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Bernstein's Lamentation Compared to Classical Hebrew Musical Tradition

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BERNSTEIN'S "LAMENTATION" COMPARED TO
CLASSICAL HEBREW MUSICAL TRADITION

A Covering Paper
Presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
Central Washington State College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Adele Jean Blankenship
May 1971

An integral part of this thesis (covering paper) is a tape recording of a graduate recital performed on April 6, 1971, as part of the requirements for the completion of the thesis.

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

Lynn B. Dupin, COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Joseph S. Haruda

John DeMerchant

CENTRAL WASHINGTON STATE COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

presents in

Graduate Recital

ADELE BLANKENSHIP, Mezzo-Soprano

accompanied by MARGARET NEUFELD

assisted by Guest Artists LYNN HOWARD, Tenor

*RAYMOND WHEELER, Clarinet

PROGRAM

I
Warnung Mozart
(1756-1791)
Parto, parto (LA CLEMENZA DI TITO) Mozart
Clarinet Obligato, Raymond Wheeler

II
Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen Mahler
(1860-1911)
Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht
Ging heut Morgen uber's Feld
Ich hab' ein gluhend Messer
Die zwei blauen Augen

INTERMISSION

III
Liber scriptus (REQUIEM) Verdi
(1813-1901)

IV
Chansons de Bilitis Debussy
(1862-1918)
La Flute de Pan
La Chevelure
Le Tombeau des Naiades

V
Duet, Act IV (CARMEN) Bizet
(1838-1875)
Carmen — Adele Blankenship
Don Jose — Lynn Howard

VI
Lamentation Bernstein
(1918-)
(Finale, JEREMIAH SYMPHONY)

HERTZ RECITAL HALL

April 6, 1971

8:15 P.M.

**Member of Faculty*

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Music

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. INTRODUCTION.	1
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.	1
DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED	2
Jewish Chant.	2
Mode.	2
Synthetic Mode.	2
Motive.	2
Ashkenazic.	2
Sephardic	3
Cantillation.	3
Concert Style	3
Chord of Omission	3
Chord of Addition	3
Mirror Effect	3
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.	3
2. A COMPARISON OF BERNSTEIN'S "LAMENTATION" TO TRADITIONAL JEWISH CHANT	4
INTERVALS	4
MODES	6
MOTIVES	9
INTERPRETATION.	10
HARMONIC STRUCTURE.	11
3. SUMMARY	14
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	16
APPENDIX.	18

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Bernstein was concerned with the world of Hebrew thought and wisdom into which he was thoroughly introduced in his youth. His symphony [Jeremiah] does not follow any fixed program, for the composer's intention is "not of literalness but of emotional quality," . . . (6:242).

Bernstein, the son of Russian-Jewish immigrants, was born and raised in America. He was one of many successive generations of people belonging to the Jewish-Orthodox faith. As these Jewish descendents became democratized and socialized in the American way of life, they began to relinquish Jewish folk customs -- those customs established in the European ghettos.

As a composer, Bernstein makes use of the contemporary musical elements. In the third movement of the Jeremiah Symphony, "Lamentation", he does not, however, completely relinquish his Jewish heritage, but incorporates elements of classical Hebrew musical tradition. As a result of this, the "Lamentation" is a highly creative musical work.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to indicate the differences and similarities between Bernstein's "Lamentation" and the classical Hebrew tradition of music or traditional

Jewish chant, so that a better understanding of the "Lamentation" may take place regarding the music itself and its interpretation.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Jewish Chant

The non-metrical music of ancient times. According to Idelsohn's Jewish Music, the non-metrical chant is referred to as unrhythmical or without time signatures.

Mode

Denotes the selection of tones, arranged in a scale, which form the basic substance of a composition.

Synthetic Mode

Any selection of tones, not adhering to any established modes, which form the basic substance of a composition.

Motive

The briefest intelligible and self-contained fragment of a musical theme or subject. The bar lines of traditional Jewish chant indicate the motives -- not the meter.

Ashkenazic

German people of the Jewish faith who use a specific Hebrew dialect carrying the same name as that of the people.

Sephardic

Spanish people of the Jewish faith who use a specific Hebrew dialect carrying the same name as that of the people.

Cantillation

Chanting in plainsong style, especially that of the Jewish service.

Concert Style

In this paper, referring to a conservative performance of highly emotional music with no freedom for traditional Jewish inflection or improvisation.

Chord of Omission

An incomplete triad with the third usually missing and possible extensions displacing the missing tone.

Chord of Addition

A complete triad with possible extensions.

Mirror Effect

Tones moving in contrary motion to each other.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This paper compares the traditional Jewish chant with that of the sung portions of Bernstein's "Lamentation". A comparison is made with regard to intervals, modes, and motives. A brief analysis is given to the harmonic structure but no attempt is made for a detailed harmonic analysis.

Chapter 2

A COMPARISON OF BERNSTEIN'S "LAMENTATION" TO TRADITIONAL JEWISH CHANT

The Jeremiah Symphony is based on the classical Hebrew tradition of music and the vocabulary of contemporary music. The "Lamentation", third movement of the Jeremiah Symphony, is based on the Book of Lamentations from the Bible -- Chapter I, Verses 1, 2, 3, and 8, Chapter IV, Verses 14 and 15, and Chapter V, Verses 20 and 21.

. . . the "Jeremiah" Symphony represented a turn toward what time has shown to be the true orientation of Bernstein's musical thought -- music based upon or in some way bound up with a literary text, allusion, or idea (2:71).

INTERVALS

The melodic line of Jewish chant consists of intervals encompassing a very limited range. The perfect fifth and fourth are generally the widest intervals found and are used only occasionally in comparison to the common intervals of the major and minor second and minor third.

Example 1. Lam. 3:55-57, Portuguese, meas. 1-5.



Bernstein generally adheres to the traditional

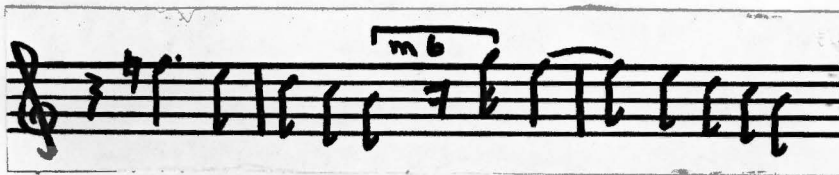
Jewish chant by extensive use of the major and minor second, and frequent use of the minor third and perfect fourth.

Example 2. "Lamentation" 1:1, Bernstein, meas. 6-10.

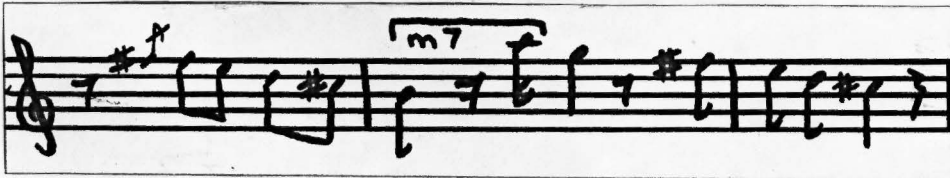


He deviates twice with wider intervals of a minor sixth and minor seventh to heighten the intensity of the written word. This is shown in example three and four below.

Example 3. "Lamentation" 4:14-15, Bernstein, meas. 88-90.



Example 4. "Lamentation" 4:14-15, Bernstein, meas. 92-94.



The limited range intervals, however, are not enough to create the tragic sounds of the "Lamentation". The modes and the motives are the main factors.

. . . it is necessary to familiarize our-

selves with the modes in order to see the practical application of the motives, . . . In the Bible the predominance of the motive is the most outstanding characteristic (8:38-39).

MODES

The traditional mode of Lamentations is based on the scale: d - e - f - g plus g - a - b flat - c. It is the plagal of the first church mode, called the second mode (Hypodorian). This scale expresses what in Hebrew is called histapchuth hannefesh -- the outpouring of the soul. It is used especially for the exhortation of the Prophets, Lamentations, and the Psalms, that is for those emotional texts the contents of which are pleading or fervent (8:50). The hypodorian mode can be seen in the following examples of the Babylonian, Portuguese, Ashkenazic, and Sephardic taken from portions of the Lamentations.

Example 5. Lam. 1:1, Babylonian, meas. 1-3.



Example 6. Lam. 3:55-57, Portuguese, meas. 6-8.



Example 7. Lam. 1:1, Ashkenazic, meas. 1-3.



Example 8. Lam. 5:1-2, Sephardic, mea. 1.



Bernstein is not traditional, regarding modes, in that he has chosen to use the mixolydian mode, in place of the hypodorian, beginning on E: e - f# - g# - a plus b - c# - d - e. As Bernstein proceeds into the following verses and chapters, he hints at several other modes (oriental, double harmonic, and enigmatic) so that he can establish high and low pitches for the various melodic lines.

Example 9. "Lamentation" 1:1, Bernstein, meas. 2-6.

Mixolydian Mode

Example 10. "Lamentation" 1:2, Bernstein, meas. 12-16.

High pitches - modal variety

Example 10 continued.



Example 11. "Lamentation" 1:3, Bernstein, meas. 20-22.

Low pitches - modal variety

Bernstein is more traditional with the motives which are projected from the modes. He maintains the tragic flavor of the "Lamentation" by using the exact literal text, maintaining a non-metrical feeling through changing time signatures, and improvising on the motives of the original Ashkenazic chant. In the following examples, Bernstein's "Lamentation" 1:1 is compared to the original Askenazic Lamentation 1:1. The correlating numbers and brackets above the staves of the examples indicate Bernstein's improvised motives on the original chant.

Example 12. "Lamentation" 1:1, Bernstein, meas. 1-10.

É - cho yosh-vo vo - dod, - Ho

Example 12 continued.

ir ra-bō-si om Ho-y' so k'al-mo-

no! Ra-bō - si va-go-yim, sho-ro

si ba-m'di-nos; Ho-y'so lo - mas,

17-4th lower
ho-y'so lo - mas!

Example 13. Lam. 1:1, Ashkenazic, meas. 1-14.

E-cho yosh-vo vo-dod,

ho-ir rab-bo-si om, hoy-so ke-al-

mo-no rab-bo-si bag-go-yim,

so-ro-si bam-di-nos, hoy-so lo - mas.

MOTIVES

The "bars" in the non-metrical examples do

not mark rhythm, but indicate the motives of the modes. This procedure enables us to grasp the way the motives are employed within the modes (8:39).

In example 13, the motives can be clearly seen as each bar line occurs. The song is to be sung in a non-metrical style and given inflection according to ta'amin (musical notation) of the Bible. The accents of ta'amin will not be explained as only those persons highly skilled in the music of the Jewish faith can interpret them.

Only for those who know the mode and its motives and characteristics do the accents serve their purpose (8:69).

Bernstein is non-traditional in that the motives are not clearly defined as they are in the traditional song. One may see that in the traditional chant, the words are not split as they are in the "Lamentation". Also, by improvising on the traditional motives and applying time signatures and harmonies, Bernstein has rejected use of traditional syntactical order.

INTERPRETATION

By not employing traditional syntactical order and not including ta'amin in the score, interpretation of Bernstein's "Lamentation" would generally not be accepted by those schooled in the traditional Jewish chant style. In the accompanying tape, the first example is of a Bible cantillation. Due to the lack of accompaniment and time signatures, there is definitely more freedom of rhythm as

well as the employment of ta'amin. Upon careful listening, one may notice the slight deviations from the main melodic tones. This is the employment of ta'amin which allows for traditional inflection of sound on the melody. Improvisation on the melody is also employed and is traditional in the singing of any chant.

The second example is that of Jennie Tourel who was the soloist in the premier performance of "Lamentation" with Bernstein. She is restricted to a definite moving rhythm due to established time signatures and accompaniments. Also, the chant is exact with no employment of ta'amin, thus closing the door to any form of traditional inflection or improvisation. There are, however, vocal colors which suggest inner emotion with regard to the text. This style of performance may be interpreted as "concert style".

HARMONIC STRUCTURE

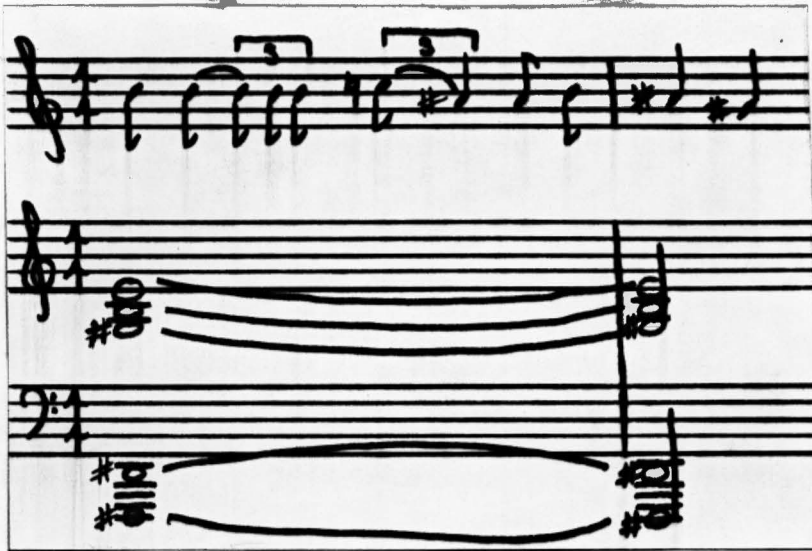
To heighten the intensity of the spoken word, Bernstein uses orchestra to accompany the chant and interpolates the orchestra between sung portions of the "Lamentation". The harmonies are bitonal and are based on the modes of hypodorian, oriental, double harmonic, and enigmatic. In "Lamentation" 1:1, it is interesting to note that the chant is mixolydian on E, but when the harmonies are added the mode becomes hypodorian on F#. The same modal treatment occurs in Chapter 1:8, with pitches beginning one-half step lower.

Example 14. "Lamentation" 1:1, Bernstein, meas. 9-11.

Example 15. "Lamentation" 1:8, Bernstein, meas. 36-38.

In the following chapters and verses of the "Lamentation", sounds of oriental, double harmonic, and enigmatic modes are hinted at in the chant. When bitonal harmonies are added a synthetic mode is produced. The example below is one suggestion of a synthetic mode.

Example 16. "Lamentation" 1:3, Bernstein, meas. 19,20.



In the interpolations, Bernstein uses block harmonies with chords of omission and addition in a mirror effect with a distinct rhythmic flavor of an eighth note followed by a sixteenth rest and sixteenth note.

Example 17. "Lamentation", Bernstein, meas. 40-42.



Bernstein, through the compatible marriage of traditional Jewish musical elements and modern rhythmic and harmonic elements, has shown his creative talents as a composer.

Chapter 3

SUMMARY

Leonard Bernstein, born in America of Jewish-Orthodox parents, became democratized and socialized in the American way of life, thus relinquishing Jewish folk customs. As a composer, he uses contemporary musical elements. However, in one composition, the Jeremiah Symphony, he chose to incorporate classical Hebrew musical tradition with contemporary musical elements. This combination shows up strongly in the third movement, "Lamentation", where the original Ashkenazic text is included from various chapters and verses of the Book of Lamentations from the Bible.

The differences and similarities of classical Hebrew musical tradition and American musical elements may be seen with regard to intervals, modes, and motives.

The intervals are distinctly similar in that both the classical Hebrew chant and Bernstein's "Lamentation" predominantly employs the major and minor second and frequently employs the minor third and perfect fourth. Bernstein deviates only twice with a minor sixth and a minor seventh.

The modes are predominantly dissimilar. The classical Hebrew tradition mainly uses the hypodorian mode for the Lamentations. Bernstein has chosen to use a variety of modes -- mixolydian, hypodorian, oriental, double har-

monic, and enigmatic.

The motives suggest the same tonal flavor as that of the classical Hebrew tradition due to the fact that Bernstein took small portions of the original chants and expanded them through improvisation.

The "Lamentation" should be interpreted in "concert style" as it lacks traditional syntactical order and ta'amin (musical notation) which closes the door to any form of traditional inflection or improvisation with regard to the Jewish chant style. In "concert style", the "Lamentation" may be just as emotional and meaningful if the performer employs vocal colors which reflect the meaning of the text.

The harmonic structure is made up of bitonalities employing the modes of mixolydian, hypodorian, oriental, double harmonic, and enigmatic. When these are mixed together, they form synthetic sounds with the exception of "Lamentation" 1:1. The mixolydian chant, "Lamentation" 1:1, when combined with the bitonal harmonies, becomes hypodorian in sound.

As the orchestra interpolates between the chants, Bernstein uses bitonal block chords of omission and addition in a mirror effect with a distinct rhythmic flavor of an eighth note followed by a sixteenth rest and sixteenth note.

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APPENDIX

TABLE OF MENTIONED MODES

Example 1. Mixolydian Mode.



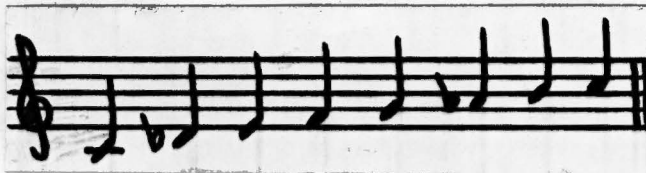
Example 2. Hypodorian Mode.



Example 3. Oriental Mode.



Example 4. Double Harmonic Mode.



Example 5. Enigmatic Mode.

