

## West Side Story Redux

I ventured out last night to see Steven Spielberg's take on *West Side Story*. After waiting in a long line at the AMC Tysons, all of us fully masked, we scrambled for the seats—it was a free showing. Had it not been, I would've waited to read the reviews, then streamed it in the comfort of my home.

For me, the 1961 version, though it did not have truly diverse casting, was perfect as emotional and heartbreaking storytelling that connected with the audience. Like *All About Eve* with Bette Davis or *Casablanca* with Ingrid Bergman and Humphrey Bogart--you just don't try to remake such classic films and when you cannot hope to top those performances.

In the current film, the outstanding performances are by Mike Faist as Riff and, wait for it...Rita Moreno, as Valentina! Oh la la, so vibrant at almost ninety. You cannot dispel the images of her dancing in the previous film. For me, the big fail by Spielberg was to take that rooftop dance sequence she did and place it in the distracting atmosphere of the streets and without the colorful costumes!

Honorable mentions: Ansel Elgort and Rachel Zegler as Tony and Maria, both improvements in casting over the previous film. (but I still love Natalie Wood as Maria), David Alvarez as Bernardo, Ariana DeBose as Anita, and Josh Andres Rivera as Chino the aspiring accountant. That made me smile, being a "bean-counter" myself.

So, there you have it. I'm waiting for *Matrix Resurrections* and it had better not disappoint, ticket bought, seat reserved at the matinee on the 23rd!

C. TaBois, December 8, 2021