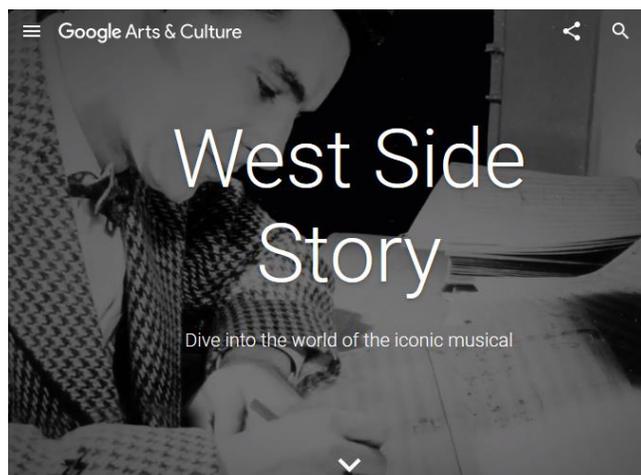**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
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<u>**GOOGLE ARTS & CULTURE LAUNCHES DIGITAL COLLECTION CELEBRATING**</u>
<u>***WEST SIDE STORY* BY PARTNERING WITH FOUR MAJOR CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS,**</u>
<u>**INCLUDING THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY**</u>

<u>**The Museum will Further Explore the Life of *West Side Story*'s Composer**</u>
<u>**Leonard Bernstein in a Special Exhibition Opening March 2018**</u>

PHILADELPHIA—**Google Arts & Culture**, in partnership with the **National Museum of American Jewish History (NMAJH), Carnegie Hall,** the **New York Public Library for the Performing Arts,** and the **Museum of the City of New York,** has brought to life the history and production of the beloved musical ***West Side Story*** in a new digital collection. Thanks to this extensive, one-of-a kind project, online visitors can explore the musical masterpiece through exclusive archival content; rich educational and interactive stories; more than 1,800 images & videos, many digitized for the first time; 22 interactive exhibits curated by leading experts; a special interview with legendary Broadway star Chita Rivera, and many other treasures in just a few clicks at g.co/westsidestory*.*

When *West Side Story* premiered on Broadway in September 1957, it immediately became an iconic statement about the country's changing notions of race and ethnic identity— fundamentally, what it meant to be an "American." Conceived as a stage adaption of William

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet,* the musical was a collaboration between choreographer Jerome Robbins, composer Leonard Bernstein, lyricist Stephen Sondheim, and writer Arthur Laurents. The movie version received the 1961 Academy Award for Best Picture, and *West Side Story*'s impact endures through orchestral performances and theater productions around the world.

NMAJH's contribution to Google Arts & Culture's project is a detailed overview of Leonard Bernstein's life in the "Meet the makers" section. Curated by **NMAJH's Associate Curator Ivy Weingram**, the digital exhibition features archival images, from Bernstein's family portraits to the album covers of his symphonies. It is a preview of the forthcoming special exhibition, ***Leonard Bernstein: The Power of Music***, on view at NMAJH in Philadelphia from **March 16 through September 2, 2018**. Coinciding with Bernstein's centennial birthday, the exhibition will explore his original works for stage, screen, and orchestra; his leadership as a conductor; and his social activism. It will take a deeper look at how Bernstein and his collaborators initially conceived of *West Side Story* as an "East Side story"—envisioning a tale of rivalry between Jewish and Catholic teens on New York's Lower East Side—through letters, production notes, draft scripts, and song lyrics.

Ivy Weingram notes, "*West Side Story* embodied the anxiety of its era, haunted by the Red Scare and changing ideas about race and ethnicity. For Leonard Bernstein and his collaborators, the production represented an expression of their own sense of outsider identity during that turbulent time. The musical remains an important, timeless classic, and NMAJH is honored to collaborate with Google on this unique digital initiative."

Select highlights of the other cultural partners' contributions to Google Arts & Culture include a 360-degree video curated by **Carnegie Hall** of "Cool," one of *West Side Story*'s most popular scenes. Digital exhibits created by the **Museum of the City of New York** take a look at the big winners of the 1958 Tony Awards and chronicle the development of New York's Upper West Side neighborhood. In addition to numerous images, the **New York Public Library for the Performing Arts** provides a virtual tour of the city streets that provided inspiration for the production's set design.

For more information about *Leonard Bernstein: The Power of Music*, visit NMAJH.org/Bernstein.

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About the National Museum of American Jewish History

The National Museum of American Jewish History, located on historic Independence Mall in Philadelphia, brings to life the more than 360-year history of Jews in America. Tracing the stories of how Jewish immigrants became Jewish Americans, the Museum invites visitors of all backgrounds to share their own stories and reflect on how their histories and identities shape and are shaped by the American experience. An open door for all, NMAJH honors the past and contributes to a better future by sharing the power of imagination and ideas, culture and community, leadership and service, in ways that turn inspiration into action.

The National Museum of American Jewish History is located at 101 South Independence Mall East at the corner of Fifth and Market Streets in Philadelphia. Museum hours are Wednesday to Friday, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10:00 am - 5:30 pm. Museum admission is $15.00 for adults, $13.00 for senior citizens and youth, free for children 12 and under, Museum Members, and active military with ID; reduced prices available if purchased online. Connect with the Museum on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest. For more information, visit NMAJH.org or call 215.923.3811.

About Google Arts & Culture

Google Arts & Culture is a new, immersive way to experience art, history, culture and world wonders from over a thousand organizations worldwide. Google Arts & Culture has been created by the Google Cultural Institute and it is available for free for everyone on the web, on iOS and Android. Read more here.