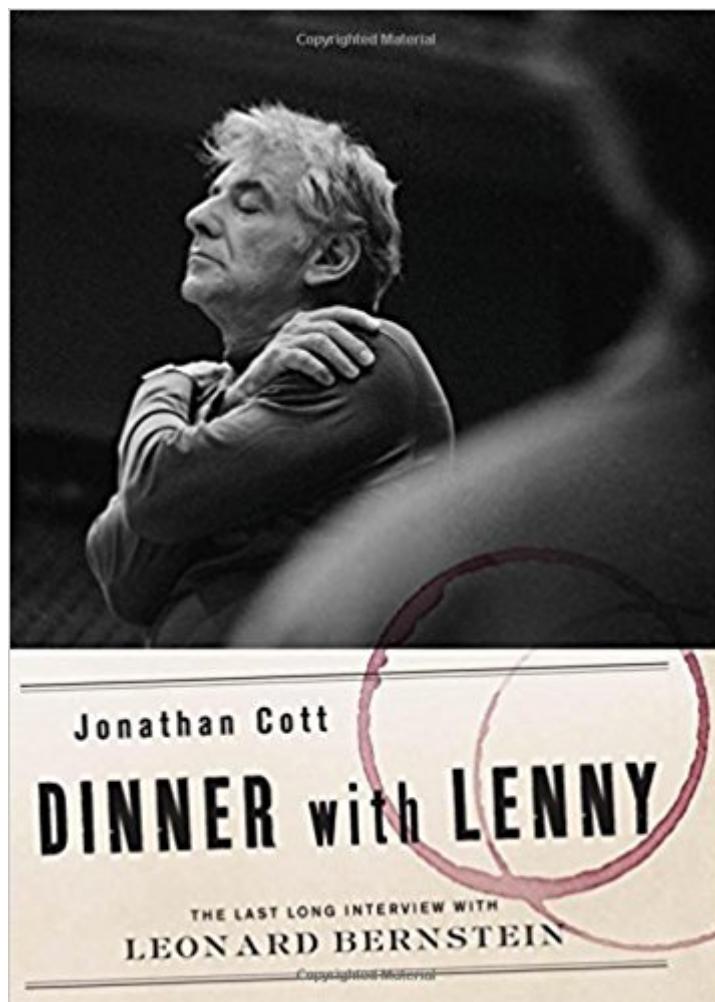


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Dinner With Lenny: The Last Long Interview With Leonard Bernstein



Synopsis

Leonard Bernstein was arguably the most highly esteemed, influential, and charismatic American classical music personality of the twentieth century. Conductor, composer, pianist, writer, educator, and human rights activist, Bernstein truly led a life of Byronic intensity--passionate, risk-taking, and convention-breaking. In November 1989, just a year before his death, Bernstein invited writer Jonathan Cott to his country home in Fairfield, Connecticut for what turned out to be his last major interview--an unprecedented and astonishingly frank twelve-hour conversation. Now, in *Dinner with Lenny*, Cott provides a complete account of this remarkable dialogue in which Bernstein discourses with disarming frankness, humor, and intensity on matters musical, pedagogical, political, psychological, spiritual, and the unabashedly personal. Bernstein comes alive again, with vodka glass in hand, singing, humming, and making pointed comments on a wide array of topics, from popular music ("the Beatles were the best songwriters since Gershwin"), to great composers ("Wagner was always in a psychotic frenzy. He was a madman, a megalomaniac"), and politics (lamenting "the brainlessness, the mindlessness, the carelessness, and the heedlessness of the Reagans of the world"). And of course, Bernstein talks of conducting, advising students "to look at the score and make it come alive as if they were the composer. If you can do that, you're a conductor and if you can't, you're not. If I don't become Brahms or Tchaikovsky or Stravinsky when I'm conducting their works, then it won't be a great performance." After Rolling Stone magazine published an abridged version of the conversation in 1990, the Chicago Tribune praised it as "an extraordinary interview" filled with "passion, wit, and acute analysis." Studs Terkel called the interview "astonishing and revelatory." Now, this full-length version provides the reader with a unique, you-are-there perspective on what it was like to converse with this gregarious, witty, candid, and inspiring American dynamo.

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Customer Reviews

A Look Inside Dinner with Lenny [Click Images to Enlarge] Leonard Bernstein, c. late 1940s (Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic Archives) Leonard Bernstein with Igor Stravinsky while filming their television program "The Creative Performer", 1960 (Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic Archives) Leonard Bernstein with his wife Felicia Montealegre, departing for a tour of Europe and the Near East, 1959 (Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic Archives) Wearing a favorite sweatshirt while rehearsing with the New York Philharmonic (Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic Archives) On the set of the television program "Omnibus", November 14, 1954, lecturing on Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (Photo by Gordon Parks/Collection/Getty Images) Exiting the National Theater in Washington, D.C. during an out-of-town tryout for West Side Story, 1957 (Photo by Robert H. Phillips)

Conductor, pianist, composer, writer, lecturer, celebrity, and above all, enthusiastic, irrepressible teacher, Leonard Bernstein (1918-90) was the presiding genius of classical music in America during the twentieth century. Baby boomers raptly learned about classical music from the 14 years' worth of televised New York Philharmonic Young Peoples Concerts he hosted, and to read the long version of Cott's 1989 Rolling Stone interview is to be excited with Bernstein all over again. Early and late in the 12-hour dialogue, Bernstein calls Cott's attention to passages in Sibelius and Mahler, respectively (the latter of whom Bernstein boosted to his present lofty perch in the orchestral repertoire), and the magic takes hold—the magic of music, for although Bernstein is charismatic, that is never in the cause of Bernstein. Music and the love that informs it and animates its performance are the great themes of this talk that scarcely touches anything nonmusical. Conferring added delight is the marvelous Yiddishkeit Bernstein manifests talking to just one fan rather than a concert hall full of them. --Ray Olson

I'm a long time fan of LB, his music making, his conducting, his compositions, and his persona. This little book rings true for me, as I can almost hear Lenny's voice again (I was privileged to spend some time with LB as a grad student.) as he speaks with the author. JC capture's Lenny's charm,

wit, and renaissance character in a respectful, yet personal way which allowed me to experience a wonderful final evening with a man I have admired for so long.

i enjoyed reading this book very much. You realize what a genius Lenny was andhow he borrowed musical ideas from other composers.He has definite ideas about "learning" and allowing children to explore.Highly recommend this interview. it is an interesting and easy read.

LB is an enduring legend even to this day. The author, astute at all things musical, was able to delve into the heart and soul of this great man, extracting supreme nuggets of wisdom and inspiration. Lenny was very interested in this self exploration. In fact, the message of his life seems to be never stop learning about yourself. A more interesting subject LB never found!

I had often though Lenny was over-the-top, but I was wrong. As demonstrated in this loving book, it was I who was too short.

It felt as if I was at the dinner table too. A very quick read, but so worthwhile if you are at all a Leonard Bernstein fan.

Lenny defies description as he is almost everything.His erudition in Languages, Faith, Psychology, and the sheer belief in LOVE make him a very rare Musician.And what a great teacher he is. He is a colossal that is rich and good in everything.

amazing interview. inspiring life stories, made me want to live more, love more play more - this was a man totally and completely engaged in life! beautiful

This is a great bit of history....directly from the man himself. Be sure to get this if you are a Lenny fan!!

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