

I FEEL PRETTY

WEST SIDE STORY

- MUSIC: Leonard Bernstein
- LYRICS: Stephen Sondheim
- TYPE: Musical Theatre
- YEAR: 1956
- CHARACTER: Maria

SYNOPSIS

West Side Story transfers Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to present-day New York. The love story is that of Maria and Tony. The feud is one involving two teenage gangs, the Jets and the Sharks. The Jets are determined to prevent the invasion into their territory by any Puerto Rican. The rival gang, the Sharks, is made up entirely of Puerto Ricans. Both gangs arrange a meeting at a dance held in the neighbourhood gymnasium for the purpose of arranging the time, place and weapons for a major gang fight, or "rumble".

At a dance, Maria the sister of Bernardo who is the leader of the Sharks, meets and falls in love with Tony, a member of the rival Jets. Belonging as they do to enemy camps, Tony and Maria must carry on their love idyll in great secrecy. In *I Feel Pretty* Maria describes her own reactions to the miracle of love. Their love blossoms out in a poignant scene on the fire-escape. They eventually go through a mock marriage -- which they themselves take more seriously -- in a bridal shop where Maria is employed and where the dress dummies serve as their guests.

But the hatred that separates the Jets and the Sharks also spells doom for their ill-fated romance. The "Rumble" erupts -- a dramatic incident where Tony kills Maria's brother. She is ready to forgive Tony, even to elope with him. But before this can happen, Tony is killed by an avenging Shark.