



Iconic Broadway Musical at St. Jacobs Country Playhouse

Friday, April 20, 2018

WATERLOO REGION – One of the greatest love stories of all time takes to the streets as the landmark Broadway musical *West Side Story* explodes onto the stage at **St. Jacobs Country Playhouse** from **May 9** to **June 2**. Tickets are selling at a rapid rate with some performances already sold out for this beloved classic musical.

Inspired by Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, star-crossed lovers Tony and Maria find themselves caught in a turf war between rival gangs – the Puerto Rican Sharks and the American Jets – as they dream of being together in a world without prejudice in New York City's derelict Upper West Side during the turbulent 1950s. Will the strength of their love overcome the hatred between their warring families?

The score by revered composer **Leonard Bernstein** and lyricist **Stephen Sondheim** is widely regarded as one of the best ever written; it includes memorable songs like "Maria," "I Feel Pretty," "Somewhere," "Tonight," "America," and more. The book by **Arthur Laurents** remains as powerful, poignant and timely as ever, touching upon racism, immigration, police and community relations, and gun violence, while also offering a poetic love story for the ages. The urban musical is also famous for its signature athletic choreography by **Jerome Robbins**.

"*West Side Story* is undoubtedly one of the greatest musicals of all time, and we are thrilled to produce it for the first time in our organization's history," says **Alex Mustakas**, Artistic Director of Drayton Entertainment. "The heartfelt characters, dramatic story, spectacular dance sequences and unforgettable music have captivated theatregoers around the world for decades, and we know our audiences in Waterloo Region are going to love it."

Veteran director **Max Reimer** will helm this timeless classic. Reimer has directed several other grand-scale musicals including *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Sister Act* and more. Reimer is joined by esteemed Choreographer **Lisa Stevens**, whose work has appeared on Broadway as well as in Canada, the U.S. and Australia. Reimer and Stevens are joined by Music Director **Mark Camilleri**, Set Designer **Samantha Burson**, Costume Coordinator **Jessica Pembleton**, and Lighting Designer **Jason Hand**.

A stellar cast has been assembled for this epic love story including Drayton Entertainment newcomer **Amber Tomlin** as Maria. A versatile singer and actress, Tomlin has appeared in operas and musicals across North America including *The Magic Flute*, *Carmen*, *Ragtime*, *Godspell* and more. Her lustrous soprano is a perfect fit for soaring melodies like “I Feel Pretty” and “Somewhere.”

David Cotton will take on the role of Tony, the conflicted former leader of the American Jets gang who finds his allegiance torn between newfound love and long-time friendship. Drayton Entertainment audiences will remember Cotton as Link Larkin in *Hairspray* earlier this season, and Marius in the 2014 hit production of *Les Misérables*, among other roles.

Anthony MacPherson is Tony's best friend Riff, the quick-tempered leader of the American Jets, who seeks to eliminate the Sharks and establish his own gang's dominance. MacPherson recently appeared in *Rock of Ages* and *Beauty and The Beast* for Drayton Entertainment.

Squaring off with MacPherson's Riff, **Dani Jazzar** is Bernardo, the proud leader of the Puerto Rican Sharks and Maria's protective older brother. Jazzar has appeared in many Drayton Entertainment productions including *Rock of Ages* and *Legally Blonde*, and has previously played the role of Bernardo at Vancouver Opera and other Canadian companies.

Making her Drayton Entertainment debut, **Louise Camilleri** is Bernardo's vivacious girlfriend Anita, who seeks to protect Maria from the Americans. Camilleri has appeared in productions worldwide, including the Broadway and touring productions of *Showboat*.

The American Jets gang also includes **Drew Plummer** as Action, **Colin Sheen** as A-Rab, **Brett Taylor** as Big Deal, and **Jesse Weafer** as Baby John. **Krysta Leis** is Anybodys, a spirited tomboy who desperately longs to be a member of the Jets. Among other roles, **Ashley St. John** and **Jennifer Thiessen** are Jet Girls Velma and Graziella.

The Puerto Rican Sharks gang also includes **Graeme Goodhall** as Toro, **Alex Kelly** as Pepe, **Andrew Taylor** as Indio, and **Darren Burkett** as Chino, who is betrothed to Maria. Among other roles, **Shelley Kenney**, **Judy Kovacs**, and **Christine Watson** are Shark Girls Francisca, Rosalia and Consuela, respectively.

Larry Mannell is Doc, the kindly owner of the store where the Jets hang out. **Brad Rudy** is Detective Shrank and **Aaron Walpole** is Officer Krupke, brash policemen who are frustrated by the ongoing gang war. Rudy also plays the role of Glad Hand, the ill-equipped social director of the school dance.

West Side Story was originally produced on Broadway in 1957. The production received multiple Tony Award nominations and won for Best Choreography and Best Scenic Design. A film adaptation of the musical was released in 1961 starring Natalie Wood, Richard Beymer, Russ Tamblyn, Rita Moreno, and George Chakiris. The movie became the second highest-grossing film of the year and won ten Academy Awards including Best Picture – the most Oscars ever awarded to a musical. Rita Moreno also made her mark in history becoming the first Latina actress ever to win an Oscar for her portrayal of Anita.

West Side Story is proudly sponsored by **Anytime Fitness**. Media sponsors are **107.1 Juice FM**, and the **Waterloo Chronicle**. Design Sponsors are **RWAM Insurance Administrators Inc.** and the **McIntyre Team (Jim & Carol McIntyre)**. The Youth Theatre Education Sponsor is **TD Bank**. The 2018 Season Media Sponsor is **CTV**.

West Side Story runs **May 9 to June 2** at St. Jacobs Country Playhouse, followed by a run June 7 to June 23 at the Huron Country Playhouse in Grand Bend.

Tickets for *West Side Story* are already over 70% sold out. Regular performance tickets are \$46 for adults; \$27 for youth under 20 years of age. Tickets for select Discount Dates and groups of 20 or more are \$37. HST is applicable to all ticket prices. Tickets may be purchased online at www.draytonentertainment.com, in person at the St. Jacobs County Playhouse, or by calling the Box Office at **(519) 747-7788** or toll free at **1-855-drayton (372-9866)**.

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