

Natalie
Burdeny
as
Dinah



Ed
Moran
as
Sam

A one-act opera from the creator of WEST SIDE STORY

Trouble in Tahiti

Suburban Opera for the 21st Century

Score and Libretto by **Leonard Bernstein**

September 8 to 18, 2011 | Firehall Arts Centre

A featured presentation at the

2011 Vancouver International Fringe Festival

By arrangement with Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Sole Agent for Leonard Bernstein Music Publishing Company LLC, Publisher.

Synopsis

Duration: 45 minutes | **Format:** One-act opera in seven scenes

Time and Place: 1950s suburban America

Prelude – A smiling jazz Trio sings of perfect life in Suburbia, with its little white houses and happy, loving families.

Scene I – Sam and Dinah talk over breakfast, alternating between habitual bickering and lyrical moments of longing for kindness. Dinah accuses Sam of having an affair with his secretary, which he denies. She also reminds Sam that their son Junior's play is that afternoon, but Sam insists that his handball tournament at the gym is more important. They continue to argue until Sam leaves for the office.

Scene II – At work, Sam exudes confidence as he deftly handles business by telephone and promises to lend money to a friend. The Trio extols Sam's virtues.

Scene III – In her analyst's office, Dinah recalls a dream of an untended garden, choked with weeds ("I was standing in a garden"). In the dream, she hears a voice calling to her, describing a beautiful garden, a place of love and harmony, and she tries desperately to find it. Meanwhile, at Sam's office, he questions his secretary about their relationship, and when reminded of an incident, he insists that it was an accident and that she forget it ever happened.

Scene IV – Sam and Dinah accidentally run into each other on the street. Uncomfortable, each makes up an excuse so they won't have to have lunch together. After parting, they privately reflect in duet on the confusing and painful course their relationship has taken, and yearn for their lost happiness.

Interlude – Inside the house, the Trio sings of lovely life in Suburbia, detailing the comforts of the American dream.

Scene V – At the gym, Sam has just won the handball tournament. He sings triumphantly about the nature of men ("There's a law")— how some try with all their might to rise to the top, but will never win; while others, like him, are born winners and will always succeed.

Scene VI – Dinah has spent the afternoon at the cinema watching a South Sea romance movie called "Trouble in Tahiti." At first she dismisses it as sentimental drivel. But as she recounts the story and its theme song "Island Magic," backed by the Trio ("What a movie!"), she gets caught up in the escapist fantasy of love. Suddenly self-conscious, she stops herself, and prepares dinner. On his way home, Sam sings of another law of men— that even the winner must pay for what he gets—as he reluctantly returns to the discomfort of his home.

Scene VII – The Trio sings of evenings of domestic bliss in Suburbia. Sam and Dinah try half-heartedly to talk about their relationship, but their effort turns into yet another argument that devolves into uncomfortable silence. Neither of them has gone to Junior's play. Sam suggests they go to the movies, to see a new film about Tahiti; Dinah consents. As they leave, they each long for quiet and communion, but not knowing if it's possible to rediscover their love for one another, they opt for the "bought-and-paid-for magic" of the silver screen. The Trio makes its final ironic comment, echoing the movie's "Island Magic" theme song.

(Source: leonardbernstein.com)

Roles

Sam, a businessman

Dinah, his wife

Trio, a Greek chorus

There are only two main characters, a married couple named Sam and Dinah. Their son, Junior, is often referred to throughout but is never seen or heard. Other characters, including Sam's secretary Miss Brown, Dinah's therapist, and a listener in the hat shop—likely one of Dinah's female friends—are spoken to in certain scenes but never seen or heard.

The opera also features a chorus consisting of three people;

Bernstein refers to them as "A Greek chorus born of the radio commercial". They sing in quasi-gibberish, sounding like an advertising jingle, about an idyllic suburban middle class-life of the American 1950s. They pop up throughout the opera to sing of the perfect suburban family life born of the American dream, only to be cut off by a fight between the two or a miserable lament.



(Source: Wikipedia)

Tahiti-toids!

Trouble in Tahiti is a one-act opera in seven scenes composed by Leonard Bernstein with an English libretto by the composer. The opera received its first performance on 12 June 1952 at Bernstein's Festival of the Creative Arts on the campus of Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts to an audience of nearly 3,000 people. The work is about 40 minutes long. The NBC Opera Theatre subsequently presented the opera on television in November 1952; a production which marked mezzo-soprano Beverly Wolff's professional debut in the role of Dinah. Wolff later reprised the role in the New York City Opera's first staging of the work in 1958. Bernstein's later opera, *A Quiet Place* (1983), incorporates *Trouble in Tahiti* in the form of an extended flashback, and both versions are regularly performed worldwide. *(Source: Wikipedia)*

Premiere: 6/12/1952
Waltham, Massachusetts
Elliot Silverstein
Conductor: Leonard Bernstein
Company: Brandeis University

Moods: Comic, Romantic

Subjects: Contemporary, Relationships, Society

Style: Musically, Bernstein indulges in many of the styles he is most recognized for. The heroine's first aria has a wistful melancholy reminiscent of Aaron Copland's earlier vernacular works and of Bernstein's later writing in *West Side Story*, while the jazzy interludes harken back to the score Bernstein wrote for *On the Town*.

Vernacular: Bernstein tried to make his opera as real as possible. He wanted everything about it to be believable. He even went to great lengths to write in language that would be heard in everyday speech during that time. "All the music [in *Trouble in Tahiti*] derives from American vernacular roots, as do the words. And the words are very carefully set so that they will sound in the American cadence and with the American kind of syncopated, almost slurred quality".

Inspiration: While it was rumoured that the troubled young couple was based on Leonard Bernstein himself and his new bride, Felicia Monealegre, there is another, perhaps more plausible, theory that the story is based on the relationship of Bernstein's own mother and father.

Composer

Leonard Bernstein (*August 25, 1918 - October 14, 1990*) was an American conductor, composer, author, music lecturer and pianist. He was among the first conductors born and educated in the United States of America to receive worldwide acclaim. According to *The New York Times*, he was "one of the most prodigiously talented and successful musicians in American history."

His fame derived from his long tenure as the music director of the New York Philharmonic, from his conducting of concerts with most of the world's leading orchestras, and from his music for *West Side Story*, as well as *Candide*, *Wonderful Town*, *On the Town* and his own *Mass*.

Bernstein was also the first conductor to give numerous television lectures on classical music, starting in 1954, continuing until his death. In addition, he was a skilled pianist, often conducting while performing piano concertos simultaneously.

As a composer he was prolific, writing symphonies, ballet music, operas, chamber music, pieces for the piano, other orchestral and choral works, and other concert and incidental music, but the tremendous success of *West Side Story* remained unequalled by his other compositions.

Leonard Bernstein was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts. He took piano lessons as a boy and attended the Garrison and Boston Latin Schools. At Harvard University, he studied with Walter Piston, Edward Burlingame-Hill, and A. Tillman Merritt, among others. Before graduating in 1939, he made an unofficial conducting debut with his own incidental music to "The Birds," and directed and performed in Marc Blitzstein's "The Cradle Will Rock." Then at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, he studied piano with Isabella Vengerova, conducting with Fritz Reiner, and orchestration with Randall Thompson.

In 1990, Bernstein received the Praemium Imperiale, an international prize created in 1988 by the Japan Arts Association and awarded for lifetime achievement in the arts. Bernstein used the \$100,000 prize to establish The Bernstein Education Through the Arts (BETA) Fund, Inc. before his death on October 14, 1990.

Bernstein was the father of three children -- Jamie, Alexander, and Nina -- and the grandfather of four: Francisca, Evan, Anya and Anna.

(Sources: Wikipedia / leonardbernstein.com)

The Company

Natalie Burdeny ~ Dinah

With her performance described as "*human, multi-faceted, emotional and real*", Canadian Contralto, Natalie Burdeny is a versatile and sought-after performer. After making her debut in the title role of Carmen, Hilary Clark (Opera Canada 2011), described her voice as "*... perfect for the part of Carmen. She showed an enviable understanding of the role, careful use of the many nuances of her vocal arsenal, to portray the vagaries of Carmen's personality*". Her repertoire includes; Title Role and Mercedes (Carmen), Madame de la Haltière (Cendrillon), Dorabella (Cosi fan tutte), Hata (Prodaná Nevesta), Zweite Dame (Die Zauberflöte), Marcellina (Le nozze di Figaro), Berta (Il Barbiere di Siviglia), and Mother's Voice (Les Contes d'Hoffmann). In addition to her musical pursuits, she is the Founder and Artistic Director for Vancouver Concert Opera Co-Operative and Vancouver Summer Opera Studio, as well as Administrator for Lyric Opera Studio of Weimar (Germany). More info is available at www.natalieburdeny.com.

Ed Moran ~ Sam

Baritone Ed Moran is from Anchorage, Alaska where he finished his Bachelor of Vocal Performance in 2005. In 2008 he completed his Masters in Opera Performance at UBC. Praised for his "gusto and panache", he made his professional American debut as Benoit/Alcindoro with Opera San Luis Obispo in La Bohème. Among other roles Mr. Moran has been seen across Canada in the roles of Capulet in Gounod's Romeo et Juliette, Il Conte d'Almaviva in Le Nozze di Figaro, Sharpless in Madama Butterfly, and Frank in Die Fledermaus.

Katherine Landry ~ Trio

Lauded for her rich tone and engaging stage presence, Mezzo Soprano Katherine Landry's recent performances include the creation of Laura in Tom Cone/Edward Top's 'Love Thy Neighbour,' Dorabella in Così fan Tutte (Lyric Opera Studio Weimar), and Zia in Madama Butterfly (Vancouver Opera). Other credits include Marcellina in Le Nozze di Figaro, Meg in Little Women, and Olga in Evgeni Onegin, as well as Handel's Messiah, Vivaldi's Gloria, Bach's St. Matthew Passion, and Saint-Saens' Christmas Oratorio. Upcoming engagements include the Mother in the 2011/2012 Vancouver Opera School Tour of Hansel and Gretel, and appearances with Vancouver's professional, self-directed chamber vocal ensemble 'musica intima'.

Paul Just ~ Trio

Hailing from South Dakota, lyric tenor Paul Just, is a graduate of St. John's University, Minnesota and an M.Mus graduate from the Opera program at the University of British Columbia under the direction of Nancy Hermiston. Paul currently studies with Canadian Baritone Peter Barcza. Paul has performed in a variety of operas, including roles in Le

nozze di Figaro, Die Zauberflöte, Die Fledermaus, La bohème, Lucia di Lammermoor, The Bohemian Girl and Rigoletto. He also had the distinction of premiering the title role in a new opera, The King's Tower, by American composer Tim Cheesebrow. Paul has been part of the Vancouver Opera Chorus since 2005, appearing in Turandot, Eugene Onegin and most recently, the world premiere of John Estacio's Lillian Alling.

Grant Wardlow ~ Trio

Tenor, Grant Wardlow is thrilled to be joining this talented cast of Trouble in Tahiti! Having studied music at The Victoria Conservatory of Music and McGill University, he is now under the tutelage of International Soprano Heidi Klassen. Grant recently received a glowing review in Opera Canada Magazine for his portrayal of the ugly stepsister, Dorothy, in Massenet's Cendrillon.

Kathleen Lohrenz Gable ~ Musical Direction

Kathleen Lohrenz Gable's professional career includes experiences as a recitalist, voice coach & accompanist, and as a musical director and rehearsal pianist for opera and musical theatre productions in Canada and the USA. She has taught in the music programs for the University of Michigan, Wilfrid Laurier University, and the University of Windsor. Currently, Kathleen teaches Applied Piano and is Music Director for the Music Theatre Ensemble at the University of Saskatchewan. As a member of the faculty of OPERA NUOVA, Edmonton's national-level summer training program for opera singers and pianists, Kathleen has conducted Puccini's "Suor Angelica", Copland's "The Tender Land" and Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel" among others. She records regularly with CBC Saskatchewan, and has conducted the Saskatoon Symphony in performances of "Amahl and the Night Visitors" by Menotti. Kathleen is a Guest Coach for the Emerging Artists Program at Calgary Opera.

Anthony Wade-Cooper ~ Stage Manager

Anthony Wade-Cooper has been lucky enough to work with some of Vancouver's favourite actors and directors in his short career in stage management. *"I am grateful for the opportunity to work on this rarely performed but really enchanting piece of Bernstein. I am sure you will enjoy it as much as we do!"*

Wayne Gilbert ~ Assistant Stage Manager

Wayne supports his theatre habit by working as an RN for Providence Health Care. Previous credits include 'What about luv?' (DSR Productions), Cinderella (DragonDiva Operatic Theatre) and Waste (United Players). Thanks to Verena for getting him into all this in the first place!

Philip Schulze ~ Lighting Design

Philip Schulze is an award-winning designer (winning the Best Lighting Design award from the Community Theatre Coalition), pyrotechnics designer, technical director/coordinator, and technical theatre instructor/designer. He was one of only 28 Follow Spot Operators for the Opening and Closing ceremonies at the 2010 Olympic

Games. He has worked on many Vancouver Moving Theatre and Heart of the City Festival events and assisted significantly with the lighting design for "Bruce the Musical" for Theatre in the Raw. He is excited to be working with the VanCOCO team on this production.

Andrea Rabinovitch ~ Choreography

Andrea Rabinovitch, has made her living in theatre and dance as an educator, choreographer, writer, performer, publicist and administrator for thirty years. Having taught at five post-secondary institutions including UBC Theatre and Film and Studio 58 Langara College, created/ ran over three dance companies/schools (Mile Zero Dance, Dance Alberta, Stagecoach School Dance Division), choreographed over 20 musicals, and taught at studios and independently to students aged three to sixty three; Andrea's passion for theatre and dance is boundless. A graduate of the Grant MacEwan College Dance program, she was a member of the original Brian Webb Dance Company and has studied ballet, jazz, modern, hip hop, African all over the world including New York where she studied with Lynn Simonson and so uses Simonson Technique as the basis for her jazz classes. Presently, she teaches dance in the general program at Arts Umbrella and runs her business Little Luxuries, Edible Art for All Occasions, with her business partner Jessica Knight.

Behind the Scenes (because it takes a team!)

Natalie Burdeny, Founder & Artistic Director | Co-Producer Trouble in Tahiti

Ed Moran, Co-Producer & Stage Direction Trouble in Tahiti

Vince Hemingson, Photography

Jana Curll, Art & Illustration

Scarlett Ballentyne, Hair & Make-Up (Photos)

Alan Maldonado, Videographer

Keepin' up with the Joneses!

Website: vancoco.ca

Blog: vancocoblog.blogspot.com

Facebook: facebook.com/VanCOCOOp

Twitter: [@VanCOCOOp](https://twitter.com/VanCOCOOp)

eMail: info@vancoco.ca