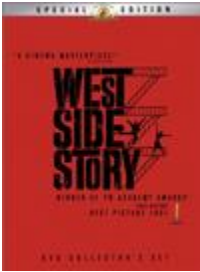


West Side Story (1961)



Directed by Jerome Robbins & Robert **Music by** Leonard Bernstein. **Genre:** Musical / Romance.

An "**All-time classic**": Romeo and Juliet on the Mean Streets of gang -infested New York City.

User Rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆ 7.7/10 (9,185 votes)

Country: USA **Language:** English / Spanish

Runtime: 151 min

"West Side Story" won ten Academy Awards, making it one of the most honored of Hollywood films. It is the adaptation of a successful Broadway stage musical.

Essentially a re-telling of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the story focuses on street gangs in New York City – the Jets, an Anglo gang, and the Sharks, a Puerto Rican gang. The two gangs are boiling over with youthful resentment, frustration, alienation and racial prejudice. But on the edge of this conflict, something beautiful is happening – Jet-turned-good Tony (Richard Beymer) is falling in love with the Shark gang leader's sister, Maria (Natalie Wood). As the conflict between the gangs escalates, this forbidden romance is bound to lead to tragedy.

Ahead of its time in 1961, *West Side Story* remains fresh, energetic and hugely entertaining decades after its release. Packed with songs and dance, this is a musical unlike other musicals. There are light moments, but this is mostly about as serious as a musical could ever be. Highly stylized, the movie still manages to tell a compelling story, with a heart-breaking romance.

Discussion:

1. Which character do you find most interesting and why?
2. Which scene do you find most memorable and why?
3. Did you have much difficulty with the language and accents?
4. Did you find the romance convincing?
5. In your opinion, how well was the music and dancing integrated with the story?
6. Do you think the film is "timeless" or does it seem "dated" to you?
7. If you were making a modern Romeo and Juliet, where would you set it? Which groups would you use in place of the warring Montague and Capulet families of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet?