



**AllWays**  
Traveller

On the Town: Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, UK

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## Sights! Lights! Nights of magic in Regent's Park

The Regent's Park Open Air Theatre opens its 2017 season with *On the Town*, the 1944 Bernstein musical charting the exploits of three sailors on one day's shore leave in New York.

With 24 hours in the city, and not a minute more, Ozzie, Chip and Gabey are determined to "see the famous sights and find romance and danger beneath the Broadway lights".

The Open Air Theatre's biggest dance musical to date, is a wonderfully colourful, vibrant production that will not fail to delight.

But also, being first staged during wartime, it offers an underlying and more thought provoking insight into the lives of those for whom tomorrow might not be an option.

*On The Town* runs until 1 July 2017.

**Ashley Gibbins**  
Commissioning Editor  
AllWays traveller



# A helluva of a musical on a number of levels

By Ashley Gibbins

**As a passionate fan of both the Open Air Theatre and American musicals, I had been looking forward to *On the Town* from the time I saw it listed in the theatre's 2017 schedule.**

I still recall the thrill when first watching Frank Sinatra, Gene Kelly and the other one (Jules Munshin) - in the screen version - dashing and dancing across New York in a desperate attempt to take in and, of course, sing about the sights and sounds of the city.

In this wonderful staging of the musical, Ozzie, Chip and Gabey arrive off their ship (and on to the Open Air auditorium) for a stint in the city and are determined they (and we) should get the absolute most out of it.

The band strikes up, the cast perform the story setting number and I quietly sing : *New York, New York a wonderful town* - except the sailors sing 'helluva town'.

Why had I got it wrong all these years? Well I had not.

A surreptitious glance at Wikipedia tells me the original musical, first performed in wartime 1944, had *helluva* in the chorus, while the 1948 film version changed this to *wonderful*, so as not to fall foul of the censors.

And that subtle change also changed my perception of *On the Town* because it provided a gentle insight into the fractured and transient life and times being lived by those enduring global conflict.

And though America at war is not flagged up in any great way, it is the 'elephant in the room' for this musical.

If today may be all that one has, making the most of it becomes an imperative - be it by an overly carefree attitude or unfettered sexual liberation.

*On the Town* focuses on the incessantly but brief relationships that Ozzie, Chip and Gabey seek and find in New York.

Chip is quickly seduced without a second thoughts by Hildy, an emancipated female cabbie, and Ozzie falls prey to Claire, a budding anthropologist who, despite on the cusp of becoming engaged to a judge, indulges her infatuation with him.



Gabey spends his day seeking out Ivy Smith, the subway's *Miss Turnstile of the month*, having been smitten by her face and fabricated profile on a poster.

And so, in some 18, ingenious set changes and musical numbers, we share the emotions of our three sailors and, in one very dramatic dance sequence, a gay sexual encounter by a fourth.

Seldom has the phrase 'never a dull moment' been more apt.

This is an effervescent musical production of the highest order with a hugely talented cast and a tremendous band.

While it is enjoyably carefree and genuinely funny, there is an underlying current of something more serious to contemplate.

And so, come 6am and with their 24 hours up, our three sailors leave their three women with melancholic resignation and sail off to who knows what.

As they do so, the next contingent arrives for its spell of shore leave and similar emotional encounters no doubt.

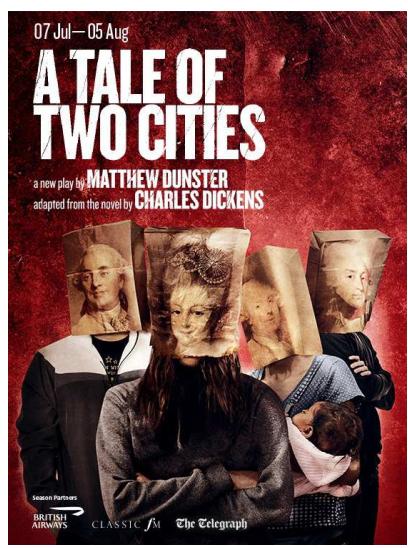
*On the Town* comes very highly recommended.

Catch it while you can.

A snapshot of *On the Town*

Other productions at the Open Air Theatre

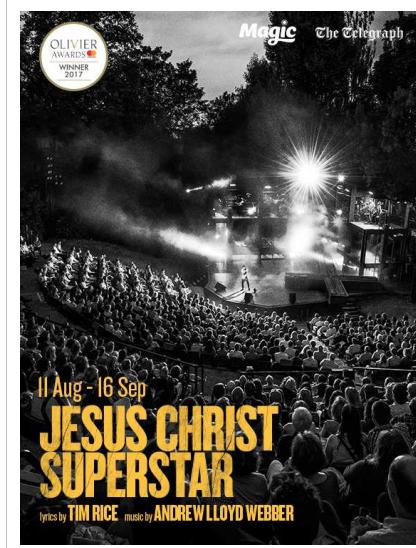
## A Tale of Two Cities



## Oliver Twist



## Jesus Christ Superstar



[www.openairtheatre.com](http://www.openairtheatre.com)

## AllWays traveller to the Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park

<http://www.allwaystraveller.com/index.php/continents/europe/the-regent-s-park-open-air-theatre-london-1>

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