

## BERNSTEIN@100

## The Youth for Victory Rally and Bernstein's 'Victory Jive'

By Leonard J. Lehrman  
Special to The Advocate

BOSTON, 1942 – The preserved copy of the souvenir program for the Oct. 11, 1942 Youth for Victory Rally at the Hotel Bradford includes Emily Rosenstein's translation of her interview with Hero of the Soviet Union Lieutenant Vladimir Pchelintsev (1919-1997), with the headline, "Red Army Lieutenant Expresses Confidence in America's Strength."

Long articles preceded and followed the event.

First, there was a four-page newsletter put out by the Junior Committee of Russian War Relief dated October 1942 and titled, "Spirit of '42 vol. 1 #1." It included an article on the rally that mentioned "the 'Victory Jive,' which promises to be the new nationwide 'dansen' ... an original song with music by Lenny Bernstein, assistant to Dr. Serge Koussevitzky, and words by Sam Abelow."

**"Remembering Solomon Michoels & Emily Lehrman," with Leonard Lehrman & Helene Williams; Nov. 12, 7 p.m., Center Makor, Brookline; 617-771-4870**

The "mammoth rally" was to be "directed by Dona Jaques, N.E. Conservatory of Music," who sang Russian songs at a Russian War Relief party six days later. The manuscript of Bernstein's song is in the Gershwin Fund Collection at the Library of Congress, and includes notes, signed by "Lenny" to "Donna" asking that composer [Harold] Shapero (1920-2013) be approached to arrange the piece, and, "Please don't use my name on this."

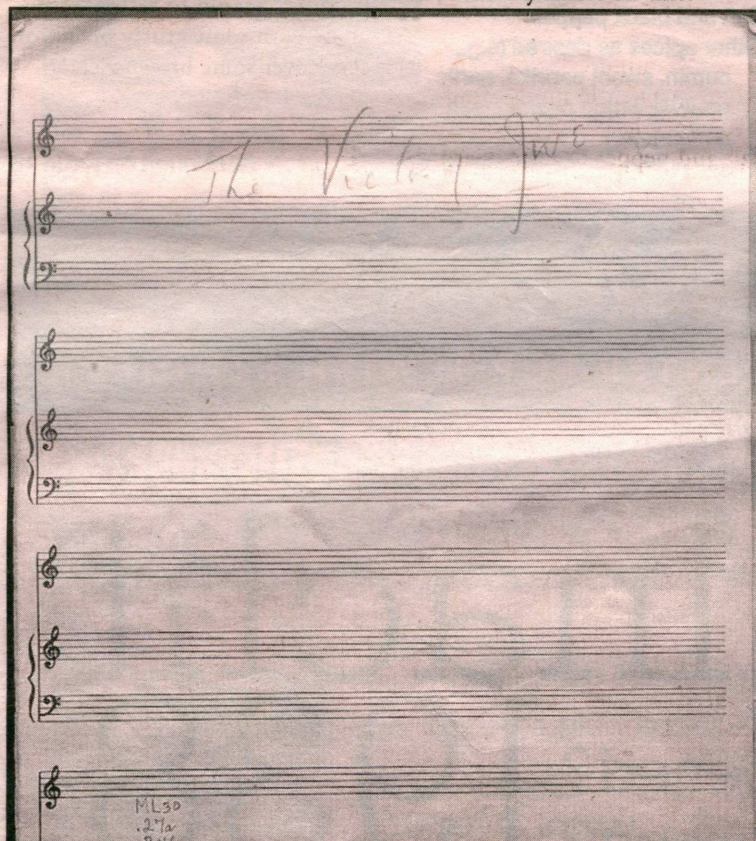


IMAGE COURTESY THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS AND THE LEONARD BERNSTEIN OFFICE

Copy of the title page of the manuscript of Leonard Bernstein's composition, "The Victory Jive," created in 1942

Bernstein was at this time writing and arranging popular music in New York, often using the pseudonym Lenny Amber. He did apparently perform the work at the rally, however, perhaps as a solo piano piece. We know he was there, because his FBI file says he was! (See Barry Seldes, "Leonard Bernstein: The political life of an American musician," University of California Press, 2009.)

On Dec. 14 and 15, 2017, permission was obtained from The Leonard Bernstein Office and from Sam Abelow of Westport, Conn., grandson of the original lyricist, to perform the work in a lecture/recital of scholarly context, including numerous events planned for 2018 in celebration of Bernstein's centennial. It has been performed in concerts in Florida on Feb. 18, 2018 and again in Great Neck, N.Y. on April 29, 2018.

Future performances are planned at similar concerts on Long Island, N.Y. on Oct. 5 and Nov. 25, and in a concert organized in memory of Emily and Michoels on Sunday, Nov. 11 at Temple Reyim, 1860 Washington St., in Newton. It will also be the subject of a paper accepted for delivery in February 2019 at the American Music Roundtable of the annual Music Library Association Convention in St. Louis.

On Oct. 12, 1942, the Boston Globe published a long article on the rally, with no mention of Bernstein, but with a photo of 12 major organizers, captioned, including "Emilie Rosenstein, B.U. Russian student." [sic]

Emily's minutes for the junior executive board meeting of June 29, 1943 contain the first mention of the Russian War Relief reception July 19 for the two Soviet Jewish delegates, Prof. Solomon Michoels and Lt. Col. Itzik Feffer. The numerous sponsors of a skit contest were to be invited.

Al Capp accepted the invitation to judge the skit contest, as reported July 9, 1943



ILLUSTRATION COURTESY LEONARD J. LEHRMAN

### A page from Emily's scrapbook

in both the Globe and the Traveler, and posed for a picture with Rita, Olga Bogach and her sister "Dolly" (Vera) – all in Russian costume – in the Aug. 6, 1943 Globe.

A flyer announced the contest as being from July 1 to Aug. 31, though it was later extended to Oct. 31. The judges eventually comprised Mrs. Osgood Perkins, Capp, Lillian Arnold, Maynard Savin, and Emily. There were two classifications: Professional or Non-Professional, and 11 suggested subjects:

Russian sailors in America give thanks to Russian War Relief;  
Guerrilla warfare incidents;  
Milk for the 13 million evacuated children in Russia;  
Clothing from America to Russia;  
American engineers in Russia;  
win the war and build the peace together;

Friendship by letter writing (Russia is asking for letters to her people);

Medicine: the need for surgical supplies;

Russian family stories;

Scene at a Russian hospital;  
Sniper skit: this lends itself well to humorous appeal; and

Any humorous attack on Axis personalities and their fate in Russia.

Emily took and/or preserved minutes of Russian War Relief's junior executive board meetings of July 13, 20, 27; Aug. 3, 10, 17, 24; Sept. 9; Oct. 3; Nov. 21; and Dec. 5, 1943; and Feb. 14 and April. 16, 1944.

No announcement of the contest's winner has been found. But "The Letter V" by "E. Raymond," translated by Emily, presented at Radcliffe on Feb. 13, 1944, may have been it.