

Paris theatre news



Here is our take on the new Spielberg movie : West side story !

West Side Story is a **musical** from 1961 but it was before a Broadway show that met a **great success**. It tells the story of Tony and Maria, two lovers in the New York of the sixties. But the problem is that Maria is Bernardo's sister, the leader of the Sharks gang and Tony is part of the rival gang : the Jets. Their **impossible love story** will cause a lot of trouble.

Spielberg wanted to come up with a **new version** of the iconic musical and he managed to do it pretty well. Indeed, this new version is giving a new life to the 1961's movie by being more colorful, with better image quality, and by modernizing the dialogues.

This remastered version allows the young generation to discover this wonderful masterpiece.

This musical is full of **important symbols** that are nowadays still relevant. We can see New York City as we have never seen it : we see a demolished city which allows delinquency to flourish. Two gangs are represented as renegades ; on the one hand the Sharks are shown wearing colorful clothes, which reveals their natural happiness and their culture of dancing and joy.



On the other hand, the Jets were wearing classical white and gray clothes, which shows that they were maybe less happy than the Sharks. We must not forget that this is a

love story and more than that a **Shakespearean tragedy** based on *Romeo and Juliet*; it shows the symbol of an impossible love between Tony and Maria whose families are foes. It brings back to life an uncommon kind of love story.

One of the central ideas of the movie is **immigration**, which is represented by the two gangs. The Sharks immigrated from Puerto Rico and a part of the Jets are WASPs (White Anglo Saxon Protestants) coming especially from Ireland.



The musical sheds light on the xenophobia and hatred between two groups with **different ethnic backgrounds** just because of 'racial' differences. Spielberg, by doing this film, wanted us to ask ourselves : **are they really so different ?**

Because they both try to defend their families and their loved ones and are ready to fight to prove their worth and prove they have the right to live in New York City as much as the other group.





Firstly, the music in this film is **incredible** and so **iconic**. For example the song *America* is opposing the idealistic idea that the Puerto Rican women have about what America is and the men are confronting their wives with the harsh reality as we can see in this extract : *"Lots of new housing with more space. Lots of doors slamming in our face "*.

In the same song we can hear about the strong immigration of Puerto Ricans : *"Everyone there will have moved here "*.

Another positive thing is that the acting and choreography are on point. All of the actors are acting, dancing and singing really well, which sets the bar very high for other musicals.

We personally would like to point out that Spielberg made the choice to cast for each Puerto Rican part actors that are either Puerto Rican or simply Latinos, which was clearly not the case in the original one because the only Puerto Rican actress was Rita Moreno who was playing Anita. Moreover, the film director decided to keep Rita as Valentina the peacemaker between the two rival gangs of the movie.

However the two-hour-and-a-half movie is quite long but it respects the duration of the original musical. Furthermore, Ansel Elgort, the main character playing Tony, unlike the other actors doesn't have a Broadway experience, which shows a bit in the movie because he falls a little bit behind the other actors despite being the leading role.

If we must hold onto one scene, it would be the first meeting between Tony and Maria at the prom, under the bleachers of the gymnasium because this scene is the trigger of the movie. It is a moment of love at first sight between the main characters. All we see during this scene is love, **it is pure, we have the impression that the time stands still.**



Finally, we noticed that **the Spanish lines in the movie were not translated or subtitled.** We think this is due to the fact that in the private sphere, the characters switch from English to Spanish. For example, when she is in public, Anita asks everybody to speak English to better integrate. Spielberg must have thought that it would have been disrespectful to translate a language that lives by itself. We also think that it can be a good thing to see English-speaking and Spanish-speaking spectators meet in the same room, who will perhaps not react in the same way in the same place.

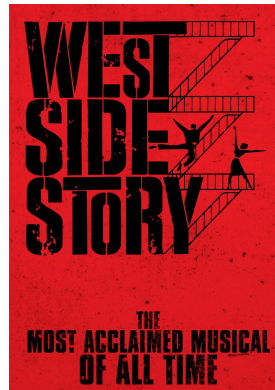
Choreography : 5/5

Acting : 4/5

Photography : 5/5

Music : 5/5

Overall : 19/20



the 1961 poster



the 2021 poster

We found this movie **very good**, be it the acting, the choreography, the music ... **very true** to the original 1961 movie but with new images, new colors and a refreshed viewing angle on today's society. **We recommend** this vigorously !

Written by Maxence R. and Ilian RM.



Credits : all pictures taken from the Spielberg movie.