

(Mobile pdf) A Place for Us: 'West Side Story' and New York

## A Place for Us: 'West Side Story' and New York

*Julia L. Foulkes*

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**Julia L. Foulkes : A Place for Us: 'West Side Story' and New York** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Place for Us: 'West Side Story' and New York:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. But he didn't like it, or specificallyBy Mary Anne PapaleMy husband requested this book, since he is an avid West Side Story fan. But he didn't like it, or specifically, didn't learn anything new from it3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Perfectly PositionedBy ejgThis book, like the play itself, comes at the perfect moment in history. Make no mistake: without West Side Story, there might not be a Hamilton. WWS broke ground on Broadway and around the world, bringing critical social issues to audiences through

its own unique lens. *A Place for Us* makes it clear that this production was no walk on the beach. Through meticulous investigation, it exposes the struggle to create and produce this play — struggles between the brilliantly talented (but often tormented) creators, struggles between them and the Broadway hegemony, and struggles between the ethnic groups that vied for their place in America. Foulkes's book offers a wealth of new insights about the play and its place in the Broadway pantheon. Lovers of theater, lovers of *West Side Story* and lovers of thorough historical documentation will all enjoy this eminently readable book. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A must read for fans of "*West Side Story*" By Laurie KI consider myself a bit of a theatre geek. I certainly thought I knew pretty much all there was to know about "West Side Story." Well I didn't. Certainly not from the perspective of this terrific book. Foulkes goes WAY behind the scenes delving into the social and economic climate that, literally, became the earth within which this work of art grew. It covers the time from the first germ of an idea (really from before the first germ of an idea) through its theatrical run to the film (and all that ensued after). Right up to the present day. It discusses world-wide political influences on "*West Side Story*" throughout its life on stage and screen as well as influences "*West Side Story*" has had on the world in all sorts of political and artistic ways. A fascinating, informative read. I kept emailing/texting/calling friends (all of whom are theatre geeks) to say "did you know ...?" There are countless moments in this book no one knew. Having the opportunity to "see" this entire theatrical creation through the lens of history was right up my own personal alley. Heaven.

From its Broadway debut to the Oscar-winning film to countless amateur productions, *West Side Story* is nothing less than an American touchstone—an updating of Shakespeare vividly realized in a rapidly changing postwar New York. That vision of postwar New York is at the heart of Julia L. Foulkes's *A Place for Us*. A lifelong fan of the show, Foulkes became interested in its history when she made an unexpected discovery: scenes for the iconic film version were shot on the demolition site destined to become part of the Lincoln Center redevelopment area—a crowning jewel of postwar urban renewal. Foulkes interweaves the story of the creation of the musical and film with the remaking of the Upper West Side and the larger tale of New York's postwar aspirations. Making unprecedented use of director and choreographer Jerome Robbins's revelatory papers, she shows the crucial role played by the political commitments of Robbins and his fellow gay, Jewish collaborators, Leonard Bernstein and Arthur Laurents. Their determination to evoke life in New York as it was actually lived helped give *West Side Story* its unshakable sense of place even as it put forward a vision of a new, vigorous, determinedly multicultural American city. Beautifully written and full of surprises for even the most dedicated *West Side Story* fan, *A Place for Us* is a revelatory new exploration of an American classic.

"Foulkes's approach is chronological, but this is no pedantic march through time. Rather it is a fascinating read focusing equally on the show and the world into which it was born. . . . Essential."