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Metropolitan Diary

DEAR DIARY:

I was, for 18 years, Leonard Bernstein's assistant and editor and the conductor of many premieres of his works.

Probably the most painful part of the post-mortem world for Lenny's three children was the disposal of his clothes after their father's death in 1990. One autumn day a package arrived at our home in Chelsea. When I opened it, I found a dark blue cashmere pullover and a deep purple cardigan with a note from the kids. They had decided that these two garments should be mine.

Here was a perfect sartorial metaphor for Leonard Bernstein. While the dark blue pullover was something no one would ever notice, the cardigan said, "Look at me!"

A few days after the arrival of this magical package, the weather was just right for a public airing of the purple cardigan, and I screwed up my courage and wore it to a meeting I had uptown.

When I got into the subway at Seventh Avenue and 18th Street, I thought to myself, "Surely this is the very first time this cardigan has been in a subway!"

I saw a man enter the far end of the car to my left. He was badly dressed, had a cardboard cup in his hand and was surely going to ask all of us for money.

As he got closer, I realized that he wasn't stopping. He was walking through the car and he was singing: "The people ride in a hole in the ground. New York, New York! It's a helluva..." and he was gone through the door that took him to the next car.

I had taken Lenny's cardigan for its first ride on a subway. And there was laughter in that hole in the ground.

John Mauceri

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