

# **WEST SIDE STORY**

## **Michael Gray's Review**

**A crisp, characterful overture, and we're into New York's Upper West Side – a stylish Futurist backdrop looming behind the concrete stairways and playgrounds.**

**The stage is filled with two opposing gangs, their interaction no less menacing for being energetically balletic. Both Sharks and Jets looked absolutely right – that awful 50s hair especially, though it might have been helpful to have them more distinctly differentiated, in particular for the powerful moment at the end when they unite around Tony's lifeless body.**

**WOW boasts some very experienced young performers, and it was good to see them respond so successfully to the challenge of this classic piece of music theatre.**

**Zoe Rogers was a great Maria – warm singing voice, huge emotional depth. Her Tony was Thomas Holland, whose relaxed style and winning way with the big numbers made for a very impressive performance, even if vocally he was pushing the limits of his instrument. Elliott Elder made a convincing Baby John, while Josh Read, a relative newcomer, had bags of energy, and a promising voice, as Bernardo; Anita was played by Sam Carlyle: her voice and her accent were spot on, and she was an accomplished dancer, too. Her duet with Maria was a vocal highlight of the show for me. As Riff, the feud's first victim, Jake Davis gave a memorable performance. His easy stage presence, his lithe physicality, and his effortless way with the music made for an incredible achievement for a performer of his age.**

**There were many enjoyable numbers – the I Feel Pretty Trio, and the inventive Krupke sextet – and plenty of eloquent stage pictures: the stylish first meeting of these star-crossed New Yorkers, their long Good Night across no-man's-land.**

**Sometimes we might have liked a bit more depth in the lighting – in the duel, for instance – and the climactic gunshot went for nothing. I found the curtain calls too stagily traditional – Maria was still clearly feeling the emotion of the tragic ending, as we all were, and I would have liked the calls to reflect that, as the a cappella closing chorus so movingly did.**

**West Side Story was directed for WOW by Angela Briley, with Natalie Wilson in charge of choreography, and Susannah Edom the Musical Director.**