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## Crossing Borders in Leonard Bernstein's *Mass*

### **Introduction**

On September 8, 1971, the John F. Kennedy Center of the Performing Arts opened with the premiere of one of the most controversial works in history. Situated on the Potomac River in Washington, D.C., the Kennedy Center was conceptualized by the National Cultural Center Act under the legislation of President Eisenhower. John F. Kennedy was an avid supporter of the arts and took control of fundraising for the Cultural Center. Two months after his death, Congress decided to name the Center after him, stating that the Center would be a “living memorial” for the late President. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis asked Leonard Bernstein to create a piece that would be played at the inauguration of the Kennedy Center ([kennedy-center.org](http://kennedy-center.org)). A friend and former school-mate of the late president, Bernstein composed *Mass* in honor of John F. Kennedy.

Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* was a deeply controversial piece that was not well received after its premiere. Much has changed in the nearly forty years since this time, and today *Mass* is enjoying a significant revival. In this paper, I will explore the ways in which Bernstein's work challenged traditional borders between genres and among different belief systems and social identities. *Mass* reflects the social and ideological tensions of the period

in which it premiered, and its changing reception provides us with an index of the ways in which these tensions have modulated.

The basic structure of Bernstein's *Mass* is determined by the Mass Ordinary, or the parts of the Mass that are the same from week to week. "The Mass is the complex of prayers and ceremonies that make up the service of the Eucharist in the Latin rites" (Catholic Encyclopedia). The traditions that Christ established at the Last Supper have made up the traditions of the Mass since the Christian beliefs were first preached.

The Mass is an opportunity for Catholics to join in worshipping God in a formal community setting. During the Mass, Catholics pray together, and sing together, but most importantly, they receive the Eucharist together. Catholics believe that the bread and wine offered at Communion is transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The transubstantiation can only be performed by priests, bishops, etc. in the context of the Mass. It is a sacrifice that is essential and substantial in the Mass. Catholics commune with one another in acknowledgement of Jesus' sacrifice to eat His body and drinking His blood. This belief that the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus sets the Mass apart from most other Christian services. Out of respect for this heavy content, Catholic church-goers have had a difficult time instituting and being open to new traditions in the Mass. One such tradition deals with the music that is deemed appropriate for the sacrifice.

Music has been a long standing tradition in the Catholic Church as a means of congregational prayer and worship. Music in the Mass can be traced back to medieval times when Pope Gregory (Gregory the Great) was credited for the idea of Gregorian chant. Musical traditions have changed since then, but the content of the Mass has remained basically the same.

The musical traditions of the Mass were revolutionized by the famous of the Vatican Council (Vatican II). The last time the Vatican Council met was between 1962 and 1965 in four sessions. Pope John XXIII stated that the Council would meet “as a means of spiritual renewal for the church and as an occasion for Christians separated from Rome to join in search for reunion” (Britannica). All Catholic bishops in the world were in attendance as well as other important people in the church, all of whom had the right to vote. Several non-Catholic Christians also attended, but were unable to vote (Britannica).

The Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II, produced 16 documents which changed or improved the way the church ran. There were a few documents that had an especially large effect on the church, including the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, which mandated that all Masses be celebrated in the vernacular. Another important document was the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, which stated that the church try to adapt to the existing world around it (McBrien). These two documents changed the way music was utilized in the church. There is one particular verse that states that the church use cultural traditions in the Mass as is evident

in the following quote from a translation of the documents from the Second Vatican Council.

In harmony with the economy of the Incarnation, the young churches, rooted in Christ and built up on the foundation of the Apostles, take to themselves in a wonderful exchange all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ as an inheritance. They borrow from the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and disciplines, all those things which can contribute to the glory of their Creator, or enhance the grace of their Savior, or dispose Christian life the way it should be (Overkott, Spindelböch).

In using surrounding cultural traditions as the quote implies, church-goers are able to relate to the Mass on a more personal level, making the celebration more effective. It makes the experience of the Mass more personal, whereas before Catholics were borrowing modes of worship from other civilizations, separating the congregation from the meaning of the text. Church-goers were still adapting to this new doctrine at the time *Mass* premiered. It is no wonder all the various popular elements shocked and offended some of the audience members at those first few performances.

Traditionally, composers like Mozart and Beethoven, composed music for orchestra and choir that could be utilized in a church setting. There are a few compositional techniques that were usually used by these composers when setting a Mass. For instance, it was conventional for the “Alleluia” and “Amen” to be set as a fugue. According to the Virginia Tech Multimedia Music Dictionary, a fugue is “a form of composition popular in, but not restricted to, the Baroque era, in which a theme or subject is introduced by one

voice, and is imitated by other voices in succession” (music.vt.edu). The voices can imitate the theme exactly, or they can imitate only the first few notes and then deviate. The “Amen” can also be a fanfare to accentuate the climax of the Mass.

Bernstein’s *Mass* departed radically from these conventional patterns. It was subtitled *A Theatre Piece for Singers, Players, and Dancers*. Unlike the traditional Classical composers, Bernstein did not intend for his *Mass* to be used in the context of a Catholic Mass. *Mass* exhibits vividly what can go on in the minds of a congregation during the celebration of the Mass. According to Bernstein’s daughter, these thoughts especially pertain to the crisis-of-faith, the questioning that many people experience in their spiritual lives. In addition to the movements of the Mass Ordinary, Bernstein also composed tropes, which were sung in the vernacular. The tropes served as a way for the musicians to share their thoughts with the audience.

The extraordinary aspect of *Mass* is its eclecticism. There is the traditional orchestra and choir “Classical” composition style, as well as rock, jazz, folk, Broadway, military, and contemporary Classical styles of music, all incorporated into the same work. There is dancing of various styles as well, not to mention the personnel needed in order to perform such a versatile piece. The work requires nearly 200 people to perform it successfully, which includes all of the actors, musicians, and dancers. These various musical genres contribute to the negative reactions to *Mass*, especially by the Catholic Church, though it was never intended to parody the sacred Catholic ritual.

*Mass* was not performed again for nearly 30 years. Most recently it was performed by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Marin Alsop. Reviews of this production were quite positive. A lot has changed over the last 37 years to make society open to a work of its nature. Catholics have changed as well as society in general. It seems to be that modern society is more open to a progressive work now than it was in the 1970's.

### **Social Perspectives**

As the riotous dancing stopped at the return of the Celebrant, a voice identified as “a rather British-sounding lady of middle age,” was heard to call out vehemently, “Pagan! This is not Christian!” Members of the company said later that they began to wonder what the voice would do when its owner saw and heard the orgy that builds up during the “Agnus Dei.” The voice did not fail them. As the Celebrant cried out, “Pacem! Pacem!” from the highest point on the stage, and a complete silence fell throughout stage and house, again there came the sound of righteous indignation, in a furious, “This is sacrilegious!” (Hume)

This quote comes from a review of one of the first performances of Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* in 1971. Many reviews at the time shared this patronizing tone. They used words and phrases such as “vulgar trash” (Shonberg), “self-indulgent” (Klein), “arrogant,” “uncomplicated language,” and “his reach clearly exceeds his grasp” (Heckman).

Consider the vocal woman described in the quote above. With a bit of imagination, we might reconstruct a hypothetical background for this woman.

She is very excited because she is attending one of the first performances in a brand new performing arts facility built in honor of the late President Kennedy. We might imagine her as a practicing Roman Catholicism with an intimate connection to the Mass, on which the work is based. Many composers in the past have written Mass settings which enrich the meaning of the text, are aesthetically pleasing, and most importantly can be performed in a church without question. In her mind, Bernstein's *Mass* could not be too different.

She sat in her luxurious seat in the Opera House of the Kennedy Center and eagerly awaited the beginning of the performance. The lights dimmed and she realized she was on the edge of her seat as the curtains opened and the music began. She had heard that the work was a little strange at times, so it did not surprise her when the first music she heard was not the product of live performers, but rather of pre-recorded audio tapes being played over the P.A. system. Then a man came onto the stage carrying a guitar which he strummed as he sang a sort of "Call to Worship" in a folk style that was very common among popular music at the time. The program called this character the Celebrant, so she was surprised to hear him sing not only in English, but also in a popular style. After all, the Second Vatican Council did not change the rules so long ago that Masses in the vernacular had caught on completely. In 1971, the Latin Mass was still celebrated in many American churches every Sunday. She tried to keep an open mind as she continued to watch and listen to the performance.

As the performance continued, more and more questionable material is performed. Even though she had been trying to keep an open mind, she was overwhelmed with all the different genres of music that did not seem to go together and certainly did not belong in the context of the Mass. She could not help but feel more and more frustrated the more she watched. Eventually, there was a song that features dancers that was so energetic and busy, it could only be described as a riot, in which the dancers are rebelling against the Celebrant and more generally, against the religious life. To this woman, dancing was not appropriate during the Mass, let alone dancing with such fiery passion against the Mass and everything for which it stood. Finally the dancing ended abruptly as the Celebrant reappears. She was so pent up with rage she could not stop herself from yelling out “Pagan! This is not Christian!”

The dizziness of the entire production did not end, and she continued to become more and more overwhelmed. During the “Agnus Dei,” the call for peace, there is more dancing that is completely the opposite of peaceful. She views it as lewd, portraying immoral behavior in the context of the Mass. The woman felt filthy just watching it, which is not a sensation she usually experienced while attending the service. The frustration continued and again she could not help from shouting “This is sacrilegious!” Let me end this imaginary construction of this specific woman and turn now to the religious and cultural context that legitimated her orthodox expectations.

Many Catholics in 1971 had a very difficult time accepting the *Mass* as anything but blasphemous. They saw it as vandalism of their ritual. One such opinion is that of Archbishop Leibold of Cincinnati. He objected to the *Mass* with the following statement:

The main issue of our concern is, is this production is a blatant sacrilege against all we hold sacred (whether it is done in Latin or English)? Does any artist have a right to use elements of our central act of worship as a vehicle to present his theme and, further, may they be vandalized in the expression of his theme?" (*New York Times*)

For all intents and purposes, the Archbishop forbade Catholics from attending the *Mass* because of its outright sacrilegious nature.

An opposing view to Archbishop Leibold is that of Fr. Linus DeSantis of the Alibrandi Catholic Center at Syracuse University. "He believed that it was sacrilegious, that it was pagan," explained Fr. Linus in an interview on March 20, 2009. "He did what he believed he had to do." Priests and Bishops often feel they have the responsibility to speak out about controversial matters. In addition, the Catholic Community looks to them for guidance in their faith, especially when something that might pose a threat to their religion presents itself. The only problem is that whether the priests and bishops speak out or not, they are criticized for their chosen action. Archbishop Leibold never actually saw *Mass*, but he still spoke out because it was the safe thing to do (*New York Times*). Some may have disapproved of his statement, but it is nothing compared to the reaction he thought he may have gotten if he did not say anything, especially since he thought it was sacrilegious himself.

Fr. Linus also did not see any of the original performances of *Mass*, but he did not believe that it was blasphemous and therefore, did not see any need to speak against it. “It was a teachable moment,” Fr. Linus stated. Fr. Linus believes that part of what went wrong is that the Catholic Community, especially those in a teaching position, did not use *Mass* to teach about the Catholic faith. According to Fr. Linus, it did not need to be seen as Pagan, but rather as a vehicle for learning about Catholicism. Archbishop Leibold could have sat down with Bernstein and talked about his intent and purpose in composing *Mass* and then passed Bernstein’s wisdom on to his congregation. According to Fr. Linus, there are such strong correlations between the Roman Mass and Bernstein’s *Mass* that it just makes sense to teach from it.

It is obvious that, among others, Archbishop Leibold thought that *Mass* was blasphemous. “I disagree,” claims Fr. Linus, “It is a very earthy, gutsy demonstration of the sacrifice [of Christ].” He firmly believed that Bernstein’s *Mass* opened up an educational opportunity that the church did not take. He also acknowledged that *Mass* was never intended to be the actual service, but merely a reenactment, or play of the Mass. It was never played in a church and was never meant to be played in a church.

According to Fr. Linus, Bernstein showed us what the Mass really is. Many church-goers, he explained, get caught up in the ritual that is practiced every Sunday, the “neat and clean,” and do not really pay attention to what the Mass is really about. People should leave the Mass feeling “shaken,” but not in the sense that they are afraid. They should be able to reflect on what

happened during the Mass after they leave. Church-goers should wonder what they can do to make the world better based on what they learned during the celebration. All of these life-altering thoughts come from what is different from week to week in the Mass. It does not necessarily come from the ritual.

Fr. Linus believes this was the real importance of the *Mass*. It made every part of the Mass new to everyone who experienced it. The ritual was changed, which made some people a little uneasy, but the same question applies: What can the audience take away from *Mass* that they can adapt to improve their every day lives? It is human nature to be dissatisfied with loose ends, which is evident in the fact that many movies have sequels. This uneasiness is the real catalyst for the Catholic view of *Mass*. People left the theater not really knowing what to think of everything they just saw, so the easy reaction is to write it off as wrong, instead of looking at the bigger picture and deciding what is right about it.

“It [*Mass*] is the truth of what the Mass really is...It is the life of Christ...He was a revolutionary. It is Jesus Christ spilling His guts...for humanity.” This is the bigger picture of which Fr. Linus speaks. *Mass* is not simply a depiction of the Mass with flamboyant embellishments; it is the story of the Gospels, of Jesus’ life. The Mass is merely a medium through which His stories are told. The view of Jesus we gain from scripture and tradition suggests that Jesus Christ was eclectic; Catholic orthodoxy teaches that He was human. Bernstein’s use of many different forms of art really symbolizes the human Christ and His life. The Celebrant is also a Christ-figure. Just like

the Celebrant, Jesus got angry at the immorality that existed around Him in Scripture readings. He acted out and tried to preach to them about His faith. There were instances when He got frustrated, just like the Celebrant. Even still, in the face of adversity, Christians believe He died for the sins of every other human. The Celebrant ripped his Vestments and broke his Chalice, and the corruption ended.

“The idea of surprise or sensationalism offends, or puts people off,” says Fr. Linus. No one expected what they saw in that first run of Bernstein’s *Mass*. Bernstein’s use of American art traditions was supposed to inspire, but was merely passed off as trash in many instances. Fr. Linus pointed out that people “cannot appreciate culture,” even when it can be viewed as a learning experience. Vatican II mandated that culture be integrated into the Mass, including language, music, etc. Why, when the church told people to implement their own culture into their Mass, did they declare that it was sacrilegious when they saw it on stage? Bernstein used several forms of American culture in his *Mass*, especially with his use of Jazz music. Fr. Linus explained that no one could accept the new cultural elements because “we’ve always done it this [the other] way.” Many people love ritual because it provides a sense of consistency in their ever-changing world. Witnessing a completely different view of one’s ritual can provide some anxiety and uneasiness.

Many members of the Catholic Community also reacted negatively to the fact that *Mass* was written by a man of Jewish faith. They argued that a

Jewish man does not have the right to write music for a Catholic liturgy. However, the other argument is: Why should a Jewish man not write music for the Catholic Mass? Would there be a problem with a Jewish man writing music for a Mass if his particular work was not seen as sacrilegious and offensive? “Bernstein was an intelligent, astute, man of faith who was coming to engage an audience,” explained Fr. Linus. The fact of the matter is that Bernstein was fascinated with the Mass and had always wanted to compose music for one. When Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis came along and asked him to write a piece for the new performing arts center in honor of her late husband, Bernstein jumped at the chance to write a Mass. The Kennedys, after all, are a Catholic family. “Bernstein had always been intrigued and awed by the Roman Catholic Mass, finding it (in Latin) moving, mysterious, and eminently theatrical” (Bernstein). Again, the argument returns that people can be very quick to dismiss what they do not understand and what they do not want to take the time to learn.

It seems as though everything Fr. Linus said came back to the same argument: Bernstein’s *Mass* could have been used as a way to teach people about their faith, but in many cases was not. People do not want to explore what they do not understand and therefore take the easy way out of complicated situations. He claims that if he were ever to use such cultural diversity in his own celebrations of the Mass, he “would prepare the community for it,” because otherwise they would be offended. He would fail in his attempt to teach them something new about their faith. When it comes

to *Mass*, Fr. Linus explains that “It was not sacrilegious, people just were not prepared. It is probable that no one could have been completely prepared for *Mass*. So much happened on that stage that it would be difficult to come prepared to such a performance. That may have been Bernstein’s goal. Perhaps he wanted to surprise each and every single person in the audience.

From Fr. Linus’ perspective, Bernstein’s *Mass* was a true representation of the ideals of Vatican II. All cultures, religions, races, ethnic groups, etc. are welcome in a Catholic Mass. Everyone who sits in a Catholic church during a Mass has a different background. They have different strengths and weaknesses, different talents and experiences. The Mass touches everyone in a different way. It even had a strong impact on one Jewish man, who decided to write music for a Mass that showed many of these different perspectives. The Mass crosses borders, even between different faiths.

Reviews from 1971, though mostly negative, also contained many positive comments. The same reviewers used words and phrases such as “a cornucopia of genius,” “orchestration is a model of know-how” (Klein), and “gift for melody” (Heckman). These positive comments cannot be forgotten. The ambivalence experienced by the reviewers reflects the confusion experienced by anyone who sat in the seats of the Kennedy Center during that first run in 1971. It is fairly obvious why they disliked *Mass*, but what accounts for these positive comments?

Now, imagine the audience members who did not think *Mass* was blasphemous. They were there for many different reasons. Perhaps they were Kennedy Center patrons. They loved hearing new music, or they had nothing to do the night they went. Maybe they were jazz fans who loved seeing a good jazz band, or they enjoyed marching band performances and wanted to see one incorporated into a stage show. Possibly, they were given tickets by a friend who could not attend, or they chose to attend because they had never seen anything like this *Mass* before. Like the woman in the first quote, they were also completely overwhelmed by everything that happened on stage, but they just sat back and absorbed everything as it came and tried not to judge.

The performers were incredible and everyone in the audience was completely impressed that they could handle so many different types of music. The dancing was also very entertaining. Who knew there would be such dancing in a show entitled *Mass*? It got a little racy at times, but it was overall fun to watch. There were also moments where the Celebrant was very passionate, sometimes even bordering on inappropriate, but very powerful. This eclecticism in the music, the action, and the dancing is what made the *Mass* such a work of art. It was what people loved about the *Mass*, but also what people hated about it. Once again, the *Mass* is crossing borders, this time between different musical genres and the communities with which they are associated.

## **History of Mass**

Leonard Bernstein was born in 1918 in Lawrence, Massachusetts of Russian immigrant parents. His father was from a long line of rabbis. As a boy, he took piano lessons and later attended Harvard University. While studying at Harvard, he composed and premiered his first composition of incidental music for a production of *The Birds*. He received his BA in 1939 and then went to the Curtis Institute of Music where he studied with Vengerova for piano, Renee Longy for score reading, Thompson for orchestration, and Reiner for conducting. He later studied conducting under Koussevitzky and became his assistant in 1942. A year later he was appointed the assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. In the same year, he had to step in for the current conductor because of health issues. Over the next decade, he immersed himself into the world of conducting and composing, which took him all over the world. In 1958 he became the first ever American born conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

In addition to a successful conducting career, he also maintained a career in composing and educating. He established himself as both a Broadway composer as well as a composer of art music. His Broadway pieces include *West Side Story*, perhaps his most famous work, *Candide*, *Wonderful Town*, *Peter Pan*, and *Trouble in Tahiti*, among others. His Art-Music includes *Prelude, Fugue, and Riffs* for solo clarinet and jazz ensemble, *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*, *Chichester Psalms* for chorus, boy soprano, and orchestra, *Symphony #3* (“Kaddish”), as well as many others.

Finally, he also wrote a few educational books including *The Young Person's Guide to Symphonic Music*, and *The Joy of Music*.

*Mass* was said to have been created 'because the composer believes that the crisis of faith is the principle crisis of our century; because he has long been intrigued with the idea of writing a comprehensive religious service; because of his fascination with Roman Catholicism, especially since the memorable papacy of John XXIII; and finally, because of his love for the man whose name the Center celebrates. (Sheppard)

As the quote above implies, the *Mass* employs very vividly the crisis of faith—the time in everyone's life when they question what they believe. More than an enactment of Roman Catholic Mass, *Mass* also performs a theatrical story. It tells the story of a man who tries to preach the Gospel. He is constantly faced with challenges that make preaching very difficult. No one pays any mind to the man who is giving his all to teach about the life of Jesus; they are all consumed in their own thoughts and lives. Thus presents a conflict. The Celebrant tries as hard as he can to get through to his congregation, but they just will not listen. The Celebrant cannot take it any more and he loses his temper. Then the people begin to listen to what he has to say. Many people can relate to this scenario, including Jesus Christ himself. Bernstein wanted *Mass* to speak to people on many different levels, which is why he made it so relatable. It is why he used all the music with which he was familiar. "On the narrative level, the hour-and-a-half-long piece relates the drama of a Celebrant whose faith is simple and pure at first, but gradually

becomes unsustainable under the weight of human misery, corruption, and the trappings of his own power” (Bernstein).

The Mass was only a vehicle through which Bernstein could tell his story. The work not only uses the pre-Vatican II Latin text of the Mass Ordinary, but also uses tropes in which the characters convey their thoughts as the Mass ensues. The score calls for an orchestra, as well as a marching band and a rock band. It also calls for a solo Celebrant and a street choir, all of whom sing the tropes throughout the performance. Additionally, the score asks for a church choir, which sings primarily in Latin, and a boys’ choir, which takes on the role of the altar boys. The huge work also utilizes many musical styles including popular music styles of the time, blues, rock, Broadway, electronic, orchestral, and modern 20<sup>th</sup>-century classical styles of music. A powerful piece, *Mass* promotes peace and the human need “to do what is right.” The crisis of faith grows more and more present as the piece progresses and is mirrored in the music. “It may seem ironic that such multitudes are marshaled for a work that celebrates a man's ‘Simple Song’: his love and faith in God. But in the end, that simplicity is shown to be all the more powerful because of it” (Bernstein).

It is a piece I have been writing all my life, and everything I have written before has been in some way a rehearsal for it.  
(Klein)

This is a quote from Bernstein himself, found in a review by Howard Klein. Leonard Bernstein composed many different genres of music in his lifetime. The Mass included elements of classical symphonies to musicals to

works that used the twelve-tone style created by Arnold Schoenberg. He saw the *Mass* as a way for him to incorporate all of the different kinds of music with which he was familiar into one big work.

In a sense, *Mass* was Leonard Bernstein himself. As suggested by the biographical sketch above, Bernstein was a very eclectic man, making a living as a musician, composer, an author, a conductor, and an educator. Within these realms, he even showed variety in style. Outside of *Mass*, he showed that he could compose in several different styles. He showed an aptitude for everything from the Broadway style in works such as *West Side Story* to classical styles in his orchestral works, such as his *Kaddish* Symphony. He showed a diverse talent in his conducting career, as well. His career included conducting many different types of music, including his own works as well as those of other composers. He maintained a steady job as the conductor of the New York Philharmonic, which gave him experience leading many different genres of music.

### ***Mass in the New Millennium***

After that first tour in 1971, Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* was rarely, if ever, performed until 2000. The 2000 performance, the first in 29 years, was monumental. It was performed in the Vatican City as part of Jubilee 2000, which was an international movement to end third world debt by the year 2000. Meanwhile, in the Roman Catholic Church, there was an event called the Great Jubilee, celebrated from December 24, 1999 to January 6, 2001. The Great Jubilee was a year of repentance, conversion, and great mercy among Catholics involving a large pilgrimage to the Vatican for the celebration. The fact that *Mass* was performed at such a huge Catholic event proves that a lot has changed since 1971, namely the acceptance of *Mass* by Catholics.

Since this performance in 2000, there have been at least 75 more performances of *Mass*. Another performance of *Mass* was recorded in October of 2004. It was performed by the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester in Berlin, conducted by Kent Nagano. An exceptionally notable performance occurred recently in 2008 in conjunction with the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bernstein's birth. The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra took on the large task of performing *Mass* under the baton of Marin Alsop. Alsop also employed the Morgan State University Choir and Marching Band, the Peabody Children's Chorus, and Jubilant Sykes as the Celebrant. Reviews of the 2008 performances were more positive than those in 1971. Two major changes have happened since 1971 that contribute to the success of the new performances of *Mass*: performance practices and the Catholic perspective.

One major societal change that took place in the last 38 years happened in the Catholic community. At this point, the Second Vatican Council implemented their new doctrine 44 years ago, which has given the people a significant amount of time to adjust. Latin Masses are few and far between, with Masses in the vernacular taking up the majority of the Mass celebrations. Music that incorporates aspects of the surrounding culture has also become mainstreamed in the Catholic Church. It is not uncommon for a church to have at least one Mass that features music that uses a drumset, a guitar (both electric and acoustic), and various other instruments that one might hear in a rock band. *Mass* implements all of these features, which received a positive reaction because Catholics are more used to experiencing their *Mass* with these features.

Recently, the Catholic Church has been under a bit of stress that has taken most of its attention. For instance, there is a shortage of priests being ordained. This is a problem because there are not enough priests for how many parishes there are in some areas. Priests are having to minister at several parishes, or parishes are consolidating because of the deficit. There is also the issue of corruption in the church. There have been many cases of clergymen sexually abusing young altar boys. The church is preoccupied because this sleaziness cost them quite a lot of money and it also hurt the trust of its congregation, not to mention that these actions were wrong. In this context, issues of blasphemy in a composers setting of a Mass might seem less important to members of the Catholic Church.

Another reason *Mass* may be better received in today's world is because the face of classical music is changing. Over the last 40 years or so, classical composers have been mixing popular styles into their music in a style often referred to as "Crossover." With the introduction of the Second Viennese School and atonality that is characteristic of the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century, came the need for some tonal classical music that was fun to listen to and fun to play or sing. Composers like Aaron Copland, John Duke, and William Bolcom write classical music with jazz, pop, folk, and musical theater elements that are just that: fun to hear, play, and sing. Bernstein's *Mass* is a whole project in crossover music. As the style has become more and more mainstreamed, *Mass* became easier and easier for people to enjoy as they listened. In this way, Bernstein was ahead of his time in composing *Mass*.

The 2008 production of *Mass* was very experimental just like the production in 1971. Eclecticism was utilized very heavily as well, just in a different way. While Bernstein's version of eclecticism showed in the score and in its various genres of music, Alsop's version came in her performers. Alsop chose eclectic groups of people to play her Celebrant, sing in her choir, and play in her marching band. Jubilant Sykes, well loved American Baritone, appeared as the Celebrant in Alsop's rendition of Bernstein's *Mass*. Sykes' talents in singing act the same as Bernstein's talent for composing: they are the embodiment of generic eclecticism.

“Jubilant Sykes brings a new dimension to the traditional career of the classically trained baritone by drawing on gospel and jazz influences” (imgartists.com). Jubilant Sykes is one of the most versatile performers of our time. He is an African American Baritone who has made a career as a recitalist and performer of many different genres of music, including gospel, jazz, classical, musical theater, pop, opera, and folk to name a few. He started singing as a boy in Los Angeles, California as a boy soprano. He stopped singing for a while when his voice changed until a teacher showed him how beautiful his voice was as it grew deeper. He told Michelle Norris that “She turned me on to classical music...I thought Bach was like Stevie Wonder!” (Norris). He began his classical music career in the early 1990’s and has continued performing in many different genres for nearly two decades. He has performed with and is respected by many noteworthy conductors, including Christoph Eschenbach, Marvin Hamlisch, Raymond Leppard, Keith Lockhart, among others. He has also made appearances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera, plus more. He is featured on two collaborative recordings, called *Jubilant* and *Wait for Me*.

Two of the large ensembles featured in the 2008 *Mass* were college ensembles from Morgan State University (MSU). MSU is “a historically black” institute of higher education. 91% of its students are black, with the next highest percentage of students are foreign at 4% (citytowninfo.com). It is a public urban university situated in Baltimore, Maryland, that has an

enrollment of about 6,000 people, drawing more than half of the student body from Maryland ([morgan.edu](http://morgan.edu)). It is a very highly respected school, especially when it comes to graduation rates and furthering education among African Americans.

The Morgan State University Choir is currently under the direction of Dr. Eric Conway, and is comprised of more than 130 singers. The choir was led by the late famous conductor, Dr. Nathan Carter. Similar to many collegiate choirs, the Choir dabbles in many genres of choral repertoire, including classical, gospel, and popular music. They are particularly well-known for their performances of spirituals. “The choir is noted for its emphasis on preserving the heritage of the spiritual, especially in the historic practices of performance ([msuchoir.org](http://msuchoir.org)). They have traveled all over the world, bringing their talents to many different countries, including Czech Republic, Russia, and most recently the Bahamas. They have also had more opportunities than most other University Choruses to perform with major orchestras. In the 1998-1999 season alone, they performed with the National Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, and the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Buffalo Symphony, the Baltimore Symphony, and the Knoxville Symphony. They commissioned a piece called “All Rise” in 2000 by Wynton Marsalis with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. They were fortunate enough to record “All Rise” several times in the years following with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and then once in Paris. The choir is in high demand, but at the end of each year, they still manage to perform a benefit concert at home for local audiences.

The Morgan State University Marching Band is equally, if not more famous than the choir. “The Magnificent Marching Machine,” as they are so affectionately known, is directed by Melvin N. Miles. 150 students participate in the band. The band has played all over the country, making appearances at Presidential Inaugurations, the World Series, National Football League Games, National Playoff Games, not to mention Morgan State football games. They have also been featured in the movie “Head of State,” written, directed by, and starring Chris Rock. The band steps outside of boundaries when it comes to marching etiquette. They sometimes use high-step, which is used often in modern marching bands, except for dramatic affect. More importantly, they have a drumline that exceeds expectations. First of all, they are very talented musicians, always remaining in sync with one another, creating a real core for the entire band. Second of all, they show their talent even more when they stay in sync while playing very difficult cadences. Third, they dance while they do it. Their performances exude energy that is unmatched, making for a very fun time for the audience. Meanwhile, the sound of the entire band is incredible, maintaining good intonation and a unified sound.

In 1971, audience members may not have been so receptive to the racial diversity used in the 2008 performance of *Mass*. The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1968, only three years before the premiere of *Mass*. Integration of black people was still a hot subject in the minds of some Americans. Not enough time had passed since the end of segregation when the first *Mass* was performed, and some of society may have been sensitive to the topic. The 2008 production, yet again, exhibits how *Mass* crosses borders. This time, it crosses the border between races.

The eclectic nature of these performers may have been and undesirable talent for musicians in 1971. Sykes is a very versatile musician, who has an affinity for many different types of music. Alan Titus, the man who played the Celebrant in the original production of *Mass*, was an opera singer who was trained at the Julliard School and at Colorado School of Music. He was not nearly as well-versed in several types of music as Sykes. At the time, there was not a great demand for musicians who could perform both pop styles and classical styles. Musicals using popular music had only just started to gain popularity in the years surrounding *Mass*. Those who attended the first performances of *Mass* probably expected to hear classical music and would have been surprised if a jazz or gospel singer sang the leading role. There was not an abundance of crossover style singers at the time, either because it was still a fairly new genre of classical music that was trying to become more and more mainstreamed as time moved forward.

Along with the eclectic nature of the musicians involved in the 2008 performance of *Mass* comes the issue of musical style as well. The Morgan State University Choir and Marching Band definitely have a certain performance style that they brought to the 2008 production of *Mass*. The MSU Marching Band is different from the everyday militaristic parade band, with their use of choreographed dance and relaxed demeanor. In utilizing their own style, they could provide an energetic performance while maintaining technical and tonal precision.

Much like Jubilant Sykes, the MSU choir is well versed in many musical genres, making them more than capable to sing every choral passage in *Mass*. In *Mass*, the choir sings in various styles and languages, including English, Latin, and Hebrew. The styles the choir sings vary drastically, sometimes within one song. There are Classical styles, as well as chant and musical theater. The choir needs to be capable in many different styles to even be chosen to be featured in *Mass*. The MSU choir is so talented in the various genres that they could switch between different techniques without a hitch. They could have also implemented some of their knowledge of spirituals into their songs, adding a new approach to the music. It would give the members of the choir a bit of a more intimate relationship with the songs they sang, making the performance more effective for the audience.

Bernstein took enough risks with his *Mass* that he could have given the role of the Celebrant to a black man or chosen a black choir as his concert choir. Even though Bernstein was daring in his compositions of *Mass*, he still wanted it to sell. He knew that “classical music” at the time possessed a certain aesthetic. It was not yet infused with other genres of music, and so his audience probably did not expect to go hear a completely new type of singing. Perhaps Bernstein thought it was enough for him to throw a lot of different styles of music at his audience sung by experts in their respective styles, it might have been excessive for him to throw in a singer who mixed all of the different styles into one timbre.

“Performance practice or performing practice indicates the attempt to perform music in the way envisaged originally by the composer” (naxos.com). Every musical performer chooses different methods in attempting to perform the music true to the composer’s intent. These chosen methods have the ability to change with time, thereby changing the delivery of a piece of music.

Comparing the performances in 1971 and in 2008 illustrates ways in which differences in performance practices can radically change the meaning of a work. Marin Alsop’s performance of *Mass* is much different than Bernstein’s original production because of the performance techniques she and her musicians chose to employ in an attempt to keep it fresh and new. Their performance practices shed light on how much society has changed between 1971 and 2008. If society had not changed, many of these performances practices, or even the people who performed them, would not have appeared in any production of the *Mass*. This is the case for any choices made by musicians in their performances, as well as by people and their behaviors on an everyday basis.

Society always dictates what is appropriate and acceptable in regards to the way people act, speak, and generally represent themselves. One might wonder what influences society and what creates behavioral norms. Societal norms are largely manipulated by popular culture and the media, including music and the people making it. Keeping this idea in mind, one could say that the original production of Bernstein’s *Mass* had an influence on popular culture, though it is a stretch. However, its eclecticism and the way it was

performed may have inspired young musicians to become well versed in several different genres of music, similar to Jubilant Sykes.

The original performance practices in *Mass* could have influenced the popular perspective on the *Mass* itself. The first performances were revolutionary and sensational enough that people expect to be surprised when they see it even now. Because of this expectation, contemporary performances can take liberties in the way of performance practices in order to arouse that same sense of surprise from their audiences. Keeping this idea in mind, it is clear that *Mass* is still influencing society, but as it relates only to the *Mass*.

It can therefore be concluded that the exchange between social changes and performance practices is ongoing. Performance practices instigate social changes, which in turn have an effect on performance practices. The progressive nature of the 1971 performance of Bernstein's *Mass* inspired society to change in such a way that the performance practices employed in 2008 were different, but just as effective as a sound, passionate, thought-provoking work of art.

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*Soprano*

Recitative and Aria “Wiewohl, mein herz in Tränen schwimmt” “Ich will dir mein Herze schenken” from <i>Mattäus-Passion</i>	J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
“Et incarnatus est” from <i>Grosse Messe C Moll</i>	W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)
Ave Maria	Gounod (Bach) (1818-1893)
En Priere	Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)
Intermission	
Biblické písně 4. The Lord is my Shepherd 5. God! God! I Will Sing a New Song	Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)
“A Simple Song” from <i>Mass</i>	Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)
Alleluia	Ned Rorem (b. 1923)
Grateful	John Bucchino (b. 1952)

## Program Notes

The first aria is from *Matthäus-Passion* by Johann Sebastian Bach. The libretto, written by Christian Friedrich Henrici under the pseudonym of Picander, is based on chapters 26-27 of the Gospel of St. Matthew. It was composed in Leipzig around 1728-1729, making it a product of the Baroque Era. Its first performance was likely on Good Friday in 1729 in the church of St. Thomas in Leipzig Germany, where Bach lived at the time. Bach revised the work three times after the first performance, but the first revision in 1736 is the most universally performed version of the work. The Passion recounts the last few days of Christ's life including his capture, persecution, and ending with his crucifixion.

### Recitative:

In truth my heart in tears doth swim,  
That Jesus doth from me depart,  
But I am by his Testament consoled:  
His Flesh and Blood, O precious gift,  
Bequetheth he to mine own hands now.  
Just as he in the world unto his people  
Could never offer malice,  
He loveth them until the finish.

### Aria:

I will thee my heart now offer,  
Merse thyself, my health, in it!  
I would merse myself within thee;  
If to thee the world's too small,  
Ah, then shalt thou me alone  
More than world and heaven be.

The aria "Et incarnatus est" is from Mozart's *Mass in C Minor*, also known as his *Grand Mass*, composed in 1782 and premiered in 1793 at St. Peter's Abbey in Salzburg, Austria. There is no clear reason Mozart composed the

Mass. He had once worked under the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg composing simple Masses that were easier for a church congregation to sing, but when he decided to compose the *Grand Mass*, this employment had ceased. It appears as though he wrote it as a gift to his father if his father approve of his marriage or as a gift to his wife who had just given birth to their first child. The work was only half completed when it premiered and Mozart actually left Salzburg the day after it premiered never to return to Salzburg or touch the work again. This aria takes place during the “Credo,” during which the church-goers profess their faith.

And is incarnate  
By the Holy Spirit  
Of the Virgin Mary  
And Was Made Man.

Charles Gounod set the words of the Latin Prayer, *Ave Maria*, to J.S. Bach’s first prelude of *Das wohltemperirte Clavier* (*The well-tempered Clavier*). Gounod originally wrote the piece for violin and pianoforte in 1853, and then later added text to the melody for singers.

Hail Mary  
Full of Grace  
The Lord is with you  
Blessed are you among women,  
And the fruit of your womb, Jesus.  
Hail Mary.

Hail Mary  
Mother of God  
Pray for us sinners  
Now and in the  
Hour of our death.  
Hail Mary.

Gabriel Fauré composed *En Priere* during his second period of song. The text was written by Stéphan Bordèse. Fauré is celebrated as one of the greatest French composers of all time. He is credited for being one of the creators and perfectionists of the French, *mélodie* as an art form.

If the voice of a child can reach You,  
O my Father,  
Listen to the prayer of Jesus, on his knees before You!

If You have chosen me to teach your laws on earth,  
I will know how to serve You, noble King of kings,  
O Light!

On my lips, Lord, place the salutary truth,  
In order that he who doubts should with humility revere You!

Do not abandon me, give me the necessary gentleness,  
To ease suffering, to relieve sorrow, the misery!

Reveal Yourself to me, Lord, in whom I believe and hope:  
For You I wish to suffer and to die on the cross, at Calvary!

The second half of tonight's program is comprised of all religious songs from the 20<sup>th</sup>-century. In earlier eras of religious song, the music as well as the text distinguished a sacred song from a secular. In other words, even though a song had sacred text, it does not mean the song is sacred. The music could have been flamboyant in the sense that it did not follow musical idioms that contributed to the religiosity of the song. When the 20<sup>th</sup>-century rolled around, composers started breaking all sorts of these rules mandating the conservative musical style of religious music in terms of the tonalities or intervals the used in their compositions. Perhaps the melody would have been too risqué for a more conservative audience. This brings us back to the question of whether songs are religious solely based on their text or is it the whole package that makes a song religious?

The next set of songs is comprised two selections from *Biblické písně* (Biblical Songs) by Czechoslovakian composer Antonín Dvořák. Dvořák wrote the set of songs while living in New York in 1894. It was his last set before his death in 1904. The songs are all based on Psalms from the Bible.

Dvořák originally set the songs from Psalms in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Czech Protestant Bible, and then later created a setting in the German language, which required that he change the rhythm of the vocal line drastically. “The Lord is my Shepherd” is based on text from Psalm 23, verses 1-4 and “God! God! I Will Sing a New Song” is based on text from Psalm 144, verse 9 and Psalm 145, verses 2, 3, 5, and 6.

4. The Lord is my Shepherd

God is my Shepherd, I want for nothing.  
My rest is in the pleasant meadows,  
He leadeth me where quiet waters flow.

My fainting soul doth He restore,  
And guideth me in the ways of peace,  
To glorify is name.

And though in deaths' dark valley my steps must wander,  
My spirit shall not fear, for Thou art by me still;  
Thy rod and staff are with me, and thy shall comfort me.

5. God! God! I will Sing a New Song

I will sing new songs of gladness,  
I will sing Jehovah's praises  
Upon a ten-stringed psaltery.

Every day will I extol Thee,  
and will bless Thy holy name,  
I will bless Thy holy name.

Great is God and great His mercy;  
Who shall tell of all His greatness?  
Who shall his power declare?

My song shall be of praise and honor,  
And of Thy glorious acts,  
Thy works are wonderful, past our knowing.

Yea, men shall tell of Thy great kindness,  
And of Thy wondrous might,  
And my voice shall proclaim aloud Thy glory.

The final set includes songs with religious text composed by Americans. The first, “A Simple Song,” is from Leonard Bernstein's *Mass*. Leonard Bernstein was a note-worthy musician in America. He was a composer, educator, and

energetic conductor. He is perhaps most famous for his contributions to the Musical Theater realm, having composed musicals such as *West Side Story*, *Candide*, and *Wonderful Town*, among others. Bernstein's *Mass*, subtitled *A Theater Piece for Singers, Players, and Dancers*, was commissioned for the opening of the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. It premiered on September 8, 1971. Bernstein worked with many other artists in order to make the production happen. Stephen Schwartz, for instance, contributed to the text and Alvin Ailey choreographed the dances. Gordon Davidson directed the piece, Oliver Smith produced the sets, and Frank Thompson was responsible for the costumes.

The *Mass* employs very vividly the crisis of faith. The work uses the Latin text of the Mass Ordinary, but also uses tropes in which the characters convey their thoughts as the Mass ensues. The score calls for an orchestra, as well as a marching band and a rock band. It also calls for a solo Celebrant and a street choir, all of whom sing the tropes throughout the performance. Additionally, the score asks for a church choir, which sings primarily in Latin, and a boys' choir, which takes on the role of the altar boys. The work also utilizes many musical styles including popular music styles of the time, blues, rock, Broadway, electronic, orchestral, and modern 20<sup>th</sup>-century classical styles of music.

There is a lot of controversy surrounding the *Mass*, considering the fact that until the 1960s, the Mass was completely in Latin and secular styles of music were not allowed. Thus, the issue of blasphemy is commonly used when speaking of Bernstein's *Mass*. Bernstein made it clear that the work was not meant to be a setting of the Mass that would be used in a church setting. It was simply a performance of what people might be thinking while attending a Mass.

I am singing "A Simple Song," which by the Celebrant and serves as a call to worship. It is composed in a folk setting, using elements of Classical music, rock music, and Gregorian chant, but with sacred text. Keeping all these factors in mind, is "A Simple Song" a sacred song? It is often extracted from the *Mass* and sung in solo recitals (much like my own), but can also be sung in sacred settings. Different performers interpret the song in different ways and perform them as such.

In the second part of my Capstone project I will look at Bernstein's *Mass*, specifically looking at the topics mentioned above. I will consider performance practice and discography, comparing the different ways people interpret the song. I will also consider the idea of blasphemy as it relates to the specific Catholic standards set by the Second Vatican Council and musical style. Finally, I will also speak about society's perceptions and reactions to *Mass* and how it influenced the future of the work.

*Alleluia* was composed by Ned Rorem in 1946. He has written for chamber groups, orchestra, piano, and operas, as well as voice, for which he has composed over 500 songs. He is also a celebrated author of eighteen books

about his career as a composer, his personal life, and his view of music and musicians. He preferred to write for voice and used his own style of songwriting which made him one of the notable American composers in the twentieth century.

*Grateful* was written by John Bucchino, an American Cabaret and Musical Theater composer from New York City. He composed the music for the recent Broadway Musical *A Catered Affair* starring Harvey Fierstein and Faith Prince. The song “Grateful” was recorded on a CD of many other Bucchino originals also called *Grateful*.

Written Summary:  
Crossing Borders in Bernstein's *Mass*

My Capstone project deals with two important aspects of culture and to my own life, music and religion, and their relationship with one another. I performed a recital in November 2008 which featured different religious music from different musical eras and different musical genres. In singing so many different kinds of music, I tried to encourage the audience to reflect on what makes religious music religious. Is it the words or the music? Maybe it is a combination of the two.

I featured a song from Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* on my recital, called "Simple Song." This provided the connection to the second half of my project, which was a paper about Bernstein's *Mass*. In the paper, I explored the various reactions to the work and what provoked such reactions. I also investigated changes in society in order to make current productions a success.

On September 8, 1971, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts opened with one of the most controversial pieces of its time: Leonard Bernstein's *Mass*. The piece was commissioned by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis in honor of her late husband. Bernstein and John F. Kennedy attended Harvard University together and became friends during Kennedy's presidency. Bernstein was famous for his work in the world of Musical Theater on plays such as *West Side Story* and his work in opera with *Candide*. He was also famous for his contributions to the orchestra and choir.

Traditionally, Classical composers, such as Mozart and Beethoven, composed music for the Mass. The music they set was for the Mass Ordinary, or the parts of the Mass that stay the same from week to week. These settings were often for orchestra and choir and were suitable for use in a church setting.

Bernstein did the same, but in a different way. He subtitled the work, *A Theater Piece for Singers, Players, and Dancers*. It vividly depicted what went on during the Mass in the minds of those in the congregation. According to Bernstein's daughter, *Mass* especially exhibited thoughts that pertained to the crisis-of-faith, which is when a person questions their religious belief. He did this by composing music for the Mass Ordinary, using the pre-Vatican II Latin Mass, and by composing tropes that were sung by congregants. The tropes were in English and many were written by Stephen Schwartz, who was another Musical Theater composer, famous for *Godspell* at the time.

One of the most famous pieces from *Mass* was "Simple Song," sung by the Celebrant, who took the role of the Catholic priest. This song was a sort of Call-to-Worship, positioned near the beginning of the entire work. The Celebrant walks out in his vestments, holding a guitar, and singing in a style that was not characteristic of traditional "church music." The song has elements of popular folk music of the 1970s, with little hints of chant characteristic of the Mass. There are no barriers when it comes to "Simple Song." Anyone can sing it. It has been sung by Baritones, Sopranos, and Mezzo- Sopranos, as well as those who are young or old. It has also been sung

by singers trained in many different areas, including those who are classically trained or those who are trained in musical theater or jazz.

One might think that all of the music in *Mass* is like “Simple Song,” but it is not. “Simple Song” is only one of many types of music that can be heard in *Mass*. Bernstein was very progressive, especially in his use of quadraphonic tape, which is when four different audio tapes of different melodies were played all at once, creating a sort of multi-tonal, multi-metered cacophony. He also used hard rock, blues, military, and Broadway music to name a few. Bernstein also required quite a lot of people to produce such an expansive work. He used 200 performers in all, including a full marching band, a rock band, a boys’ choir, a classical choir, and a full orchestra, plus more.

It was Bernstein’s use of so many kinds of music that had reviewers and Catholics on edge. Many negative reviews were published after the work premiered in 1971. Reviewers thought the piece was tacky and trashy. Don Heckman, a reviewer for the New York Times, thought *Mass* was “self-indulgent,” and “arrogant.” He went so far as to write that the work’s “reach clearly exceeds its grasp”. He felt that Bernstein unsuccessfully tried too hard to fit every style he could into one piece seamlessly.

The Mass is a very important part of the Catholic faith. The Mass gives Catholics the opportunity to worship God and receive the Eucharist together. Catholics believe that during the Mass, the bread and wine are turned into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This transubstantiation occurs in

every Mass and it is a very important institution in the Catholic faith. Many Catholics thought Bernstein's *Mass* was sacrilegious.

The appropriateness of music for the Mass was determined by the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). Vatican II was a gathering of bishops and other important people in the Catholic church in an attempt to improve and revise the doctrine of the church. It met only a few years before Bernstein's *Mass* premiered. Vatican II made a lot of very significant changes in the church, especially as it pertained to the Mass. For instance, Masses were now in the vernacular. Vatican II also mandated that surrounding culture be integrated into the Mass setting, including music and the musical styles that should be used in the Mass. The council thought that these changes might help church-goers relate more to the Mass and therefore take more away from the Mass.

Even with these changes, Catholics still thought that popular culture in Bernstein's *Mass* was exploited, to the point of vandalizing the Mass.

Bernstein used the pre-Vatican II version of the Mass, which included the sacred Latin texts. There was dancing that could be viewed as scandalous, as well as actions performed by the Celebrant that is unacceptable behavior for a priest. To many Catholics, these elements made it blasphemous, including an Archbishop in Cincinnati, who practically forbade Catholics to see *Mass*.

It was the eclecticism of *Mass* that elicited the Catholic response; however, it was also the eclecticism that gave *Mass* its reputation. Everything about it is eclectic, including its characters. The Celebrant, for instance, is

very eclectic. He shows anger as well as compassion and peace, and he is eclectic musically in that he needs to be able to sing in several different styles. One might think he represents Jesus Christ, who was believed to have been very eclectic. He was human, but could perform miracles; and he expressed anger, but he was also the Son of God. Another might think that the Celebrant or *Mass* itself represents Bernstein, who was obviously quite eclectic. He was a conductor, an educator, an author, but he was also a composer of so many different kinds of music.

Another example of eclecticism can be seen in the casting. Jubilant Sykes is an example of a man chosen to play the Celebrant. Sykes is a classically trained baritone who has a background in blues and gospel. He is also quite well-versed in Broadway music, opera, jazz, and popular music. He is a very competent musician who is also a black man, which brings another dimension to the eclectic nature of *Mass*. In the 1970's, a black man probably would not have been chosen to play the leading role in a major production like *Mass*, considering its close proximity to the 1960's and the Civil Rights Movement.

Jubilant Sykes played the Celebrant in the most recent professional production of *Mass*, which was performed in October 2008 in honor of Bernstein's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (BSO) produced the piece under the direction of Marin Alsop. They performed in Baltimore as well as at Carnegie Hall and again at the Kennedy Center.

Nearly 40 years after the premiere, the reviews for the BSO performances were quite positive. The second half of my Capstone paper examined the reasons for the societal changes. First of all, society has had some time to adapt to Civil Rights and Catholics have had time to adapt to Vatican II and the new laws it presented. Secondly, Catholics have bigger worries right now, including the shortage of priests and sexual abuse within the walls of the church.

Lastly, the societal view of Classical music has changed. It is not easy being a classical composer right now. There is an expectation that contemporary composers will create atonal music unless they are composing music for musicals or popular musicians. In an attempt to get away from this reputation, a new genre of music was created called “Crossover” music. Crossover is the juxtaposition of classical music and popular forms of music, such as jazz or musical theater. Many composers have been successful in this genre. Much of Bernstein’s *Mass* could be considered crossover today. In a way, Bernstein was ahead of his time.

The conclusion of my paper deals with the importance of performance practice, which can be described as the choices a musician makes in performing a piece in order to portray the composer’s original intent. A lot of what a musician chooses to do is determined by what society expects and what they will enjoy. At the same time, past performance practices determine what society will expect. In Bernstein’s *Mass*, society has come to expect very passionate, almost over-the-top performance practices. They expect to be

surprised, which allows the artists to take their performances to the next level. Because of these expectations, *Mass* continues to have a huge influence on the world of music and continues to become mainstream repertoire for classical musicians.