

August 5, 2014

Our Spirit in Symphony by Bernstein, Bloch, Foss and More

Today marks the release of albums eight and nine in [Volume 11—Symphonic Visions: Orchestral Works of Jewish Spirit](#)—featuring compositions by Leonard Bernstein, Ernest Bloch, Lukas Foss, Mario Davidovsky, and Joel Hoffman. Each work was poignant in the time it was written, each still evokes new resonances today.

From Bernstein, a recording of his *Symphony No. 1: "Jeremiah."* Inspired by the biblical prophet's premonitions of impending doom and destruction for the people of Judea, its early performances led many critics to dub it the

best new work of the year (1944). Works by Bernstein contemporary Lukas Foss and electronic music pioneer Mario Davidovsky explore the Song of Songs with its themes of love, in settings for orchestra and voice. The Foss recording features mezzo-soprano Jennie Tourel; soprano Susan Narucki performs on the Davidovsky.



Ponder the Portrait



Our mini-documentary features Joel Hoffman discussing his inspiration for **Self-Portrait with Gebirtig**.

Get a Little Country



Country star Ray Benson has a lot of notable distinctions. Being a **Jewish performer in country music** is just one.

See More Symphony



Celebrate 20 years of the **LA Jewish Symphony** with "**Hershey Felder in Concert**" on August 25th.

Joel Hoffman's cello concerto, *Self-Portrait with Gebirtig*, explores the ins and outs of the Eastern European tradition of the *klezmerim*. Using melodies from three songs by the famous Polish-Jewish poet and songwriter Mordechai Gebirtig, Hoffman has crafted a work of stunning character and charm that is by turns moving, poignant, and just plain fun.

Ernest Bloch once remarked that his "Jewish" works were inspired by an "inner voice" rather than any external sources—which is to say that he approached "Jewish" music more as an expression of personal identity than an exploration of putative Jewish modes and rhythms. Hear his unique approach on two fantastic performances—*Baal Shem* and *Suite Hebraique*—featuring the legendary Zina Schiff on violin.

Whatever your inner voice tells you and whatever sources you draw upon, there's sure to be something that speaks to you and recharges your spirit. And who doesn't need more of that these days?