him to get through an astounding amount of work.

Now, although beginning to "get tired," he still does not want to limit his activities. He has said, "I don't want to give in and settle for some speciality. It would bore me to death. I want to conduct. I want to play the piano. I want to write music for Broadway and Hollywood. I want to write symphonic music. I want to keep on trying to be, in the fullest sense of that wonderful word, a musician. I also want to teach. I want to write books and poetry. And I think I can, and still do justice to them all. But I can't do them all at once. I have to learn to do one at a time, and to give it all my strength until I've done it right."

What this means Bernstein knows only too well. One recent morning as he staggered to bed at 3.0 a.m., he surveyed the next day's schedule and cried in despair, "My God! Who do I think I am—everybody?"

WALKING THE GAUNTLET

IT takes great technical skill to fly an aircraft at 500 miles an hour, but should a mishap occur and the pilot find himself stranded in hostile territory, he may lack the more primitive know-how necessary to stay alive. This point is made by Flight Lieutenant Peter Robinson in *Come Back Alive*, a documentary programme about the first R.N.Z.A.F. survival course, staged recently in Canterbury. Station 3YA sent along a team headed by Allan Sleeman to cover the operation on the spot, and their report will be heard by YA and 4YZ listeners at 9.30 a.m. on Sunday, July 28.

For two weeks at the school at Wigram, Flight Lieutenant Robinson, who flew flying-boats during World War II, and Sergeant Len Restall, ex-R.A.F., trained the 14 jet pilots who were to take part in the course. They learned how to kill a rabbit on the run, to set a snare, light a fire without matches, and make rations for a single meal last as long as seven days. After lectures came a 48-hour daylight trial, then finally the pilots were dropped into unfamiliar "hostile" territory. Actually this territory was 40 miles west of Christchurch in the Hororata farming district,

and at 4.0 a.m., in pouring rain three vehicles treaded their way along a gravel road, stopping every mile to drop a group of airmen.

In pairs, with one group of three, the airmen shouldered their packs and tramped off into the country north of the Rakaia River. For the next 48 hours they were on their own, and

counting only on their parachutes for shelter, they had to cover the 24 miles to the safety zone at West Melton. The route was north-west between the Rakaia and Waimakariri Rivers, over flat land broken only by hedges and pine trees. Warmly dressed beneath green overalls, the airmen had to live off the land and avoid capture, but were permitted to lie up in farm buildings if they dared risk detection by doing so. However,



there were two houses run by the "underground movement," and anyone who managed to locate them could snatch something to eat, and a few hours' sleep in safety.

Leaving the Hororata Road, the remaining hour or two of darkness was used to find a suitable place to lie up during the day, secure from detection by ground patrols or searching aircraft. Then they had to find out where they were. Most of the aircrew were strangers to Canterbury, and they were deliberately not informed where they had been dropped. On a map of scale eight miles to the inch they had to locate their position, then travelling only by night, head towards West Melton.

Men taking part in the course were instructed in parachute handling, water survival and swimming in oil, making identification signals, and dinghy drills (in Lyttelton Harbour). On their cross-country hike they were wearing overalls instead of flying kit, but carried a parachute, rubber sheet, and a 4 lb. survival kit—no more than they would have had if their plane had actually made a forced landing.

LEFT: Survival Course trainees hide out during the hours of daylight