

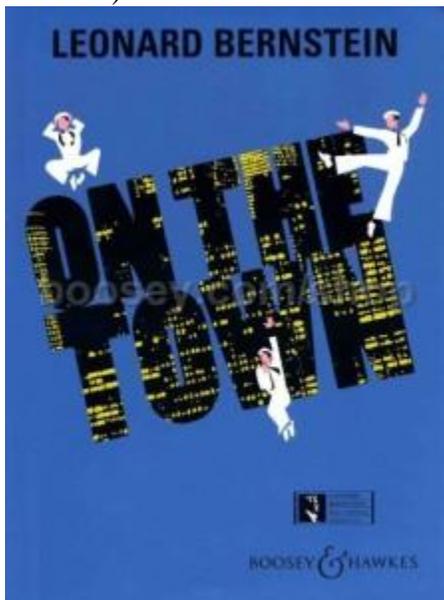
Coral Springs **TRIBUNE**

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Great dances, top-notch songs buoy 'On the Town' at Broward Stage

CORAL SPRINGS – Who says musicals from the 1940s can't cut it on the theatrical stage today?

Not anyone who saw the Stage Door Theatre's production of "On the Town," the 1944 show that became a film in 1949 with Frank Sinatra and Gene Kelly leading the cast. (Kelly also co-directed.)



"On the Town," which is nearing the end of its run locally, is a zesty sassy, musical-comedy that follows three sailors on a 24-hour pass in New York City.

Certainly the musical would be a lot different if it focused on sailors in 2010. But these three tars – Chip (Tyler Fish), Gabey (John Ramsey) and Ozzie (Joey Zangardi) – are taking a break from wartime to gawk at things like Times Square and Coney Island – using a guidebook that's somewhat out of date.

But even in the 1940s, sailors were looking for women. And each of the guys in "On the Town" hooks up with a lovely lady. Naïve Gabey falls for "Miss Turnstiles," a gal he spots on a subway poster.

Then, the quest to find Miss Turnstiles begins. Gabey, Chip and Ozzie split up to search for the subway lady. As luck would have it, Gabey finds the girl, Ivy Smith (portrayed impeccably by Nikki Allred), in a dance studio where she is struggling under the tutelage of Madame Lilly (Kimberley Xavier Martins).

While Gabey's friends are searching the Big Apple, they also join up with a couple of babes. Chip is swept away – quite literally — by Hildy (Erin Romero) while Ozzie finds Claire de Loon (Lindsey Powell) – a lusty anthropologist – in a museum.

“On the Town” gets a little silly as it follows the gang from one drinking spot to another, always one step ahead of Claire’s unwitting fiancé, Judge Pitkin W. Bridgework (excellently underplayed by Jack Livesey). Don’t miss a major change in the judge’s behavior toward the end of the musical.

One other thing to note. “On the Town” was a joint effort of choreographer Jerome Robbins and composer Leonard Bernstein, based on a chance meeting. They discussed their mutual projects and combined them into this show. You’ll see a lot of ballet in the dancing and hear a lot of power in the songs – no doubt a harbinger of things to come. The pair went on to create “West Side Story.”

Bernstein’s score is well-sung, and a delight, from the iconic “New York, New York,” to the sweeping ballet music, to the frisky patter songs (“Carried Away,” “I Can Cook Too”) and final, poignant ballad (“Some Other Time”).

Everyone in the cast is excellent, with exquisite dance talents and skilled voices.

See this show before the fleet sails. “On the Town” runs through Dec. 5 at the Stage Door Theater, 8036 Sample Road, Coral Springs. For tickets, call 954-344-7765.

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