

Union Church Concerts

Bernstein *Chichester Psalms* 4pm March 21

On Sunday, March 20 at 4pm, Union Church Concerts presents the third in its series of four concerts: the *Chichester Psalms* of Leonard Bernstein, with the Union Church choir, soloists, and members of the Academy of Union Church, conducted by Vince Peterson. (Leonard Bernstein, composer of *West Side Story* and *Candide*, was a Brooklyn native and now “resides” here permanently—in Green-Wood Cemetery.)

Chichester Psalms is a choral work for boy treble or countertenor, solo quartet, choir, organ, harp, and percussion. The original version also called for a full orchestra. In 2004, Peter Martins choreographed a ballet to this music for the New York City Ballet.

The work was commissioned for the 1965 Southern Cathedrals' Festival at Chichester Cathedral in England. Some material was recycled from early sketches for *West Side Story*, which initially involved a Jewish-American gang.

Bernstein stated explicitly in his writing that the solo part must be sung by boy soprano or a countertenor, because the 23rd Psalm, a "Psalm of David" from the Hebrew Bible, was to be heard as if sung by the boy David himself. The text was arranged by Bernstein from the Psalms in the original Hebrew. Part 1 uses psalms 100 and 108, Part 2 uses 2 and 23, and Part 3 uses 131 and 133.

Chichester Psalms was Bernstein's first composition after his Third Symphony (Kaddish). They are his two most overtly Jewish works. While both works have a chorus singing texts in Hebrew, the Kaddish Symphony has been described as a work often at the edge of despair, while the *Chichester Psalms* is affirmative and at times serene.

Like many of Bernstein's works, the *Chichester Psalms* significantly features the harp (the instrument traditionally associated with King David). Bernstein completed the harp scores before composing the accompanying orchestral and choral parts, thus granting the harpists a pivotal role in realizing the music. In rehearsals, Bernstein is known to have requested that his harpists play through the piece before the rest of the orchestra in order to emphasize the importance of the harp. *(adapted from Wikipedia)*

*Admission \$12 adults, \$8 seniors, students with ID, and children under 12
Childcare for the young and the restless*