

## **Seymour: An Introduction**

No, this is *not* a filmed version of J.D. Salinger's late novella. Rather it is a paean to a little-known but treasured member of the classical musical world, the 87-year-old pianist and piano teacher Seymour Bernstein. A Jersey boy long established in New York, Bernstein was a keyboard prodigy who had a solid concert career until 1977 when, at 50, he gave up the stage to concentrate on composing and passing on his knowledge to talented pupils

The film, enlivened by ample interviews with the charming Bernstein himself, was directed by his new best friend, actor Ethan Hawke, who met the musician at a dinner party a few years before and set out to tell his story. Hawke captures the pianist coaxing and challenging his (very skilled) pupils, ruminating about his life in music and on the arts generally, and, winningly, puttering around the tiny Manhattan apartment he has lived in for almost 60 years. A middle section, adorned with clips and clippings, also gives a neat resumé of his concert career, narrates a sweet story of his successful concretizing during the Korean War, and shows Seymour's tarter side through his caustic remarks about his great contemporary, Glenn Gould.

A sweet finale is built into the documentary, with Hawke setting up Bernstein to perform in public for the first time in 35 years, when he plays a recital in the Steinway Hall in New York. For classical music fans, the multiple excerpts of works by Schubert, Chopin, Mozart, Schumann and others will just whet their appetites for more, while any moviegoer will be left with memories of a true talent and a graceful soul.

*(Rated PG, the film lasts 84 min.)*

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