

RITA MORENO

Rita Moreno is a Puerto Rican actress, of *West Side Story* (1961) fame, who throughout her career has broken new ground for Latinos in entertainment.

Synopsis

Born Rosa Dolores Alverio on December 11, 1931, in Humacao, Puerto Rico, Rita Moreno is best known as Anita in *West Side Story* in 1961, a role that earned her an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress, making her the first Latina actress to win the honor. Moreno also appeared on the children's shows *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company*, and is one of only 11 people to have received the four major entertainment honors—Emmy, Oscar, Tony and Grammy awards.

Early Life

Born Rosa Dolores Alverio on December 11, 1931, in Humacao, Puerto Rico, Rita Moreno has broken new ground for Latinos in the field of entertainment throughout her career. Moreno began her career in show business at early age. She appeared on Broadway and in her first film role in her early teens, and left school around the same time.

Career Highlights

Moreno is perhaps best known for her work in *West Side Story* (1961), a modern musical inspired by Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. A versatile performer, she had to sing, dance and handle very dramatic scenes during the course of the film. She won an Academy Award for best supporting actress for her portrayal of Anita, the tough but vulnerable girlfriend to the Sharks's gang leader—becoming the first Hispanic actress to win a Best Supporting Actress Oscar.

After her success with *West Side Story*, Moreno took on a range of interesting roles on stage and in films. She performed with the likes of Marlon Brando, Jack Nicholson and James Garner. Her career took another interesting turn in the 1970s, when she joined the cast of *The Electric Company*, a children's television program. She stayed with the program for six seasons and became known for her trademark catchphrase: "Hey, you guys." She and the rest of the cast won a Grammy Award in 1972 for the show's soundtrack.

Only a few years later, Moreno won a Tony Award (best featured actress in a play) for her work in Broadway's *The Ritz* (1975). Accolades didn't stop there for Moreno. She went on to win two Emmy awards for guest appearances on *The Muppet Show* (1977) and *The Rockford Files*

(1978). She is one of only 11 people to have received the four major entertainment honors—Emmy, Tony, Oscar and Grammy awards (also known as the EGOT).

Moreno again impressed critics with her turn as a no-nonsense nun on the cable television series *Oz* from 1997 to 2003. Today, she continues to act in feature films, make guest appearances on television, and sing and perform in theatrical productions.

Personal Life

Once romantically linked to Marlon Brando, Moreno has been married to Leonard Gordon since 1965. The couple has a daughter and lives in Berkeley, California.