

BUZZ EXTRA

WEST SIDE STORY



May 3-15
Click here for tickets.

PlayhouseSquare

FEATURED ARTICLES



MIRRORING REAL LIFE
WEST SIDE STORY MIRRORS REAL LIFE

"IT SPEAKS TO SO MANY PEOPLE" ON WSS

Talking with Ryan Ghyssels

Click here to read more...

WEST SIDE STORY MIRRORS REAL LIFE
Click here to read more.



ENRICH YOUR EXPERIENCE

Pre-Show Talks with Joe Garry

Click here to read more...



FUN FEATURES

Have you ever fallen in love with someone that your family and friends did not approve of?

Yes

No

[View Results](#)

[Vote Now](#)

Official West Side Story Website
Follow West Side Story on Twitter
Like West Side Story on Facebook

ALL ARTICLES

SPOTLIGHT

SOMETHING'S COMING, SOMETHING GOOD.



Photo Credit: Kyle Harris and Ali Ewoldt;
Photo by: © Joan Marcus, 2010

"Could it be? Yes, it could. Something's coming, something good." WEST SIDE STORY rumbles into PlayhouseSquare as part of the KeyBank Broadway Series May 3-15.

"This high-energy WEST SIDE STORY revival is as powerful as the original, yet feels refreshed. It's a beautifully balanced success that straddles honorable homage with authentic, modern sensibilities. You'll be wowed by the athleticism in the dances and moved by the gorgeous harmonies and musical artistry." *BroadwayWorld.com*

"WEST SIDE STORY is spectacular. It's more than a revival; it's a renewal of everything that made the original production so unforgettable." *The Oakland Press*

[Read More...](#)

SPONSORED BY

Buzz Extra is a publication of the Community Engagement & Education Department at PlayhouseSquare

Vice President of Theatricals:
Gina Vernaci

Director of Community Engagement & Education:
Colleen Porter

Director of Ticket Sales & Marketing:
Autumn Kiser



Home

Something's Coming, Something Good

Tony + Maria = Romeo + Juliet

Who Wrote the Lyrics?

Talking with Dance Captain Ryan Ghysels

West Side Story Mirrors Real Life

Enrich Your Experience:
Broadway Buzz Events

Recommended Reading from
Cleveland Public Library

Editors:
Linda Jackson, Cindi Szymanski

Writer:
Robin Pease

Photos:
Joan Marcus

PRINTABLE VERSION: 

Download and read the printable version of the
Buzz (535Kb in PDF format) [here](#)

Archives:
[Blue Man Group](#)
[Billy Elliot The Musical](#)
[South Pacific](#)
[Shrek The Musical](#)
[Les Miserables](#)

FEEDBACK: 

We welcome your feedback and suggestions for the
Buzz Extra. Please email
ArtsEducation@PlayhouseSquare.org

Ohio Arts Council
A STATE AGENCY
THAT SUPPORTS PUBLIC
PROGRAMS IN THE ARTS



BUZZ EXTRA

WEST SIDE STORY



May 3-15
Click here for tickets.

PlayhouseSquare

FEATURED ARTICLES



MIRRORING
REAL LIFE
BEAT FILE
MIRROBORING

"IT SPEAKS TO SO MANY PEOPLE" ON WSS
Talking with Ryan Ghysels
Click here to read more...

WEST SIDE STORY MIRRORS REAL LIFE
Click here to read more.



ENRICH YOUR EXPERIENCE
Pre-Show Talks with Joe Garry
Click here to read more...

FUN FEATURES

Have you ever fallen in love with someone that your family and friends did not approve of?

Yes

No

[View Results](#)

[Vote Now](#)

[Official West Side Story Website](#)
[Follow West Side Story on Twitter](#)
[Like West Side Story on Facebook](#)

ALL ARTICLES

SOMETHING'S COMING, SOMETHING GOOD.



Photo Credit: National Tour of West Side Story
Photo by: © Joan Marcus, 2010

"Could it be? Yes, it could. Something's coming, something good." **WEST SIDE STORY** rumbles into PlayhouseSquare as part of the KeyBank Broadway Series May 3-15.

"This high-energy WEST SIDE STORY revival is as powerful as the original, yet feels refreshed. It's a beautifully balanced success that straddles honorable homage with authentic, modern sensibilities. You'll be wowed by the athleticism in the dances and moved by the gorgeous harmonies and musical artistry." *BroadwayWorld.com*

"WEST SIDE STORY is spectacular. It's more than a revival; it's a renewal of everything that made the original production so unforgettable." *The Oakland Press*

"This WEST SIDE STORY is fluent in the language of the heart." *The Washington Post*

"This refreshed staging proves how strongly the basic vision of the collaborators holds up in the face of political, social or demographic changes; perhaps even more so in the inherent universality of the musical's theme — the power of romantic love to defy family and the world remains its driving force." *CurtainUp*

Awards

Home

Something's Coming, Something Good

Tony + Maria = Romeo + Juliet

Who Wrote the Lyrics?

Talking with Dance Captain Ryan Ghyssels

West Side Story Mirrors Real Life

Enrich Your Experience:
Broadway Buzz Events

Recommended Reading from
Cleveland Public Library

WEST SIDE STORY has been one of the most popular musicals since it opened in 1957. It has had four official Broadway revivals and been made into a film that won 11 Oscars. It has three Tony awards, a Grammy award for best musical show album, one Theatre World award, one Drama Desk award and 13 Tony nominations.

There have been 40,000 productions of WEST SIDE STORY all over the world. The show has been translated into many different languages including: [Japanese](#), [Czech](#), [Polish](#), [Korean](#), [Swedish](#), [Hungarian](#), and [Italian](#), just to name a few. This is a testament to the popularity, power and universal appeal of the show.

Synopsis

The West Side of New York City, 1950s

Two rival gangs wreak havoc on a city as they fight to maintain bragging rights to their "turf." The Jets are from the city while the Sharks are from Puerto Rico.

Uncomfortable with the Spanish language and culture, the Jets want to have a rumble to determine who will rule the land.

In the midst of this chaos, Tony, a former Jet, falls in love with Maria, the sister of the leader of the Sharks.

Can the two lovers find a way to end the feud and be together?

Did You Know?

Arthur Laurents, the director of the WEST SIDE STORY revival told *The Los Angeles Times*, "I couldn't just do a replica of the original. We had to ask ourselves: Why are we doing it now?...The Sharks are isolated, they face terrible bigotry, and we could illustrate this now by using Spanish in key songs and scenes. It was the kind of change the show needed."

Consequently, the revival of WEST SIDE STORY is bilingual with some of the lines and lyrics in Spanish as well as English.

To write the Spanish lyrics, Lin-Manuel Miranda was brought aboard. Miranda was no stranger to Broadway musicals and Spanish. He wrote and starred in the Tony-award winning show about a Latino neighborhood in New York City called *In The Heights*. Miranda had artistic license in re-writing lines and lyrics. He explained to *The New York Daily News*, "I could use whatever imagery that would work in Spanish, but the lyrics had to rhyme for the English listener."

BUZZ EXTRA

WEST SIDE STORY



May 3-15
Click here for tickets.

PlayhouseSquare

FEATURED ARTICLES



MIRRORING
REAL LIFE
BEAT FILE
MIRRORING

"IT SPEAKS TO
SO MANY
PEOPLE" ON WSS

Talking with
Ryan Ghysels

Click here to read more...

WEST
SIDE
STORY
MIRRORS
REAL LIFE

Click here to read more.



ENRICH YOUR
EXPERIENCE

Pre-Show Talks
with Joe Garry

Click here to read more...

FUN FEATURES

Have you ever fallen in love with someone that your family and friends did not approve of?

Yes

No

[View Results](#)

[Vote Now](#)

[Official West Side Story Website](#)
[Follow West Side Story on Twitter](#)
[Like West Side Story on Facebook](#)

ALL ARTICLES

TONY + MARIA = ROMEO + JULIET

According to *Variety*, "the Shakespearian perspective on rival New York City gangs is as timeless in its poignancy as the universal despair over senseless gang violence."

WEST SIDE STORY is based on the play by William Shakespeare. But did you know that Shakespeare's play was based on numerous other sources?

Shakespeare
Shakespeare was notorious for borrowing ideas from other writers and stories of his time.

The following pieces of literature probably served as a **foundation** for his classic play *Romeo and Juliet*:

- Arthur Brook's 1562 poem *The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Juliet*
- William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure* written before 1580
- Matteo Bandello's 1554 novella *Giulietta e Romeo*
- Masuccio Salemitano's story from *Il Novellino*
- Luigi Da Porto's 1530 "Ritrovata di Due Nobili Amanti" (A Story Newly Found of Two Noble Lovers)



Leonard Bernstein told the Dramatists Guild symposium that WEST SIDE STORY was originally "conceived on the East Side of New York, and was a kind of *East Side Story* version of *Romeo and Juliet* involving, as the feuding parties, Catholics and Jews. And the time was the coincidence of the Passover/Easter season, in which feelings in the streets ran very high. And there was a lot of slugging and some bloodletting, which seemed to match the Romeo story very well."

East Side Story
But *East Side Story* had already been told in a play that had been on Broadway for five years, made into two different films and been a weekly radio series called *Abie's Irish Rose*. This comedy dealt with a Catholic girl who marries a Jewish boy and the oppositions their families have.

Jerome Robbins and Leonard Bernstein, the creators of WEST SIDE STORY, noticed that New York in the 1950s had:

- 80 -100 gangs of diverse backgrounds

Home

Something's Coming, Something Good

Tony + Maria = Romeo + Juliet

Who Wrote the Lyrics?

Talking with Dance Captain Ryan Ghyssels

West Side Story Mirrors Real Life

Enrich Your Experience:
Broadway Buzz Events

Recommended Reading from
Cleveland Public Library

- 75,000 Puerto Ricans migrating to the city
- Neighborhoods with signs in Spanish
- Turf wars between rival gangs splashing the newspaper headlines

Consequently, *East Side Story* was about to become *WEST SIDE STORY*...set in Manhattan where today's Lincoln Center was once a Latino neighborhood.

This new show seemed like the story was ripped from the headlines, and staying with the idea of *Romeo and Juliet*, Arthur Laurents, who wrote the book, used the basic format of the Shakespeare play for this new musical.

How does *WEST SIDE STORY* compare to Shakespeare's ***Romeo and Juliet***?

Similarities in Characters:

- The Jets are the Montagues
- The Sharks are the Capulets
- Tony is Romeo
- Maria is Juliet
- Anita is the Nurse
- Riff is Mercutio
- Bernardo is Tybalt
- Baby John is Benvolio
- Action is Sampson
- A-Rab is Gregory
- Anybodys is Balthazar
- Chino is Paris
- Doc is Friar Laurence/Apothecary
- Detective Shrank/Officer Krupke is Prince Escalus

Similarities in Plot Sequence:

- Both start with a fight scene between rival gangs broken up by the authority figure
- The male lead neglects his friends, in *R&J* because Romeo is in love with Rosalind and in *WSS* because Tony has a job
- The male lead is encouraged to attend a party
- The female lead has a confidant in an older, wiser woman
- The female lead is opposed to her arranged marriage
- The female lead meets the male lead at the party with a bad reaction from a male relative
- Both have a balcony scene during which the leads declare their love for one another
- The male lead seeks advice from a trusted older man
- The lovers get married
- Nurse/Anita is taunted by the Jets/Montagues
- The rival gangs fight and two men are killed: a friend of the male lead and the female lead's male relative (killed by her lover)
- The female lead forgives the male lead
- The female lead is believed to be dead
- The male lead wants to die without his lover

Arthur Laurents did make changes to *Romeo and Juliet* in order to create the plot of *WEST SIDE STORY*. While the characters are similar and the basic love story and rivalry may remind us of Shakespeare, setting the story in New York during the 1950s and using the ethnic gang violence changed everything. The musical was ripped from the headlines.

Today, 54 years later, this timeless masterpiece still lives because of the power of its universal tale.

Photo Credit: Kyle Harris and Ali Ewoldt

Photo by: © Joan Marcus, 2010

BUZZ EXTRA

WEST SIDE STORY



May 3-15
[Click here for tickets.](#)

Playhouse Square

FEATURED ARTICLES



MIRRORING
REAL LIFE
BEAT FILE
MIRRORING

"IT SPEAKS TO SO MANY PEOPLE" ON WSS
Talking with Ryan Ghysels
[Click here to read more...](#)

WEST SIDE STORY MIRRORS REAL LIFE
[Click here to read more.](#)



ENRICH YOUR EXPERIENCE
Pre-Show Talks with Joe Garry
[Click here to read more...](#)

FUN FEATURES

Have you ever fallen in love with someone that your family and friends did not approve of?

Yes

No

[View Results](#)

[Vote Now](#)

[Official West Side Story Website](#)
[Follow West Side Story on Twitter](#)
[Like West Side Story on Facebook](#)

ALL ARTICLES

WHO WROTE THE LYRICS?



Photo Credit: National Tour of West Side Story
Photo by: © Joan Marcus, 2010

When WEST SIDE STORY opened on Broadway in 1957, it was reviewed by Brooks Atkinson in *The New York Times*.

The review extols, "the author, composer and ballet designer are creative artists. Pooling imagination and virtuosity, they have written a profoundly moving show that is as ugly as the city jungles and also pathetic, tender and forgiving."

Atkinson then goes on to praise, "Mr. Laurents has provided the raw material of a tragedy that occurs because none of the young people involved understands what is happening to them. And his contribution is the essential one. But it is Mr. Bernstein and Mr. Robbins who orchestrate it."

He even commends the actors Larry Kert, Carol Lawrence, Chita Rivera, Ken Le Roy, Lee Becker and Mickey Calin. Atkinson then applauds the scenery by Oliver Smith, the costumes by Irene Sharaff, and the lighting by Jean Rosenthal.

But nowhere is there a mention of the name Stephen Sondheim, the young man who wrote the lyrics and was making his Broadway debut.

Comden and Green

The lyrics to WEST SIDE STORY were supposed to be written by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, the pair that worked with Bernstein in *On The Town*. But in 1955, they were involved in a movie contract and their film *It's Always Fair Weather* (a sequel to *On The Town*) was opening.

Home

Something's Coming, Something Good

Tony + Maria = Romeo + Juliet

Who Wrote the Lyrics?

Talking with Dance Captain Ryan Ghyssels

West Side Story Mirrors Real Life

Enrich Your Experience:

Broadway Buzz Events

Recommended Reading from

Cleveland Public Library

Enter Stephen

Arthur Laurents recommended 27-year old Stephen Sondheim to Leonard Bernstein. Laurents had just heard some of Sondheim's lyrics from a musical called *Saturday Night* and liked them.

Sondheim recalls, in his book *Finishing The Hat**, his audition for Bernstein, "I played him a few songs from *Saturday Night*. He listened intently, then asked me, 'Have you got something more poetic?' I had indeed, but I told him no, I had only conversational lyrics to offer...Lenny shrugged politely and said he'd let me know within a week whether or not Comden and Green would be available to work on the show...When Lenny phoned a week later and invited me to join the crew, I duly leapt."

How ironic that in spite of WEST SIDE STORY being one of the most successful shows on Broadway, Sondheim has claimed in a 2002 NPR interview to be "embarrassed by the lyrics because of their lack of artistic merit." This was because he was trying to match Bernstein's idea of what was poetic. Sondheim felt that gangs on the New York City streets would not have said or sung, "Tonight there will be no morning star," saying in his book that "you don't see stars in Manhattan except at the Planetarium."

Obscenity

He also wanted WEST SIDE STORY to be the first Broadway musical that used an obscenity. In an interview on NPR's *Fresh Air*, Sondheim said, "I wanted the last line in 'Krupke' to be 'Gee Officer Krupke, f—k you.' And we played the song for...Columbia Records, but then Goddard (Lieberson, the president of Columbia Records) told us that if we used that word, we couldn't ship the show across state lines because it would be in violation of the obscenity laws. So we changed it to 'Krup you.'"

Again, No Mention

After *West Side Story*, Arthur Laurents asked Sondheim to write the songs for his next show, *Gypsy*. But Ethel Merman wanted Jule Styne to compose the music, so Sondheim wrote the lyrics only. "Small World" was nominated for a Grammy award, but again, Sondheim's name was not mentioned in the nomination. Jule Styne got credit for the song, which did not win a Grammy.

Finally He Gets Credit

Five years after WEST SIDE STORY, Sondheim wrote music and lyrics for *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum*. The show won the Tony award for Best Musical and Sondheim's name is mentioned as the composer and lyricist. The legend had begun.

*NOTE:

Finishing the Hat, the title of Sondheim's book, is a lyric from *Sunday in the Park with George*.

'How you have to finish the hat.
How you watch the rest of the world
From a window
While you finish the hat.

And when the woman that you wanted goes,
You can say to yourself, 'Well, I give what I give.'
But the women who won't wait for you knows
That, however you live,
There's a part of you always standing by,
Mapping out the sky,
Finishing a hat...
Starting on a hat...
Finishing a hat...
Look, I made a hat...
Where there never was a hat."

[Click here to read the full 1957 *New York Times* review on WEST SIDE STORY](#)

[Listen to the NPR Sondheim interview](#)

[Read a review of Sondheim's book](#)

BUZZ EXTRA

WEST SIDE STORY



May 3-15
[Click here for tickets.](#)

Playhouse Square

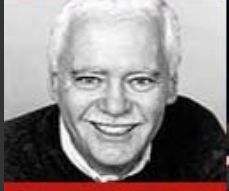
FEATURED ARTICLES



MIRRORING
REAL LIFE
BEAT THE
MIRRORING

"IT SPEAKS TO SO MANY PEOPLE" ON WSS
Talking with Ryan Ghyfels
[Click here to read more...](#)

WEST SIDE STORY MIRRORS REAL LIFE
[Click here to read more.](#)



ENRICH YOUR EXPERIENCE
Pre-Show Talks with Joe Garry
[Click here to read more...](#)

FUN FEATURES

Have you ever fallen in love with someone that your family and friends did not approve of?

Yes

No

[View Results](#)

[Vote Now](#)

[Official West Side Story Website](#)
[Follow West Side Story on Twitter](#)
[Like West Side Story on Facebook](#)

ALL ARTICLES

TALKING WITH DANCE CAPTAIN RYAN GHYSELS



Photo Credit: National Tour of West Side Story
Photo by: © Joan Marcus, 2010

Buzz Extra spoke with WEST SIDE STORY's Dance Captain, Ryan Ghyfels. Originally from Los Angeles, Ghyfels graduated from the University of Southern California. He has appeared regionally in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, *Into the Woods*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*. Ghyfels traveled the oceans performing on Holland America Cruise Lines and DisneySeas, and also performed in the international tour of WEST SIDE STORY. In addition to being Dance Captain, Ghyfels, in the national tour, is a swing, which means he covers all of the Shark boys and is the understudy for A-Rab, Snowboy and Baby John.

EXTRA: When did you first see WEST SIDE STORY?

GHYSELS: I was probably 11 or 12. I remember thinking it was so cool. Watching the "Dance at the Gym" scene and "America." It was one of those things that I thought, "I can't believe that that's on stage." I would never have guessed that I would have made a career out of performing and protecting the choreography of WEST SIDE STORY.

EXTRA: How did you get started in this business?

GHYSELS: I've been performing since I was about eight, singing and dancing and studying musical theater in college. Then I moved to New York and started working on the international tour of WEST SIDE STORY, working with Joey McKneely. I've been Joey's assistant and Dance Captain for about seven years.

Home

Something's Coming, Something Good

Tony + Maria = Romeo + Juliet

Who Wrote the Lyrics?

Talking with Dance Captain Ryan Ghysels

West Side Story Mirrors Real Life

Enrich Your Experience:
Broadway Buzz Events

Recommended Reading from
Cleveland Public Library

EXTRA: What does a Dance Captain do?

GHYSELS: I make sure the choreography stays the same as opening night. I give notes, run rehearsals. If new people come into the show, I rehearse them and teach them all the choreography. I make sure everything keeps running smoothly.

EXTRA: How did you get to be Dance Captain?

GHYSELS: Joey must have seen something in me and felt he could really rely on me to make sure the show is up to his standards. It was totally his decision.

EXTRA: You are a swing and understudy; that means you play many different roles in this show. How do you keep all the roles straight in your mind?

GHYSELS: We have understudy rehearsal at least twice a week, but I watch the show a lot. I draw a lot of pictures to make sure I know what's going on.

EXTRA: Is it traditional for the swing to be the Dance Captain?

GHYSELS: A lot of times, yes; it's not always true, but in this show, yes. So they can be offstage and watch.

EXTRA: It's been said that the choreography in this production is not just reproduced, but rejuvenated.

GHYSELS: Yes. While most of the steps are very true to the original choreography, a lot of it is the intention behind the moves. The creative team wanted to make this a more realistic and grittier, violent production. It is about getting that out of the performers. The athleticism of the movement is very masculine, not so balletic. Of course ballet is still very prevalent and you have to have it in order to do the technique, perform the choreography, it's just approaching the intention behind the movement. For example, one of the iconic photos of WEST SIDE STORY, when you see the Sharks pique into the floor and brush that leg, it's them saying, "this is our territory, this is our space that we call our own." Intention.

EXTRA: Can you give us an example of how the intention has changed the movement?

GHYSELS: In the prologue, some of the hands and arms are changed a little bit here and there to make it less dance looking. There are still sights of the true ballet that Jerome Robbins was known for. But every step, every movement means something. You see, through dance, that this is the Shark side and this is the Jet side.

EXTRA: You've traveled all over the world doing WEST SIDE STORY. What's been the reaction to this revamp of the show?

GHYSELS: WEST SIDE STORY is about overcoming love and acceptance in a world of hate. It speaks to so many people. It is a timeless piece of theater and whether you like the changes or not, you will leave having an incredible theatrical experience. Whether it is the score, the dancing or the meaning behind the show, no matter what, you will have a great time.

BUZZ EXTRA

WEST SIDE STORY



May 3-15
[Click here for tickets.](#)

Playhouse Square

FEATURED ARTICLES



MIRRORING
REAL LIFE
BEAT FILE
MIRRORING

"IT SPEAKS TO SO MANY PEOPLE" ON WSS

Talking with
Ryan Ghysels

[Click here to read more...](#)

WEST SIDE STORY MIRRORS REAL LIFE

[Click here to read more.](#)



ENRICH YOUR EXPERIENCE

Pre-Show Talks
with Joe Garry

[Click here to read more...](#)



WEST SIDE STORY MIRRORS REAL LIFE



Photo Credit: National Tour of West Side Story
Photo by: © Joan Marcus, 2010

FUN FEATURES

Have you ever fallen in love with someone that your family and friends did not approve of?

Yes

No

[View Results](#)

[Vote Now](#)

[Official West Side Story Website](#)
[Follow West Side Story on Twitter](#)
[Like West Side Story on Facebook](#)

ALL ARTICLES

New York City in the 1950s had many diverse gangs. There were the Viceroyes, Latin Gents, Chancellors, Negro Sabres, Rainbows and Hancocks, just to name a few. As more and more different types of ethnic people migrated to the city, conflicts between the new arrivals and those who were there before arose. The gang members fought mostly using fists or knives.

Between the 1940s and the 1960s, violence in the city escalated. Groups of young people fought over school recreation facilities. As guns became available and the adolescent death rate increased, the New York City Youth Board was formed in 1947. The purpose of the board was to foster gang intervention. They sponsored athletic events, dances (like the "Dance at the Gym"), trips to beaches and parks, neighborhood events and job opportunities for the gang members and their families.

Robbins Visits West Side Neighborhoods

During his research for the show, Jerome Robbins attended an event like WEST SIDE STORY's "Dance at the Gym." He witnessed two rival gangs fighting. He also visited Spanish Harlem and other neighborhoods that housed these gangs.

Speaking to *Dance Magazine*, Robbins explained, "My office is on Lexington Avenue and 74th Street and just twenty blocks away life is entirely different. The streets are darker, the signs are in Spanish, and the people lead their lives on the sidewalks. Those kids live like pressure cookers. There's a constant tension, a feeling of the kids having steam that they don't know how to let off."

Home

Something's Coming, Something Good

Tony + Maria = Romeo + Juliet

Who Wrote the Lyrics?

Talking with Dance Captain Ryan Ghysels

West Side Story Mirrors Real Life

Enrich Your Experience:
Broadway Buzz Events

Recommended Reading from
Cleveland Public Library

Actress Chita Rivera told *The New York Sun*, "Gangs used to come down and stand outside the stage door and wait to see what the guys looked like."

Real Life Event

WEST SIDE STORY was so close to real life that on July 30, 1957, one month before the show was to open, **15-year old Michael Farmer** was brutally beaten and stabbed to death by members of the Egyptian Kings and the Dragons. It was believed that these two gangs thought Farmer was a member of the Jesters, a rival gang.

Michael's younger brother has said that Michael was not a member of the Jesters. Michael would have been a member, except for the fact that he had polio. 18 gang members were arrested; many of them were juveniles. They were convicted and the older members were sentenced to 10 or more years in jail.

In 1957 alone, there were 11 gang-related murders in New York. These murders were called acts of juvenile delinquency; nothing of racial motivations was mentioned.

Brooks Atkinson, in his 1957 *New York Times* review says, "Arthur Laurents has written the story of two hostile teen-age gangs fighting for supremacy amid the tenement houses, corner stores and bridges of the West Side." This violence is exactly what Michael Farmer ran into the night he died. Atkinson described, "very little of the hideousness has been left out...the show is as ugly as the city jungles...and although the material is horrifying, the workmanship is admirable."

WEST SIDE STORY is a slice of real life in New York in the 1950s.

BUZZ EXTRA

WEST SIDE STORY



May 3-15
Click here for tickets.

PlayhouseSquare

FEATURED ARTICLES



MIRRORING
REAL LIFE
BEAT THE
MIRRORING

"IT SPEAKS TO SO MANY PEOPLE" ON WSS

Talking with Ryan Ghysels

Click here to read more...

WEST SIDE STORY MIRRORS REAL LIFE

Click here to read more.



ENRICH YOUR EXPERIENCE

Pre-Show Talks with Joe Garry

Click here to read more...

ENRICH YOUR EXPERIENCE

IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING BROADWAY BUZZ PRE-SHOW TALKS FOR WEST SIDE STORY

During WEST SIDE STORY, PlayhouseSquare will be bustling with activity – more activity than normal! We are pleased to present our 2nd Annual International Children's Festival during the first week of May. Due to the unprecedented activity level, we regret that we will not be able to hold Broadway Buzz Pre-Show Talks as usual. You will be able to hear Joe Garry's insights on the show by tuning in to WCLV 104.9 FM on Tuesday, May 3 at 6:30 pm, or by visiting wclv.com at that time or anytime during the run of WEST SIDE STORY.



We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

Post-Show Chats with the Cast will be held following Thursday evening performances (May 5 and 12).

There is no charge for admission to Broadway Buzz events.

Broadway Buzz programs and the Buzz Extra online newsletter are made possible by the generosity of individual and corporate donors, foundations and sponsors.

Pre-Show Talks will be held as usual during the run of **Next to Normal**.

FUN FEATURES

Have you ever fallen in love with someone that your family and friends did not approve of?

Yes

No

[View Results](#)

[Vote Now](#)

Official West Side Story Website
Follow West Side Story on Twitter
Like West Side Story on Facebook

ALL ARTICLES

Home

.....
Something's Coming, Something Good
.....

Tony + Maria = Romeo + Juliet
.....

Who Wrote the Lyrics?
.....

Talking with Dance Captain Ryan Ghysels
.....

West Side Story Mirrors Real Life
.....

Enrich Your Experience:
Broadway Buzz Events
.....

Recommended Reading from
Cleveland Public Library



Find: Search

Search in: [The Catalog](#) [Digital Gallery](#) [eMedia](#) [This Site](#)

[Contact us](#) [Donate](#) [My account](#)

[Home](#) [Books, Movies & More](#) [Research](#) [Branch Locations](#) [The Library](#) [Events & Classes](#) [Kids](#) [Teens](#) [Seniors](#)

[Research](#) » [Popular Topics](#) » [Theater](#) » [Playhouse Square Book Lists](#)

Playhouse Square Book Lists

In this section

Research

» [Popular Topics](#)

» [Research Databases](#)

» [Journal Finder](#)

» [Digital Gallery](#)

» [Cleveland Necrology File](#)

» [Homework Help](#)

- » [West Side Story, May 3 - 15, 2011](#)
- » [Les Miserables, April 5 - 17, 2011](#)
- » [Shrek the Musical, March 1 - 13, 2011](#)
- » [South Pacific, February 1 - 13, 2011](#)
- » [Blue Man Group, October 5 - 17, 2010](#)
- » [The Phantom of the Opera, July 28 - August 15, 2010](#)
- » [Fiddler on the Roof, June 15 - 27, 2010](#)

Get answers to your questions online, anytime.



(216) 623-2800

Cleveland Public Library
325 Superior Ave., N.E.
Cleveland, OH 44114

[Home](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Employment](#)

©2011 Cleveland Public Library
"The People's University"

