

New York's No Angel

At 27, Leonard Bernstein is still young enough to prefer valor to discretion. At a music panel held by the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship in New York last week, he tore into the sponsorship of the New York City Symphony, an orchestra which he regularly conducts and which is part of the New York City Center of Music and Drama, Inc.

"When I travel around the country," Bernstein said, abruptly departing from his discussion of "The Soviet Influence in American Music," "people always . . . ask me what they can do to give their cities a civic orchestra like New York's . . . I hasten to assure you in front of all these people, that it's a fraud. We haven't a penny from the city."

Rash though such an accusation might seem, at least Bernstein cannot be accused of biting the hand that buys his batons. Like his predecessor in the job, Leopold Stokowski, he receives no salary. Further, as the successful composer of the ballet "Fancy Free," the Broadway hit "On the Town," and the "Jeremiah" Symphony, and as a maestro who has guest-conducted most of the nation's leading symphonies, he can have almost any job he wants.



Bernstein: La Guardia rebuked him

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The word "fraud," however, was more than Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia could take, quietly. "I am very fond of Mr. Bernstein," the mayor replied, "and I am sure he will on reflection see that he was most unfortunate in his choice of words . . . A very big contribution was made [by the city] in the building and putting it in shape for concerts."

Somewhat sobered the next day—and lavish with praise for La Guardia's aid in establishing the Center — Bernstein answered that he had referred to the "misapprehension that the City Center is, in fact, a municipally subsidized venture."

Actually, although the City Center has operated in an aura of civic pride fostered by La Guardia and Newbold Morris, it did announce at its start in 1943 it was a private, nonprofit organization. The city owns the building but leases it to the Center at a minimum of \$10,000 a year through 1950—only enough, it is claimed, to pay taxes. The Center runs itself on subscriptions, gifts, office rentals, rental of the auditorium, and box-office receipts on its popular opera seasons. Last year, the Center's music activities—opera and symphony—ran up a deficit of \$35,908.71.