



DENVER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS Theatre Company

INSIDE OUT

A DEEP DIVE FOR PATRONS



SOMEWHERE

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INSIDE OUT

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Somewhere

By **Matthew López**

Directed by **Laurie Woolery**

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PLAY SYNOPSIS: SOMEWHERE

From the Tony Award-winning writer of *The Inheritance* and *The Legend of Georgia McBride* comes a music and dance-filled portrait of a tight-knit Puerto Rican family striving to make it in show business.

It's 1959, *West Side Story* is a Broadway sensation, and the Candelarias' small Manhattan apartment is filled with big love and plenty of talent. With news of a film version of the

hit musical in the works, it seems that the family's dreams of the spotlight might finally come true. But a sudden notice announcing a neighborhood-wide eviction threatens to destroy their home and the passions that have sustained their American Dream.

Dance, family bonds, and unextinguishable hope take center stage in *Somewhere* by DCPA fan-favorite Matthew López.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

INEZ CANDELARIA, (50s), a mother

ALEJANDRO CANDELARIA, (23), her son

FRANCISCO CANDELARIA, (17), her other son

REBECCA CANDELARIA, (16), her daughter

JAMIE, (25), a young man she raised

PLAYWRIGHT & DIRECTOR BIOS

PLAYWRIGHT: MATTHEW LÓPEZ is an American playwright and filmmaker. His play *The Inheritance*, which premiered in 2018 at London's Young Vic Theatre, is the most honored American play in a generation, sweeping the Best Play awards in both London and New York, including the Tony Award, Olivier Award, Drama Desk Award, *Evening Standard* Award, London Critics Circle Award, Outer Critics Circle Honors, and Drama League Award. He is the first Latine writer to win the Tony Award for Best Play. He was nominated again two years later for the musical adaptation of *Some Like It Hot*, which he co-wrote with Amber Ruffin with a score by Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman. His other works for theatre include *The Whipping Man*, *Somewhere*, *Reverberation*, *The Legend of Georgia McBride*, *The Sentinels*, and *Zoey's Perfect Wedding*. He wrote and directed the film adaptation of the bestselling novel *Red, White, and Royal Blue*, which premiered in 2023. He co-wrote and produced the sequel: *Red, White, and Royal Wedding*, which is slated for release in 2027.

DIRECTOR: LAURIE WOOLERY is an OBIE award winning director and playwright working at the intersection of theater and civic engagement having collaborated with Public Theater, National Theatre, Weiwuying National Kaohsiung Center (selected). World premiere plays include *Manhatta* (OSF/Yale/ Public); *The Tenth Muse* and *The River Bride* (OSF); *El Huracan* and *Imogen Says Nothing* (Yale), *Promenade* (NY City Center), etc. Laurie's musical adaptations of *As You Like It* and *The Tempest* had premieres at the Delacorte Theater. Laurie served as Director of Public Works/Public Theater, Associate Artistic Director of Cornerstone Theater Company and Conservatory Director at South Coast Repertory, founding member of The Sol Project, 2020 United States Artist recipient, 2021 Americans for the Arts Johnson Fellow and named 2022 National Theatre Conference's Person of the Year.

WEST SIDE STORY

Somewhere is set in New York City, beginning in 1959 as the Broadway production of *West Side Story* was in full swing. *West Side Story* was not only a critical and commercial success, it changed the face of American musical theatre. But the road to Broadway wasn't an easy one. The development of the musical started almost ten years before, when infamous choreographer and director Jerome Robbins approached composer Leonard Bernstein and playwright Arthur Laurents about collaborating on a musical adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. Originally, the musical was set in the Lower East Side of Manhattan and called *East Side Story*. Instead of warring gangs, the story was about star-crossed lovers from different religious backgrounds — a Jewish boy and an Irish Catholic girl. However, during the development process, more and more stories of teenage gang violence were being reported in the news, a relatively new appearance in the media. To bring the story up to date, Bernstein and Laurents decided to move the story uptown to Manhattan's Upper West Side and the conflict between Jewish and Catholic families became the conflict between Puerto Rican and Polish-American gangs.

As Bernstein and Robbins worked on developing the musical it became clear that Bernstein would not be able to write both the music and the lyrics — he was simultaneously working on *Candide*, an extremely complicated operetta, and the music for *West Side Story*, as Bernstein said, “turned out to be extraordinarily balletic and there was tremendously more music — symphonic and balletic music — than anything I had anticipated. I realized that I couldn't do all the lyrics and do them well.” It was then that a relatively unknown 20-something composer and lyricist named Stephen Sondheim joined the writing team, which would later be termed “the big four.”

When rehearsals finally began for *West Side Story* in 1957, Jerome Robbins was in complete control. Robbins was both the choreographer and director, and the musical gained a greater dance focus as a result. As a result, large parts of the story were told exclusively through dance and movement, such as the wordless prologue, something unheard of at the time. Reviewers had a difficult time classifying what they'd just seen. Walter Kerr of the *New York Herald Tribune* wrote:

The radioactive fallout from *West Side Story* must still be descending on Broadway this morning. Director, choreographer, and idea-man Jerome Robbins has put together, and then blasted apart, the most savage, restless, electrifying dance patterns we've been exposed to in a dozen seasons...the

show rides with a catastrophic roar over the spider-web fire-escapes, the shadowed trestles, and the plain dirt battlegrounds of a big city feud...there is fresh excitement in the next debacle, and the next. When a gang leader advises his cohorts to play it “Cool,” the intolerable tension between an effort at control and the instinctive drives of these potential killers is stinging graphic. When the knives come out, and bodies begin to fly wildly through space under buttermilk clouds, the sheer visual excitement is breathtaking...Mr. Bernstein has permitted himself a few moments of graceful, lingering melody: in a yearning “Maria,” in the hushed falling line of “Tonight,” in the wistful declaration of “I Have a Love.” But for the most part he has served the needs of the onstage threshing machine.... When hero Larry Kert is stomping out the visionary insistence of “Something's Coming” both music and tumultuous story are given their due. Otherwise it's the danced narrative that takes urgent precedence...

TIME magazine's review of the production reveals more of the cultural impact of the story, evident just weeks after the production opened:

While critics speculated about the comic-tragic darkness of the musical, audiences were captivated. The story appealed to society's undercurrent of rebellion from authority that surfaced in 1950s films like *Rebel Without a Cause*. *West Side Story* took this one step further by combining the classic and the hip. Robbins' energetic choreography and Bernstein's grand score accentuated the satiric, hard-edged lyrics of Sondheim, and Laurents' capture of the angry voice of urban youth. The play was criticized for glamorizing gangs, and its portrayal of Puerto Ricans and lack of authentic Latin casting were weaknesses. Yet, the song “America” shows the triumph of the spirit over the obstacles often faced by immigrants. The musical also made points in its description of troubled youth and the devastating effects of poverty and racism. Juvenile delinquency is seen as an ailment of society: “No one wants a fella with a social disease!” One writer summed up the reasons for the show's popularity in these terms: “On the cusp of the 1960s, American society, still recovering from the enormous upheaval of World War II, was seeking stability and control.

References:
Kerr, Walter (September 27, 1957). “*West Side Story*. *New York Herald Tribune*.
Theater: *New Musical in Manhattan* (“*West Side Story*”). *Time Magazine*, October 8, 1957.

NEW YORK CITY: THEN AND NOW

West Side Story represented a change in American musical theatre, a blending of classic musical and ballet, a modern concept at the time. However, beyond the artistic importance, the musical also represented a shift in musical storytelling, putting stories ripped from the headlines on the stage. In fact, just a month before *West Side Story* opened, New York City was shocked by the brutal murder of a white teenager from Washington Heights by rival black and Puerto Rican gang members. There were 11 gang related murders in New York City in the summer of 1957 as *West Side Story* rehearsed in downtown studios, and these stories became fuel for Jerome Robbins' storytelling. In fact, he would post articles about New York City gang violence in the rehearsal room to give the actors more real-life background for their characters.

The late 1950s were a time of change for New York City. After World War II, urban developer Robert Moses had situated himself in the New York state government to allow him to develop New York City as a city. He built thousands of apartments in high rise buildings (28,000 units

by 1959), bridges (including the Henry Hudson and Verrazano Narrows bridges), and cultural centers like Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and Shea Stadium. However, as the Candelaria family discovers in *Somewhere*, this development often meant the destruction of buildings that were home to thousands of New Yorkers. The West Side Urban Renewal Project demolished dozens of buildings in the west 80s and 90s, displacing thousands of families, most of them African American and Puerto Rican. Through urban renewal projects, neighborhoods like the Upper West Side that were once home to ethnically and socioeconomically diverse communities became too expensive for their original residents, and many of these families were forced into housing projects in the outer boroughs of New York City.

READ MORE

NPR: [West Side Story: The Murder that Shocked New York](#)

NY.com: [The History of New York City's Upper West Side](#)

Columbia.edu: [History on Harlem](#)

TIMELINE OF HISTORICAL EVENTS

March 2, 1917

President Woodrow Wilson signs the Jones-Shafroth Act, making Puerto Rico a U.S. Territory and giving U.S. Citizenship to Puerto Ricans.

1937

The nation's first public housing program introduced under the United States Housing Act of 1937.

April 1944

Fancy Free, a new ballet about three sailors premiers at the Ballet Theatre in New York. The breakout project launches the Broadway careers of composer Leonard Bernstein and a 25-year old dancer/choreographer, Jerome Robbins. *Fancy Free* would be developed further and become the musical *On the Town*.

December 1944

On the Town, composed by Leonard Bernstein and choreographed by Jerome Robbins, opens on Broadway.

1945

Billion Dollar Baby, Jerome Robbins' second musical, opens on Broadway.

1949

Title I of the Housing Act of 1949 allows developers to participate in "slum clearance" and "urban redevelopment" in urban areas. New construction is encouraged.

1951

The King and I debuts on Broadway. Jerome Robbins choreographs this Rodgers and Hammerstein musical about an English governess who cares for the King of Siam's many children.

June 1952

Puerto Rico becomes a US Commonwealth with its own constitution.

1954

[Housing Act of 1954](#) marks a shift from "demolition" and "new construction" to "rehabilitation" and "conservation of deteriorating areas."

December 20, 1954

Peter Pan, directed by Jerome Robbins, [premieres on Broadway](#). It closes in February of 1955 so NBC can record a television version of the musical for its "Producers Showcase" series.

September 26, 1957

[Original Broadway production of West Side Story opens](#) at the Winter Garden Theatre. The production closes June 27, 1959, but will return in 1960, be revived on Broadway four times, tour nationally and internationally, and have countless productions in regional, community, and school theatres.

December 19, 1957

[The Music Man opens](#) at the Majestic Theatre on Broadway. The show runs through April 15, 1961.

1957

Jerome Robbins and Bob Fosse are nominated for a Tony Award for Best Choreographer for the show *Bells Are Ringing*.

1958

West Side Story wins Tony Awards for Best Choreographer (Jerome Robbins) and Scenic Designer (Oliver Smith). The musical is also nominated for Best Musical, Featured Actress in a Musical (Carol Lawrence), Conductor and Musical Director (Max Goberman), and Costume Designer (Irene Sharaff).

March 11, 1959

A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry opens on Broadway. The play depicts an African-American family living in Chicago as they try to realize their dreams and weigh whether to move into an all-white neighborhood. It runs at the Ethel Barrymore, then the Belasco Theatre, and closes on June 25, 1960.

May 21, 1959

Gypsy opens at the Broadway Theatre. It runs through March 25, 1961, and closes at the Imperial Theatre.

November 16, 1959

The Sound of Music opens at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre on Broadway. It closes at the Mark Hellinger Theatre on June 15, 1963.

References

https://www.broadwayworld.com/browseshows.cfm?showtype=BR&open_yr=1957

https://www.broadwayworld.com/browseshows.cfm?showtype=BR&open_yr=1959

<https://www.hud.gov/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Pan_\(1954_musical\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Pan_(1954_musical))

GENTRIFICATION

Gentrification is defined as “the process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents” (Mirriam-Webster).

In *Somewhere*, the Candelaria family feels the effects of gentrification when the Lincoln Square Renewal Project destroys their apartment building, forcing them to relocate to the Greenpoint neighborhood in Brooklyn.

Here’s a simple definition of gentrification from the Center for Urban Research and Learning at the Loyola University of Chicago:

One way to think about gentrification is to play the game of Monopoly. In this game, the goal is to become the wealthiest player through buying, renting, and selling property. In every game, there are winners

and losers, and we see parallels to everyday life. Sometimes the gains and losses involved affect the same person. For example, many long-term homeowners consider their property to be a central investment for retirement and want their homes to increase in value. When property values rise, the value of their home improves. So, what is the problem? When the value of a home increases, so does the property tax assessed. For retired senior citizens on fixed incomes, tax increases can force them to leave their homes. Many working people with low to moderate incomes find it harder to purchase their own homes or cover the rent increases in developing neighborhoods.

Where you come from, where you are, and where you go is fueled by dreams, talent, and social circumstances.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

by Twanna LaTrice Hill, DCPA contributing writer

At What Cost?

Playwright Matthew López characterizes his play *Somewhere* as a “story about a family with dreams and a world that [is] indifferent to them.” Guided by the strength and spirit of a fierce, passionate mother, and brimming with undeniable talent, a tireless work ethic, and endless dedication, the members of this black, Puerto Rican fight for a place in the artistic universes of both stage and screen while facing forced eviction from their neighborhood to make way for the Lincoln Center in 1950s New York.

This “play with music and dance,” delves deeply into the transformation of place, the erosion of a neighborhood, and the erasure of community. If you are looking for a simplistic characterization of gentrification as a societal ill, you will be disappointed. López presents the issue in all its complexity. In an interview with *American Theatre* magazine, he maintains:

“I never purposefully set out to write a play about gentrification. ... [New York City Urban Planner] Robert Moses would have told you that progress requires sacrifice

and the good of the many outweighs the rights of the few.... No one could say that the presence of Lincoln Center has not been an absolute good for the city and, by extension, the nation.... *Somewhere* makes no judgment as to the value of the enterprise; it simply asks that the audience consider who was there before and what happened to them after. That is the story of New York and, again by extension, the country. It is the same question that must be asked when we send young men and women off to war. When we decide that healthcare is too expensive a burden for us to cover as a nation. And, as we have recently and tragically learned, when we decided that the rights of gun owners are more important than the safety of children. The question must always be asked: at what cost?"

At its simplest definition, gentrification is the effort to upgrade or rehab an older or less affluent area; while it often results in new job opportunities, increases in property values, and reduction in crime among other benefits, it too often devastates lower income neighborhoods, decreases space for small businesses, reduces the availability of affordable housing, disrupts communal history and culture, and leads to re-segregation. Its negative consequences overwhelmingly impact lower-income residents and communities of color.

Gentrification is by no means strictly an East Coast phenomenon. In 1974, under the guise of urban renewal, residents in Denver were subject to forced relocation from their communities, neighborhoods they had come to live in due to redlining, in order to make room for the Auraria campus near downtown. In many ways, the impact on the original inhabitants who were largely Hispanic was devastating. One segment of the population, however, was uniquely positioned to serve as place-keepers - the artists. Their role in gentrification is complicated by their very existence because their work often attracts the upper-classes to the area, which ultimately leads to their displacement.

What occurred with Auraria in Denver is not dissimilar to what happened in Soho in New York. In a process described as "textbook" Soho, "originally a manufacturing district, became a hub for artists in the 1960s and 70s. However, the cultural capital generated by artists eventually

attracted galleries, boutiques, and high-income residents, transforming [Soho into one of Manhattan's most expensive neighborhoods.](#)"

In both instances, the role of community members in decision making was limited, and many of their concerns were not considered. As Billie Bramhall, a retired city planner for the City of Denver noted, "This is not to say that it was a mistake to clean up and redevelop portions of downtown, which included the build of the Auraria Higher Education Center. However, it is to say that it was overdone with a sword not a scalpel."

There was minimal space for the voices and contributions for artists in the process as well. Manuel Aragon, a Latinx director and filmmaker in Denver notes that despite their expressed interest in the culture that was already in evidence, those involved in development of these spaces paid little heed to their impact on the existing culture. Aragon suggests that potential new residents "want that cultural currency of the area but the comforts of the suburbs; they want it to be "safely adjacent;" so even as they move in, they transform it into something else.

In addition to financial implications, the transformative process imposes major emotional and psychological stresses on the inhabitants as well, effects are rarely explored in advance. DL Cordero, a Denver-based nonbinary, queer, Afro-Latinx, and Taíno author who focuses on creating stories featuring marginalized communities asserts that loss of place "induces a sense of psychological homelessness.... It is like, 'where am I from if where I am from no longer exists?' You've lost a piece of yourself." Cordero also suggest that artists and the arts are uniquely qualified to assist in dealing with those stressors:

"Dealing with gentrification as an artist is a way to move through grief." For them, art itself can help heal.... I try and transform [the loss] into something different through the artistic process as a way to honor the grieving process. It's sort of like I've created my own place to exist through creating art."

Gentrification is not inherently good or bad. Artists are uniquely qualified to serve as holders of culture and of place, as promoters of connection, as arbiters of healing. They not only possess the ability to mitigate the harm, but some would say the responsibility. And in many ways, in *Somewhere*, Matthew López does just that.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

SOMEWHERE

- 1. Dreams and Displacement**

How do the characters' dreams conflict with the reality of their impending displacement?
- 2. The Role of Dance and Performance**

What does dance symbolize in the play, and how does it serve as a form of resistance or hope for the Candelaria family?
- 3. Historical Context**

How does the backdrop of 1959 New York City and the looming construction of Lincoln Center influence the story's tension and urgency?
- 4. Family Dynamics**

How does the Candelaria family navigate generational differences in values, dreams, and expectations?
- 5. Representation and Identity**

In what ways does the play explore Puerto Rican identity and representation in American culture and the arts?
- 6. The Power of Imagination**

How do the characters use imagination and fantasy to cope with their circumstances? What does this say about the role of art in difficult times?
- 7. *West Side Story* as a Parallel**

Why do you think Lopez chose to set the play during the rise of *West Side Story*? How does this musical serve as a mirror or contrast to the Candelarias' story?
- 8. Sacrifice and Survival**

What sacrifices do the characters make for their dreams or for each other? Are these sacrifices portrayed as noble, tragic, or both?
- 9. Urban Renewal and Gentrification**

How does the play comment on the effects of gentrification on marginalized communities? Are there parallels to today's issues?
- 10. Hope and Resilience**

Despite the challenges they face, the Candelaria family remains hopeful. What moments in the play best capture their resilience?

Questions generated by Microsoft Co-Pilot