

LA WEEKLY

ISTANBUL NATIONAL OPERA & BALLET: East Side Story

The only city in the world to straddle two continents, Istanbul has been a bridge as well as a battlefield between Europe and Asia for centuries. That historical duality underlies this contemporary Romeo and Juliet story set in 1970s Istanbul.



Photo by Yadar Saracodlu)

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ISTANBUL BALLET : EAST SIDE STORY

By Ann Haskins

Just as the musical *West Side Story* captured the crosscultural rip tides of immigrants flooding into New York City, *East Side Story* reflects those currents in Turkey, setting the iconic *Romeo and Juliet* plot in Istanbul during the 1970s. The only city in the world to straddle two continents, Istanbul has been a bridge as well as a battlefield between Europe and Asia for centuries. The American premiere of this acclaimed Istanbul Ballet production includes local talent recruited to augment the 39 original cast members brought here with support from the Turkish government's cultural offices. With metro L.A. now in contention for the mantle of world's most culturally diverse city, a drama set in a centuries-old cultural crossroads holds important lessons for us, as well as the raw materials for riveting dance drama. At the Ford Amphitheater,