

Symphonic Dances from WEST SIDE STORY

Notes on the Symphonic Dances.

West Side Story opened on Broadway in September, 1957 to glorious critical and public acclaim. It became a major artistic landmark and proof of a new kind of operatic synthesis that fused complex vocal and instrumental ensembles, ballet, classical and jazz styles, with powerful and ancient tragic themes (love versus hate) played out by streetgangs in urban New York. The Symphonic Dances are a concert suite of nine connected movements that recall the dramatic events and their inspired music. The order of the material is based more on "feel" than on the plot sequence of the show, and the whole thing manages to be both "serious" and "popular." As arranger Sid Ramin wrote (1992), "This suite brings the music of Broadway into the concert hall, orchestrating with symphonic character the music every theater-goer loves." This is a standalone musical work in its own right.

1. Prolog (Allegro moderato): The growing rivalry between two teenage gangs, the Jets and the Sharks.
2. Somewhere (Adagio): In a dream ballet, the two gangs are united in friendship.
3. Scherzo (Vivace e leggiero): In the same dream, the gangs break away from the city walls, suddenly finding themselves in a playful world of space, air and sun.
4. Mambo (Meno presto): In the real world again, the competitive dance at the gym between the two gangs.
5. Cha-cha (Andantino con grazia): The star-crossed lovers, Tony and Maria, see each other for the first time. They dance together.
6. Meeting Scene (Meno mosso): Music accompanies their first words spoken to one another.
7. Cool Fugue (Allegretto): An elaborate dance sequence; Riff leads the Jets in harnessing their impulsive hostility, figuratively "cooling their jets."
8. Rumble (Molto allegro): Climactic gang battle; the two gang leaders, Riff and Bernardo, are killed.
9. Finale (Adagio): Maria's I have a Love develops into a procession that recalls the vision of Somewhere.

Notes on the piano transcription.

The songs from West Side Story are among the most re-interpreted art music of the twentieth century, and a quick internet search turns up dozens of recordings in print (Josh Bell (violin); Richie Cole (sax); Oscar Peterson, Dave Brubeck, Andr Previn (jazz piano); the Falla guitar trio; Buddy Rich and Stan Kenton (big bands); and many more out of print). A few classical pianists have made West Side Story albums (John Bayless' arrangements; the Labeque duo). John Musto made a two-piano arrangement of the Symphonic Dances for the Murray Dranoff two-piano competition (Florida, 1998; Boosey & Hawkes, M-051-26166-6, 2001). The only solo transcription appears to be by the eclectic Swiss pianist, Dag Achatz, at the personal behest of Leonard Bernstein. It is not published in score, but is available on CD (BIS #352, 1994). Unlike Liszt's opera transcriptions (which tend to be virtuosic vehicles) or the "free" fantasy-transformations of Godowsky or Rachmaninoff or Earl Wild, both the Musto and Achatz follow the symphonic score, and are more like sparse pen-and-ink architectural drawings than sprawling impressionist canvases. After all, the Symphonic Dances are already a free metamorphosis of the Broadway show, and are carefully wrought. I recommend that students and lovers of this music consult those scores and recordings. This arrangement follows them pretty closely, as well as the orchestral score and particularly Bernstein's own recording of it. Mary Farbood helped immensely in drafting big sections. It was made for the 2002 Van Cliburn competition for outstanding amateur pianists in Fort Worth, Texas.

The up-to-date version may be found at: <http://www.mike-hawley.com/scores/bernstein/wss.pdf> I have indicated fingerings and pedallings ("u.c."= una corda, "m.p."=middle pedal) in a few key places, and have labelled some of the instrumental voicings to keep their character in mind. Most tempo and expression marks come from the orchestral score. I have laid out the score in a compact format, to contain phrases and sections within line and page breaks. Pianistically, this arrangement is not a "finger breaker," but the minimalist lines lend themselves to very graceful expression and help to render a handsome and emotionally rich concert suite. Knowing the lyrics by heart, and knowing what it takes to get a symphony orchestra to dance, will help bring this music to life. It is my sincere hope that lovers of piano literature will find here an enjoyable, fresh perspective on Bernstein's wonderful West Side Story.

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Symphonic Dances from WEST SIDE STORY

Leonard Bernstein
arranged by: Michael Hawley

www.mike-hawley.com/scores/bernstein/wss.pdf

1 Prolog. (the growing rivalry between the Sharks and the Jets)
Allegro Moderato (q. = 128)

[pizz. and muted brass]

Measures 1-15: Piano introduction. Treble clef, 2/4 time. Dynamics: *p*, *mp*, *p*. Includes first ending bracket and a second ending with a fermata.

Measures 16-28: Solo saxophone entry. Treble clef, 2/4 time. Dynamics: *p*, *mp*. Includes performance instructions: "finger snaps", "with a jazz feel", and "2 1+1 2".

Measures 29-39: String section entry. Treble clef, 2/4 time. Dynamics: *smoothly*. Includes performance instruction: "smoothly".

Measures 40-52: Solo trombones and bassoon + trumpet entry. Treble clef, 2/4 time. Dynamics: *joyously*, *roughly*, *sfz*, *p*. Includes performance instructions: "switch to LH" and "LH".

Measures 53-64: Continuation of the previous section. Treble clef, 2/4 time. Dynamics: *let fade*, *smoothly*, *loco*. Includes performance instruction: "LH".

Measures 65-75: Tutti section. Treble clef, 2/4 time. Dynamics: *f*, *ff*. Includes performance instruction: "[tutti]".

Measures 76-87: Solo oboe, saxophone, and cello + horns entry. Treble clef, 2/4 time. Dynamics: *p*, *ten.*. Includes performance instructions: "[oboe]", "[sax]", "[cello + horns]", and "ten.".

Measures 88-96: Piano, xylophone, and flute entry. Treble clef, 2/4 time. Dynamics: *pp subito*, *G.P.*. Includes performance instructions: "[piano+xylo+flute]" and "G.P.".

97 [strings+winds] *f*

106 [piano+xylo] *pp* *f* *sfz*

116 *q. = q* [tutti] *ff* *molto* *sfz* *fff* G.P. G.P.

129 Scherzando e misterioso (l'istesso tempo) [pno+xylo+picc] *f*

143 [flute] [winds] [piano]

154 *f*

164 [winds] *f* *ff* [strings] *mf*

174 [trombones] [+horns] [+winds+strings] *f*

(8)

185 [piano+xylo] *p* *f* *p*

196 [cello+bass] *f* *f*

206 G.P. [bass+low winds] *f* *dim. molto* *p* 8^{vb}

216 [tutti]

226 *Furioso* *ff*

235 *fff* *loco*

243 [tutti] [police whistle!] [piano+strings] *mf marcato*

253 [harp+vibr] *p* *Adagio* (e=72) (harmonic) (release) *PPP*

3 Scherzo. (in the same dream, the gangs break away from the city walls suddenly finding themselves in a playful world of space, air and sun)

poco accel.

poco piu mosso (q = 96)

Agitato (q = 120)

accel. di piu

319 [celeste+strings] p espr. mf pp [u.c.] [oboe+trumpets] [strings] mp mf f p

accel. (q = 132)

accel al... *8va*

Vivace e leggero (q = 172)

329 mf mp p [flute+oboe] pp [strings] 2 5

grazioso

[pizz]

338 p mf pp mf

finger snaps

348 pp f sub. pp pp f sub.

360 pp mf f ppp

finger snaps

371 pp molto

[pizz]

G.P.

377 p sfz mf f ff

4 Mambo. (in the real world again, the competitive dance at the gym between the two gangs)

Meno presto (q = 132)

385 [tutti] *ff* etc. *sfz*

393 *f* *ff*

403 *f* *ff*

413 *ff*

421 *ff* Mam-bol [SHOUT]

428 [strings] [+piano] *mf* *f*

437 *ff* Mam-bol [SHOUT] *fff*

444 *mf* *f* *ff* *sfz*

2 3 5

Detailed description: This page of a musical score for a piece titled 'Mambo' consists of eight systems of piano accompaniment. Each system contains a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The music is in 2/4 time and features a complex, rhythmic texture with many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *ff* (fortissimo), *f* (forte), *mf* (mezzo-forte), *fff* (fortississimo), and *sfz* (sforzando). Performance instructions include 'tutti' at the beginning, 'etc.' in the first system, and 'Mam-bol [SHOUT]' appearing twice. There are also markings for '2', '3', and '5' at the bottom of the page, likely indicating fingerings or specific rhythmic patterns. The page number '4' is in the top left corner, and the page number '6' is in the bottom right corner.

[piano+winds+strings]

453 *f* *ff*

[pizz.]

This system contains measures 453 to 460. The upper staff features a complex texture of chords and moving lines, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic and reaching fortissimo (*ff*) by measure 458. The lower staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment with a 'pizz.' (pizzicato) marking. The system concludes with three double bar lines.

[brass+xylo] [pizz.] [pizz.] *sfz*

461 *f* *sfz*

[pizz.] *sfz* *piano*

31 32 43

RH

This system contains measures 461 to 465. The upper staff has a 'brass+xylo' marking and includes 'pizz.' markings. The lower staff has a 'RH' (Right Hand) marking. Dynamics range from *f* to *sfz*. Measure numbers 31, 32, and 43 are indicated below the staff. The system ends with a double bar line.

465 *ff* *sfz* *ff* *f*

[piano]

2 4 5 *sfz* 3 3 2 1

[piano+winds+strings]

This system contains measures 466 to 476. The upper staff features a dense chordal texture with dynamics *ff*, *sfz*, *ff*, and *f*. The lower staff has a 'piano' marking and includes measure numbers 2, 4, and 5. A '3' is written above the staff in measure 475. The system ends with a double bar line.

476 *sfz* *sfz*

[trombones]

This system contains measures 477 to 488. The upper staff has a 'trombones' marking and includes *sfz* dynamics. The lower staff continues the accompaniment. The system ends with a double bar line.

489 *sfz*

This system contains measures 489 to 498. The upper staff features a complex texture with a *sfz* dynamic. The lower staff continues the accompaniment. The system ends with a double bar line.

498

This system contains measures 499 to 504. The upper staff features a complex texture. The lower staff continues the accompaniment. The system ends with a double bar line.

505 *fff* *tutta forza!*

This system contains measures 505 to 514. The upper staff features a complex texture with a *fff* dynamic and the marking '*tutta forza!*'. The lower staff continues the accompaniment. The system ends with a double bar line.

515 *pp* *molto rall.*

This system contains measures 515 to 524. The upper staff features a complex texture with a *pp* dynamic and the marking '*molto rall.*'. The lower staff continues the accompaniment. The system ends with a double bar line.

5 Cha-Cha. (*The star-crossed lovers, Tony and Maria, see each other for the first time. They dance.*)
 Andantino con grazia (q = 100)

[pizz+flute+piano] *light and dry.*

[+vibr]

[pizz.] LH 2

[bass Clar.] [pizz.] LH 2

[+Vibr]

5 4 2 3

5 4 2 3

2 1 3

542 dolce [winds+high strings] subito *mf* *espr.* [oboe solo] *p* [vibr+harp+celeste] 3 1 3 2 ... 3 1 ... *mf* *p* *dim. molto.*

[low strings] *f*

6 Meeting Scene. (*Music accompanies their first words spoken to one another.*)
 Meno mosso (q = 72) sempre rubato

poco rall. a tempo rit. a tempo

[celeste+vln solo] *pp* *mfz* *mp* *pp* *f* *pp* *mp* *ppp*

[vibr+vln solo] *dolce*

[four violins]

8^{va}

8^{va}...

7 Cool Fugue. (*An elaborate dance sequence in which Riff leads the Jets in harnessing their impulsive hostility, figuratively "cooling their jets."*)
 Allegretto (q = 160) (Swing)

Stringendo un poco.

(8) accel. molto

mf *mf* [piano+bass clar.] *p* *sfz* *sfz* *p* *mf* *pp* *mp*

[pizz.]

[harp+flute]

[pizz] *pp* *mp*

3

583

583

p *mf* *mp*

3

This system contains measures 583-590. It features a complex piano accompaniment with triplets and various dynamics including piano (*p*), mezzo-forte (*mf*), and mezzo-piano (*mp*).

591

591

p *mf* *pp* *mf* *p* *pp*

3

This system contains measures 591-600. The piano part continues with intricate textures, including triplets and dynamic markings such as piano (*p*), mezzo-forte (*mf*), and pianissimo (*pp*).

601

601

pp *sfz* *pp* *pp* *f*

[+bongo] [trumpet]

FUGUE

3

This system contains measures 601-610. It marks the beginning of a section titled "FUGUE". The piano part includes dynamic markings like pianissimo (*pp*), sforzando (*sfz*), and forte (*f*). Percussion parts for bongo and trumpet are indicated.

615

615

mf *p* *sfz* *cresc.*

3

This system contains measures 615-620. The piano part features a crescendo and dynamic markings including mezzo-forte (*mf*), piano (*p*), and sforzando (*sfz*).

622

622

p *ff* *f* *mf* *pp*

sfz

3

This system contains measures 622-630. The piano part shows a dynamic range from piano (*p*) to fortissimo (*ff*) and forte (*f*), ending with mezzo-forte (*mf*) and pianissimo (*pp*). A sforzando (*sfz*) marking is also present.

630

630

sfz *pp* *sfz*

3

This system contains measures 630-637. The piano part continues with dynamic markings such as sforzando (*sfz*), pianissimo (*pp*), and sforzando (*sfz*).

637

637

p *sfz* *p*

3

This system contains measures 637-645. The piano part features dynamic markings including piano (*p*), sforzando (*sfz*), and piano (*p*).

645

645

p *f* *sfz*

3

This system contains measures 645-652. The piano part includes dynamic markings such as piano (*p*), forte (*f*), and sforzando (*sfz*).

652

652

sfz

3

This system contains measures 652-660. The piano part concludes with a sforzando (*sfz*) marking and triplets.

657

662 [tutti] *ff* *8va*

673 *ff* *ff* *fz*

679

684

691 [harp+flute] *p* *pp* *mf* *pp* *mp*

699 [tutti] *ff* *pp* *mf* *molto* *ff*

707 [flute+vibr] [piano] *pp* *p*

715 [vibr. + piano] *finger snaps*

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is written for piano and flute. It consists of nine systems of two staves each. The first system (657-661) features a melodic line in the right hand with triplets and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The second system (662-672) is marked 'tutti' and 'ff', with a 'pizz.' instruction and an '8va' marking. The third system (673-678) continues the 'ff' dynamic and includes a 'fz' (forzando) marking. The fourth system (679-683) shows a change in texture with block chords in the left hand. The fifth system (684-689) features a more active right hand with triplets. The sixth system (690-695) includes a 'harp+flute' section with dynamics ranging from 'p' to 'mp'. The seventh system (696-706) is marked 'tutti' and 'ff', with a 'molto' marking and triplets. The eighth system (707-714) is marked 'piano' and 'pp', with a 'flute+vibr' marking. The ninth system (715-719) is marked 'vibr. + piano' and includes the instruction 'finger snaps'.

8 Rumble. (Climactic gang battle; the two gang leaders, Riff and Bernardo, are killed.)
 Molto Allegro $e = e$ ($q. = 144$)

The musical score is divided into several systems, each with a starting measure number:

- System 1 (722-731):** Piano introduction with *marcato* and *ff* dynamics. Includes *[tutti]* and *[piano + strings]* markings.
- System 2 (732-742):** Continuation of piano introduction with *ff* dynamics. Includes *[xylo]*, *[piano + strings]*, and *mp* markings.
- System 3 (743-752):** Introduction of brass instruments. Includes *[muted trmp]*, *[trump bones]*, *mf*, *f*, *[brass]*, *(m.p.)*, *[winds]*, and *[brass]* markings.
- System 4 (753-761):** Piano solo section. Includes *mf*, *f*, *[piano]*, *ff*, and *f* markings. An annotation indicates an *optional cut to m. 800 ...*
- System 5 (762-771):** Piano solo section with *ff*, *ffz*, *pp*, and *sempre stacc.* markings. Includes *[solo+pizz]* marking.
- System 6 (772-783):** Introduction of reeds. Includes *[reeds]*, *mf*, *cresc.*, and *cresc. poco a poco* markings.
- System 7 (784-793):** Full orchestral entry. Includes *[winds]*, *[piano+winds]*, *[strings]*, *f*, and *sfz* markings.
- System 8 (794-800):** Piano solo section. Includes *ff*, *cresc. molto.*, *fpp*, *molto*, *sfz*, *[tutti]*, *fff*, and *lunga* markings.

