



Bernstein Meets Broadway: Collaborative Art in a Time of War (Broadway Legacies)

Carol J. Oja

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Winner of the 2015 Music in American Culture Award from the American Musicological Society

When Leonard Bernstein first arrived in New York City, he was an unknown artist working with other brilliant twentysomethings, notably Jerome Robbins, Betty Comden, and Adolph Green. By the end of the 1940s, these artists were world famous. Their collaborations defied artistic boundaries and subtly pushed a progressive political agenda, altering the landscape of musical theater, ballet, and nightclub comedy. In *Bernstein Meets Broadway: Collaborative Art in a Time of War*, award-winning author and scholar Carol J. Oja examines the early days of Bernstein's career during World War II, centering around the debut in 1944 of the Broadway musical *On the Town* and the ballet *Fancy Free*. As a composer and conductor, Bernstein experienced a meteoric rise to fame, thanks in no small part to his visionary colleagues. Together, they focused on urban contemporary life and popular culture, featuring as heroes the itinerant sailors who bore the brunt of military service. They were provocative both artistically and politically. In a time of race riots and Japanese internment camps, Bernstein and his collaborators featured African American performers and a Japanese American ballerina, staging a model of racial integration. Rather than accepting traditional distinctions between high and low art, Bernstein's music was wide-open, inspired by everything from opera and jazz to cartoons. Oja shapes a wide-ranging cultural history that captures a tumultuous moment in time. *Bernstein Meets Broadway* is an indispensable work for fans of Broadway musicals, dance, and American performance history.

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