

Salute to Leonard Bernstein

By Randall P. Lieberman, Staff Writer

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Abe Freed, 85, of [Lantana](#), said he is not quite old enough to have seen the original Broadway production in 1944 of "On the Town," iconic composer Leonard Bernstein's first Broadway show.

However, the [Brooklyn](#) native did see a revival of "On the Town" on Broadway, as well as the classic 1949 film starring Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Ann Miller and [Betty Garrett](#) about three sailors eager to find romance and explore [New York City](#) during a 24-hour shore leave.

As such, Freed loved the concert version of the musical-comedy "On the Town," which was performed on Sunday, June 22 by the 50-member Klezmer Company Orchestra (joined by six guest opera singers) at Florida Atlantic University's Carole and Barry Kaye Performing Arts Auditorium in [Boca Raton](#). The concert was billed as the show's Florida concert-version premiere.

"The show was very creative," Freed said. "They did an excellent job. I particularly liked the videos of New York City that were on the screens in the background. That brought back a lot of nostalgic memories for me."

While the auditorium was filled with an estimated audience of nearly 2,000 people, the crowd definitely skewed older.

"Yes, this is a show for the older people to enjoy," said Shirley Ladin, 72, of Lantana. "The younger crowd probably wouldn't get into it. They wouldn't get the references."

The concert was the main event of the three-day inaugural "Spirit of America Festival: A Celebration of Music and Arts" (June 21-23) that FAU Libraries hosted to salute Leonard Bernstein.

The concert was organized by Maestro Aaron Kula, director and conductor of KCO, the professional ensemble-in-residence at FAU Libraries. Kula worked with the Bernstein Organization in New York City for more than a year on the concert.

Kula said: "We continue to be inspired by Bernstein's creative genius. I am especially honored to be part of the Bernstein legacy and to conduct 'On the Town' as we celebrate the 70th anniversary since its Broadway debut."

The festival kicked off on Saturday, June 21 with "An Intimate Conversation with Jamie Bernstein," a conversation at FAU's Wimberly Library about family and the Bernstein legacy with Leonard's daughter, Jamie Bernstein — noted concert narrator, writer and broadcaster in her own right.

On Monday, June 23, "Bernstein on Broadway," — a piano-vocal recital with commentary by South Florida theater critic Bill Hirschman — concluded the festival at Wimberly Library. During the recital, two distinguished vocalists performed selections from "West Side Story" and other songs composed by Bernstein, who often used New York City and Broadway as inspiration for his musicals.

The festival showcased FAU Libraries' Print Music Collection, Marvin and Sybil Weiner Spirit of America Collection, Harold L. Glasser Collection and other special collections. The festival was made possible by its sponsors: the Weiner Family, Marny Glasser, First Southern Bank and The University Club at FAU.

Continuing through Friday, July 11 is FAU Libraries' "Inaugural Spirit of America Exhibition," a presentation of rare materials from the Weiner and Glasser collections.

The exhibition features influential texts that have contributed to Western Civilization since the invention of the printing press 500 years ago and materials from the Glasser Collection, which honors the World War II bombardier and former president of Miss Universe, Inc.

The exhibition is taking place on the fifth floor of the Wimberly Library at FAU's [Boca Raton](#) campus (777 Glades Road). Hours are Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Viewing by appointment is available by calling 561-297-3787 or 561-297-2693, or by emailing lysca@fau.edu.