presents...

ISABEL LEONARD | Mezzo-soprano
JOHN ARIDA | Piano

Sunday, October 1, 2017 | 7pm
Herbst Theatre

Isabel LEONARD

LEONARD BERNSTEIN

LENNY ON LOVE
A Little Bit in Love (Wonderful Town)
My House (Peter Pan)
I Feel Pretty (West Side Story)
My Twelve Tone Melody (written for Irving Berlin’s 100th birthday)
What a Movie! (Trouble in Tahiti)

BERNSTEIN FOR KIDS (OF ALL AGES)
I Hate Music (A cycle of five kids songs)
So Pretty (1968 anti-war song first performed by Barbra Streisand)
I’m a Person Too (A cycle of five kids songs)
Peter, Peter (Peter Pan)
Something’s Coming (West Side Story)

INTERMISSION
ARTIST PROFILES

San Francisco Performances presents Isabel Leonard for the fourth time. She made her SF Performances recital debut on the Young Masters series in 2008 and most recently was featured in our 34th Season Gala with Alek Shrader in October 2013. John Arida makes his SF Performances debut.

Highly acclaimed for her “passionate intensity and remarkable vocal beauty,” the multiple Grammy Award-winning Isabel Leonard continues to thrill audiences both in the opera house and on the concert stage. In repertoire that spans from Vivaldi to Mozart to Thomas Adès, she has graced the stages of the Metropolitan Opera, Vienna State Opera, Paris Opera, Salzburg Festival, Bavarian State Opera, Carnegie Hall, Glyndebourne Festival, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera as Rosina in Il barbiere di Siviglia, Angelina in La Cenerentola, Cherubino in Le nozze di Figaro, Dorabella in Così fan tutte, Charlotte in Werther, Blanche de la Force in Dialogues des Carmélites, Costanza in Griselda, the title roles in La Périchole and Der Rosenkavalier, as well as Sesto in both Mozart’s La clemenza di Tito and Handel’s Giulio Cesare.

She has appeared with some of the foremost conductors of her time: James Levine, Valery Gergiev, Charles Dutoit, Gustavo Dudamel, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Yannick Nézet-Seguin, Franz Welser-Möst, Plácido Domingo, Edward Gardner, Edo de Waart, James Conlon, Michele Mariotti, Harry Bicket, Andris Nelsons, and Michael Tilson Thomas with the Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, New York

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BERNSTEIN IN MY MIND
Maria (West Side Story)
Piccola Serenata
(1979 song for Karl Böhm’s 85th birthday)
Lonely Town (On the Town)
To What You Said (Songfest)
There Is a Garden (Trouble in Tahiti)

LENNY & LEONARD SAY GOODBYE
It Must Be So (Candide)
Greeting (Arias and Barcarolles)
Take Care of This House
(1600 Pennsylvania Avenue)
Some Other Time (On the Town)

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Hamburg Steinway Model D, Pro Piano, San Francisco.

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Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Philharmonic, and San Francisco Symphony, among others. She is a multiple Grammy Award winner, most recently for Ravel's *l'enfant et les sortilèges* with Seiji Ozawa on Decca and *The Tempest* from the Metropolitan Opera on Deutsche Grammophon, both Best Opera Recording.

Ms. Leonard is on the Board of Trustees at Carnegie Hall and joined the supporters of the Prostate Cancer Foundation to lend her voice in honor of her father who died from the disease when she was in college. Ms. Leonard is also the recipient of the Richard Tucker Award.

This season, she appears at the Metropolitan Opera (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Vienna State Opera and Bavarian State Opera (*La Cenerentola*), and Washington National Opera (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*). In concert, she performs Ravel’s *L'heure espagnole* with Charles Dutoit and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. To celebrate the 100th birthday of Leonard Bernstein, Ms. Leonard will perform Bernstein’s Arias and Barcarolles with Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony, as well as her first performances of Maria in *West Side Story* in concert with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin. To further commemorate the Bernstein centennial, Ms. Leonard will give an all-Bernstein recital celebrating his music for the stage, screen, and concert stage in New York, San Francisco, Fort Worth, Chapel Hill, and Washington D.C.

**PROGRAM NOTES**

**LEONARD BERNSTEIN**

Born August 25, 1918, Lawrence, MA
Died October 14, 1990, New York City

**Lenny on Love**

A Little Bit in Love (*Wonderful Town*)  
My House (*Peter Pan*)  
I Feel Pretty (*West Side Story*)  
My Twelve Tone Melody  
(*written for Irving Berlin's 100th birthday*)  
What a Movie! (*Trouble in Tahiti*)

In 1953 Bernstein wrote the music for *Wonderful Town*, a musical based on Ruth McKenney’s novel *My Sister Eileen*, with lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green. The show, which featured Rosalind Russell in the original cast, was a huge success, running for 569 performances and winning five Tony awards. Eileen sings the jaunty love-song *A Little Bit in Love* in Act I as she begins to fall in love with Frank, the manager of a Walgreen’s drugstore.

In 1949 Leonard Bernstein was asked to provide lyrics and music for a musical based on J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*. Bernstein wrote about an hour’s worth of music, but then it was discovered that the cast that had been hired had very limited singing abilities (Boris Karloff was both Captain Hook and George Darling), and only five of Bernstein’s songs were retained for the production, which opened on Broadway on April 24, 1950. The heartfelt *Build My House* comes from Act II when Wendy sings of building a house—it’s fine to build it with brick and mortar, but it should be founded on love, faith, truth, and peace.

*West Side Story*—first produced in Washington, D.C. on August 19, 1957—ran on Broadway for over a thousand performances, and Bernstein’s music is probably his most memorable score. In his later years, Bernstein worried that he would be remembered only as the composer of *West Side Story*, but one could do much, much worse. Bernstein’s songs from *West Side Story* have proven so powerful and so haunting that even people who have never seen *West Side Story* know these songs by heart and can sing them. *I Feel Pretty* comes from the very beginning of Act II. Unaware that Tony has killed Bernardo, Maria—and her friends Consuela, Rosalia, Teresita, and Francisca—sing this song as Maria dreams of meeting Tony.

Some of the most famous American musicians of all time gathered in Carnegie Hall on May 11, 1988, to celebrate the 100th birthday of Irving Berlin. A partial list includes Frank Sinatra, Ray Charles, Isaac Stern, Willie Nelson, and Rosemary Clooney (Berlin did not attend but was later able to see a video of the event). At that concert Leonard Bernstein sang an early Berlin song, *Russian Lullaby*, and then played and sang a song he had written for the occasion, *My Twelve Tone Melody*. Cast as a slow waltz, the song is—as its title suggests—something atonal, and Bernstein’s biographer reports that it “went down badly with the Berlin family.” Nevertheless, it remains an affectionate—and unusual—tribute.

In 1951 Bernstein wrote his own libretto and composed *Trouble in Tahiti*, a one-act opera about a day in the life of a married couple—Sam and Dinah—who are materially successful but spiritually unhappy: they live in the suburbs and have everything they want except a sense of wholeness and purpose. *What a Movie!* comes from Scene VI. Dinah has seen a cheesy movie about an exotic romance set in the South Seas. She
knows it’s a shallow portrayal of love, yet she longs for a fulfilling love.

**Bernstein for Kids** (of all ages)

I Hate Music (a cycle of five kids songs)  
So Pretty (1968 anti-war song first performed by Barbra Streisand)  
I’m a Person Too  
(a cycle of five kids songs)  
Peter, Peter (Peter Pan)  
Something’s Coming (West Side Story)

In the fall of 1942 Bernstein shared an apartment on West 52nd Street with an artist named Edys Merrill who would walk through the tiny apartment with her hands over her ears shouting “I hate music!” when he was coaching opera singers there. Bernstein used her outcry as the title for a set of five tiny children’s songs that he composed in October 1942, when he was 24 (the songs are about the world of a child, but they are much too difficult for children to sing or play). Bernstein wrote the texts, and the third song, I Hate Music—a child’s reaction to formal concert life—gave the cycle its title.

Bernstein and his wife Felicia were strong opponents of the Vietnam War and strong supporters of Senator Eugene McCarthy’s presidential campaign in 1968. Early that year Bernstein wrote an anti-war song, So Pretty, on a text by Adolph Green and Betty Comden. Barbra Streisand sang the first performance at a fundraiser called “Broadway for Peace” on January 21, 1968.

*I’m a Person Too* is the fifth and final song of the *I Hate Music* cycle. It is a gentle (and moving) plea for identity and respect. Jennie Tourel made her New York debut on Saturday, November 13, 1943, with Bernstein at the piano, and she included the whole *I Hate Music* cycle on that program—it was a huge success. But Bernstein had a secret that evening: he’d already learned that Bruno Walter was sick and that he was going to replace Walter the next afternoon on the Philharmonic’s nationally-broadcast Sunday concert. That triumphant concert became Bernstein’s break-through moment.

Like the excerpt heard earlier, *Peter, Peter* comes from Act II of *Peter Pan*. Wendy uses a smudge on Peter’s face or his mussed hair as an excuse to get closer to him: “I want to feel your touch.” This sparkling little song whips past in just over a minute.

In *Act I of West Side Story*, Tony—wishing for something better than life in a gang—has left the Jets. Riff, their leader, has talked him into rejoining, but even as he agrees, Tony is hoping that his future will hold something better. Something’s Coming is Tony’s first song in the musical.

**Bernstein in My Mind**

Maria (West Side Story)  
Piccola Serenata (1979 song for Karl Böhm’s 85th birthday)  
Lonely Town (On the Town)  
To What You Said (Songfest)  
There Is a Garden (Trouble in Tahiti)

If ever there was a song that needs no introduction, this is it. In Act I of *West Side Story*, Tony has just discovered the name of the girl he feels attracted to. Now he begins to exult in the name Maria, repeating it in wonder and in many different ways.

Leonard Bernstein began conducting regularly in Vienna in the mid-1960s, and he took the city by storm. Among the friends he made there was the conductor Karl Böhm. Bernstein credited Böhm with teaching him how to conduct Mozart. On August 25, 1979, three days before Böhm’s 85th birthday, Bernstein wrote Piccola Serenata (“A Little Serenade”) for the conductor, inscribing it “with affection from his admiring colleague.” This truly is a “little” serenade—it lasts only a couple of minutes—and it’s a lot of fun. Bernstein begins with an ominous vamp in C minor and then sets a nonsense text that begins “Da ga da ga dum da lai la lo.” The spirit is light and playful, and Bernstein’s marking Andantino grazioso is perfect.

In the fall of 1943 choreographer Jerome Robbins approached Leonard Bernstein with an idea for a ballet about three sailors on leave in New York City, and this became *Fancy Free*, first performed at the Metropolitan Opera in April 1944. That summer, Bernstein had an operation on his nose and found himself sharing a hospital room with his old friend, the lyricist Adolph Green, who suggested that the plot of *Fancy Free* could be transformed into a musical. Green and Betty Comden supplied the lyrics, and Bernstein wrote the music for this show, now titled *On the Town*. After a try-out in Boston, *On the Town* opened on Broadway in December 1944 and ran for 463 performances. One of the sailors, Gabey, sings the bluesy Lonely Town in Act I. Set in Central Park, it tells of loneliness in the big city. This was one of the most successful numbers in *On the Town*, and its deletion from the film version of *On the Town* was a source of particular pain for Bernstein.

Like many other composers, Bernstein was commissioned to write a work for the Bicentennial, and he planned a cycle of songs by American poets that would be sung either as solos or ensemble songs. Bernstein did not finish *Songfest*, as he called it, in time for the Bicentennial, and its first complete performance did not take place until October 1977. The fourth song is a setting of Whitman’s To What You Said, a poem about secret sexual identity that Whitman held back from publication during his lifetime. The poem appealed to Bernstein, who—after the song’s staccato introduction—gives Whitman’s gentle text an equally gentle setting.

*I Was Standing in a Garden* comes from Scene III of *Trouble in Tahiti*. During a session with his psychoanalyst, Dinah describes her dream about a garden that—in her troubled imagination—becomes a symbol of unattainable happiness.

**Lenny & Leonard Say Goodbye**

It Must Be So (Candide)  
Greetings (Arias and Barcarolles)  
Take Care of This House (1600 Pennsylvania Avenue)  
Some Other Time (On the Town)

Voltaire’s novel *Candide*, a savage attack on the statement by Leibniz that “All is for the best in this best possible of all worlds,” was published in 1759. Two centuries later, this tale of the catastrophic adventures of Candide, his tutor Pangloss, and his lover Cunegonde in a world that is emphatically not the best possible was transformed into an operetta by Leonard Bernstein and a team of distinguished collaborators, including Lillian Hellman, Dorothy Parker, Richard Wilbur, and Bernstein himself. The initial run in 1956 was not a complete success, and *Candide* went through numerous revisions in the three decades after the first production, but some of the music (notably its terrific overture) has become part of concert life. *It Must Be So* is heard early in the first act. Believing (mistakenly) that Cunegonde has been killed, Candide sings this quiet “meditation” in which he re-states his acceptance and optimism.

Bernstein was asked to write a work in memory of a friend who had died of AIDS, and in April 1988 he composed a suite of seven songs for soprano and baritone titled *Arias and Barcarolles*. The songs have been continued on page 6
described as depicting the seven ages of man, and Bernstein regarded the suite as autobiographical. For the fifth song, Bernstein did not compose a new work but reached back to 1955 for a song he had written immediately after the birth of his son Alexander. Greetings is a most gentle setting, a love song for a newborn child, and Bernstein frames the text (his own) with a substantial piano prelude and postlude.

For the Bicentennial celebration Bernstein composed the musical 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue on lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner, and it was first performed on May 4, 1976. It was a flop, closing after only seven performances, and it has always remained one of Bernstein’s least-known scores (demoralized by the production, he later refused to allow any of it to be recorded). The musical focuses on race relations in this country as a way of telling the story of inhabitants of the White House across the nineteenth century. Abigail Adams sings Take Care of this House in Act 1. Some Other Time is sung near the end of the second (and final act) of On the Town. The sailors have almost exhausted their 24-hour pass, and now they’re headed back to their ship. Left behind, the women wonder about their own futures.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger