

In 1954, a young Leonard Bernstein makes his first television appearance as he explains (and illustrates) why Beethoven's Fifth Symphony was so revolutionary for its time.

Using material Beethoven had discarded, during the creation of his work, Bernstein also reveals what *might* have been (had Beethoven not changed his mind).

The program - created for Omnibus and broadcast in the early years of television - was so successful that Bernstein received a great deal of "fan mail." The following is an example, in which a California mother praised him for making Beethoven's 5th clear to young and old alike:

November 15, 1954

Dear Mr. Bernstein:

I'm not the person to write fan letters but after your appearance on Omnibus yesterday, I felt this is one letter I must write.

I have never enjoyed t.v. in the five years we have had a set, until yesterday.

Your dissertation [sic] of Beethoven's Fifth brought me back to the old days of Frederick Stock & the children's concerts in Chicago. Stock would always interrupt a symphony to explain one passage.

I don't see why you, or someone like you couldn't do a music appreciation program on the t.v. for all of us who are starved for the classics & would like to know more about the composers & the music.

...Even something for children. I know my children aren't getting the chance at concerts that I had. We are to [sic] far away from town to take them to concerts & I don't drive.

The children of today will grow up to be cowboy morons if some of the finer things don't come thru the t.v. screen soon.

Our seven year old son watched you yesterday and loved every second of it. Just think what a steady diet of music, good music, would do for these children.

I didn't mean to go on & on, but just to say thanks... and I hope we'll hear from you soon.

The whole world heard from Bernstein "soon" because his career as a famous musician, composer and conductor continued for the rest of his life.

See, also:

[Bernstein Explains Beethoven's 5th Symphony, Part 2](#)

[Bernstein Explains Beethoven's 5th Symphony, Part 3](#)

[Bernstein Explains Beethoven's 5th Symphony, Part 4](#)

Credits:

Video clip of Bernstein explaining Beethoven, online via YouTube.

Quoted fan-mail letter, online courtesy [Leonard Bernstein.com](http://LeonardBernstein.com).

All of [Bernstein's historic broadcasts](#) for the Omnibus program were released on DVD in January of 2010. Copyright, Omnibus (or its successors), all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with the broadcasts.

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Bernstein-Explains-Beethoven-s-Fifth0>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Bernstein-Explains-Beethoven-s-Fifth0>