

Something's Coming

Bernstein

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- Born in 1918, Massachusetts.
- Studied at Harvard University
- Was principal conductor of New York Philharmonic Orchestra between 1958 and 1969.
- In 1957, he wrote '*West Side Story*', his 4th Broadway musical.
- Died in 1990, New York

Musical Theatre

- Originated in Ancient Greece, where stories were acted out for entertainment.
- In the 1700s theatre then evolved into Vaudeville, where popular songs were parodied with different, comical (and often rude) words, and Burlesque, which was more restrained, but parodied serious plays.
- This then moved into Opera-bouffe and operetta, which were light operas (with the former having some spoken dialogue and humour).
- Modern day musicals have three main types: Broadway, West End, and Rock Operas.

Musical Theatre

<u>Broadway Musicals</u>	<u>West End Musicals</u>	<u>Rock Operas</u>
<i>Showboat</i> Jerome Kern	<i>Oliver</i> Lionel Bart	<i>Jesus Christ Superstar</i> A. Lloyd Webber
<i>Oklahoma!</i> O. Hammerstein, R. Rogers	<i>Evita</i> A. Lloyd Webber, T. Rice	<i>Tommy</i> The Who
<i>Annie Get Your Gun</i> Irving Berlin	<i>Blood Brothers</i> Willy Russel	<i>Little Shop of Horrors</i> Howard Ashman

West Side Story

- Written in 1957
- Based on 'Romeo and Juliet' by Shakespeare, with the Sharks and the Jets being the Capulets and Montagues.
- Set in 1950s New York, against a background of racial gang warfare.
- Sharks- From Puerto Rico, Jets- From New York
- Tony and Maria meet at a dance and fall in love but are allied with rival gangs. Both acts end in murder.
- The show has elements of opera, musical, jazz and Latin-American dance music.
- The performance was cutting edge owing to its dark theme, long extended dance scenes, sophisticated style, and focus on social problems of America.

Something's Coming

- An aria, Tony's first solo.
- Sung at the end of Act 1, where he has not yet met Maria.
- Tony is disillusioned with gang life, and wants to leave the Jets.
- He agrees to go to a dance with the Jets, looking forward to a better future, having got a job.
- His optimism is shown by the fast tempo of the song, the major key, staccato motifs, positive lyrics, and changes in the music echoing changes in the future.

Key Musical Elements

- Jazz-based harmony, where chords have blue notes and dissonance (*"If I can wait..."*)
- Syncopated rhythms, push rhythms (*"Could be!"*)
- Interval of the tritone, known as the 'diabolus in musica' which represents evil/sinister moods (*"Soon as it shows"*)
- Extensive use of short riffs (*"something due any day"*)
- Cross rhythms (*"Or whistling down the river"*)
- Layered textures of independent parts (Orchestration)
- Short phrases followed by sustained notes (*"Coming to me!"*)

Instrumentation

- Large orchestra, requiring at least 30 players
 - 5 woodwind players (each 'doubling up' due to large numbers of performers)
 - 2 horns, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones
 - 7 violins, 4 cellos, 2 double basses, acoustic and electric guitar
 - Piano
 - Drum kit and two other percussionists (using Latin-American instruments like castanets)
- Strings play tremolos ("*Whistling down the river*") and use harmonies
- Uses pizzicato strings
- Trumpets and brass use mutes
- No microphones etc. so the band plays softly to avoid overpowering the singer
- Tony is sung by a Tenor performer

Structure and Melody

- Intro > Section A > Section B > Section B1 > Section A1 > Outro
- Ends on a blue note (C natural)
- Uses blue notes and dissonance (e.g. G \flat s in C major)
- Syllabic, and uses word painting (*"Down through the sky"*)
- Three melodic ideas
 - 1) "Could be... soon as it shows," – quiet and syllabic, in $\frac{3}{4}$ time
 - 2) "It may come cannonballing... one handed catch," – loud, with push-rhythms in $\frac{2}{4}$ time
 - 3) "Around the corner," – slow-moving, legato with triplets.
- Uses tritones (G \sharp -> C)
- Higher tessitura in second section than the first section

Texture

- Homophonic
- Range of dynamics (ppp to f)
- Piano plays ostinato accompaniments:
 - 1) Repeated riff to open
 - 2) Short syncopated chords
 - 3) 'Oompa' bass (C and G)
- Strings accompany with tremolo

Harmony and Tonality

- In D major, but modulates to C major at bar 32 (*"Coming to me!"*)
- Some sections are bitonal
- Uses extended chords (7th, 9th, 11th)
- Uses dissonance
- Bars 77-81 are chromatic
- Intro starts with Bm chord changing to D. Bm is the relative minor of D, and this is a jazz harmony.
- Neapolitan chord in bar 95

Rhythm, Metre and Tempo

- 176bpm (Fast)
- In $\frac{3}{4}$ time at the start and end, but melody theme 2 is in $\frac{2}{4}$, and then frequent changes later in the piece.
- When the piece is in $\frac{2}{4}$, beats 1 and 2 are emphasised by the bass playing the tonic and dominant (C and G).
- Uses push rhythms (e.g. "*Could be*") and cross-rhythms.
- Syncopation and use of triplets
- Bars 52-58 move between straight and swing rhythms.
- Accented notes
- Bass plays straight 'oom-pah' rhythms