



A STUDY OF
THE NEW YORK DRAMA CRITICS' REVIEWS
OF THE MUSICAL PLAYS OF
RICHARD RODGERS AND OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN 2ND

By

CoraJane Diane Bunce

A THESIS

Submitted to the College of Communication Arts
Michigan State University of Agriculture and
Applied Science in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Speech

1958

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The author is deeply indebted to two major professors at Michigan State University for their cooperation in this project: Dr. Stewart Chenoweth for originating the idea and Dr. Roger M. Busfield, Jr. for assisting in its completion.

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Finally, grateful recognition is due two faithful assistants, Mr. Aysel L. Bunce and Mr. Herman F. Marx for their technical aid.

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AN ABSTRACT

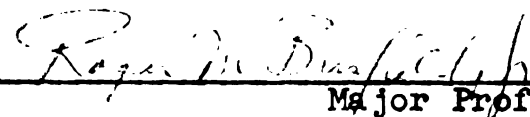
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ABSTRACT

The problem of this study was to conduct a survey of New York drama critic reviews in order to gain an insight into how a drama critic judges the Rodgers and Hammerstein 2nd musicals. It is the hope of this thesis that by an examination of the reviews of these critics that something can be learned about the problems involved, the criteria, the standards, etc., concerning the reviewing of musicals. Presented here is an analysis of what these reviewers had to say about the Rodgers and Hammerstein plays with reference to book, music, lyrics and form and integration.

Throughout the course of study extensive research was conducted to determine the characteristics of the medium of musicals and policies and practices of the New York newspapers and their drama critics. Various interviews and correspondences contributed considerably to this foundational material.

Chapter One presents background material on reviewers, newspapers and musicals. Chapter Two treats Oklahoma! and Carousel, the two plays that Rodgers and Hammerstein adapted from already existing plays. Chapter Three surveys the comments on South Pacific, The King and I, and Pipe Dream, three plays which were derived from a literary source. In Chapter Four are the reviews covering two original

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musicals by Rodgers and Hammerstein, Allegro, and Me and Juliet. The final chapter offers a statistical analysis of specific mention per topic and a conclusion on the investigation of standards and methods.

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CHAPTER ONE

NEWSPAPER DRAMA CRITICISM

The Function and Responsibility of the Critic

The professional dramatic critic is a member of the audience who has a newspaper available through which to express his reaction. His function is to react to the performance. To qualify for this position he must first write clearly in order to communicate his ideas to his readers. Next he must have sufficient background in order to have a reaction that his readers can trust and to some authorities, he must be a man of principle and courage, with a high degree of personal integrity.¹

Although constantly in touch with the celebrated and glamorous people of the theatre world, the drama critic's profession is neither a glamorous nor an easy one. He is governed by the constantly changing tastes of a heterogeneous public.

A daily reviewer tries to do two things. He attempts to describe what happened during the play he is writing about, thus conveying information to the readers. He tries to report upon his own response to these things, thus providing guidance to those among his readers who have found by experiment that they are apt to enjoy or

¹ James P. Brown, City Editor of the Jackson Citizen Patriot, and Instructor of Journalism, Jackson Junior College. Personal interview, August 2, 1958.

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This study is primarily concerned with the reviews of the drama critics who write for the daily New York newspapers. Specifically omitted from consideration are the reviews appearing in weekly or monthly periodicals. The daily newspaper critics attend the same opening performances and record their impressions and reactions immediately after the final curtain, whereas the weekly or monthly critics often attend different performances and have more time to write their appraisals.

The daily reviewer operates under a greater handicap than does his colleague who writes for the weekly or monthly publication. The daily critic has an early deadline and he must formulate his views quickly. In addition, he usually has far less space for his review than does the weekly or monthly critic. This study, therefore, is limited to the reviews of the men who sit in judgment opening night and give their pronouncements the following day.

The reviews of the daily New York drama critics were chosen for this study for the purpose of finding out how these critics judge a musical in terms of the work itself. There is no intent to minimize the importance of presentation and spectacle but rather to consider the factors of book, music, lyrics, and form and integration in the light of reviewing. Nor is it the purpose to contrast the reviews of daily papers

²"Failing Plays and the Critics," Theatre Arts, November 25, 1921, p. 777.

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⁴ Ibid., p.

⁵ Brown, 10

⁶ Ibid.

with weeklies or monthlies. It appears that the basic function for all critics is the same, for as Brooks Atkinson of the New York Times has said:

If well done, criticism is a form of art, in which the critic, as a human being, responds to the ideas and emotions in the theatre, painting, or any other form of art.³

Mr. Atkinson further points out that critics are members of the public and not an isolated group of people.⁴

In accord with Mr. Atkinson is Mr. Brown of the Jackson Citizen Patriot who says:

From the standpoint of the newspaper, the minute you try to set the critic up as an artist--rather than basically a member of the audience--you are negating the whole purpose of his existence because people read the newspaper to find out whether they will like the play or not.⁵

On a "straight-away" review the critic writes his report when it is fresh in his mind and he is filled with his own response. He tells his audience what he saw, what he heard and how it affected him. He tells them what the show is made of, so that the reader will know what to expect if he chooses to attend one of the performances.⁶

³ Brooks Atkinson, "Does the Critic Make or Break a Play", Let's Meet the Theatre, Dorothy and Joseph Samachson Collection (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1954), p. 33

⁴ Ibid., p. 31

⁵ Brown, loc. cit.

⁶ Ibid.

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The Musical Adds Responsibilities

Drama critics have been reviewing musicals for many years, in fact since this form of entertainment became a part of American theatre. There are, of course, controversial opinions as to just when the birth of the modern musical occurred. Some claim it was established by the high spirited, elaborate production called A Gaiety Girl on September 18, 1894, at the Daly Theatre in New York. According to Cecil Smith:

If any single moment can be elected as the moment of the birth of modern musical comedy, this was it. American farce-comedy, from its humble beginnings with Salsbury's Troubadours, had grown up and, so to speak, taken a trip to England, where it entered into a liaison with British comic opera and burlesque. A Gaiety Girl was the result of that union; she was part English and part American in parentage.⁷

At least since this production critics have been reviewing musicals in their various forms of presentation.

The performances of opera and its variations have been reserved for the music critic but when musical comedy came into being the drama critics were given the responsibility of covering them.⁸ This may have been due to the elements that comprise the nature of the work, and also to the fact that the form deviates from the traditional form of opera and the field of classism. Also added to the reviewer's task was the covering of the revue, a craze which started about 1915

⁷Cecil Smith, Musical Comedy in America, Theatre Arts Book, (Clinton, Mass: The Colonial Press, Inc. 1950), p. 116

⁸Brown, loc. cit.

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when some producers decided to pay more attention to dances, pantomines, glittering costumes and a fast pace than to a "book" for the show. They found this medium of speed and variety pleasing to the public and also profitable to the producers.

In any event this new assignment placed an added responsibility upon the drama critic because it was then necessary for him to become acquainted with those elements that compose this type of entertainment. Many of the Broadway newspaper drama critics who are members of the New York Drama Critics' Circle may well fit into the category of journalistic dramatic critic, since their background is newspaper work rather than academic scholarship or a formal music education. Therefore, with the public's growing interest in the musical forms of entertainment, the critic found his profession becoming more complicated and demanding.

A critic in his regular assignment of reviewing plays is concerned with the essential elements of drama such as plot, character, theme, dialogue, language etc. When the reviewer covered the musical comedy at the beginning of the twentieth century he was seldom concerned with the plot because such a play had "elaborate scenery and showy costumes, but only a sketchy and usually farcical plot."⁹ The term musical comedy seemed to be applied to any sentimental humorous play with light music and attempted to fuse burlesque and light opera. For example, in The Girl Friend "a routine plot

⁹The World Book Encyclopedia, Vol XII (Chicago, Ill. Field Enterprises, Inc., 1956), p. 5925

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¹¹ Ibid

involving professional cyclists, corrupt gamblers, and a fixed six-day bike race was flexible enough to permit interpolations of rousing burlesques on grand opera and on minstrel shows, and to highlight a brilliant eccentric dance."¹⁰ This musical comedy, written by Richard Rodgers and Larry Hart, was produced on March 17, 1926, by Lew Fields.

Also about this time the critics were covering the Ziegfield Follies and other similar "Revue" productions. These "Revue" were a survey, mainly satiric of contemporary events with songs, sketches, burlesques, monologues, etc. This form of entertainment still exists and the critics in writing reviews of these shows take into consideration the speed and variety, the tempo, the choruses, dancers, pantomimes, etc. Leonard Selman's New Faces of 1955, '56, '57, etc., are recent examples of this type of show.

As the authors made changes in their methods of writing so the reviewers had to make changes in their elements of consideration. In 1927, Show Boat by Oscar Hammerstein and Jerome Kern was an epochal event in the history of America's musical theatre and the reviewers covered not a musical comedy but an American folk play with music. Robert Garland called it "an American masterpiece," and John Chapman said it was "immortal...what every musical comedy should be--and no other has been."¹¹

¹⁰David Ewen, Richard Rodgers (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1957), p. 101

¹¹Ibid., p. 205

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¹²Ibid.

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¹⁴Ibid.

Show Boat gave Broadway audiences a foretaste of what the musical theatre would become in a later era--once again with Hammerstein, but this time with Richard Rodgers' music.¹²

In 1931, the critics had another new experience in musical reviewing George Gershwin's musicale, Of Thee I Sing. Though the musical featured the usual numbers and routines, it aimed at presenting a bitingly satirical picture of the American political scene and its backgrounds.¹³ "It was also fresh and novel, a sharp departure from anything ever before attempted in an American musical comedy. Its plot avoided the usual patterns, even though it did adhere to the time-honored Broadway theme of "boy meets girl."¹⁴ Now the reviewers had to take into consideration the plot, its timeliness, and its appeal. They had to combine their methods of analysis, the way they viewed a regular play and the way they considered a musical comedy.

Reviewing the New Integrated Musical of Rodgers and Hammerstein 2nd

Prior to the writing of Oklahoma! in 1942 the usual Broadway musical was of the musical comedy or revue style. As a result of the Gershwin effort some plots became a little more important but the majority continued to employ a sketchy plot. But with Oklahoma! a new form took shape.

¹²Ibid.

¹³David Ewen, The Story of George Gershwin (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1943), p. 142.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 143.

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When Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote Oklahoma! they actually wrote a folk opera. Then through the evolution of their writings they developed for themselves a form most evident in The King and I. Their partnership has been distinguished by a consistent drive toward something that became a new musico-dramatic form; something that is not "grand" opera, but is very definitely neither musical comedy nor operetta.¹⁵ They have called the majority of their works musical plays and if they changed from this form of composition they made their deviation apparent to the audience as the thing they intended to do. For example, when they wrote Me and Juliet, they printed in the program that the production was a musical comedy and not a musical play.

Most critics agree that this team made an apparent effort to bridge between the inanity of the Broadway musical review, the song and dancer musical comedy, and the operetta or opera type vehicle to the depth of a real play. They present real characters--characters that live. This is the greatest test in all fiction writing and tells whether or not it is good.¹⁶

Although musically Rodgers and Hammerstein created no new components still they developed an integrated form by the use of existing elements. In the melodic line they also use a special technique that has utilized a modal form by which

¹⁵Deems Taylor, Some Enchanted Evenings (New York: Harper & Bros., 1953), p. 231.

¹⁶Brown, loc cit.

they, in some part, identify themselves. Instrumental music has utilized this method but it seldom, if ever, has been used in writing for the Broadway stage. This special technique is accomplished by the treatment of a motif repeated in varied keys.¹⁷

In the song "It Feels Good" from Me and Juliet there is an example of this technique.¹⁸



In the course of their writings Rodgers and Hammerstein attempted to make changes in their style but some critics were inclined to object to these changes. In his Theatre in the Fifties George Jean Nathan remarked:

... In The King and I Rodgers tried to break at least to a small degree from the compositional safety of "Oklahoma," "South Pacific," etc., and to accomplish something less "hit parade" and a trifle more musically independent. It is perfectly true that he hasn't anywhere undertaken any marked departure, but even the minor measure he has seems to be sufficient to make some fish pursue their accustomed bias and challenge him. They appear determined that for the rest of his life he should devote himself strictly to musical proclamations of beautiful mornings and enchanted evenings and not even remotely consider the possibility of nights of wind and storm.¹⁹

In spite of attempts by the critics and audiences to type the compositions of Rodgers and Hammerstein, these artists

¹⁷Don Gillis, Composer and publisher with Interlochen Press, Personal Interview. August 14, 1958.

¹⁸Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2nd, Me and Juliet, Vocal Score, (New York: Williamson Music Inc., 1953), p. 142.

¹⁹George Jean Nathan, Theatre in the Fifties (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 259.

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²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.;
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²⁴Gillis
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p. 48.

have continued to work on the development of their musical idea and their musical plays, according to Don Gillis, composer and publisher, "have become distinctive in their composition."²⁰ He further remarked:

First of all they have within their structure the basic elements of a play. Also they are written with an adaptability for spectacle. In their conquest for integration they interpolate into their scores various methods of interpretation such as: (1) recitative, (2) incidental music, (3) spoken dialogue with musical accompaniment, (4) individual songs, (5) soliloquy, (6) music for choreography.²¹

For example, spoken dialogue with musical accompaniment is apparent in The King and I when Anna and Louis are arriving in Bangkok and Louis asks if she isn't afraid to go into a country where she does not know anyone. She tells him "no" in her song "I'll Whistle a Happy Tune" and then in spoken dialogue he replies, "I don't think I'll ever be afraid again."²² Also an example of this can be found in South Pacific in "Unspoken Thoughts." Here Emile and Nellie are comparing cultures and the possibility of their mergers.²³ In Allegro the grandmother's death is told in a soft musical passage flowing beneath the spoken message.²⁴

Incidental music is common to the Rodgers and Hammerstein works. In "Music Under the Scene", South Pacific, Nellie goes to the home of Emile for a social visit and exclaims about its

²⁰Gillis, loc cit.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.; Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2nd, The King and I (New York: Williamson Music Inc., 1951), Tempo Primo, p. 18.

²³Gillis, loc cit.; Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2nd, South Pacific (New York: Williamson Music, Inc., 1949), p. 22.

²⁴Gillis, loc cit.; Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2nd, Allegro (New York: Williamson Music, Inc., 1948), p. 48.

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beauty. This incidental music sets the mood for her individual song "Cockeyed Optimist."²⁵ In The King and I the "Fireworks" music introduced the finale to the first act.²⁶ Also in Allegro the "Chance of Scene" music forwards the plot through emotion when Joe returns to his father's office and says "I forgot my diploma."²⁷ In South Pacific, Rodgers did not want the continuity of stage action disturbed and therefore, after Emile sang "Some Enchanted Evening" "before the demand for encores could be expressed, Rodgers used a traditional passage in the orchestra to lead the play firmly from the ending of that song to the change of scene."²⁸

In a play such as The King and I even when there is no singing, there is a well-nigh continuous murmur of music, whether under dialogue or to illustrate a scene in pantomime. It is a device that greatly helps the plausibility of the action and eases immeasurably the transition from speech to song.²⁹

The former opera star, present instructor and opera impresario, Barre Hill, points out various incidents where the soliloquy is used by Rodgers and Hammerstein. He says:

In South Pacific, while visiting Emile's home, Nellie and Emile join in a "Twin Soliloquy" where they express their wonders of what the future could be.³⁰ In "My Lord and Master," The King and I, Tuptim exposes her

²⁵South Pacific, op. cit., p. 15.

²⁶The King and I, op. cit., p. 106.

²⁷Allegro, op. cit., p. 171.

²⁸Ewen, Richard Rodgers, op. cit., p. 259.

²⁹Taylor, op. cit., p. 219.

³⁰Barre Hill, former opera star, present instructor and opera impresario, Personal Interview, August 15, 1958; South Pacific, op. cit., p. 20.

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native train of thought wondering what the King really thinks of her. She says she will put on a smile for him but the smile will really be for another man.³¹ The King also delivers a soliloquy in "A Puzzlement" in which he questions in his own mind his youthful teachings and his present enlightenments.³² In the opening of Carousel, Billy Bigelow makes plans for the future of his unborn child in a soliloquy.³³

Mr. Hill also has this to say about the component, recitative:

Recitative is not used as frequently in the new integrated musical of Rodgers and Hammerstein as it is by some other contemporary composers. For example, Lerner and Lowe in My Fair Lady employ this technique to some extent. However, there are some recitatives in the musical plays of Rodgers and Hammerstein. For example, "There is Nothing Like a Dame", South Pacific, has within it a recitative line by Billis which begins "We got nothin' to put on a clean white suit for."³⁴

Choreography produced a major change in the musical and with it a new factor came into the picture. The dances open spontaneously out of the narrative and forward the action. Agnes de Mille expanded the dance medium and contributed much to the development of the new musical play form. For example, the dance of Bloody Mary and the Seabees depicts a spirit of fun and frivolity.³⁵ In Allegro choreography plays a major part in the biography cantata. In South Pacific Nellie and the nurses dance in resolution and agreement that any man can be forgotten. In Oklahoma the dream sequence conveys the

³¹The King and I, op. cit., p. 27. Hill, loc. cit.

³²Ibid., p. 44; Hill, loc. cit.

³³Hill, loc. cit.

³⁴Hill, loc. cit., South Pacific, op. cit., p. 36.

³⁵South Pacific, op. cit., p. 32.

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36 Allegro,

37 Ibid., p

38 The King

39 Taylor, S

40 Ewen, R

wishes and fears of Laurie and gives a hint of danger and a foreshadowing of the future. In Allegro the "End of College Dance" forwards the plot by presenting explanatory material.³⁶ And the "Children's Dance" in this same play helps the audience follow the growth of Joe through his childhood.³⁷ In The King and I there is a dance sequence in pantomime before a reprisal of "Something Wonderful" called "Change of Scenes" which sets the mood for the reprise.³⁸

The technique of using the individual songs is a very important factor in this new musical of Rodgers and Hammerstein. For one thing the songs are written in the language of the spoken dialogue, so that the transition from speech to song is smooth. Then too, Rodgers' music has a "conversational quality about it that makes it easy to sing."³⁹ The songs always forward the plot and "the interest lies exclusively in the lyricism."⁴⁰ In fact, many times the composers sacrifice prospects of getting songs on the hit parade in an attempt to accomplish the integration of music and story, the factor with which they are so concerned.

[Rodgers] "makes his structure adapt itself resiliently to the flow of his musical ideas and to the requirements of his text. Gone forever are the formal verse and chorus relationships; the thirty-two bar melody evenly

³⁶Allegro, op. cit., p. 68.

³⁷Ibid., p. 34.

³⁸The King and I, op. cit., p. 102.

³⁹Taylor, op. cit., p. 231.

⁴⁰Ewen, Richard Rodgers, op. cit., p. 316.

partitioned into symmetrical phrases. Instead we have a song which becomes an art song in the freedom of its construction, in the deepened expressiveness of the lyricism, the independence of the harmony, and most of all in the capacity of the melody to catch the most elusive mood and emotional vibration of the lyric."⁴¹

Another great change this new musical form seemed to foster was the fact that the Rodgers and Hammerstein characters appear to be so real according to the situation in which they find themselves. For example, the song, "Surrey with the Fringe on Top," in Oklahoma is written in exactly the language a cowboy would use when trying to make a hit with his girl. And the songs for Nellie Forbush in South Pacific are written in the vernacular of a girl from Kansas. Her song "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Out of My Hair" is an example of this technique.⁴²

Also in their plays the composers attempt to bring out the flavor of the country. In The King and I the "March of the Siamese Children" produces a feeling of the country of Siam. The songs "Bali Ha'i" and "Happy Talk" in South Pacific place the audience in the South Sea Island mood. Accents also bring out the flavor of the country and its people. Oklahoma has Western dialect, Carousel, New England. "South Pacific, while perhaps not technically written in dialect, is couched in Army and Navy lingo, which is almost a dialect in itself, and one character speaks with a French accent. The King

⁴¹Ewen, Richard Rodgers, op. cit., p. 317-318.

⁴²South Pacific, op. cit., p. 60.

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and I is written in English that most of the characters speak with an exotic accent.⁴³

Since the birth of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical other composers have used many of the various factors that comprise the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical in an effort toward greater unity while others have continued to adhere to the old form of musical comedy. For example, Happy Hunting, Bells are Ringing, Lil' Abner follow more closely the former musical comedy pattern while Fanny, Most Happy Fellow, and My Fair Lady have used various factors lending to the integration of story and music.⁴⁴ Don Gillis, whose technique in advancing the story line is by conversation between characters closely relayed in delivery of spoken conversation yet done as part of the musical structure, has rejected the recitative as well as the spoken word to achieve this result. Thus, in both Pep Rally and Park Avenue Kid, the flow of both story line and music is uninterrupted by starts and stops.⁴⁵

Regarding a valuable contribution to the Broadway stage, Mr. Gillis has said:

Rodgers and Hammerstein, as well as Loesser and Gershwin, proved the much questioned use of English in art forms to be valid communication. English in song is beautiful and can convey a message as well as the spoken word when the composer employs it wisely.⁴⁶

⁴³Taylor, op. cit., p. 222.

⁴⁴Gillis, loc. cit.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

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While other composers before Rodgers and Hammerstein have used some of the components mentioned in the analysis of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, still they have not produced the real characters or the form and integration that characterizes, say, South Pacific, or The King and I. For example, Nurse Forbush is more genuine than the tenor in "Girl Crazy." "Girl Crazy," itself, is a series of inane reviews, rollicking songs with a parade of pretty girls across the stage. The dancers at the wedding of Laurie and Curly in Oklahoma are not the same high stepping chorus line of "Girl Crazy."⁴⁷ Also in Strike Up the Band the music is not integrated with the play itself. For example, the song "Soon" actually does not forward the plot or contribute to the continuity of the play. Yet in this same musical is an example of the use of incidental music with the "Dream Music".⁴⁸ Even the older musicals like Vagabond King, Rose Marie, Show Boat made use of many of these aforementioned techniques, but they did not contain the fusion between music and text which is so characteristic of the newer type of musical.

The problem before the critic in regard to these new musical forms became then a recognition of these forms, to be aware that "songs were made to flow into speech and speech

⁴⁷ Brown, loc. cit.

⁴⁸ George Gershwin, Strike Up the Band, (New York: New World Music Corp. 1930), p. 53 & 58.

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into song; melody and text became one."⁴⁹ They had to begin to perceive that "extended sequences combined prose, verse, and speech, or recitative with melody."⁵⁰ When they heard the orchestra they had to notice that "the orchestra often became an eloquent commentator on what had just happened or was about to happen."⁵¹ This presented the problem of considering the musical from many added aspects, together with the musical methods making up the character of the musical play, and still analyzing it from the standpoint of dramatic principles. Methodology and the varying ways in which the creation could be discussed in terms of quality carried a great deal of importance. Now in line for consideration were such things as: the text with deep feeling, its great universality, the encompassing humanity, tragic overtones, smooth integration of dialogue, lyrics and music, form and integration, decor, voice, tempo, dramatic truth, effective atmosphere, characterizations, etc. And to climax his problem the critic now was forced to squeeze into his limited space a synthesis of all that he had been able to gather in his observation of the musical and adequately inform his readers.

⁴⁹Ewen, Richard Rodgers, op. cit., p. 238.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

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The Critics and Their Newspapers

The American newspaper is now as much a medium of entertainment, specialized information and advertising as it is of news.⁵² As a result of mergers, the names of many newspapers have changed through the years; policies, such as sensationalism, conservatism, liberalism, have changed with times and need, but the initial job of reporting to the public has remained the primary objective. Just as changes in these occur, so circulation changes, for it is not a static thing. That is the reason that the circulation rate of the New York newspapers is based on a three months' period by the auditing bureau of circulation. There are so many things that influence the readers, and, in a metropolitan city, circulation is largely determined by newstand purchases. It is here that choice fluctuates so readily. One of the main reasons is that the reader has been taught to think in terms of sensationalism. This pertains to the average reader.

According to William V. Swank of the Jackson Citizen Patriot the reader is influenced by the type of headline used on the front page. The Bold Black Headliner, as it is called, generally mounts in circulation for the day. There are some people who buy a certain paper because they like the editorial policy, political views, or a certain columnist; but as a general rule circulation is the victim of the headline or habit.⁵³

⁵²A Free and Responsible Press, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 53.

⁵³William J. Swank, Music Critic, Jackson Citizen Patriot, Personal interview, September 4, 1957.

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Six of the leading New York newspapers have been chosen as part of this survey. They are: The New York Times, New York Herald-Tribune, New York Post, New York Journal-American, New York News, New York World-Telegram and the Sun. All of the reviews from the Daily Mirror were not obtainable. However, those available reviews from this paper are included in the appendix. A brief discussion of the six papers follows:

People who like a conservative paper may buy either the New York Times or the Herald-Tribune. Both are conservative in their typographical makeup and boast no bold black headline. The Times is a leader in American newspapers, supports the League of Nations, is noted for its independence of party, its printing of important documents and speeches, its usually conservative news techniques, its voluminous foreign news and Washington correspondence.⁵⁴ There are no crusades in its news column and its motto is "All the News That's Fit to Print". The primary objective of the Times is to solicit the patronage of intelligent Americans who desire information rather than entertainment, who want facts unadorned.⁵⁵ It is distributed every morning, is classified as independent-democratic and has a daily

⁵⁴ Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism, (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1941), p. 654

⁵⁵ The Newspaper, Its Making and Its Meaning, by Members of the Staff of The New York Times (New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1945), p. 174

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circulation rate of 557,224.⁵⁶ The Herald-Tribune is a paper of similar policy and its professional standing has grown rapidly. It has become a powerful paper. Although Republican, it has not been afraid to experiment in its editorial features. Its news, even its political news, is not too biased. It is famous for its typographical excellence and seeks complete coverage without becoming a dreary catalogue.⁵⁷ It is distributed every morning, is classified as Independent-Republican, and has a daily circulation rate of 361,379.⁵⁸

The New York News uses a black banner. typographical policy, but not the bold banner. It uses the single black banner and its style is similar to that of the Chicago Tribune. It is distributed in the morning, is classed as Independent, and has a daily circulation rate of 2,156,137. This is the highest daily circulation rate of all the metropolitan newspapers.⁵⁹

The papers with the bold black headline typographical policy are The Journal-American, The New York Post, and the New York World-Telegram and The Sun. The Journal-American is distributed evenings except on Sunday. It became quite successful on the policy of sensationalism. Also it covers

⁵⁶ N. W. Ayers & Sons, Directory Newspaper & Periodicals 1957, (Philadelphia, Pa.: N. W. Ayers & Son, Inc. 1957), p. 706-741

⁵⁷ Harry W. Boehr, Jr. The New York Tribune Since the Civil War (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1936) p. 396

⁵⁸ Ayers, op. cit., p. 706-741.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

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heavily on agricultural science and new inventions. The daily circulation rate is 703,449 and it is classed as Independent.⁶⁰ The New York Post is distributed evenings except Saturdays and Sundays. It is listed as Independent and has a daily circulation rate of 408,150.⁶¹ The New York World-Telegram and The Sun is distributed evenings except Sunday. Scripps-Howard, owners of the New York World-Telegram, acquired The Sun in February of 1950, and the papers merged.⁶² In this survey for the musicals Oklahoma, Carousel, Allegro, and South Pacific, The New York World-Telegram, and The New York Sun will be treated as individual newspapers and carry separate critics' reviews. For the musicals The King and I, Me and Juliet, and Pipe Dream they will be covered as one paper because of their merger. This paper now is listed as Independent with a daily circulation rate of 569,290.⁶³

Following are some brief sketches of the drama critics who have been associated with the above newspapers and whose reviews have been chosen for this survey.

For the New York Times

Justin Brooks Atkinson was born November 28, 1894, in Melrose, Mass. He received his AB from Harvard University in 1917, his honorary LHD from Williams college in 1941, and was

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Lee B. Wood, Executive Editor, New York World-Telegram and The Sun. Correspondence, May 8, 1958.

⁶³Ayers, op. cit., p. 706-741

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instructor in English in Dartmouth college in 1917-18. He began reporting in 1917 on the Springfield Daily News. He has been a drama critic since 1925 and at present is the drama critic for the Times. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Journalism in May, 1947 and has written many books and literary articles.⁶⁴

Lewis Nichols also wrote for the Times. He was a member of their staff for twenty years as reporter, drama editor and critic. He then retired from the regular staff and became a free-lance writer. On November 16, 1947, he wrote an article in the New York Times Magazine called "The Nine Cold Men of Broadway" in which he named Broadway's "Supreme Court".

For the Journal-American

John Anderson wrote for this paper until 1943. He was born in Pensacola, Florida, October 18, 1896, was a student of the University Military School at Mobile, Alabama, 1912-14, and of University of Virginia, 1914-16. He began his newspaper career as assistant critic in 1920 on the New York Evening Post and became their drama critic in 1924. He later became drama critic for the Journal American. He was also a writer of plays and articles. He died July 16, 1943.

Robert Garland was born in Baltimore, Maryland, April 29, 1895. He attended public and private school in Baltimore

⁶⁴ This and the following brief biographies of New York drama critics are quoted from Who's Who in America, 1950-58, (Chicago, Illinois: A. N. Marquis Co.).

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and abroad. He became a feature writer on the Baltimore News in 1920, drama critic on the New York World-Telegram in 1928, motion picture critic for the New York American in 1937 and then drama critic for the New York Journal-American. He was the editor of several publishing companies, author of plays and scenarios and short articles. He also was an actor. He received various awards from Theatre Time for valuable contributions to American Theatre.

John Wilcox McClain was born in Marion, Ohio, August 7, 1904. He attended Brown University in 1925-26 and received a PHB from Kenyon College in 1927. He was a columnist for the New York Sun in 1928-38, for the New York American and then joined the Journal-American. He became their drama critic in 1951. He also is a scenarist.

For the Herald Tribune

Harold Barnes was born in London, England, November 26, 1904, and came to the United States in 1906. His education consisted of studies at Yale, A.B., 1925, at Queen's College, Oxford University, 1919-20 and Sorbonne University 1925-26. He joined the New York World Telegram in 1926 and in 1929 went with the Herald Tribune. Since 1937 he has been drama and motion picture critic for this paper. He also is a writer of articles.

Otis L. Guernsey, Jr., was born in New York City on August 9, 1918. He was a student at Taft School, Watertown, Connecticut. and received his BA from Yale in 1940. He started

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with the New York Herald Tribune in 1941 and became drama editor in 1955. He also is the author of articles on stage and screen.

Walter F. Kerr was born in Evanston, Illinois, July 8, 1913. He received his BS in Speech from Northwestern in 1937, MA in 1938. Other degrees earned were LLD from St. Mary's Notre Dame, D. Litt., La Salle, 1956. He has been an instructor of speech and drama, Associate Professor of Drama, and professional director. He was the drama critic on Commonweal, 1950-52, and for the Herald Tribune in 1951. He is also the author of plays and books on dramatic writing, criticism, and censorship.

For the New York News

Burns (Robert) Mantle was born in Watertown, New York, December 1873. He attended Normal College. He was dramatic editor of the Denver Times in 1898, worked for the Chicago Tribune in 1907, became drama editor for the Evening Mail in New York in 1911 and drama editor for the New York Daily News 1922-43. He also was drama correspondent for the Chicago Tribune from 1911-43. He then retired from staff writing. He was the editor of Best Plays and Year Book of Drama in America since 1919, and the editor of other books and articles. He died February 9, 1948.

John Arthur Chapman was born in Denver, Colorado, June 25, 1900. He attended the University of Colorado, 1916-17, and Columbia, 1919-21. He began his newspaper work with the Denver Times in 1917 and joined the News in 1920.

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He has been the drama critic there since 1943. Also he is the editor of several books on drama.

For the New York World Telegram and The Sun

Burton Rascoe was born in Fulton, Kentucky, October 22, 1892. He attended the University of Chicago, 1911-13. He started his newspaper work with the Shawnee (Okla) Herald in 1908-11, went to the Chicago Tribune, 1912-20, where he was the literature and drama editor. He became the literary editor for the New York Tribune in 1922 and then was literary critic for the New York Sun from 1930 to 1932. He became the drama critic and an editorial writer for the New York World Telegram in 1942. He has been the editor and advisor for various publications and literary enterprises, a writer of a syndicated column, a teacher of playwriting, as well as co-author of many books, plays, articles and stories.

William Hawkins was born in New York on June 17, 1912. His education consisted of: Phillips Exeter Academy; A.B. Washington and Lee University, 1933; LLB 1935. He was with Selznick International Pictures Inc., 1935, became a columnist with the New York World Telegram in 1940 and drama critic for this paper in 1946.

Ward Morehouse was born in Savannah, Georgia, November 24, 1899. He received his education at North Georgia College, Dahlonega, Georgia. He started as a reporter on the Savannah Press in 1915, was dramatic critic for the New York Sun in 1943, and joined the New York World Telegram and The Sun when

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For the New York Post

Wilella Louise Waldorf was born in South Bend, Indiana, November 22, 1899. She received her AB from Mount Holyoke College in 1922. She was with the New York Post as film critic in 1926 and became their dramatic editor in 1930. She died March 12, 1945.

Richard Watts, Jr., was born in Parkersburg, West Virginia January 12, 1898. He was educated at Columbia, 1917-21. He started with the Brooklyn Times in 1922, became motion picture critic for the New York Herald-Tribune in 1924, was their drama critic in 1936, and then became drama critic for the New York Post.

The reviews of the foregoing critics on seven musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein 2nd, as authorized by their individual newspapers, are the object of this study. The musicals are: Oklahoma!, Carousel, Allegro, South Pacific, The King and I, Me and Juliet, and Pipe Dream.

Opening Night Rating Statistics

The opening night critic's rating statistics will be quoted from Facts on File which is a weekly digest of world events with a cumulative index, published by Facts on File, Inc., 119 West 57th St., New York 19, New York. Regarding the opening night verdicts by the leading newspapers on theatre

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productions, this publication prints statistics in the following code:

First figure - Number of favorable reviews

Second figure - Number of mixed reviews

Third figure - Number of unfavorable reviews

This resource is being used as a statistical basis of comparison of ratings since all seven shows have been listed in this publication and also because this publication has a fine reputation for accurate culmination of statistics.

Method of Analysis

The aim of this study is to find out how a drama critic judges a musical, from the standpoint of the work itself and to try to determine whether or not these critics have among them a standard of evaluation. Seven of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals can be grouped into different examples of source material, and these musicals were chosen for the working area of this survey. The first two under consideration, in Chapter Two, were written as adaptations from already existing plays. These are Oklahoma! and Carousel. Chapter Three deals with South Pacific, The King and I and Pipe Dream because these three musicals were derived from literary sources that had already established themselves as successful books. The plays, Allegro, and Me and Juliet, treated in Chapter Four, are two original musicals by Rodgers and Hammerstein 2nd.

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The reviews of the seven leading New York newspapers were collected and subjected to analysis. From this analysis it became apparent that the critical comments made by the reviewers fell into natural topic headings. The treatment of the reviews of each play follow the following topic headings: (1) general comments (2) comments on book (3) comments on music (4) comments on lyrics (5) comments on form and integration and (6) miscellaneous comments. Since this study is largely concerned with reviews of the musicals from the standpoint of a work, specific comments on such things as performances, lighting, directing, etc., were not included.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE CRITICS REVIEW OKLAHOMA! AND CAROUSEL

In 1942, when Rodgers and Hammerstein began working on Oklahoma! both men were well known to the critics. Hammerstein was already a person of considerable consequence in the musical theatre: the author of books and lyrics for over twenty-five stage productions, and words to several hundred songs; the partner in the creation of several operettas, musical comedies and songs that were formidable successes.¹ Rodgers had already distinguished himself as a composer in his collaboration with Larry Hart and their various successful productions as well as with many tunes which had been favored with popular acclaim.

The Theatre Guild had produced Lynn Riggs' folk play, Green Grow the Lilacs, in 1942 and was convinced it would make a fascinating text for a musical. This play became Oklahoma!, a musical which broke away from the conventions of a musical comedy and became a folk play with music. For its try-out, the musical played three nights in New Haven and two weeks in Boston under the title of "Away We Go." When Oklahoma! opened in New York, at the St. James Theatre, on March 31, 1943,

¹David Ewen, Richard Rogers (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1957), p. 199

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the house was not completely sold out opening night. However, once the audience saw what Rodgers and Hammerstein 2nd had created for them, Oklahoma! became a box office hit.

On May 1, 1944, Oklahoma! won the Pulitzer Prize and then went on to break the long run record for musicals, exceeding by eight per cent the record set by Chu-Chin-Chow in Land. Since its opening on March 31, 1943, the show grossed over seven million dollars for a 2,500% return on the \$80,000.00 investment. In London it ended its run October 21, 1950, at the Drury Lane Theatre, having had the longest run in London's theatrical history with 1,511 performances.

For Oklahoma! Facts on File published a rating score of 9-0-0, 9 favorable reviews, no mixed reviews, no unfavorable reviews, closing date May 29, 1948, with 2,246 performances.²

All of the seven New York newspapers chosen for this survey gave the musical a favorable report. Five commented on the music, four devoted space to the book, three specifically mentioned the lyrics and four engaged in a discussion of form and integration.

Comments on Oklahoma!

Burns Mantle of the New York Daily News made this statement: "The most thoroughly and attractively American musical comedy since "Show Boat"...really is different... beautifully different."³ "A jubilant and enchanting musical"⁴

²Facts on File, 1943 & 1948.

³Burns Mantle, New York Daily News, April 1, 1943.

⁴Howard Barnes, New York Herald Tribune, April 1, 1943.

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wrote Howard Barnes of the New York Herald Tribune. Burton Rascoe of the New York World Telegram called the musical "fresh, lively, colorful, and enormously pleasing."⁵ "Oklahoma!" has great charm,"⁶ said Ward Morehouse of the New York Sun. "It is fresh and diverting."⁷ Lewis Nichols of the New York Times commented that "possibly in addition to being a musical play "Oklahoma!" could be called a folk operetta; whatever it is, it is very good."⁸ Miss Wilella Waldorf of the New York Post wrote the only general comment with "faint" praise:

After a mild somewhat monotonous beginning the Theatre Guild's new musical play "Oklahoma!" suddenly came to life around the middle of the first act and grew steadily more entertaining as the evening progressed.⁹

Comments on the Book

Nichols called the book "simple and warm".¹⁰ Barnes said:

Hammerstein has written a dramatically imaginative libretto...Plots are generally a nuisance in musical comedies, but the narrative line in "Oklahoma!" is arresting and even dramatic. So many scenes are so good after "Oklahoma!" gets off to a rather slow start, that it is difficult to single any one out for special

⁵ Burton Rascoe, New York World-Telegram, April 1, 1943.

⁶ Ward Morehouse, New York Sun, April 1, 1943.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Lewis Nichols, The New York Times, April 1, 1943.

⁹ Wilella Waldorf, New York Post, April 1, 1943.

¹⁰ Nichols, loc. cit.

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commendation.¹¹ [Here Mr. Barnes seems to have noted the slow start to which Miss Waldorf objected.]

In her comment on the book Miss Waldorf continued with her objection: "Hammerstein has done a workmanlike job of adapting Mr. Rigg's play after that first dull stretch."¹²

John Anderson of the Journal-American wrote:

The second Oscar Hammerstein has turned Mr. Rigg's play into a light and colorful libretto...fresh and imaginative, as enchanting to the eye as Richard Rodgers' music is to the ear.¹³

Mantle, Rascoe and Morehouse made no reference to the book.

Comments on the Music

Regarding the music, Anderson made this comment: "It is Rodgers who puts the spell on the evening with a score that ranks with his best."¹⁴ He called Richard Rodgers' music "enchanting to the ear."¹⁵ Nichols wrote at length on the music:

Mr. Rodgers' scores never lack grace, but seldom have they been so well integrated as this for "Oklahoma!". He has turned out waltzes, love songs, comic songs and a title number which the state in question would do well to seize as an anthem forthwith. "Oh What a Beautiful Morning" and "People Will Say We're in Love" are headed for countless juke boxes across the land and the dirge called "Poor Jud" is amazingly comic. "The Farmer and the Cow Man", and "The Surry [sic] With the

¹¹Barnes, loc. cit.

¹²Waldorf, loc. cit.

¹³John Anderson, New York Journal-American, April 1, 1943.

¹⁴Anderson, loc. cit.

¹⁵Ibid.

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"Fringe on Top" also deserve mention only because they quite clearly approach perfection; no number of the score is out of place or badly handled.¹⁶

Barnes and Rascoe both rated the score one of great quality. Barnes: "The Rodgers score is one of his best which is saying plenty."¹⁷ Rascoe: "Richard Rodgers has written for the show one of the finest musical scores any musical play ever had."¹⁸ Miss Waldorf complimented the music but still felt it necessary to register a criticism:

Mr. Rodgers' music is invariably pleasant and will grow on you as it is played and replayed...For some reason a flock of Rodgers' songs that are pleasant enough but sound quite a bit alike are warbled in front of Laurey's farm house, one after another without much variety in the presentation.¹⁹

Four out of five reviewers who mentioned the music were very complimentary, one had some fault to find. Two reviewers made no comment on the music.

Comments on the Lyrics

Only three reviewers made specific mention of the lyrics. "Hammerstein has written a string of catchy lyrics," said Barnes.²⁰ "Hammerstein's lyrics are often bright and amusing," wrote Miss Waldorf.²¹ Anderson merely mentioned

¹⁶ Nichols, loc. cit.

¹⁷ Barnes, loc. cit.

¹⁸ Rascoe, loc. cit.

¹⁹ Waldorf, loc. cit.

²⁰ Barnes, loc. cit.

²¹ Waldorf, loc. cit.

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that Mr. Hammerstein "has written the lyrics for Rodger's [sic] music."²² The other four reviewers made no mention of lyrics in their reviews.

Comments on Form and Integration

Form and integration seemed to be of interest to four of the reviewers in this play. Each made reference to the slow start and rather lengthy first act. "Though I would have gladly sat up with the show all night," said Anderson, "it does need cutting, for the first act is too long; but I imagine it would be safer to cut throats than lay the blue pencil to it."²³ Morehouse of the Sun commented: "It is inclined to undue slowness at times and monotony creeps in and by the time they're singing the title song near the finish you're under the spell of it."²⁴ Howard Barnes made this observation: "So many scenes are so good after 'Oklahoma!' gets off to a rather slow start. It is difficult to single any one out for special commendation."²⁵

Miss Waldorf was a bit more lengthy in her remarks on form and integration. She made reference to the "flock of...songs...warbled in front of Laurey's farm house"²⁶ and

²² Anderson, loc. cit.

²³ Anderson, loc. cit.

²⁴ Morehouse, loc. cit.

²⁵ Barnes, loc. cit.

²⁶ Waldorf, supra, footnote 19.

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then continued with:

We were heartedly glad when the scene finally shifted to the smokehouse where the villain lurked. When Curly, who had been singing his head off in the farm yard, started telling the hired man what would happen if he hung himself, things began to look up at once. The second and final act was an improvement on the first dramatically and several vigorous ensemble numbers gave variety and movement to the performance. By the time Curly and Laurey were married and were shouting out the title song, we were having a good time.²⁷

Carousel

The Theatre Guild had successfully produced Ferenc Molnár's Liliom in 1921 and in 1940 Rodgers and Hammerstein adapted this already successful play into a musical which became Carousel. With its interventions of form, this musical play was a forward step in the history of the American musical play.

The play had its four-weeks' try-out in New Haven and Boston and the people were pleased with it. The guild was happy with the musical version and on April 19, 1945, it opened in New York at the Majestic Theatre.

Facts on File published a rating score of 9-0-0, 9 favorable reviews, no mixed reviews and no unfavorable reviews, closing date May 24, 1947, with 864 performances.²⁸ Incidentally, Carousel is Mr. Hammerstein's favorite musical.

All of the seven New York newspapers chosen for this

²⁷ Waldorf, loc. cit.

²⁸ Facts on File, 1945 & 1947.

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survey gave the musical a favorable report. One of them, however, rated it reasonably favorable. Six commented on the music, five devoted space to the book, three specifically mentioned the lyrics and four engaged in a discussion of form and integration.

General Comments on Carousel

Lewis Nichols of the New York Times called the musical "on the whole delightful."²⁹ Ward Morehouse of the New York Sun made this statement:

"Carousel", a touching and affecting musical play, is something rare in the theatre. It's a hit, and of that there can be no doubt. If it is not the musical piece to challenge "Oklahoma!" for all-time honors, it is certainly one that deserves its place in the 44th Street block. The team of Rodgers and Hammerstein will go on forever.³⁰

John Chapman covered the show for the New York Daily News. He made quite a comparison of this musical with Oklahoma! He talked about the cast and the treatment of the production as a whole but gave little material about the work itself except to tell the story.

"Carousel" concerns the love of a gentle girl for a roughneck carnival barker. He is handsome, a bully, a braggart. In bad company he gets caught at an attempted robbery and kills himself. In Heaven two cops take him in through the back gates. He finds he is on probation. He can have one more day on earth and a chance to do something nice for somebody. When he returns he finds he has a daughter, she is now fifteen and unhappy. Billy Bigelow almost fumbles his chance but finally he conveys a new hope to the child

²⁹ Lewis Nichols, New York Times, April 20, 1945.

³⁰ Ward Morehouse, New York Sun, April 20, 1945.

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and the wife who loved him.³¹

About the authors Chapman remarked: "The musical theatre does not have two finer creative artists."³² He did not place the show in any particular category. Regarding its classification he said: "Carousel is tender, rueful, almost tragic, and does not fit into the pattern of musical comedy, operetta, opera bouffe or even opera."³³

Robert Garland of the New York Journal-American had no complaints about Carousel, but he had no analysis either. His general statements were:

Yes, yes, a thousand times yes..."Carousel" opened last night at the Majestic...opened triumphantly!

.....
As one who sees no good reason for comparing "Carousel" with "Oklahoma!", as one who prefers to let each stand on its perfected own, let me assure you that the Theatre Guild's new play-with-music is romantic, melodramatic, fantastic, colorful, comic, tragic, melodic and an evening of sheer theatrical enchantment.³⁴

Burton Rascoe was ill the night Carousel opened. Therefore, the New York World Telegram ran a review of the show with no by-line. They gave the musical a favorable headline: "Guild Scores Again With Its Carousel"³⁵

Wilella Waldorf, of the New York Post appeared to lean to a reasonably favorable or luke warm review.

³¹ John Chapman, New York Daily News, April 20, 1945.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Robert Garland, New York Journal-American, April 20, 1945.

³⁵ New York World Telegram, April 20, 1945.

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"Carousel", which started promptly at 8:15 and ended at 11 o'clock seemed to us rather a long evening. The "Oklahoma!" formula is becoming a bit monotonous, and so are Miss DeMille's ballets. All right, go ahead and shoot.³⁶

Comments on the Book

Otis L. Guernsey, Jr., of the New York Herald Tribune called the book "a tale told with sincerity. A series of variations on the theme of love or sorrows."³⁷ He continued with:

Rodgers and Hammerstein and the other collaborators have been treading on dangerous ground in such an adaptation; the soaring gayety of other musicals never comes up through the heavy atmosphere of this one. But the combination of the "Oklahoma!"³⁸ talents has found material to overcome the handicap.

Nichols of the New York Times said: "They conquered... the familiarity of Liliom...by following the story quite closely as to incident, changing only the time and locale."³⁹

The New York World Telegram had this to say about the book:

As you know, Liliom was the story of a swaggering carnival barker in Hungary, led to the Devil's gates by force of circumstance and his own willfulness. Mr. Hammerstein has transposed the scene to New England, renamed his characters for the most part, and has held fairly closely to the theme of the Molnar fantasy. He does permit his Liliom (in this case Billy Bigelow) to return to earth, after his death, in order to accomplish

³⁶Wilella Waldorf, New York Post, April 20, 1945.

³⁷Otis L. Guernsey, Jr., New York Herald Tribune, April 20, 1945.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Nichols, loc. cit.

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Chapman made no reference to the work of Hammerstein himself but instead spent quite a bit of space talking about the story Liliom from which Carousel was adapted. Actually he covered the book in the original form.⁴¹ Miss Waldorf claimed that "Carousel is closer to 'Oklahoma' than to 'Liliom'".⁴² Most of her comment was on this comparison. Ward Morehouse commended Hammerstein on his book writing saying that "he has done well in the fitting of the dramatic material of the Molnar play to the framework of musical comedy."⁴³ He devoted almost all of his commentary to the contents of the story as adapted from the play Liliom.

Comments on the Music

Regarding the music Nichols said the "composer offers all types of songs."⁴⁴ Guernsey wrote considerably on the Rodgers' score:

With a lovely musical score, a letter-perfect cast, a fine production and a tale told with sincerity, "Carousel" is definitely something to see...You will find few 'breaks' in "Carousel"...it flows smoothly through the music and dialogue, and, as is the technique of the authors, the drama is unfolded in songs and lyrics as much as in conversation. Since there is very little time for comedy in "Carousel" the score is a series of variations on the

⁴⁰New York World Telegram, loc. cit.

⁴¹Chapman, supra, footnote 35.

⁴²Waldorf, loc cit.

⁴³Morehouse, loc. cit.

⁴⁴Nichols, loc. cit.

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theme of love or sorrows; it avoids monotony only by its excellence. Rodgers and Hammerstein and the rest have proved that music and real drama can be combined outside the opera with very good entertainment results.⁴⁵

In discussing the music the New York World Telegram review read: "There are times when the music bears the distinct flavor of "Oklahoma!" particularly in the more spectacular ensembles, but that certainly is nothing against the play."⁴⁶

Morehouse listed the musical numbers and termed the music "tender and ingratiating with lyrics which are frequently stirring."⁴⁷ He listed Carousel a "beguiling musical play with a lovely score."⁴⁸ John Chapman listed the names of the songs but made no reference to their style. Miss Waldorf said this about the music:

...often very fine to listen to, as beautifully orchestrated by Don Walker and played by an excellent orchestra under Joseph Littau, but there is no doubt that it is not the sort of score one goes out humming. We must admit, too, that "Carousel" is no great vocal treat. Several of the Rodgers' melodies might have⁴⁹ proved more haunting if "sold" by cleverer singers.

Comments on the Lyrics

Only three reviewers made specific mention of the lyrics. Nichols said: "Some of them are funny, some factual,

⁴⁵Guernsey, loc cit.

⁴⁶New York World Telegram, loc cit.

⁴⁷Morehouse, loc. cit.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Waldorf, loc. cit.

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some aiming at nothing higher than to be pleasant."⁵⁰
 Guernsey said that the "drama is unfolded in lyrics"⁵¹ and
 Morehouse said the lyrics "are frequently stirring."⁵²

Comments on Form and Integration

Four reviewers called attention to the form and integration. Robert Garland made one comment about the form in which he stated:

A professional fault-finder by trade, I can't find anything to complain about where the Theatre Guild's latest musical play is concerned, although it is in me to wish mildly that the opening ballet, "Carousel", could be a wee bit longer, that the closing ballet, which has no programmed title, could be a wee bit shorter. But it doesn't really matter.⁵³

Guernsey combined his reference to music with reference to form and integration pointing out that the form has few breaks, flows smoothly through the music and dialogue, has little comedy, avoids monotony and is a combination of music and real drama.⁵⁴

The unsigned review in the New York World Telegram said this about form and integration:

The long first scene, making certain allowances for American colloquialism, follows the Molnar lines, almost line for line with the original. With the exposition out of the way, however, Mr. Hammerstein

⁵⁰ Nichols, loc. cit.

⁵¹ Guernsey, loc. cit.

⁵² Morehouse, supra, footnote 51.

⁵³ Garland, loc. cit.

⁵⁴ Guernsey, supra, footnote 49.

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does pretty much as he chooses with the dialogue.⁵⁵

Nichols of the Times said the play was "sometimes fast and rousing, now nostalgic and moving."⁵⁶ He gave this criticism: "At the beginning of the play, where scene and mood must be established, 'Carousel' moves a little slowly."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ New York World Telegram, loc. cit.

⁵⁶ Nichols, loc. cit.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

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CHAPTER THREE

REVIEWS OF THE THREE MUSICALS BASED ON A LITERARY SOURCE

South Pacific, The King and I, and Pipe Dream are the three musicals that Rodgers and Hammerstein derived from a literary source.

As long as Rodgers and Hammerstein seemingly stubbed their toe with their original Allegro¹, it was probably fortunate that Joshua Logan came up with the suggestion to Richard Rodgers in 1948 of doing another adaptation. However, a complete adaptation of Michener's Tales of the South Pacific, the book Logan had in mind, did not seem advisable. But a musical based on this literary source intrigued both Rodgers and Hammerstein. From this book came their immemorial South Pacific. They followed this policy with their King and I two years later. Each of their wives had read Margaret Landon's novel, Anna and the King of Siam, in 1944, and tried to interest the writers in a musical based on the book. However, it was not until 1946, when the novel was made into a motion picture, that the men took any interest in it and this was instilled by the late Gertrude Lawrence,

¹The reviews of Allegro can be found in chapter four and in the appendix.

who had a desire to play the part of Anna. Finally, through Fannie Holtzman, Miss Lawrence's lawyer, and the William Morris Agency, Rodgers and Hammerstein agreed to base a musical on Margaret Landon's novel. This musical became The King and I.

The third play derived from a literary source was Pipe Dream and was based upon John Steinbeck's novel Sweet Thursday. Between The King and I and Pipe Dream had been presented the original Me and Juliet. Actually Mr. Steinbeck, at the suggestion of the producers, Feuer and Martin, had originally intended to write his own adaptation and have Frank Loesser write the music. This project did not materialize and later Rodgers and Hammerstein were asked by the producers if they would be interested in the book. They began working on the text while in London in 1953 to prepare a production of The King and I. Their score, based on Sweet Thursday, became Pipe Dream.

South Pacific

South Pacific was first produced by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2nd in association with Leland Hayward and Joshua Logan, April 7, 1949, at the Majestic Theatre, New York City. This was the first show in which the collaborators had anything to do with production. Although many of the cast members of their various shows went on later to achieve great fame, this was the first of their shows that had opened with stars of first importance--Mary Martin and Ezio Pinza. Also Michener's Tales of the South Pacific had

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received the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and so this musical was based on first-rate material. The authors concentrated on two sketches for their musical from these Tales. For a basic plot they chose the sketch, "Our Heroine", which related the love of Nellie Forbush, an American nurse, and Emile de Becque, a local planter of French extraction. For a subsidiary plot they chose the sketch "Fo' Dolla", the tale that emphasized the love of Lieutenant Joseph Cable of the Marines for the native girl Liat. In the sub-plot they made a plea for racial tolerance.

The show had an advanced sale of \$500,000. and it capitalized at \$225,000. The play cost less than \$200,000. to produce and declared a 10% dividend the morning that it closed. On April 12, 1949, it received the New York Critic's award. On April 9, 1950, it received the "Tony" award for the best musical, and individual performance awards were granted to Mary Martin, Ezio Pinza, Juanita Hall and Myron McCormick. In 1950 it received the Pulitzer Prize drama award.

The general public took South Pacific straight to the heart, and the fact that the critics told them in advance that they would be missing something if they didn't attend contributed to the enthusiasm. It was not long before people were begging for tickets. Also within four months after the show opened, the 'angels' had a full return of their investment. Also the juke boxes all over the nation played the hit tunes and sale of sheet music and records sky-rocketed. So if

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finances are to be considered in the criteria for success, then South Pacific certainly jumped the hurdle quickly.

On May 16, 1953, the show closed for a five week engagement in Boston prior to the resumption in New York scheduled for June 22nd. At the original opening Facts on File published a score of 8-0-0, 8 favorable reviews, no mixed reviews, and no unfavorable reviews. It presented a closing date in its 1954 issue, January 16, 1954, with 1,925 performances.²

All of the seven New York newspapers surveyed gave South Pacific a favorable report. Six critics commented on the music, five devoted space to the book, four specifically mentioned the lyrics and three made mention of form and integration.

General Comments on South Pacific

Brooks Atkinson of The New York Times made this general statement:

Magnificent musical drama...rhapsodically enjoyable. It is a tenderly beautiful idyll of genuine people inexplicably tossed together in a strange corner of the world...as lively, warm, fresh, and beautiful as we had all hoped that it would be.³

Ward Morehouse of the New York Sun wrote: "It serves to bring fresh vitality to our soaring musical state."⁴

Howard Barnes of the New York Herald Tribune began his column

² Facts on File, 1949 & 1954

³ Brooks Atkinson, The New York Times, April 8, 1949.

⁴ Ward Morehouse, The New York Sun, April 8, 1949.

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with "Pearls, Pure Pearls."⁵ He continued:

The new and much heralded musical, 'South Pacific', is a show of rare enchantment. It is novel in texture and treatment, rich in dramatic substance, and eloquent in song...All the pleasant things that have been said in advance about "South Pacific" have been triumphantly justified.⁶

The New York Journal-American was represented by Robert Garland. His remarks about the work were short but they were complimentary. He wrote: "Now that it's at the Majestic, this 'South Pacific' has pretty nearly everything. This 'pretty nearly everything' is always good, often better, frequently best."⁷

Richard Watts, Jr., of the New York Post, wrote quite a lengthy general opinion:

'South Pacific' is not only delightful in its songs, humor and romantic narrative, but captures an enchanting mood of rueful, bittersweet sadness and even without forcing it, finds time for a sardonic glance at the tragedy of prejudice between people of different races. An utterly captivating work of theatrical art...a work of great style and loveliness, that is yet gay, vigorous, and vital...both strangely touching and richly entertaining...the rarest and most tasteful showmanship.⁸

William Hawkins of the New York World Telegram complimented the musical with: "Finest kind of balance

⁵ Howard Barnes, The New York Herald Tribune, April 8, 1949.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Robert Garland, The New York Journal-American, April 8, 1949.

⁸ Richard Watts, Jr., The New York Post, April 8, 1949.

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between story and song."⁹

John Chapman of the New York Daily News gave the only luke warm review of the seven. He made one general overall statement about the work itself and the rest of his review concerned the performance. Chapman:

I hope everybody involved will forgive me for reporting here that "South Pacific" is a good and classy musical but not the greatest thing since the invention of the wheel or even since "Kiss Me Kate." In order to pack in as much as possible, the authors have dispensed with set numbers and have tried to make everything all one piece. This is what Richard Wagner did in his musicals.¹⁰ [The question here may arise: And what is wrong with Richard Wagner's musicals?]

Comments on the Book

Regarding the book Atkinson said:

They have culled the story from James Michener's "Tales of the South Pacific" which in some incredible fashion managed to retain sensitive perceptions toward the Pacific Islands and human beings in the midst of the callous misery, boredom and slaughter of war.¹¹

Ward Morehouse wrote:

First-rate book material... "South Pacific", based upon portions of J. Michener's "Tales of the South", is a musical play without ballet or chorus, the dancing is of an incidental sort, and it's a show in which the rowdiness and barbarism of the Marines and the Seabees blend well enough with the romantic story of little Nellie from Little Rock and her adoring French planter.¹²

⁹William Hawkins, New York World Telegram, April 8, 1949.

¹⁰John Chapman, New York Daily News, April 8, 1949.

¹¹Atkinson, loc. cit.

¹²Morehouse, loc. cit.

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While talking about the performances of Mary Martin and Ezio Pinza, Howard Barnes mentioned this about the work itself:

Since Oscar Hammerstein 2nd and Joshua Logan have afforded them [Martin and Pinza] a book of variety and color, in which the Richard Rodgers-Hammerstein numbers are beautifully integrated, last night's gala premiere was an occasion for rejoicing... The librettists have plucked various situations from the Michener novel, mixing the grim background of island fighting with two inter-locking romances and making capital of lusty humor and the inevitable tragedy of war.¹³

The only mention Robert Garland made of the book was to refer to J. Micheners' prize-worthy war tales.¹⁴ Richard Watts described the book as being full of "humor and a romantic narrative." He continued with: "The book mixes drama and comedy in highly skillful fashion."¹⁵

Comments on the Music

Atkinson remarked: "Mr. Rodgers' music is a romantic incantation."¹⁶ Morehouse wrote this about the music:

"South Pacific" combines superb music and lyrics with first-rate book material, fine performances with skillful showmanship. It serves to bring fresh vitality to our soaring musical state, and it finds Rodgers and Hammerstein functioning on the plane that they achieved giving the theatre such masterpieces as "Oklahoma!" and "Carousel".¹⁷

¹³Barnes, loc. cit.

¹⁴Garland, loc. cit.

¹⁵Richard Watts, Jr., New York Post, April 8, 1949.

¹⁶Atkinson, loc. cit.

¹⁷Morehouse, loc. cit.

Howard Barnes was not too impressed with the music but still felt that it fulfilled its purpose. He wrote:

The Rodgers music is not his finest, but it fits the mood and pace of "South Pacific" so felicitously that one does not miss a series of hit tunes.¹⁸

Robert Garland mentioned "Richard Rodgers' fine and seldom highfalutin' score."¹⁹ Richard Watts, Jr., said the musical was "delightful in its songs." [He continued with:] "Mr. Rodgers' music is haunting and beautiful with half a dozen songs that are unforgettable."²⁰ Hawkins wrote:

Every song in the score has something to say that immediately advances the story or the character's relationships, and the orchestra on its own often makes the most telling comment on silent stage action.²¹

Comments on the Lyrics

Regarding the lyrics Brooks Atkinson pointed out that "as usual, Mr. Hammerstein's verses are both fervent and simple."²² Morehouse felt the musical contained "superb lyrics."²³ Garland remarked: "Oscar Hammerstein's smooth and tops...with earthy verses,"²⁴ and Richard Watts wrote:

¹⁸ Barnes, loc. cit.

¹⁹ Garland, loc. cit.

²⁰ Watts, loc. cit.

²¹ Hawkins, loc. cit.

²² Atkinson, loc. cit.

²³ Morehouse, loc. cit.

²⁴ Garland, loc. cit.

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"Mr. Hammerstein's lyrics are as distinguished as any he has ever written."²⁵

Comments on Form and Integration

Form and integration seemed to interest Howard Barnes considerably. Barnes:

Perhaps the chief delight of the production is the manner in which it belies its intricacy... Under Logan's superb direction, the action shifts with constant fluency. Borrowing the lap dissolve from the screen, he has kept the book cumulatively arresting and tremendously satisfying. The occasional dances appear to be magical improvisations. It is a long and prodigal entertainment, but it seems all too short.²⁶

The other two reviewers who made brief comments on form and integration were Richard Watts and William Hawkins. Watts: "All of its elements fit together with the rarest and most tasteful showmanship."²⁷ Hawkins: "This is the ultimate modern blending of music and popular theatre to date, with the finest kind of balance between story and song, and hilarity and heartbreak."²⁸

The King and I

The King and I was produced by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2nd. It opened in New Haven February 26, 1951, and played there one week, then went to Boston and

²⁵Watts, loc. cit.

²⁶Barnes, loc. cit.

²⁷Watts, loc. cit.

²⁸Hawkins, loc. cit.

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stayed there three weeks. The early audiences had liked this show so well no changes were made in either the music or the book. On March 30, 1951, The King and I opened in New York at the St. James Theatre. And on March 30, 1952, it won the American Theatre Wing's Antoinette Perry Award.

Deems Taylor, in his book Some Enchanted Evenings, writes that the musical closely follows the book which

...tells the story of Anna Leonowens, a widowed mid-Victorian lady who arrived in the 1860's at the court of the king of Siam to be the teacher of the royal children. The theme of the story concerns the crisis she met, in the classroom and in connection with the king's affairs, and the influence she bore on the destiny of an Oriental nation still unaffected by Western civilization.²⁹

Facts on File published a score of 8-0-0, 8 favorable reviews, no mixed reviews, no unfavorable reviews, closing date of March 20, 1954, with 1,246 performances.³⁰

According to Lee B. Wood, Executive Editor of the New York World-Telegram and The Sun, Scripps-Howard, owners of the New York World-Telegram, acquired The Sun in February of 1950.³¹ The New York World-Telegram and The Sun will be treated as one publication reducing the number of surveyed newspapers to six.

All six of the newspapers gave The King and I a favorable report. All six of these reviewers commented on

²⁹Deems Taylor, Some Enchanted Evenings (New York: Harper & Bros., 1953), p. 191

³⁰Facts on File, 1951 & 1954

³¹Lee B. Wood, Executive Editor, New York World-Telegram and The Sun, Personal correspondence, May 8, 1958.

both book and music, two mentioned the lyrics and five, including Mr. Morehouse's review for The Sun, discussed form and integration.

General Comments on
The King and I

Brooks Atkinson of the New York Times seemed to group most of his comments on the work into one overall statement. He said:

"The King and I" is no match for "South Pacific"... strictly on its terms...an original and beautiful excursion into the rich splendor of the Far East, done with impeccable taste by two artists and brought to life with a warm, romantic score, idiomatic lyrics and some exquisite dancing... Don't expect another "South Pacific" or an "Oklahoma!"³²

Otis L. Guernsey, Jr. covered The King and I for the Herald-Tribune. He followed the same pattern as Brooks Atkinson by grouping most of his reference to the work into one overall statement. He wrote:

This new show has everything that one has a right to expect from these talented collaborators, including a libretto that stands on its own merits, music that transposes emotion into melody and a half-civilized, half-barbarous eastern court.³³

John Chapman of the New York Daily News made comparison but presented this complimentary headline:

³² Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, March 30, 1951.

³³ Otis L. Guernsey, Jr., New York Herald Tribune, March 30, 1951.

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"THE KING AND I" A GRAND, STUNNING AND BOLDLY
DIFFERENT MUSICAL PLAY³⁴

Both William Hawkins and Ward Morehouse wrote
reviews for the New York World-Telegram and The Sun.

Hawkins commented: "The play is unusual and tender and
something rare to see."³⁵ Morehouse offered: "A stunning
show, taste, style and singular beauty...something I shall
be going back to see for all the next decade."³⁶

Richard Watts, Jr. made his comments collectively for
the New York Post:

A beautiful and fascinating musical play, a splendid
successor to the great "South Pacific". It has color,
beauty and a strange kind of sweetness, a good story,
characteristically fine music and lyrics...a delight-
ful ballet...a show of rare quality...

...
unfairly but inevitably everyone will want to know
if it is as good as "South Pacific". I will confess
that I don't suppose it is. But what is?³⁷

Comments on the Book

In commenting on the book Atkinson called it "an
original and beautiful excursion."³⁸ Watts merely labeled it
"a good story."³⁹ McClain remarked: "Even the story is both

³⁴John Chapman, New York Daily News, March 30, 1951.

³⁵William Hawkins, New York World-Telegram and The Sun,
March 30, 1951.

³⁶Ward Morehouse, New York World-Telegram and The Sun,
March 30, 1951.

³⁷Richard Watts, Jr., New York Post, March 30, 1951.

³⁸Atkinson, loc. cit.

³⁹Watts, loc. cit.

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unconventional and exceptionally good box office."⁴⁰

Chapman said: "There is a great deal of story in the music,"⁴¹ and Guernsey mentioned that it had "a good story."⁴²

Hawkins commented a little more in length about the book:

The play is unusual and tender and something rare to see. I cannot help feeling that if it were to do complete justice to its startling narrative, the outcome would have approximated a popular form of grand opera. As it is, it is remaining palatable for its intended public. Every enchanted moment of it makes the principal characters recede farther into the background.⁴³

Comments on Music and Lyrics

Atkinson grouped his comments on the music and lyrics together. He stated that Rodgers had "written several songs in an affable mood."⁴⁴ He continued with: "This time Rodgers and Hammerstein are not breaking any fresh trails but they are accomplished artists of song and lyrics in the theatre."⁴⁵

Chapman appeared to do the same thing. He wrote:

In lyrics and music their main job is story telling. So very few of the songs are songs in the Broadway sense.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ John McClain, New York Journal-American, March 30, 1951.

⁴¹ Chapman, loc. cit.

⁴² Guernsey, loc. cit.

⁴³ Hawkins, loc. cit.

⁴⁴ Atkinson, loc. cit.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Chapman, loc. cit.

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Guernsey said: "Rodgers' music has only a few echoes of the land of the pointed headpiece, it is Broadway theatre music of a uniformly superior quality."⁴⁷ He did mention that the "music transposes emotion into melody."⁴⁸

Hawkins had this to say about the music:

The music acts on the story in much the same way that technicolor does in a moving picture. It is not so much an addition as it is an illumination of the play. You lose sight of the struggle⁴⁹ which should be the constant thread of narration.

Richard Watts described the score as "characteristically fine music." He continued with:

The score I am forced to say didn't make the immediate impression on me that the songs in "South Pacific" did, but it is none-the-less distinguished and impressive.⁵⁰

John McClain devoted quite a bit of space to the music:

We come now to the matter of music, and I feel obliged to say I think it is not a great score according to Richard Rodgers' standards. I realize it is a difficult chore to maintain a Siamese flavor through-out, keeping it popular the while, yet he was able to do a fine interpretive job with "South Pacific" and I had hoped for more here. I mean, there were no musical moments which made you almost jump out of the seat, knowing you were hearing a great hit for the first time, as there have been in most of his other successes.⁵¹

⁴⁷Guernsey, loc. cit.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Hawkins, loc. cit.

⁵⁰Watts, loc. cit.

⁵¹McClain, loc. cit.

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Comments on Form and Integration

Chapman commented on the form and integration by saying: "They have cut away from the usual music-show pattern once again and have achieved a very beautiful piece for stage."⁵² Watts remarked the play "has color, beauty and a strange kind of sweetness."⁵³ Guernsey commented: "The King and I" is a good story told and decorated with all the Rodgers and Hammerstein technical competence and intuitive showmanship blessed with the presence of G. Lawrence and Yul Brenner."⁵⁴ Morehouse referred to its "style and singular beauty."⁵⁵

Hawkins went into more detail on form and integration:

In one way or another you always expect novelty from Rodgers and Hammerstein. In "The King and I" they have achieved it once more in a balance between drama and music which is quite different from their earlier efforts. [He offered this criticism:] The sub-plots are carefully restrained but an enchanting ballet in the second act is all out of proportion in entertainment value and length.⁵⁶

Pipe Dream

Pipe Dream opened at the Shubert Theatre in New York November 30, 1955, with the largest advance sale of any Rodgers and Hammerstein play (\$1,200,000). It also had the

⁵²Chapman, loc. cit.

⁵³Watts, loc. cit.

⁵⁴Guernsey, loc. cit.

⁵⁵Morehouse, loc. cit.

⁵⁶Hawkins, loc. cit.

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shortest run of any of their plays with 246 performances.

Facts on File published a score of 1-4-2, one favorable review, four mixed reviews, and 2 unfavorable reviews, closing date of June 30, 1956, with 246 performances.⁵⁷

None of the six reviewers in this survey seemed overwhelmingly pleased with Pipe Dream. Mr. Hawkins was the most complimentary of any. Three others appeared to rate it as fair and then discussed their reservations. Two others, Watts and McClain, definitely showed their disappointment. Six wrote about the music, four about the book, three about the lyrics and five about form and integration.

General Comments on Pipe Dream

Richard Watts of the New York Post made this general statement: "I can't deny that 'Pipe Dream' disappointed me."⁵⁸

Brooks Atkinson of the New York Times called the play "a pleasant, lazy romance."⁵⁹ He said it was not as good as Carousel and continued with: "On its own level as romantic entertainment, 'Pipe Dream' is tender and entertaining."⁶⁰

John McClain of the New York Journal-American told his readers: "I do not believe that 'Pipe Dream,' which opened at the Shubert

⁵⁷Facts on File, 1955 & 1956.

⁵⁸Richard Watts, The New York Post, December 1, 1955.

⁵⁹Brooks Atkinson, The New York Times, December 1, 1955.

⁶⁰Ibid.

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Theatre last night, is up to their high standard."⁶¹ His headline read "Fails to Meet R & H Norm".⁶²

Comments on the Book

Regarding the book, Walter F. Kerr of the New York Herald-Tribune said: "All through the thoroughly possible new musical at the Shubert, the authors seem unable to keep their minds on cheerfulness...Philosophy keeps breaking in."⁶³ He talked quite a bit about this presentation of philosophy. He also made this remark:

...The frolicsome moments are rare: the story of how a bunch of easygoing madmen of Monterey get together to help their scientific pal "Doc" get both a microscope and a wife is told at a sluggish pace, virtually unrelieved by dancing, and in a staid, straight-faced style that seems light-miles away from the raffish and roaring Steinbeck original.⁶⁴

William Hawkins of the New York World-Telegram and The Sun exclaimed that "when the story cuts loose it has an offbeat charm that is unforgettable."⁶⁵ In his headline Mr. McClain stated that the "Story Line Misses Mark."⁶⁶ He told

⁶¹John McClain, New York Journal-American, December 1, 1955.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Walter F. Kerr, New York Herald-Tribune, December 1, 1955.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵William Hawkins, New York World Telegram and The Sun, December 1, 1955.

⁶⁶McClain, loc. cit.

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the story, then said "As reported in Steinbeck's 'Sweet Thursday' it is an hilarious and moving tale; at the Shubert it is something less."⁶⁷ He continued:

Only at rare intervals did the sense of mockery come through; the characters were there, but their small loyalties and involvements became lost in a story which could never keep close enough to the central theme to be engrossing. Boy meets girl, sure, but who cares? There was never the slightest interest in why, or by what means they get together.⁶⁸

Mr. Watts complimented the book with: "The narrative has the advantage of possessing some of the warmth and affection for amiable riffraff that Mr. Steinbeck can make so engaging."⁶⁹ He also wrote: "Their libretto based on 'Sweet Thursday' is filled with episodic matters that can be both humorous and touching when set down in the course of a Steinbeck novel."⁷⁰ John Chapman of the New York Daily News just told the story to his readers as far as the book was concerned.

Comments on the Music

The music seemed to interest all six of the critics and received a unanimous verdict. According to Watts:

When the songs do come along, they are usually fresh, pleasant and happily tuneful ones. In such numbers as "All Kinds of People," "A Lopsided Bus," "The Man I Used to be," "Sweet Thursday" and "How Long?," to name

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Watts, loc. cit.

⁷⁰Ibid.

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just a few of them, Mr. Rodgers demonstrates his notable touch in such matters.⁷¹

Atkinson wrote:

Mr. Rodgers has written a beautiful score...All their songs together [referring to Miss Tyler and Mr. Johnson] are delightful. But the song with which they conclude the first act, "All at Once You Love Her," is especially captivating. It is a typically Rodgers song of richness and feeling...Mr. Rodgers has written some enchanting music to keep love on a high romantic plane.

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"Pipe Dream" represents Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein in a minor key. Being professional writers and men of taste, they have made it sweet, pleasant and enjoyable.⁷²

According to Chapman "the Rodgers score is always melodious, nicely varied and satisfyingly highlighted by some outstanding numbers...It has a couple of grand songs--"All at Once You Love Her" and "The Man I Used to Be."⁷³ Hawkins suggested that "it is a sort of score you might hope Stephen Foster would write in the modern idiom."⁷⁴

Still talking about the presentation of philosophy Walter Kerr continues with:

Every bit of this, it should be quickly said, is accompanied by light, deft, sometimes wonderfully melodic improvisation by Richard Rodgers. And sometimes the music is able to take such firm hold of the proceedings that genuine gayety rears its welcome head.⁷⁵

⁷¹Watts, loc. cit.

⁷²Atkinson, loc. cit.

⁷³John Chapman, New York Daily News, December 1, 1955.

⁷⁴Hawkins, loc. cit.

⁷⁵Kerr, loc. cit.

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In his headline John McClain stated that the "Score of New Musical Pleases."⁷⁶ After stating some reservations on other elements, he mentioned: "On the bright side of the ledger it must be recorded that this is a good R & H score: They have good numbers in "All Kinds of People," "Sweet Thursday" and "All At Once You Love Her."⁷⁷

Comments on the Lyrics

The three reviewers who mentioned the lyrics were Watts, Chapman and Atkinson. Richard Watts said that "Mr. Hammerstein's talent for getting a kind of gay colloquial poetry into his lyrics is almost always in evidence."⁷⁸ John Chapman remarked that "Hammerstein's lyrics are uniformly admirable, but the story keeps getting in their way,"⁷⁹ and Brooks Atkinson commented that "Mr. Hammerstein has written his usual effortless verses."⁸⁰

Comments on Form and Integration

Form and integration seemed of considerable interest to Hawkins:

Much of the show is leisurely. The songs are gentle. The action is casual except for a few outbursts. It is all about a lazy life that has cast a sure spell

⁷⁶ McClain, loc. cit.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Watts, loc. cit.

⁷⁹ Chapman, loc. cit.

⁸⁰ Atkinson, loc. cit.

over certain people.

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The whole tempo and attack of "Pipe Dream" are different. It is good-humored, never brashly comical. It is gentle, never maudlin. It is like swinging in a hammock that keeps going up, the way a hammock can only do in a good "Pipe Dream."⁸¹

John Kerr remarked: "The people are capable, the material keeps promising to turn into a party. But someone seems to have forgotten to bring along that gallon jug of good, red wine."⁸² Watts gave the compliment that "the dances, which aren't numerous, always fit into the text, and they never fail to be lively and imaginative."⁸³ Chapman was not so complimentary to form for his headline called it "cumbersome."⁸⁴ And he further stated that "it appeared to be unwieldy--and for a surprising amount of the time it is dull."⁸⁵ Atkinson did not discuss the form but talked quite a bit about the casting and the performances. Mr. McClain registered his disappointment in form this way: "There is a rousing comedy interlude in the first act called 'The Bums' Opera,' which sets a key which one hopes will be followed but isn't. The big masquerade ball in the second act, was, in my estimation, disappointing."⁸⁶

⁸¹Hawkins, loc. cit.

⁸²Kerr, loc. cit.

⁸³Watts, loc. cit.

⁸⁴Chapman, loc. cit.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶McClain, loc. cit.

CHAPTER FOUR

REVIEWS OF THE TWO ORIGINAL MUSICALS

The musicals Allegro and Me and Juliet are the two shows that had original stories by Rodgers and Hammerstein. The writers planned that Allegro was to be a serious play with deeply tragic incidents and highly charged dramatic climaxes. In writing Allegro Rodgers and Hammerstein agreed that what they were writing was in essence a modern morality play and that consequently it called for unorthodox methods and techniques. Hammerstein had always wanted to write a play tracing the career of one man from birth to death. It was his first attempt at writing an original play for Rodgers' music.

A genuine love for the theatre was the inspiration for the original Rodgers and Hammerstein musical comedy, Me and Juliet. For Rodgers and Hammerstein, Me and Juliet represented a return to old patterns and stage aesthetics discarded a decade earlier. As they took pains to point out in the program, Me and Juliet was not a "musical play" but a "musical comedy." They felt that would be a way to retain their freshness.

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ALLEGRO

Allegro was first produced by The Theatre Guild October 10, 1947, at the Majestic Theatre in New York City. This play told the story of Dr. Joseph Taylor, Jr., from his birth, through college and medical school, to his lucrative practice as a fashionable physician, and at the last, his disgust at the shallowness and neuroticism of his wealthy patients, and his abandonment of the city and return to the small town from which he had come.¹

Facts on File published a rating of 4-2-3, 4 favorable reviews, 2 mixed reviews and 3 unfavorable reviews, closing date July 10, 1948, with 315 performances.²

The critic reviews of the seven New York newspapers surveyed did not seem to agree regarding this musical. Three gave favorable reports, two were cautious in their commitments, one gave an unfavorable report and one was non-committal.

Five commented on the music, all seven devoted space to the book, only two mentioned the lyrics, and six discussed the form and integration.

General Comments on Allegro

Those critics who reported favorably were Brooks Atkinson of the New York Times, Ward Morehouse of the New York Sun, and Howard Barnes of the New York Herald Tribune.

¹Deems Taylor, Some Enchanted Evenings (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), p. 184.

²Facts on File, 1947 & 1948.

Mr. Atkinson called the play "A musical play of superior quality."³ Mr. Morehouse wrote: "Allegro" is a distinguished and tumultuous musical play...a musical play of beauty and dignity, produced with perception and imagination."⁴ Mr. Barnes called Allegro "a memorable musical...a musical play of rare distinction"⁵ and said that it was "no ordinary song and dance production."⁶ He went on to comment that "Allegro" has bitter overtones, as it celebrates a rather frenzied era, but it is a memorable musical comedy."⁷

Mr. Robert Garland of the New York Journal-American and Mr. Richard Watts of the New York Post were the cautious reviewers. Mr. Garland spent time telling the story, describing the costumes and dances and he called the tunes lilting, but he did not say whether or not he thought the show was a 'hit'. He seemed upset over the title. Garland:

To the Messrs. Funk and Wagnalls, publishers of The Standard Dictionary, "allegro" means "brisk", "lively", and even downright "gay". But to the Messrs. Rodgers and Hammerstein, collaborators on the Theatre Guild's first production of the season, the word means nothing of the kind.

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³Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, October 11, 1947.

⁴Ward Morehouse, New York Sun, October 11, 1947.

⁵Howard Barnes, New York Herald Tribune, October 11, 1947.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

They, brighter than your reporter, seem to have confused "allegro" with, say, "lento", which means "slow," "unhurried", and even downright "serious." For the co-authors of "Oklahoma!", still in New York, and "Carousel" now on the road, have turned out a serious "play with music."

Don't get me wrong, "Allegro" is bigger than anything Messrs. Rodgers and Hammerstein have written. But I do wish it had more consistently lived up to its title.⁸

It would appear that not wanting to commit himself on whether or not the play was a hit or a miss, Mr. Garland became cryptic and factious.

Although Mr. Watts gave praise to the play, he did show that he wasn't completely 'sold' on the musical. Watts:

A distinguished musical play...I have certain reservations about it but there is no disputing the fact that it is a notable achievement in its field. Now that it has opened with fanfare and flourishes, it can be reported that it has overcome the handicap of its premature fame and is revealed as a distinguished musical play, beautiful, imaginative, original and honest.

Mr. William Hawkins of the New York World Telegram gave a decidedly unfavorable report:

The highly touted musical "Allegro" is a vast disappointment. The early conception of the work has a worthy beauty, but its realization crosses the stage like an impoverished sophomore class production.¹⁰

The non-committal report came from John Chapman of the New York Daily News. His generalized statement was: "Allegro"-an elaborate sermon by two very serious showmen."¹¹ Throughout

⁸ Robert Garland, New York Journal-American, October 11, 1947.

⁹ Richard Watts, New York Post, October 11, 1947.

¹⁰ William Hawkins, New York World Telegram, October 11, 1947.

¹¹ John Chapman, New York Daily News, October 11, 1947.

his review he gave compliments on the book, music and form but did not commit himself in calling the product as a whole a success or failure.

Comments on the Book

Regarding the book Mr. Atkinson made the following statements:

For at least half its length it is a work of great beauty and purity, as if "Our Town" could be written, in music.

.....

The story has style and character; the music enriches it...Until the disaster of 1929 overtakes it, "Allegro" has the lyric rapture of a musical masterpiece.

.....

If the first half of "Allegro" were not so overwhelming, the commonplaceness of the second act would be hardly worth noting.¹² Perhaps it is only commonplace by comparison.¹²

Mr. Morehouse gave this backhanded compliment:

"Oscar Hammerstein's story, if somewhat trite, is at least compact",¹³ and then he continued with:

The book lets you down somewhat in the play's second act when it gets somewhat deeply into the city versus the country theme. It is a simple story, but it becomes frequently touching and occasionally exalted as the chanting of the chorus and the music of Rodgers--sometimes humorous, sometimes gay, sometimes disturbingly somber--are carried along with it.¹⁴

¹²Atkinson, loc. cit.

¹³Morehouse, loc. cit.

¹⁴Ibid.

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Mr. Barnes had this to say:

Hammerstein, for his part, has written a cohesive libretto. With the strictest of chronology, he [Referring to Hammerstein] has traced the career of Joseph Taylor, Jr., with unerring touches, employing a sort of Greek chorus to commentate on events in the biography, capturing the full spirit of the '20s, when the hero went to college, fell in love and got trapped by an ambitious sweetheart and falling back on straight pantomime for the most moving chapter in the work.¹⁵

Mr. Garland commented on the book by saying that "Allegro" went its slow, unhurried way, telling a simple run of the U. S. A. biography... and that it suffers from over-elaboration."¹⁶

Mr. Watts gave considerable space to the book:

"Allegro" retains a kind of pure simplicity in its story telling. The first act, for one thing, is considerably more effective than the second, because the boy's adventures in childhood, college and courtship are more interesting than his disillusionment with life in the big city. In addition, I confess I am always made uncomfortable by scenes in which metropolitan authors pretend that they find all the virtues in small towns and only vice and decadence in cities.¹⁷

Mr. Hawkins made the following observation:

The Dr. Kildare narrative is painfully obvious. The mood of mixed imagination and reality is muddled and there is never any visual substitution for the early twilight drabness. At the start a boy is born. Here the stereopticon images and the chorus voicing the parents' dreams and emotions are deeply moving. When he later marries, there is again a clarity about this comment. In between, and after the wedding, the story and its presentation are entirely lacking in exhilaration.¹⁸

¹⁵Barnes, loc. cit.

¹⁶Garland, loc. cit.

¹⁷Watts, loc. cit.

¹⁸Hawkins, loc. cit.

Mr. Chapman wrote this about the book:

Their story veers sharply away from the common practice of the musical stage both in the way it is presented and in its content. The boy, girl romance here leads to discontent and infidelity; the girl is shallow and selfish, and the boy when he is mature, must find another love. But in the show itself Rodgers and Hammerstein seem to disapprove of levity and in the plot they defend their attitude against such profoundly regretful opinions as this one.¹⁹

Comments on the Music

Brooks Atkinson was very complimentary regarding the music as he stated that the "style and character of the music enriches it. 'Allegro' has the lyric rapture of a musical masterpiece."²⁰ Mr. Morehouse commented that "Richard Rodgers has contributed some hypnotic music."²¹ He called the music "sometimes humorous, sometimes gay, sometimes disturbingly somber."²² He also referred to "the chanting of the chorus."²³

Mr. Barnes stated that "much of the music is subordinated to a plot of depth and emotional power."²⁴ He also mentioned that many of the tunes "will distinguish juke boxes across the land."²⁵ Mr. Garland only mentioned

¹⁹Chapman, loc. cit.

²⁰Atkinson, loc. cit.

²¹Morehouse, loc. cit.

²²Ibid., Footnote 14.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Barnes, loc. cit.

²⁵Ibid.

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that the tunes were lilting.²⁶ Mr. Chapman remarked that "Their songs seem rigidly stylized, to fit mood and story; and, although many of them are lovely, not many burst loose and make a bid for immediate popular acceptance."²⁷

Comments on the Lyrics

The only two reviewers who commented on the lyrics were Mr. Morehouse and Mr. Barnes. Morehouse said: "The lyrics of Oscar Hammerstein 2nd are pungent."²⁸ Barnes remarked "Hammerstein...has written...pertinent lyrics to make a true 'musical play'."²⁹

Comments on Form and Integration

Form and integration seemed to be of importance to six of the reviewers of Allegro.

Mr. Atkinson cited that "they have composed a musical play without any of the conventions of form... Abandoning the routine of musical comedy choruses "Allegro" returns the chorus to its original function as comment and interpretation."³⁰ Still Mr. Atkinson did not explain to his readers what he considers "the conventions of form".

Mr. Morehouse remarked that Allegro is "excitingly

²⁶Garland, loc. cit., Footnote 8

²⁷Chapman, loc. cit.

²⁸Morehouse, loc. cit.

²⁹Barnes, loc. cit.

³⁰Atkinson, loc. cit.

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unconventional in form. Some of the sharpest dialogue is supplied in the form of comment from the chorus."³¹ Mr. Barnes referred to the "falling back on straight pantomime for the most moving chapter in the work."³² He noted the method of "employing a sort of Greek chorus to commentate on events in the biography."³³ Mr. Watts voiced the following opinion:

I think the most impressive thing about it is that despite its size, costliness and lavish use of the stage's resources from treadmills and lantern slides to ballets and musical Greek choruses, "Allegro" retains a kind of pure simplicity in its story telling.³⁴

Regarding form and integration Mr. Hawkins stated:

It lacks consistency of mood, visual excitement and theatrical stimulation. The progress of the show sees the original conception blotted out by unimaginative tricks. In the end it seems like the creation of a pretentious passe customer who has nothing but cambric to work with.³⁵

Mr. Chapman was impressed by the chorus. He said:

An excellent mixed chorus tells of Joe's birth and early years, and the event of baby's first step is rousingly recounted in the number titled "One Foot, Other Foot."

.....
Much of what they have done in "Allegro" is notable for its imagination and sensitivity.³⁶

³¹Morehouse, loc. cit.

³²Barnes, loc. cit., Footnote 15

³³loc. cit.

³⁴Watts, loc. cit.

³⁵Hawkins, loc. cit.

³⁶Chapman, loc. cit.

ME AND JULIET

Me and Juliet was first produced by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2nd, on May 28, 1953 at the Majestic Theatre in New York City.

The musical proved to be a cavalcade (an "original", not an adaptation) of life backstage in the theatre, a show within a show, a chronicle of the fortunes of a theatrical company in a musical comedy, "Me and Juliet", that has settled down for a run in a Broadway theatre. There are two stories, one comic, the other melodramatic.³⁷

Facts on File published a score of 0-6-1, no favorable reviews, six mixed reviews and one unfavorable review, closing date of April 3, 1954, with 358 performances.³⁸

Of the six New York newspapers surveyed none gave a favorable report, five seemed to have mixed opinions within themselves and became noncommittal, and one rated it unfavorably. Five commented on the music, five wrote about the book, one mentioned the lyrics and five talked about the form and integration.

General Comments

Brooks Atkinson of the New York Times gave his opinion in this fashion:

³⁷ Taylor, op. cit., p. 234

³⁸ Facts on File, 1953 & 1954

When Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein make up their minds what they are writing about "Me and Juliet" may turn out to be an enjoyable show.³⁹

Mr. Hawkins of the New York World-Telegram and The Sun was more reserved than the Times reviewer since his general comment was: "They have copied nobody at all."⁴⁰ John McClain printed this headline in the Journal-American:

BELOW PAR JOB BY GREAT TEAM
HIT A SLIGHT SNAG⁴¹

Richard Watts, Jr., of the New York Post, came out with these questions:

Is "Me and Juliet" disappointing because it doesn't live up to the high standard its creators have set for themselves? Or are we made to think it is somewhat better than it actually is because we read into it our memories of the previous achievements of its eminent authors?⁴²

Comments on the Book

Atkinson gave the book quite a lashing when he made the following statements:

It is just about everything but an intelligible story.
.....
None of the fine items in a gifted show can quite break through the elaborate heaviness of the story.
.....
All the captivating things everyone loves in a Rodgers and Hammerstein show struggle in "Me and Juliet" with a book that has no velocity.⁴³

³⁹ Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, May 29, 1953.

⁴⁰ William Hawkins, New York World-Telegram and The Sun, May 29, 1953.

⁴¹ John McClain, Journal-American, May 29, 1953.

⁴² Richard Watts, Jr., New York Post, May 29, 1953.

⁴³ Atkinson, loc. cit.

Mr. Hawkins wrote considerably on the book. For one thing he called the story shallow. He said it was an unglamorous backstage story and a weak musical, "not specifically dated nor specifically satirical...just timelessly superficial."⁴⁴ He also registered the following complaints on the book:

So that nothing will distract the attention due the "show", there is a great shallow splash of story. The action has so many places to go and so much to establish that it is a long time before anything reaches out and really "sends" you.

.....
When things move on, try as everybody might, the "show" loses out to the people. The Bigley-Hayes triangle with Mark Dawson as a red tempered electrician becomes wild melodrama, which deserves more heroics than it gets for its resolution. Miss McCracken gets her prey, not by prowess but by luck.⁴⁵

Mr. Walter Kerr of the New York Herald Tribune spent considerable time telling what the story was about but said nothing about the writer and his work as far as quality was concerned.⁴⁶ Mr. McClain penned the following criticisms:

In my ringside recordings the fault would lie partly with Oscar Hammerstein 2nd for a story which lacked style and excitement, and partly to both partners for an uninspired job of casting.

.....
Maybe Hammerstein made a mistake in trying to do a bit musical with the familiar play-within-a-play formula, for it is difficult to make things hold still for all the plot development necessary.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Hawkins, loc. cit.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Walter F. Kerr, New York Herald Tribune, May 29, 1953.

⁴⁷McClain, loc. cit.

Mr. Watts was slightly complimentary regarding the book:

The narrative is at its best, not during its plot manipulations, but in the wry incidental comments on actors, producers and audiences that have been knowingly injected into the proceedings from time to time.

.....
As for the central backstage story, Mr. Hammerstein has provided an amiable melodrama about a jealous electrician who tries to break up a romance between the girl understudy and the assistant stage manager, and he tries rather handsomely to avoid the clichés of such tales. For example, the understudy goes on for the star only during a rehearsal. But it doesn't quite work out.⁴⁸

Mr. John Chapman of the New York Daily News made one reference to the book: "Me and Juliet" does not strike me as a major Rodgers and Hammerstein work because its story is either too involved or incapable of competing with the remarkable scenic plot."⁴⁹

Comments on the Music

Four out of the five reviewers were complimentary in regard to the music. Atkinson: "Mr. Rodgers has written one of his most melodious scores in the endless variety of form that makes him a musician."⁵⁰ McClain: "Eventually Rodgers' lovely tunes begin to creep into your heart."⁵¹ Watts: "It has, of course, a number of attractive songs."⁵²

⁴⁸Watts, loc. cit.

⁴⁹John Chapman, New York Daily News, May 29, 1953.

⁵⁰Atkinson, loc. cit.

⁵¹McClain, loc. cit.

⁵²Watts, loc. cit.

However, Mr. Watts did make this criticism: "As for the music, I doubt if it represents Mr. Rodgers at his best."⁵³

Mr. Kerr wrote quite extensively on the music:

Musically, it is good basic Rodgers, Rodgers with some of the violins sent home and all of the brass thoroughly roused. If the score doesn't have the emotional weight or the gentle, lilting line of some of the composer's recent romantic journeys, it's because he is trying for something else; for straight musical-comedy verse ("Keep It Gay"), for bright caustic comment ("Intermission Talk"), for brash, breezy nonsense ("We Deserve Each Other"). And nobody is short-changed on the ballads. "Marriage-Type Love", "No Other Love", and "I'm Your Girl" are all run-of-the-gold-mine Rodgers-fresh, sweet, and infinitely singable.⁵⁴

Mr. Chapman didn't seem to be too impressed, however:

Rodgers' score, as orchestrated by Don Walker, has lots of brass and bounce, but its melodies have eluded me on first hearing, except for "Keep It Gay" and "Marriage Type Love." And Rodgers and Hammerstein have written a very solemn hymn to the theatre audience titled "Big Black Giant", which is overstressed.⁵⁵

Comments on the Lyrics

The one man who mentioned the lyrics was Mr. Watts. He said: "Its lyrics are bright and intelligent and sung so that you can understand them."⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Kerr, loc. cit.

⁵⁵ Chapman, loc. cit.

⁵⁶ Watts, loc. cit.

Comments on Form and Integration

In the review, the form and integration did not receive very favorable comments. Mr. Atkinson indicated that he did not approve of the play-within-a-play structure and stated that:

Mr. Hammerstein has complicated it by shifting back and forth repeatedly separating the material into small pieces. Although the content of the story is romantic and attractive, form is unwieldly and verbose... Sooner or later, however, we have to face the fact that the form of Mr. Hammerstein's backstage legend is cumbersome.⁵⁷

Mr. McClain wrote:

During the first there are long arid moments when people are singing songs and bending each other's ears in a rather confusing effort to get the audience oriented.⁵⁸

Mr. Watts also objected to the show within a show structure. He did, however, give the authors a compliment by saying: "It is lively, vigorous and filled with the showmanlike craftsmanship of its makers." He discussed the structure as follows:

In spite of the creative professionalism the show within a show structure presents a handicap, requires authors to give two good shows instead of one and both the play that is actually presented and the one that its characters are supposed to be staging have to be properly entertaining... This, I think, is one of the failures of "Me and Juliet." A number of the scenes are given of the musical comedy that the players are staging during the course of the plot, and none of them manages to suggest that the show within the show has any degree of merit.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Atkinson, loc. cit.

⁵⁸McClain, loc. cit.

⁵⁹Watts, loc. cit.

Mr. Kerr commented:

But like a lot of lovers bent on declaring their passion, the authors strike a point at which they become tongue-tied. They want to say so much, they want to say it so burstingly, they want to be so sure that no heartfelt endearment is omitted anywhere, that they wind up gasping for breath and making slightly disconnected sounds.⁶⁰

He felt that "the show began in a satirical vein but went limp in progress due to the show-within-a-show form."⁶¹ He spoke of a "lack of gaiety, humor and consistent point of view."⁶²

Mr. Hawkins also was disappointed in the form and integration. He wrote: "The action flashes back and forth and in and out, like a very fluid xray...The scheme of 'Me and Juliet' asks for the fluidity of a movie camera but demands the operation be in realistic terms."⁶³

⁶⁰ Kerr, loc. cit.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Hawkins, loc. cit.

CHAPTER FIVE

STATISTICAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The primary objective of the newspaper drama critics is to give a comprehensive theatre report to the public. These reports are formulated by the reviewers' reactions and are communicated in the amount of space furnished by the publications. As people generally pick for themselves a favorite critic, each critic has a responsibility to the public and to theatre art, and is directly responsible for the opinions formulated by his readers.

The responsibility of reviewing musicals, as well as plays, has belonged to the drama critic since the latter part of the nineteenth century. This responsibility was further complicated when Rodgers and Hammerstein introduced their particular form of the musical play. They presented a fusion of story and music, with true-to-life characters, and used various methods of interpretation in order to integrate the story and music. Viz: recitative, incidental music, spoken dialogue with musical accompaniment, individual songs, soliloquy and music for choreography. In general, the reviewers tried to inform their readers about form and integration, but seldom did so through the terms, "recitative," "spoken dialogue," "soliloquy," etc. These structural terms

of composition apparently did not concern them.

The reviews presented indicate that the critics serve two main purposes: (a) to show the creator just where he was successful and where he fell short, and (b) to familiarize the reader with the over-all appeal of the play, thus helping him to select the shows he will wish to attend. Each reviewer has readers who prefer his type of coverage. It is the sum of these readers, the general public, which spells success or failure for any composer's efforts.

This study has shown that dramatic criticism, its criteria and possible standards, is an intangible subject and by the nature controversial, since it deals with personal reactions. As individual literary styles have not been the object of this thesis, no attempt has been made to analyze the techniques of the reviewers. Standards of evaluations and methods have been the basic problem and the statistical analysis of the reviews presented here indicate that drama critics have, perhaps through time, practice and observation, established an unwritten form or guide. However, no proof has been established that a set standard of evaluation is in existence. Instead the survey points out that critics seem to conduct themselves according to the policy of their own publication, appear to be generally in reasonable agreement, and attempt to be fair in their reporting to all concerned. Also an analysis of the reviews reveals that the individual critic, through his own experience and perhaps

through repetition of coverage, has developed a personal pattern which could be labeled an individual standard.

This survey was conducted from the standpoint of four major elements of consideration in the creation of a musical. Performance and technical aspects were disregarded; not in an attempt to minimize their importance, but rather to determine whether or not the critics become so involved in how the actors, actresses, director, technicians, dancers, etc. interpret the play that they neglect a discussion on the creation of the work itself. Results of the survey seem to indicate that such is not the case.

The elements covered were book, music, lyrics, form and integration. The reviews of seven papers were originally used. The number was reduced to six with the merger of the New York World-Telegram and The Sun. Taken into consideration were the reviews printed in each paper, written by whomever was employed by the paper at that time. This was in part to determine whether or not the newspaper itself had a policy which it "inflicted" upon its employees. Therefore the following tables are computed by newspaper rather than by individual reporters. This is because no one reviewer covered all seven musicals. Whether or not the reporter per newspaper changed from year to year was not considered in this particular statistical analysis.

TABLE 1
SPECIFIC MENTION PER NEWSPAPER

Newspaper	Number of Reviews	Music	Book	Lyrics	Form and inte- gration
New York Times	7	7	6	4	3
Herald-Tribune	7	7	6	3	7
New York Post	7	6	7	4	6
Journal-American	7	6	6	2	4
New York News	7	5	3	2	3
World-Telegram (Before merger)	4	3	2	0	3
The New York Sun (Before merger)	4	3	3	3	2
The World-Telegram and The Sun	4	2	3	0	4
Total.....	47	39	36	18	32

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TABLE 2
SPECIFIC MENTION PER MUSICAL

Musical	Number of Reviews	Music	Book	Lyrics	Form and inte- gration
Oklahoma	7	5	4	3	4
Carousel	7	6	5	3	4
Allegro	7	5	7	2	6
South Pacific	7	6	5	4	3
The King and I	7	6	6	2	5
Me and Juliet	6	5	5	1	5
Pipe Dream	6	6	4	3	5
Total.....	47	39	36	18	32

The foregoing tables show that there seems to be a consistency of policy within the newspapers. Each paper represented devoted about equal space, and the most space, to the music and book, gave quite a bit of attention to form and integration but touched only lightly on the lyrics.

Undoubtedly mention should be made here that each reviewer also informed the public about the presentation of the play and the cast. The complete reviews of each critic are contained in the appendices.

Statistical analysis of the reports of the reviewers would also seem to indicate that there is no great dissimilarity in the individual standards of specific mention per reviewer. The following table shows the results of this analysis demonstrating individual standards.

TABLE 3
SPECIFIC MENTION PER REVIEWER

Reviewer	Number of Reviews	Music	Book	Lyrics	Form and inte- gration
John Anderson	1	1	1	1	1
Brooks Atkinson	5	5	4	3	2
Howard Barnes	3	3	3	2	3
John Chapman	6	5	3	2	3
Robert Garland	3	2	2	1	1
Otis L. Guernsey	2	2	2	1	2
William Hawkins	5	3	4	0	5
Walter Kerr	2	2	1	0	2
John McClain	3	3	3	0	2
Burns Mantle	1 (Reviewed <u>Oklahoma</u> with general statements.)				
Ward Morehouse	5	3	3	3	3
Lewis Nichols	2	2	2	1	1
Burton Rascoe	1	1	0	0	0
Wilella Waldorf	2	2	2	1	1
Richard Watts	5	4	5	3	5
NYWT-No By-line *	1	1	1	0	1
Total.....	47	39	36	18	32

*Burton Rascoe was ill the night Carousel opened. However, the New York World Telegram ran a review of the show with no by-line. The review is included here so that final figures in the tables will coincide.

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Specific Comment Procedure

Book

While discussing the book the reviewers had two tendencies: one, to compare the book for the musical with the original source from which the musical was adapted, and two, with previous musical plays by Rodgers and Hammerstein. For example, John Chapman made a comparison between the story appeal of Carousel and that of Oklahoma! And he spent considerable space discussing the play Liliom. Miss Waldorf, in reviewing Carousel, referred to the Oklahoma! style of choreography that she detected in Carousel and considered monotonous. Nichols complimented the team in closely following the story line and incidents of Liliom in Carousel. But Nichols told the story in terms of Liliom and not of Carousel, and then pointed out where the musical had made changes. In discussing the story as a whole, Miss Waldorf made a three way comparison between Oklahoma!, Liliom and Carousel. Ward Morehouse devoted considerable space to the contents of the story, not as Carousel but as adapted from Liliom. However, Mr. Garland, writing for the Journal-American, stated that he saw no reason for comparison and that each show should be allowed to stand on its own merits.

South Pacific did not receive a strict comparison to its literary source. Most of the reviewers just made mention of J. Michener's Tales of the South Pacific as source material. On the other hand, The King and I was placed in a

comparative position, sometimes with South Pacific and sometimes with Oklahoma! For instance, Atkinson said that The King and I was no match for South Pacific, and Richard Watts said that he supposed everyone would want to know if it was as good as South Pacific and he had to confess that he didn't think so. Pipe Dream was compared with Sweet Thursday by almost all of the critics. The two originals, Alle gro and Me and Juliet, were compared to other musicals by Rodgers and Hammerstein from the standpoint of appeal.

In addition to discussing the book by comparisons, five musicals, excluding the originals, were discussed in such terms as: "simple and warm," "light and colorful librettos," "a tale told with sincerity," "full of humor, a romantic narrative," etc.

The two originals were given a great deal of criticism. Alle gro was given the mixed reports of 4-2-3 and much discussion has been held on whether the musical could be called a success or failure, although it received Donaldson awards in three categories (book, lyrics and musical score). It was not a failure financially, but the question has been whether it could be called an artistic as well as a box office success. It has been said that possibly it would not have had the short run it did if the critics had treated it more favorably on its opening night. The advanced sale of tickets for the play was somewhere around \$700,000. After these tickets were used the attendance fell off, and the show ran for 315 performances, then closed.

Although many of the critics' comments have been quite complimentary on certain phases of the work, still the overall flavor of the reviews was not the kind that would send the public to the box office for a ticket. For instance, regarding the book, all of the critics complimented it as to style and character, but still they did not feel that the story as a whole was one that could hold interest and be called a great play.

Me and Juliet met a similar fate. It was not treated too favorably by the critics but still managed to run for 358 performances. The whole picture on this musical seems to be confusing. The rating on Me and Juliet was 0-6-1 as published by Facts on File. This was lower than Allegro. The comments on the book were not good. Only Watts seemed slightly complimentary. What seems strange is that where Allegro was never called a success, Me and Juliet was never called a failure except by one reviewer, McClain of the Journal American. Yet in comparison the show Me and Juliet ran only 43 more performances than Allegro and the backers made back their investment on both shows. Me and Juliet ran over a year and returned a profit of over \$100,000. for an investment of \$360,000.

Only in Pipe Dream were elements of idea within the book brought out. McClain and Kerr seemed to wish to write about the philosophy, the sense of mockery etc. Nowhere were any of the books analyzed in terms of plot, theme, character, suspense, urgency, real people, catharsis,

sensitivity, etc. The origin of the story was presented and the evaluation seemed to be passed upon the original work and relationships rather than the musical adaptation or plot that emerged from a germ idea.

Music

In speaking of the music such terms were used as: "enchanting to the ear", "fine score," "all types of songs," etc. Some made comparisons with other shows and many listed the songs that particularly pleased them. Miss Waldorf was unusually critical in all components of discussion and music was no exception. Nichols made quite a few comments on the music of Oklahoma! and Guernsey wrote considerably on the score of Carousel. Morehouse was impressed with South Pacific. Richard Watts made a comparison between the music for South Pacific and The King and I. He did not seem to like the music for The King and I. He spoke of the flavor of Siam presented and this is one of the rare mentions of a style of composition.

Mr. Chapman made the statement that the songs in The King and I were not songs in the Broadway sense. For comparison purpose one could question why "Hello Young Lovers" would not be considered as much a "song in the Broadway sense" as, for instance, "Some Enchanted Evening" from South Pacific or "People Will Say We're in Love" from Oklahoma! Yet Guernsey referred to the music as Broadway theatre music of uniformly superior quality. The question could be asked

then, are not Broadway theatre music and songs in the Broadway sense the same thing? This could be a matter of semantics but, then again, it could mean that the reviewers are not aware of the different functions of music and the various forms which are interwoven into the present day musical. Probably Mr. Chapman was referring to the fact that in the basic style of the musical the individual songs were so integrated with the dialogue that a sacrifice of hit tunes might have been made in the favor of fusion. However, when the score was marketed, the individual songs were cut as popular solos, etc.

One concrete observation is that the critics paid a great deal of attention to the music and whether or not the melodies remained in their memories after they left the theatre. In discussing Pipe Dream all of them gave more space to the music than they did the book, and they liked the music better than the book. In fact they blamed the book for the fact that the musical did not come quite up to par. However, they did seem to be interested in technique to some extent. For instance, Chapman compared the technique of dispensing with set numbers and integrating the music and story in South Pacific to the works of Richard Wagner. He registered an objection to this. Actually what he was objecting to is exactly what the composers were striving to achieve. But at least Chapman was conscious of the integration.

Although there was no lengthy discussion of the music in Allegro, the comments were complimentary. Also the music for Me and Juliet seemed to please. Watts and Chapman did not care too much for the music but the rest of the reviewers appeared to be happy with the score as far as individual songs were concerned.

Lyrics

Almost all of the comments on lyrics were surface reactions. They were called "catchy, "bright and amusing," "some factual," "aiming at nothing higher than to be pleasant," "fervent," "simple," etc. They did not seem to convey the idea that the lyrics were actually what the characters were saying, and that if they were sentimental in certain places, there was a reason. Nor did they mention that if they were witty or ironic, for example, it was for the purpose of forwarding the plot. There was no mention of how the characters felt, the flavor of the lyrics, their warmth, whether they were effortless, created a mood, were neat metaphors, or perhaps once in a while pure poetry. Watts was the only reviewer who even mentioned the lyrics in either Allegro or Me and Juliet and they were just incidental and surface reactions. Yet here in the lyrics, in all of the musicals, is generally found the main idea.

Form and Integration

The critics' discourse on form and integration covered

such items as length, pace, smoothness, the avoidance of monotony, the mood such as rousing, nostalgic, moving, etc. Mr. Barnes seemed interested in the technique in South Pacific. Hawkins was impressed with the balance between drama and music in The King and I. Both Hawkins and McClain spoke of the tempo in Pipe Dream. In connection with form and integration most of the critics discussed the choreography and its relationship to the plot. This very important element in the musical play did not escape their attention. They did not make mention of the transitions from speech to song, the dialects, the creation of moods, and some of the important elements of form and integration because they began to bridge into the form in performance rather than in the basic composition. They said that Allegro was different and they liked the unconventional form. But still they were not all sincerely able to report with the enthusiasm they would have for a play that impressed them as a hit. In Me and Juliet they objected to the show-within-a-show form. They felt that it was too confusing and the play as a whole was too involved.

Some of the comments indicated that at times the critics were not always in accord as to what kind of a musical they were seeing. For instance, in reviewing Carousel Mr. Garland in one paragraph called the musical a "musical play" and then in another, when giving his general statement,

he referred to it as a "play-with-music." Some critics did not realize that Me and Juliet was not intended as a musical play but rather as a musical comedy although the program clearly stated that fact.

Final Analysis

One of the most important discoveries in this study is the fact that no critic designated the theme of the plays, what the composers were attempting to convey. This fact clearly shows that each critic expressed, most of all, the value of the musical as it impressed him, and that he instinctively felt his comments would arouse in his readers' minds the desire to see the play and then make their own evaluations and determine the authors' intent and purpose.

Each individual reviewer helps to form and public consensus and from reading the reviews one gets the positive knowledge that each play has been judged by different persons for the components that most appeal to them personally. For example, to some the music was the most important, to others the form, or the book, and some enjoyed the privilege of comparison with the original form from which the musical was created. But of all this, the technical details of composition appeared to play a minor part, thus seeming to prove that the critics attended these performances for the purpose of entertainment and relaxation, rather than for a desire to criticize and tear down the achievements of the composers, etc.

They were not intent on directing their energies as reporters to destructive purposes, aesthetic or clinical analysis, or great lesson teaching, but rather toward the initial job of reporting an event the way it impressed them personally.

This study has produced no evidence that a standard of evaluation in dramatic criticism existed between the New York Drama Critics at the time they reviewed the seven musicals by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2nd. Comparisons have shown, however, that these reviewers had individual sets of values and preferences by which they judged the opening night performances of these musicals.

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BIOGRAPHY

CoraJane Bunce is a native of Jackson, Michigan, attended the public schools there and was graduated from Jackson High School. She attended Cleary College in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and graduated with a major in business administration and journalism. She received her associate of arts degree from Jackson Junior College in 1953 with the major emphasis on music education. She earned her bachelor of arts from Michigan State University in speech in 1955 and her teaching certificate on December 19, 1955.

Since childhood Mrs. Bunce has been active in professional theatre work. She has received special training in dance, drama, voice and opera from the following: Sheehan School of Dance in Cleveland, Ohio, Robella Manong of New York, the late George M. Bogues of the Richard Carle Co., Powers Schools Inc., Detroit Division, The University of Michigan School of Music, Interlochen National Music Camp, and the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago. She coaches with Dr. Barre Hill, Managing Director of the American Opera Workshop.

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At present Mrs. Bunce is the head of the Theatre Art

and Vocal Department of Northwest Rural High School in Jackson, Michigan. She also is doing special research in education from the elementary through college level, and in educational television.

APPENDIX I. CRITICS' REVIEWS OF "OKLAHOMA!"

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
April 1, 1943

Theatre Guild Gives Musical
Version of Lynn Riggs'
'Green Grow the Lilacs'

By John Anderson

When the Theatre Guild goes gay anything can happen--sometimes the best and sometimes the worst, but from the uproar of welcome at the St. James last night there was no mistaking the fact that in "Oklahoma" the Guild has a beautiful and delightful show, fresh and imaginative, as enchanting to the eye as Richard Rodgers' music is to the ear. It has, at a rough estimate, practically everything. Even Guild First Nighters, suspected for years of not having hands, applauded.

Though the horse has recently returned to fame, both on the streets and on the menu, no one could have guessed (as did the astute Guild) that the horse's late companion, the cowboy, would achieve a similar urban popularity.

"Oklahoma" is about cowboys and their girls, so the home-state of Will Rogers herewith makes its second gift to Broadway. Actually the show is based on Lynn Riggs' "Green Grow the Lilacs," a folk play of the Indian territory days of 1901, which never had the success it deserved when the Guild did it without music and dances these years ago.

Delightful Score

Now the second Oscar Hammerstein has turned Mr. Riggs' play into a light and colorful libretto, and written the lyrics for Mr. Rodgers' music. Lemuel Ayres has tossed out a stageful of handsome scenery, suggesting the wide, windswept, rich rolling land of Grant Wood paintings and Agnes de Mille has inserted some superb dances into the proceedings with the fine energy of splashing movement, and the boldness of fresh design, all helped by Miles White's brilliant costumes.

But it is Mr. Rodgers, I suspect, who puts the spell on the evening with a score that ranks with his best, from the frank exuberance of "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning," as the curtain raises, to the lovely duet, "People Will Say"-of which for all I know, Joan Roberts and Alfred Drake may still be trying to persuade the audience that it has had enough.

Besides these there is a resounding and fullthroated title song, celebrating the glories of the Oakies homeland, and such amusing numbers as "I Can't Say No," "All 'er Nothin'" and "Pore Jud."

None of it has either the routine sight or sound of the usual showshop patchwork. Rouben Mamoulian has managed to give the whole thing the gaiety and freshness of the material and has caught the simple as well as the picturesque quality that suggest the Broadway equivalent of vivid, semi-frontier days.

Excellent Cast

Miss Roberts and Mr. Drake are ideal for the principal parts, not only because of their singing, but because they, too, add to the easy, natural, folksy atmosphere. Celeste Holm and Lee Dixon, as the comic love interest, help considerably and Joseph Buloff is enormously amusing as the Persian peddler. Betty Garde is excellent as Aunt Eller, and there are admirable smaller performances by Ralph Riggs, and Howard daSilva, Marc Platt and Katharine Sergava are the principal dancers and they execute the ballets with much grace and distinction.

Though I would gladly have sat up with the show all night it does need cutting, for the first act is too long, but I imagine it would be safer to cut throats than lay the blue pencil to it.

The Guild is probably too busy, anyway, just cutting capers. Or even a rug.

This and the following reviews of "Oklahoma!" are contained in New York Theatre Critics' Reviews (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1943), IV, 341-343.

NEW YORK HERALD-TRIBUNE

April 1, 1943

Lilacs to "Oklahoma"

 By Howard Barnes

Songs, dances and a story have been triumphantly blended at the St. James. "Oklahoma!" is a jubilant and enchanting musical. The Richard Rodgers score is one of his best, which is saying plenty. Oscar Hammerstein 2d has written a dramatically imaginative libretto and a string of catchy lyrics; Agnes de Mille has worked small miracles in devising original dances to fit the story and the tunes, while Rouben Mamoulian has directed an excellent company with great taste and craftsmanship. Is it any wonder, then, that this Theater Guild production is one of the most captivating shows of the season?

Plots are generally a nuisance in musical comedies, but the narrative line in "Oklahoma" is arresting and even dramatic. It is based on the Lynn Riggs play of a dozen years ago, "Green Grow the Lilacs." That work, as I remember it, was lean on substantial subject matter for a straight play, but it has been transmuted into a brilliant frame for songs and dances. The melodrama which Riggs invented for the Indian Territory at the turn of the century has been given exciting elaboration at the St. James, with the vocalists and the dancers picking up the threads of the fable unerringly.

* * *

The point is that everybody concerned with this new offering has conspired to make it a striking piece of theatrical Americana as well as a series of musical-comedy numbers. The songs stick to the outline of the frontier tale in both theme and mood. The ballets and production numbers give it an irresistible flavor. "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," "People Will Say" and "Out of My Dreams" are going to be heard a lot, but less-featured Rodgers tunes, such as "Pore Jud" and "All 'er Nothin'," keep the proceedings at the St. James tremendously refreshing.

So many scenes are so good after "Oklahoma!" gets off to a rather slow start that it is difficult to single out any one of them for special commendation. The ballet at the end of the first act, when the heroine dreams of a fight between her cowboy lover and the smokehouse villain who has what were known in 1900 as designs on her pretty person, is a superb piece of musical choreography. That between the hero and the villain in the smokehouse is a brilliant short dramatic scene with a perfect

song for the incident. The "Oklahoma" number of the climax is a knock-out and a picnic tableau is something to see.

* * *

There are no particularly well known performers in the piece, but that is all to the good in a show which has inherent theatrical excitement. Alfred Drake is first rate as the cowpuncher and Howard da Silva is equally fine as the smokehouse skunk. Joan Roberts makes an attractive heroine and Betty Garde is splendid as her rough-and-ready aunt. Meanwhile, Joseph Buloff has some wonderfully funny scenes as a Persian peddler in the western wilds and Marc Platt is particularly striking among the dancers. Lemuel Ayers has designed exactly the right settings for the production. They had to be good to go with this superb musical.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
April 1, 1943

'Oklahoma' Links
the Ballet With the
Prairie Beautifully

"Oklahoma," musical play based on Lynn Riggs' "Green Grow the Lilacs;" music by Richard Rodgers; book and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein, 2d. Produced by the Theatre Guild at the St. James Theatre, New York, March 31, 1943.

* * * *

By Burns Mantle

"Oklahoma," which the Theatre Guild brought to the St. James Theatre last night, is a combination of Lynn Riggs' "Green Grows the Lilacs" and Agnes de Mille's "Rodeo" ballet, if you can picture the combination. And a mighty sweet joining of the arts of drama and the dance.

With the songs that Richard Rodgers has fitted to a collection of unusually atmospheric and intelligible lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein 2d, "Oklahoma" seems to me to be the most thoroughly and attractively American musical comedy since Edna Ferber's "Show Boat" was done by this same Hammerstein and Jerome Kern.

It has color, and rhythm and harmony plus. It is held to the native idea and kept sufficiently clean to give it standing in the Western country from which it springs. And it has been modestly but handsomely staged by the Guild.

Ballet and Drama

There may be some little objection advanced by subscribers who have little liking for the modern ballet. They may insist that the dance numbers dominate both the drama and the songs.

If there is this objection it will be no cause for worry on the producers' part, because ballet fans, whose numbers have increased amazingly these last few years, will more than make up for it.

The Rodgers score, and the Hammerstein lyrics, both a definite departure in form for these writers, are the really dominant feature of the production. Two of them come at the very start of the action and practically "stop the show" before it is begun.

These items are the hero's introduction, "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," and "The Surry With the Fringe on the Top," something pretty fine in the way of a dialogue number fitted into the story.

These are no sooner out of the way than one of the minor principals partly talks an adventure song of a recent trip he has made to Kansas City, which establishes a comedy standard that is agreeably different. And right after that a comedienne's lament, "I Cain't Say No," completes the capture of a surprised audience.

About this time you will naturally be looking for one of those I Love the Moon and You ballads. You won't get it. In its place another story number called "People Will Say We're in Love."

Different Detail

A dramatic interlude, with the villain, of all people, becoming emotional over the picture of his own timely end, and before you know it, a dream sequence finishes the act excitingly. In this the heroine goes both lyrical and dramatic while Miss De Mille's gifted substitutes dance out her vision beautifully without disturbing the continuity in the least.

I give you this detail to show you that "Oklahoma" really is different-beautifully different. And as a prelude to the admission that thereafter the succession of surprises is less frequent.

There are worthy numbers in the last third of the entertainment, but the magnificent beginning is never again

quite equalled in attraction.

The singers and dancers are also a part of the happy surprise. Alfred Drake, who has acted and sung hereabout a good deal the last couple of seasons, has never found so happy a role as that of Curly, the romantic cowhand in "Oklahoma." His modest voice is admirably suited to the prairie type of tune.

Joan Roberts, who has sung mostly in the West, and much in St. Louis at the Municipal Opera, is charmingly fitted to the role of Laurey, the heroin who loved a cowhand but was sought after by a nasty fellow who lived in a smokehouse papered with art in the nude. Joan will not be going back to St. Louis very soon, if Broadway managers are smart.

Betty Garde has a short but important part. Lee Dixon doubles nicely in song and dance. Joseph Buloff plays a Persian peddler with as much gusto as permitted. Celeste Holm is happy in her first musical comedy role, and Howard da Silva is the bad boy.

The excellent ballet is headed by Marc Platt and Katharine Sergava, and they were great favorites last night, as they should have been.

The scenic background by Lemuel Ayers has a sweeping Thomas Benton quality that is pleasing, and Miles White's costumes are original and colorful. Rouben Mamoulian did the staging, and with fine judgment.

NEW YORK SUN
April 1, 1943

'Oklahoma!' Brings Rodgers
& Hammerstein Melodies
Into the St. James

By Ward Morehouse

Back in the mid-Twenties the Theater Guild found the trick of doing a song and dance show and last night, for the sixth time in its history, this organization came forth with musical entertainment. Now the play is "Oklahoma," fashioned from Lynn Riggs's "Green Grow the Lilacs."

It was Richard Rodgers, we older settlers of the flatlands of Manhattan recall, who provided that bright score for the Guild's original "Garrick Gaieties" and now they've turned-"they" meaning Miss Helburn and Mr. Langner-again to Mr. Rodgers for music, to Oscar Hammerstein 2d for book and lyrics and to

Rouben Mamoulian for stage direction. The result is a happy one.

"Oklahoma!" has great charm. It is fresh and diverting. It is inclined to undue slowness at times and monotony creeps in, but it recovers, and by the time they're singing the lusty title song near the finish you're under the spell of it.

Lynn Riggs, in his successful folk play wrote of Indian Territory just after the turn of the century-of an era when Claremore was just a cowpath and Tulsa wasn't a great deal more; when the country of his childhood was a land of alfalfa and barley and rye, of cowpunchers and mustangs, and when people still talked of the Eighty-niners and the excitement of the Run.

Now the Guild has taken the Riggs fable of that great untamed country, his story of the love of Cowboy Curly for the beautiful Laurey-taken it and called in the Messrs. Rodgers and Hammerstein for tunes and words, Mr. Mamoulian for his magic groupings, Agnes de Mille for her dance patterns and Lemuel Ayers for the scenery. And you have "Green Grow the Lilacs," with all the trimmings-and with such fetching songs as "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" and "The Surrey With the Fringe on the Top."

There are attractive people in this "Oklahoma!" Such as Joan Roberts, Alfred Drake, Lee Dixon, Celeste Holm, Miss Roberts is a delight in her Southwestern ways. Call her a find, and it's all right. She is both vocal and ornamental. Perhaps Lynn Riggs, and certainly Edna Ferber, would know if there's anything really like her down in the Cimarron country. Last night was her Broadway debut as far as most of us are concerned, although it seems she appeared here in the short-lived "Sunny River." Now it's Broadway's job to keep her here-and to have Hollywood lay off.

Celeste Holm handles her comedy songs with great effect and proves that she can adjust herself to the musical stage as well she can, say, to "The Damask Cheek." The drawling Lee Dixon is an agreeable performer. Joseph Buloff is funny and so is Ralph Riggs. Howard da Silva is very good indeed. Betty Garde should have more to do.

"Oklahoma!" is charming and leisurely. And tunely. And certainly not topical. It's of an era in American life before anybody ever heard of Gabes or Sfax-and probably only vaguely of Tunisia. It reveals Mr. Rodgers, shorn only for the moment of Larry Hart, in good form indeed. And nobody in last night's audience seemed to have a better time than Mr. Hart himself, who applauded the proceedings from a seat in Row B.

NEW YORK TIMES
April 1, 1943

'Oklahoma!' a Musical
Hailed as Delightful, Based
on 'Green Grow the Lilacs,'
Opens Here at the St. James
Theatre

By Lewis Nichols

For years they have been saying the Theatre Guild is dead, words that obviously will have to be eaten with breakfast this morning. Forsaking the sometimes somber tenor of her ways, the little lady of Fifty-second Street last evening danced off into new paths and brought to the St. James a truly delightful musical play called "Oklahoma!" Wonderful is the nearest adjective, for this excursion of the Guild combines a fresh and infectious gayety, a charm of manner, beautiful acting, singing and dancing, and a score by Richard Rodgers which does not do any harm either, since it is one of his best.

* * *

"Oklahoma!" is based on Lynn Riggs' saga of the Indian Territory at the turn of the century, "Green Grow the Lilacs" and, like its predecessor, it is simple and warm. It relies not for a moment on Broadway gags to stimulate an appearance of comedy, but goes winningly on its way with Rouben Mamoulian's best direction to point up its sly humor, and with some of the Agnes de Mille's most inspired dances to do so further. There is more comedy in one of Miss de Mille's gay little passages than in many of the other Broadway tom-tom beats together. The Guild has known what it is about in pursuing talent for its new departure.

Mr. Rodgers's scores never lack grace, but seldom have they been so well integrated as this for "Oklahoma!" He has turned out waltzes, love songs, comic songs and a title number which the State in question would do well to seize as an anthem forthwith. "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning," and "People Will Say" are headed for countless juke-boxes across the land, and a dirge called "Pore Jud"-in which the hero of the fable tries to persuade his rival to hang himself-is amazingly comic. "The Farmer and the Cowman" and "The Surry with the Fringe on the Top" also deserve mention only because they quite clearly approach perfection; no number of the score is out of place or badly handled. The orchestrations are by Russell Bennett, who knows his humor and has on this occasion let himself go with all the laughter he can command.

To speak and sing the words-Oscar Hammerstein 2d contributed the book and lyrics-the play has an excellent collection of players none of whom yet is world-famous. Alfred Drake and Joan Roberts as the two leading singers are fresh and engaging; they have clear voices and the thought that the audience might also like to hear Mr. Hammerstein's poetry. Joseph Buloff is marvelous as the peddler who ambles through the evening selling wares from French cards to Asiatic perfume-and avoiding matrimony. Howard da Silva, Lee Dixon, Celeste Holm and Ralph Riggs are some of the others, and Katharine Sergava and Marc Platt are two of the important dancers. Possibly in addition to being a musical play, "Oklahoma!" could be called a folk operetta; whatever it is, it is very good.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
April 1, 1943

The Guild's Oklahoma
Opens at the St. James

By Burton Rascoe

The Theater Guild, once so austere intellectual and aristocratic, has joined the march of democracy, let down the bars to a musical show-and has a hit on its hands. With its Oklahoma, which opened at the St. James last night, the Guild has combined some of the best features of the ballet at the Met with some of the best features of the great tradition of Broadway's own indigenous contribution to the theater-a girl show with lovely tunes, a couple of comics, a heavy, pretty costuming and an infectious spirit of gayety and good humor.

Oklahoma is fresh, lively, colorful and enormously pleasing. Richard Rodgers had written for the show one of the finest musical scores any musical play ever had; Russell Bennett has orchestrated it with a touch of genius, and Jacob Schwartzdorf wields the baton over the musicians who play it with all the zest and finesse of a proud symphony orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

Next to Mr. Rodgers, however, must stand the amazing Agnes de Mille, whose choreography, carried out to perfection by her ballet, is actually the biggest hit of the show. Miss de Mille has already won fame with her ballet, Rodeo, which made the attempts of Les Six of Paris in the '20s to modernize the ballet seem amateurish and mechanical; but she has two numbers in Oklahoma-danced to the music of the songs, Out of My Dreams and All 'er Nothin'-which are such supreme aesthetic delights as to challenge anything the Met can produce this season. They are spinetingling, out of this world.

Why No Encore

(I have a quarrel with the stage manager about the first of these numbers. In spite of the audience's excited and insistent applause at the end of Out of My Dreams, he permitted no encore and, moreover, allowed only the principals, Katharine Sergava and Marc Platt, of the ballet number to take bows. These two were fine, of course, but there was one of two girls, who appears from the program to be either Rhoda Hoffman or Rosemary Shaeffer, who was the outstanding hit of this outstanding hit of the show. She was the girl who danced the part of the awkward country girl with such sprite-like and unutterable charm and grace.)

Among the principals, Celeste Holm simply tucked the show under her arm and just let the others touch it. This is an astounding young woman, Miss Holm. It seems that only a few weeks ago she was doing a straight part exceedingly well in The Damask Cheek as a guilefully meretricious lady of the theater whose morals were those of the alley fence; and here she shows up as an excellent comic, and still an eyeful, with an ear-caressing voice. When you see and hear her sing the rather naughty song, I Can't Say No, you are in for a tickling thrill. And you just wait for her next number, which happens to be All 'er Nothin', she sings with Lee Dixon and as a ballet number in which Kate Friedlich and Joan McCracken (who are delightful as can-can dancers in Out of My Dreams) score another triumph. Miss Holm, with her fresh beauty, has too much talent to be quite credible.

A New Barflies' Lament

Besides those already mentioned, the others featured in the production are: Betty Garde, as the heroine's aunt, a sort of Ma Pettingill; Alfred Drake, as the cowhand who finally wins the heroine from the foul clutches of the sinister ranch manager; Howard da Silva, as the ranch manager who has a habit of burning up the homes and barns of people who don't like him; Lee Dixon, as the boobish cowhand who wants to marry a girl who can't say no even to a Persian peddler; Joseph Buloff as the peddler; Joan Roberts as the heroine, and George Church and Ralph Riggs for reasons not apparent to me, although they played their tiny bits well enough.

Mr. da Silva, as the heavy, not only combined to give the role both a repellent and a comic aspect but also to sing Pore Jud (with Mr. Drake) in such a way that it will probably become a barflies' lament overnight, and amateurs will soon be rendering it whenever you let them. Mr. Buloff was fairly amusing and Mr. Dixon was an appealing Oklahoman in voice and person.

The joy of the production, however, is in its total effect. The girls are unusually fresh, pretty and lively; they

wear fetching costumes by Miles White, who has discovered that old-fashioned lace drawers can be more seductive than a G-string; and they dance and sing with abandon. The lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein 2nd are bright and amusing. There is nothing mechanical about the production which is directed by Rouben Mamoulian. Lemuel Ayres is very Thomas Bentonish in his settings, but the locale (Oklahoma when it was Indian Territory) calls for it. The plot is allegedly derived from Lynn Riggs' *Green Grow the Lilacs*. What plot?

NEW YORK POST
April 1, 1943

"Oklahoma!" the Theatre
Guild's New Musical Play
at the St. James Theatre

By Wilella Waldorf

After a mild, somewhat monotonous beginning, the Theatre Guild's new musical play, "Oklahoma!" suddenly came to life around the middle of the first act last night and grew steadily more entertaining as the evening progressed. It is something a little different as Broadway musicals go these days, presenting a gay and colorful picture of life in the Indian Territory at the turn of the century, just before it became the state of Oklahoma.

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2d, who have never collaborated on a musical before, although both have labored in the field for years with other partners, went back to Lynn Riggs' play about the cowboy and the farm girl, "*Green Grow the Lilacs*," for inspiration.

The Guild has brought Rouben Mamoulian back from Hollywood to stage their handiwork, engaged Agnes de Mille to arrange the choreography for several amusing ballet interludes, and called in Lemuel Ayers to design some decorative scenery in the Grant Woods manner, and Miles White to dress everybody as quaintly and colorfully as the period permits.

The Villain Still Pursued Her

Old fashioned homespun charm is the keynote of the production from the time the curtain goes up, and for a while last night it all seemed just a trifle too cute. For some reason known only to the producers, a flock of Mr. Rodgers' songs that are pleasant enough, but still manage to sound quite a bit alike, are warbled in front of Laurey's farm house, one after another, without much variety in the presentation.

It was all very picturesque in a studied fashion, reminding us that life on a farm is apt to become a little tiresome.

We were heartily glad when the scene finally shifted to the smokehouse where Howard da Silva, the lecherous villain of the piece, lurked, surrounded by feeble peectures.

When Alfred Drake as Curly, the engaging cowboy who had been singing his head off up in the farm yard with the women, started telling the villainous hired-hand what would happen if he hanged himself and had a bang-up funeral, things began to look up at once, and Act I ended with a well staged dream-ballet by Agnes de Mille's dancers featuring a knock-down-and-drag-out fight between hero and villain-a sort of ballet version of the climactic scene from "The Spoilers"-and some insidious luring by a troupe of fancy women right out of one of those dear old Western saloons where everybody used to get shot up at least once every reel.

The second and final act was an improvement on the first dramatically and several vigorous ensemble numbers gave variety and movement to the performance. By the time Curly and Laurey were married and everybody was out shouting the title song, 'Oklahoma!' we were having a very good time.

Mr. Rodgers' music, much of it in the folksong style, is invariably pleasant and will grow on you as it is played and replayed. Mr. Hammerstein has done a workmanlike job of adapting Mr. Riggs' play after that first dull stretch, and his lyrics are often bright and amusing.

Well Acted, Nicely Sung

The cast is on the whole very capable, although some of the players have singularly little to do. Alfred Drake, who carries the heaviest vocal burden, again proves that he is equally at home as actor and singer. His is no tremendous voice, but it is a warm baritone, intelligently used. As always, he gives a very attractive performance.

Playing opposite, Joan Roberts is delightfully young and beguiling as the fair Laurey. She not only sings nicely but is uncommonly successful in the straight dramatic scenes. Howard da Silva makes an excellent villain, while Joseph Buloff and Celeste Holm have a merry time as the chief comedians of the evening, and Lee Dixon and Betty Garde are always helpful. The solo dancing is entrusted to the capable hands, or rather, feet of Katharine Sergava, Marc Platt and George Church.

If "Oklahoma!" is an example of what the Theatre Guild can do by detouring into the musical field, perhaps it would be a good idea to stay there for a while. It is the most original and entertaining production the Guild has sponored in a considerable time.

APPENDIX II. CRITICS' REVIEWS OF "CAROUSEL"

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
April 20, 1945

'Carousel' Is a Lovely,
Touching Musical Drama
Based on 'Liliom'

By John Chapman

"Carousel" is one of the finest musical plays I have seen and I shall remember it always. It has everything the professional theatre can give it-and something besides; heart, integrity, and inner glow. . . I don't know just what to call it.

Since those who have made "Carousel" are those who made "Oklahoma" one might expect another "Oklahoma"-but one shouldn't. The older work is bright, lean and gay-a musical comedy. "Carousel" is tender, rueful, almost tragic, and does not fit into the pattern of musical comedy, operetta, opera bouffe or even opera.

Those looking for a happy and foolish evening had better go elsewhere, for, although "Carousel" has all the trappings of a big-time Broadway show-the sets, the songs, the production numbers, the ballets-it is essentially something else. It is a story of a wistful, touching love, and it takes time to tell it.

The zip, the pace, the timing of the ordinary musical are not in it, but it offers stirring rewards for the listener who will adapt himself to the slower progression and let it tell and sing its story in its own way.

A Version of "Liliom"

"Carousel" is an adaptation of Ferenc (or Franz) Molnar's "Liliom," which the Hungarian dramatist first had produced in Budapest in 1909, when it was a failure. Revived after World War I, it was a hit, and in 1921 the young Theatre Guild (which celebrated its 26th birthday last night) presented it in New York with a cast including Eve Le Gallienne, Joseph Schildkraut, Henry Travers, Helen Westley and Dudley Digges.

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For this musical version "Liliom" has been taken out of a story-book Hungary and planted in the spare and familiar soil of New England. Its time is the 1870's and 80's. Benjamin F. Glazer has made the adaptation, and his transition has not injured the quality of the original play. An added scene is in keeping-and is necessary, for it ends "Carousel" on a heartening upbeat.

The score and lyrics are by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2d, and the musical theatre does not have two finer creative artists. The joy of their song, "June Is Bustin' Out All Over," is electric, and the way Rouben Mamoulian and Agnes de Mille have staged it is superb. Two other chorus-and-dance numbers, a sailors' song called "Blow High, Blow Low" and a picnic scene "This Was a Real Nice Clambake," are almost equally remarkable.

Then there are love songs like "If I Loved You," fragile little numbers like "What's the Use of Wond'rin'" and funny interludes like "There's Nothin' So Bad for a Woman." The finale, "You'll Never Walk Alone," is almost a hymn.

Partly Fantasy

The story of "Liliom" and the story of "Carousel" concerns the love of a gentle girl for a roughneck carnival barker. He is handsome, a bully, a braggart. In bad company, he gets caught at an attempted robbery and kills himself. In Heaven-two cops took him in through the back gates-he finds he is on probation. He can have one more day on earth and a chance to do something nice for somebody.

When he returns he finds he has a daughter, and she is now 15, and she is unhappy. Liliom-or Billy Bigelow, as he is called-almost fumbles his chance, as he did in the play; but finally he conveys new hope to the child and the wife who loved him.

This not, as you can see, a musical comedy plot; but it makes an extraordinary musical play, and the Theatre Guild has given it an excellent company. John Raitt, as the barker, looks, acts, and sings a lusty part in a way to establish him firmly in the Broadway scene. Jan Clayton, as the slight, wistful Julie, is a remarkable young singing actress. Her scene at the body of her suicide husband is beautifully, heart-breakingly done.

New Role for Vye

In a comedy role Jean Darling is winsome and chipper; she is paired with Eric Mattson for a lighter love story which has been injected, and Mattson, too, is good. Murvyn Vye, once the Jud of "Oklahoma," now has a better role and is excellent in it. He is a villain, yes, and a nasty one; but he is very amusing, too.

Agnes de Mille's dances again are used to carry forward the story and again are fresh and novel - and performed by attractive young people. The first-nighters were particularly impressed by Bambi Linn, who dances the story of the barker's daughter.

Jo Mielziner's sets and Miles White's costumes are beautiful, the chorus is unusually good, and a big orchestra under the direction of Joseph Littau does justice to Mr. Rodgers' music.

This and the following reviews of "Carousel" are contained in New York Theatre Critics' Reviews (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1945), VI, 226-228.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
April 20, 1945

'Carousel' Makes Bow
At Majestic Theatre

By Robert Garland

Yes, yes, a thousand times yes . . . When somebody writes a better musical play than "Carousel," written by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein will have to write it. And when somebody produces a better musical play than "Carousel," produced by The Theatre Guild, The Theatre Guild will have to produce it.

This "Carousel," for which I'm deliberately going off the deep end, is the song-and-dance translation of the Ferenc Molnar "Liliom" which has been trying out in Boston. Transplanted from Budapest, Hungary, to Salem, Mass., it's not too far removed from the original. Like Cynara's boy-friend, it has been faithful after its fashion.

To go back and start at the beginning, "Carousel" opened last night at the Majestic. Opened triumphantly! For all I know to the contrary, the plush and gilded first-night congregation is still standing up in W. 44th st., applauding the score by Mr. Rodgers, the book and lyrics by Mr. Hammerstein and the dances by no other than Agnes de Mille.

Which is not to overlook the settings by Jo Mielziner, the costumes by Miles White and the all-over supervision of the tried and true Theatre-Guilders, who are Lawrence Langner and Theresa Helburn. As for the dances, Miss de Mille has again proved herself a genius.

Billy and Julie

Nowadays, with locale changed and songs and dances added, play names are not the same. Liliom is Billy Bigelow, Julie still is Julie, although Jordan has been added. Mrs. Muskat is Mrs. Mullen. Ficsur is Jigger. So it goes! But the story of "Carousel" and the story of "Liliom" are pretty close relations. It's the mood that differs.

Billy meets Julie. Julie meets Billy. And in an amusement part on the New England coast in the May of 1873. Then, on a treelined path along the shore. Again, married to Julie, in front of Nettie Fowler's Spa hard by the ocean. An island across the bay. A mainland water front, where murder is committed. Up there. Down here.

You remember how it went in the Garrick Theatre in April, 1921. And, later, up at the Fulton. Girl meets boy. Girl marries boy. Girl loses boy, only to find him after he has died. It's romance. It's comedy. It's melodrama. And it's metaphysical. To which somethings new have been added. Songs which are lovely. Dances which are marvelous.

You'll be hearing these songs, over and over again.
 "You're a Queer One, Julie Jordan." "When I Marry Mr. Snow."
 "June Is Bustin' Out All Over." "Blow High, Blow Low."
 "You'll Never Walk Alone." "That Was a Real Nice Clam Bake."
 "If I Loved You."

No Complaints

Casting is perfection. Jan Clayton, making her Broadway debut as Julie, is lovely to look at, lovelier to listen to. Her "What's the Use of Wond'rin'," along with her share in the duets, trios and ensembles, is perfection. She's a fine young actress, too. John Raitt, as Billy Bigelow, is in every way her equal. Both as a singer and an actor.

But there's neither time nor space to go into details in connection with a cast which could scarcely be improved upon. Jean Darling's Carrie Pipperidge, Eric Mattson's Enoch Snow, Christine Johnson's Nettie Fowler, Jean Casto's Mrs. Mullen, Murvyn Vye's Jigger Craigin, Bambi Linn's Louise, Peter Birch's Boatswain and Annabelle Lyon's Hannah are tops.

A professional fault-finder by trade, I can't find anything to complain about where The Theatre Guild's latest musical play is concerned, although it is in me to wish mildly that the opening ballet, "Carousel," could be a wee bit longer, that the closing ballet, which has no programmed title, could be a wee bit shorter. But it doesn't really matter.

As one who sees no good reason for comparing "Carousel" with "Oklahoma!," as one who prefers to let each stand on its perfected own, let me assure you that The Theatre Guild's new play-with-music is romantic, melodramatic, fantastical, colorful, comic, tragic, melodic and an evening of sheer theatrical enchantment.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
April 20, 1945

Definitely Something

By Otis L. Guernsey Jr.

The Theater Guild correctly describes its new "Carousel" as "a musical play." Based on Ferenc Molnar's "Liliom," it carries through the sad, misty mood of this drama about the life and death of ne'er-do-well with few comedy additions. Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein 2d and the other collaborators have been treading on dangerous ground in such an adaptation; the soaring gayety of other musicals never comes up through the heavy atmosphere of this one. But the combination of the "Oklahoma" talents has found material to overcome the handicap. With a lovely musical score, a letter-perfect cast, a fine production and a tale told with sincerity, "Carousel" is definitely something to see.

* * *

The show has been assembled with the unmistakable Rodgers-Hammerstein touch. You will find few "breaks" in "Carousel" - it flows smoothly through the music and dialogue, and, as is the technique of the authors, the drama is unfolded in songs and lyrics as much as in conversation. Since there is very little time for comedy in "Carousel," the score is a series of variations on the theme of love or sorrows; it avoids monotony only by its excellence. In it is set a brilliant diamond of a number entitled "If I Loved You," repeated in nearly every scene, asking and deserving to be called the song of the Broadway musical year.

* * *

"If I Loved You" is still the theme of the "Liliom" story, even though it has been moved from Austria to New England for "Carousel." John Raitt's role of the carousel barker is now called Billy Bigelow; he is still the same old Liliom, however, attracting all women and treating them all badly even though he is made to fall in love with one of them. Raitt gives the character the perfect blend of roguery and sentiment, and he has an excellent voice for the part. He sings the shall-I-shall-I message of "If I Loved You" with great feeling. He manages to bring off a difficult musical feat; one scene has him alone on the stage for many minutes singing about his unborn child, but the attention never lags from the emotions he is describing.

Raitt's notable musical characterization is backed up by a long list of first-rate performers. Jan Clayton brings pathos and a good voice to the role of the barker's wife as she makes love to him and mourns his death in "There's Nothin' So Bad for a Woman" or "You'll Never Walk Alone." Jean Darling, Eric Mattson and Christine Johnson sing "When I Marry Mr. Snow," "When the Children Are Asleep" and "June Is Bustin' Out All Over"; their names are only the most prominent among the list of those deserving notice, which is as long as the cast.

* * *

Of course, there is an Agnes de Mille ballet, and of course, it tells a story with the lighter touches of dancing gradually becoming serious and ending on a note of sorrow. The ballet enacts the barker's daughter's life as Billy Bigelow looks down on her from Heaven after his death, and Bambi Linn dances the laughter and tears of the fifteen-year-old with pertness and grace. The Guild's production has made "Carousel" attractive with pastel shades of yellow and red in the Jo Mielziner sets and Miles White costumes. The creators of "Carousel" posed for themselves a difficult problem in this serious musical play, and they have come up with an unusual piece of Broadway stagecraft. Rodgers, Hammerstein and the rest have proved the music and real drama can be combined outside the opera with very good entertainment results.

NEW YORK SUN
April 20, 1945

'Carousel,' Beguiling Musical
Play With Lovely Score,
Opens at Majestic

By Ward Morehouse

The Theater Guild, having struck gold on the south side of 44th street, now tries the north side and has come up with a new song-and-dance play, "Carousel," which has fragile beauty and an enchanting score. It opened last night at the Majestic and it will be around for a long, long time.

"Carousel," which used to be "Liliom," is a beguiling play. Richard Rodgers has contributed some of the loveliest music of his career. Oscar Hammerstein has written distinctive lyrics. And the Guild has crowded the stage with people who can sing this play, dance it and also speak it.

Molnar's story of the swaggering carousel barker who marries the gentle Julie, makes an attempt at robbery, commits suicide when trapped by the police and then returns to earth to

see his daughter and whisper words long unspoken to his wife, has charm and compassion in musical play form. The Messrs. Rodgers and Hammerstein, with the aid of the imaginative staging of Rouben Mamoulian, have created a mood and have sustained it. And "Carousel" becomes something memorable in the theater.

The locale that was once Hungary is now the coast of New England, 1873-1888, and the production provides some beautiful interludes. Such as the amusement part prelude, crowded, colorful and gay, and done entirely in pantomime; the clambake scene along an island's jagged, misty shore, unfolded at the beginning of the second act, and the end-of-the-play scene showing the daughter of the wise and understanding Julie and the braggart Billy Bigelow (as Liliom is now called) in her graduation class, determined to hold up her head in the world.

The score of Richard Rodgers includes some outstanding numbers - "June Is Bustin' Out All Over," "This Was a Real Nice Clambake," "When I Marry Mr. Snow," "If I Loved You" and "You'll Never Walk Alone." Warm and tender and ingratiating music it is. Mr. Hammerstein's lyrics are frequently stirring and in his book writing he has done well in the fitting of the dramatic material of the Molnar play to the framework of musical comedy.

The Theater Guild, getting wise in the ways of the song and dance field, has again called upon the talents of Rouben Mamoulian for production direction, of Agnes de Mille for staging of the dancing and Miles White for the fetching costumes. Jo Mielziner has contributed the atmospheric period settings. Mr. Mamoulian, who has a passion for the blending of song and dance with drama, has again achieved exciting stage groupings and effects.

The cast is not one of names, but it's one of abundant ability. John Raitt is the Billy Bigelow, and he has the bluster and certainly the voice for the role. Jan Clayton, also making her Broadway debut, is a completely delightful Julie. She is indeed welcome to Broadway. There are good performances from the exuberant Jean Darling, Eric Mattson and Jean Casto, as the tough old girl who owns the carousel. Christine Johnson has all the gusto in the world in putting over "June Is Bustin' Out All Over." Murvyn Vye, who has the appearance of a young Al Jolson, is excellent as the sly and sinister Jigger Craigin. Bambi Linn does extraordinarily well with her beach ballet. And there should be a word, or several of them, for the dancing of Peter Birch and the orchestrations of Don Walker.

"Carousel," a touching and affecting musical play, is something rare in the theater. It's a hit, and of that there can be no doubt. If it is not the musical piece to challenge "Oklahoma" for all-time honors it is certainly one that deserves

its place in the 44th Street block. The team of Rodgers and Hammerstein will go on forever.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
April 20, 1945

Guild Scores Again
With Its 'Carousel'

Burton Rascoe was ill last night
and unable to write a
review of "Carousel."

Although the Theater Guild may not have a second "Oklahoma!" on its hands, a consensus of critics and those who were fortunate enough to see "Carousel's" opening last night at the Majestic Theater is that Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein have created another beautiful musical play and one that again will keep the Guild's box office busy.

Hammerstein and Rodgers appear to have combined the successful device of "Carmen Jones" - the adaptation of a classic to modern scene and tempo-with the musical enthusiasm that was the outstanding quality of "Oklahoma!" and the result is happy.

As you know, "Liliom" was the story of a swaggering carnival barker in Hungary, led to the Devil's gates by force of circumstance and his own willfulness. Mr. Hammerstein has transposed the scene to New England, renamed his characters for the most part, and held fairly closely to the theme of the Molnar fantasy. He does permit his Liliom (in this case Billy Bigelow) to return to earth after his death, in order to accomplish one good deed.

Follows Molnar Lines

The long first scene, making certain allowances for American colloquialism, follows the Molnar lines almost line for line with the original. With the exposition out of the way, however, Mr. Hammerstein does pretty much as he chooses with the dialogue.

There are times when the music bears the distinct flavor of "Oklahoma!" particularly in the more spectacular ensembles, but that certainly is nothing against the play. "This Was a Real Nice Clam Bake," for example, which opens the first scene of the second act, is another of those rip-roaring choral numbers that is designed to lift the audience into a

mood of exhilaration (like, for example, "Oh What a Beautiful Morning") and it accomplishes its purpose spectacularly.

Cheerful Numbers

"June is Bustin' Out All Over" is another cheerful number and so are "You'll Never Walk Alone" and "What's the Use of Wond'rin'."

Last night's audience was appreciative of many things, among them the excellent diction and audibility of the words of Mr. Hammerstein's good lyrics, and the general excellence of the cast. John Raitt is the play's Liliom. He has a robust voice and musically is in character, although some of the critics would have enjoyed seeing a little more swagger in the acting.

Jan Clayton is a delightful Julie and has a pleasing voice. Jean Darling is Julie's friend and Eric Mattson is Jean's husband. They are all capable in the singing and acting departments.

Agnes DeMille, again the choreographer, has staged two principal dances, one a gay hornpipe, the other a ballet as seen by Billy as he looks down from heaven. As always, Miss DeMille has been imaginative and effective.

Richard Rodgers, who had injured his back recently, watched the performance from behind curtains, propped up in a stretcher.

NEW YORK TIMES
April 20, 1945

'Carousel'

By Lewis Nichols

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2d, who can do no wrong, have continued doing no wrong in adapting "Liliom" into a musical play. Their "Carousel" is on the whole delightful. It spins and whirls across the stage of the Majestic, now fast and rousing, now nostalgic and moving. To it, the composer of the team has brought one of the most beautiful Rodgers scores, and the lyricist some of his best rhymes. The Theatre Guild, offering the play as its farewell to the season and on its twenty-sixth birthday, has given it an excellent production, with Rouben Mamoulian to direct, and Agnes de Mille for the dances. The Majestic is across the street from the St. James, where "Oklahoma!" is stationed; the pair of Rodgers-Hammerstein shows will be able to wink at one another for a long time to come.



In deciding to make a musical play of Ferenc Molnar's "Liliom," the pair automatically adopted a couple of heavy millstones. One is "Oklahoma!" and they got around that by not trying to imitate themselves. The other is the familiarity most audiences have with "Liliom." This they conquered by following the story quite closely as to incident, changing only the time and locale. "Carousel" is set on the New England coast toward the end of the nineteenth century. Its principal figure still is a barker in a carnival, he still commits suicide after an abortive holdup, he goes to heaven and comes back again to do his one good deed. There is a new ending, but one which does not violate the spirit of the original.

At the beginning of the play, where scene and mood must be established, "Carousel" moves a little slowly, but as soon as Mr. Rodgers has warmed his keyboard and Mr. Hammerstein his pen, chance complaints evaporate. The composer is offering all types of song. "June Is Bustin' Out All Over" is a cheerful rousing number; "If I Loved You" is excellent of the type implied by its name. "What's the Use of Wond'rin'" is very good, so is "You'll Never Walk Alone." There is ballet music, soft music and sentimental, and connecting themes. Mr. Hammerstein has worked hard on his lyrics; some of them are funny, some factual, some aiming at nothing higher than to be pleasant. In the lyric to "This Was a Real Nice Clam Bake" he can make his audience hungry for an immediate shore dinner.

As lyricist, Mr. Hammerstein must have a great admiration for the cast, which sings the words audibly and well. John Raitt is Liliom under the name of Billy Bigelow. He has an excellent and powerful voice and is not afraid to use it. He perhaps is not as good an actor as singer; he lacks the easy swagger and arrogance which goes with the character. Jan Clayton is a charming Julie, and can also sing; Jean Darling is Julie's friend and Eric Mattson the latter's husband. Christine Johnson is fine in the role derived from that of the photographer with whom Julie and Liliom lived, and Jean Casto has the part of the carousel's owner.

Miss de Mille has built up two main dances. One is a hornpipe, which is light and gay; the other is a ballet which Billy sees as he looks down from heaven upon his daughter. This last is perhaps not up to Miss de Mille's final score, although Bambi Linn, late of the rival across the street, is in it. Mr. Mamoulian has directed the whole thing so as to stress the music which is eminently proper, and to set forth every pleasant angle possible. "Carousel" lacks comedy in its usual sense, only one role—that of Billy's nemesis and played by Murvyn Vye—approaching the normal forms of musical play humor. Jo Mielziner has designed good settings, simple for a New England seacoast, whimsical for heaven, and Miles White has costumed everyone nicely. But "Carousel" remains a Rodgers-Hammerstein offering, and as such a good turn on and to the spring theatre.

NEW YORK POST
April 20, 1945

'Carousel' Is Closer to
'Oklahoma' Than to 'Liliom'

By Wilella Waldorf

Although "Carousel," which opened at the Majestic last night, is billed as a musical version of Ferenc Molnar's "Liliom," the Theatre Guild has made every effort to establish it in the minds of Broadway theatre-goers as the logical successor to "Oklahoma," its fabulous hit still playing just across 44th Street.

The locale of Molnar's play has been shifted from Budapest to the Maine Coast back in the seventies and eighties, substituting old-time American folksiness and cute Agnes DeMille ballets for Molnar's swaggering Continental fantasy about a tough sideshow barker in a Hungarian amusement park who is loved by a simple little servant girl, dies committing a robbery, is tried in a celestial police court, spends sixteen years in purgatory and is finally allowed a day back on earth to show his repentance by performing one kind act.

The "Oklahoma" Graduates

Miss DeMille isn't the only "Oklahoma" alumna involved in "Carousel." Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2d are again responsible for the music and the book and lyrics, respectively. The production was directed by Rouben Mamoulian. Miles White designed the quaint old-fashioned costumes and several of the singers and dancers are graduates of "Oklahoma" companies, either on Broadway or the road.

Some of the people who never happened to take part in "Oklahoma" could easily wander across the street and mingle with the boys and girls at the St. James without causing undue comment. A number of the roles seem to have been cut off the same bolt of cloth.

The question that arises today, therefore, is not so much is "Carousel" a satisfying musical version of "Liliom" as it is: How does the show shape up as a new "Oklahoma"?

The answer is that it is no "Liliom" and also no "Oklahoma," but that it will doubtless have a nice, hefty run on the strength of both of its predecessors' reputations.

Most admirers of "Liliom" will probably miss the Continental tang of Molnar's work, especially the wry comedy of the heavenly police court scene, which is by-passed at the Majestic. And "Oklahoma" addicts will find that although Miss DeMille and her talented dancers are still going through most of the same motions, there is even less to laugh at here, while Mr. Rodgers has composed a score that is more musicianly but less "popular" than his "Oklahoma" parade of hits.

This reviewer found the music in "Carousel" often very fine to listen to, as beautifully orchestrated by Don Walker and played by an excellent orchestra under Joseph Littau, but there is no doubt that it is not the sort of score one goes out humming. We must admit, too, that "Carousel" is no great vocal treat. Several of the Rodgers melodies might have proved more haunting if "sold" by cleverer singers.

Jan Clayton Appealing

The most attractive and talented member of the company is a newcomer from the movies named Jan Clayton, who plays Julie. She hasn't much of a voice, but she has an appealing personality, a strong feeling for the stage and a sense of style that is decidedly promising.

For the rest, John Raitt sings better than most and swaggers effectively enough as the New England Liliom, Murvyn Vye gets something out of the role of his pal Jigger and Eric Mattson has a decent tenor. Russell Collins does wonders in a couple of small roles along toward the end.

Jean Casto is pretty well smothered in the role Helen Westley once played and Jean Darling is cute but certainly no vocalist. On the other hand, the only trained singer among the women principals, Christine Johnson, is certainly no actress. Bambi Linn, the charming young "Oklahoma" dancer, not only dances now, but speaks as well.

"Carousel," which started promptly at 8:15 and ended at 11 o'clock, seemed to us rather a long evening. The "Oklahoma," formula is becoming a bit monotonous, and so are Miss DeMille's ballets. All right, go ahead and shoot.

APPENDIX III. CRITICS' REVIEWS OF "SOUTH PACIFIC"

THE NEW YORK TIMES
April 8, 1949

At The Theatre

By Brooks Atkinson

No one will be surprised this morning to read that Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein 2d and Joshua Logan have written a magnificent musical drama. Even before they set pencil to paper and chose "South Pacific" for the title, alert theatre-goers very sensibly started to buy tickets for it. With Mary Martin and Ezio Pinza in the leading parts, the opening performance at the Majestic last evening amply confirmed preliminary expectations and brought the town a wonderfully talented show.

Although Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein are extraordinarily gifted men, they have not forgotten how to apply the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair. One thing that makes "South Pacific" so rhapsodically enjoyable is the hard word and organization that have gone into it under Mr. Logan's spontaneous direction. They have culled the story from James Michener's "Tales of the South Pacific," which in some incredible fashion managed to retain sensitive perceptions toward the Pacific Islands and human beings in the midst of the callous misery, boredom and slaughter of war.

* * *

The perception has been preserved in this sombre romance about a French planter and an American nurse from Arkansas. Writing for Broadway, Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein have not forgotten to entertain the customers with some exuberant antics by humorously sullen American Seabees who resent everything they have to endure. But essentially this is a tenderly beautiful idyll of genuine people inexplicably tossed together in a strange corner of the world; and the music, the lyrics, the singing and the acting contribute to the mood.

If the country still has the taste to appreciate a masterly love song, "Some Enchanted Evening" ought to become reasonably immortal. For Mr. Rodgers' music is a romantic incantation; and, as usual, Mr. Hammerstein's verses are both fervent and simple. Mr. Pinza's bass voice is the most beautiful

that has been heard on a Broadway stage for an eon or two. He sings this song with infinite delicacy of feeling and loveliness of tone. As a matter of fact, Mr. Pinza is also a fine actor; and his first appearance on the one and only legitimate stage is an occasion worth celebrating.

* * *

Since we have all been more or less in love with Miss Martin for several years, it is no surprise to find her full of quicksilver, pertness and delight as the Navy nurse. She sings some good knockabout melodies with skill and good nature, making something particularly enjoyable out of the stomping jubilee of "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair" and blowing out the walls of the theatre with the rapture of "I'm In Love With a Wonderful Guy." In the opinion of one inquiring theatregoer, there seems to be a little of Annie Oakley, the gun-girl, left in Miss Martin's attack on a song, and perhaps this should be exorcised by slow degrees. For the Navy nurse is a few cuts above Annie socially. Miss Martin is the girl who can make her captivating without deluging her in charm.

Since "South Pacific" is not an assembled show, but a thoroughly composed musical drama, you will find high standards of characterization and acting throughout. Take Juanita Hall, for example. She plays a brassy, greedy, ugly Tonkonese woman with harsh, vigorous, authentic accuracy; and she sings one of Mr. Rodgers' finest songs, "Bali Ha'i" with rousing artistry.

After wasting his talents on stereotyped parts for several years, Myron McCormick has a good one as a braggart, scheming Seabee, and plays it with great comic gusto. "South Pacific" naturally does well by the ruffians who saved democracy amid groans of despair in the Eastern ocean, and "There Is Nothing Like a Dame" ought to go down as their theme song.

As evidence of the care that has gone into this drama take note of the part of Capt. George Brackett, U. S. N. The part is written with real invention on the model of a human being, and Martin Wolfson plays him admirably.

Jo Mielziner has provided entrancing settings that presumably have a Polynesian accent. Russell Bennett has written orchestrations, especially for the overtures, that are rich and colorful in instrumental sound. For the authors and producers have a high regard for professional skill, and everything they have put their hands to is perfectly wrought. Fortunately, Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein are also the most gifted men in the business. And "South Pacific" is as

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lively, warm, fresh and beautiful as we had all hoped that it would be.

This and the following reviews of "South Pacific are contained in New York Theatre Critics' Reviews, (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, Inc., 1949) X, 312-315.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
April 8, 1949

By Howard Barnes

Pearls, Pure Pearls

The new and much-heralded musical, "South Pacific," is a show of rare enchantment. It is novel in texture and treatment, rich in dramatic substance, and eloquent in song. Mary Martin and Ezio Pinza are the chief sorcerers in the adaptation of James A. Michener's "Tales of the South Pacific" at the Majestic. They have superlative collaboration from a large and inspired company. Since Oscar Hammerstein, 2d and Joshua Logan have afforded them a book of variety and color, in which the Richard Rodgers-Hammerstein numbers are beautifully integrated, last night's gala premiere was an occasion for rejoicing. All the pleasant things that have been said in advance about "South Pacific" have been triumphantly justified.

* * *

Perhaps the chief delight of the production is the manner in which it belies its intricacy. The librettists have plucked various situations from the Michener novel, mixing the grim background of island fighting with two interlocking romances and making capital of lusty humor and the inevitable tragedy of war. Under Logan's superb direction, the action shifts with constant fluence. Borrowing the lap dissolve from the screen, he has kept the book cumulatively arresting and tremendously satisfying. The occasional dances appear to be magical improvisations. It is a long and prodigal entertainment, but it seems all too short. The Rodgers music is not his finest, but it fits the mood and pace of "South Pacific" so felicitously that one does not miss a series of hit tunes. In the same way the lyrics are part and parcel of a captivating musical unity.

The scenery and lighting by Jo Mielziner are not the least virtues of the exhibit. He has conjured up two island settings with a minimum of ornamental nonsense, using screens and a briefly blackened stage to back up a chiaroscuro of a naval base and the neighboring Bali H'ai, which is celebrated in one of the loveliest of the Rodgers-Hammerstein songs. Whether opera's gift to the theater, Pinza and the fettle-some Miss Martin are falling in love and being separated by the fact that the French planter has had a Polynesian wife, or Myron McCormick, William Tabbert, Juanita Hall, Betta St. John and the others are reconstructing existence on a spear point of our attack on Japan, the show is eye-filling as well as dramatic.

* * *

Pinza's commanding bass voice swells magnificently in

"This Nearly Was Mine" and "Some Enchanted Evening," but he matches it with singularly satisfactory acting. Miss Martin has never been more appealing and gay. Her portrayal of a Navy nurse is magnificent. In "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Out of My Hair," in which she suits words to action, or "I'm in Love With a Wonderful Guy," in which she steps like sixty, she makes the romance far more than a musical comedy love affair. What is more, she sings with Pinza and holds her own. McCormick jests and does a wonderful danse de ventre; Miss St. John is gravely graceful as a Tonkinese miss, and Tabbert is fine as the lieutenant to whom she surrenders. Moreover, Miss Hall gives a rowdy characterization of Liat's scrounging mother, while Martin Wolfson and Harvey Stephens play big brass with arrogance and persuasion. The Motley costumes are right and exquisite. "South Pacific" is a musical play to be cherished.

DAILY NEWS
April 8, 1949

'South Pacific' a Beautiful, Big
Musical, and Pinza Dominates It

By John Chapman

The finest things about the new musical play, "South Pacific" are, in this order, the highambition of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2d in putting it together with words and music and then putting it on; the first Broadway appearance of Ezio Pinza, whose great talent as a singer, comedian and leading man has long been known to patrons of grand opera; the gallant spirit and music-show know-how of Mary Martin, and the tropical settings by Jo Mielziner.

Packs in a Lot

Whoo-ee, but that was a long and weighty sentence! Well, so is the show. It was a great big hit long before it opened, and the enthusiasm of its first audience at the Majestic Theatre last evening indicates that it will continue to be one for a year or two or three. With this assurance assured, I hope everybody involved will forgive me for reporting here that "South Pacific" is a good and classy musical but not the greatest thing since the invention of the wheel or even since "Kiss Me, Kate."

The book is based on James A. Michener's salty and sentimental "Tales of the South Pacific." As it is presented on the stage, it is a remarkable venture trying to confine many moods and stories within the dimensions of a Broadway show. In order to pack in as much as possible, the authors have dispensed with set numbers and have tried to make everything all one piece. This is what Richard Wagner did in his musicals.

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Mr. Hammerstein's impeccable lyrics have been fitted to some beguiling Rodgers melodies. The score gets off to a wonderful start with Mr. Pinza singing "Some Enchanted Evening" to Miss Martin in his luxuriant hilltop garden on a South Pacific island. The authority of a superb musician is at once apparent-and so is the authority of a big and handsome actor.

Dances With Her Fingers

Miss Martin, wearing a feminine version of a crew haircut, scores on her own singing "I'm in Love With a Wonderful Guy" and by taking a real shampoo while warbling "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair." She also clowns, endearingly, in a scene in which the warriors and the warrioreesses on Mr. Michener's island give a home-talent show.

There should be at least one haunting melody in a musical about the tropics, and Mr. Rodgers has provided a lovely one in "Bali Ha'i," which is splendidly done by Juanita Hall. And the sweetest, fetchinigest number of the evening is "Happy Talk," which Miss Hall sings while a graceful young beauty, Betta St. John, pantomimes it in a finger dance.

The story involves Miss Martin, a Navy nurse, and her romance with Mr. Pinza, a middle-aged French planter on an island which our forces have occupied in the war with Japan. It also involves as many Marine, Seabee and Navy characters as possible, and such Polynesians as Bloody Mary (Miss Hall) and her daughter (Miss St. John).

"South Pacific" has charm and melody and some good comedy by Myron McCormick in the role of an acquisitive sailor. It is beautifully and expensively presented and is, as I say, a good show. It would help if you read Mr. Michener's book first.

JOURNAL AMERICAN

April 8, 1949

Fine Music, Smooth
Lyrics, Prize Story

By Robert Garland

Now that it's at the Majestic, this "South Pacific" has pretty nearly everything. This "pretty nearly everything" is always good, often better, frequently best.

For music, Richard Rodgers' fine and seldom highfalutin score. For lyrics, Oscar Hammerstein's smooth and tops-when-earthly verses. For story, James Michener's prize-worthy Polynesian wartales adapted by Mr. Hammerstein and Joshua Logan.



To such pre-production assets add some South Pacific scenery in Jo Mielziner's play-with-music manner, some scanty and scantier garments by the costumers known as Motley, some Rodgersian orchestrations by Russell Bennett and an orchestra that is an orchestra under the leadership of Salvatore Dell'Isola.

And a cast! A cast in which Mary Martin, who belongs to Broadway, and Ezio Pinza, borrowed from the Metropolitan Opera House, are rightly starred; in which Juanita Hall, Betta St. John, William Tabbert, Martin Wolfson, Harvey Stephens and Myron McCormick are rightly featured. And Mr. McCormick's activated abdominal tattooing, which should be.

These make for good into better into best entertainment. The American theatre has a reputation for the worthiness of its "musicals." This "South Pacific" will, in its long run, enhance it. It has already!

* * *

Man Meets Girl

Supposing that it mattered, I'm in no position to report on the faithfulness with which "South Pacific" as a musical, follows "Tales of the South Pacific," as a book. But Ensign Nellie Forbush is at the Majestic. So is Planter Emile de Becque. M. de Becque's Polynesian prodigy are also seen and heard, although they number only two.

Man meets Girl before the first curtain rises and while the overture is on. Man loses Girl on the edge of the mid-show-intermission. But when, one act and seven songs later, the final curtain falls, Man has his Girl again as He and She, and his unhallowed South Pacific offspring, are having tea together as one big legal family.

Then concurrently with the happy Nellie Forbush-Emile de Becque story, there is the unhappy story of Liat, Bloody Mary's daughter, and Lt. Joseph Cable, U.S.M.C. In and out is the brash and busy Luther Billis, the all-too-able seaman who can make, among other desirabilities, a grass skirt, a well-ironed pleat and a female impersonation.

Backgrounding both the happy and unhappy stories are the U. S. sailors, Seabees and Marines, the native islanders and a bevy of lady ensigns evidently not included when the boys in uniform get together and tell the Polynesian world that "There's Nothing Like a Dame"-young American womanhood excepted!

* * *

Mary Martin, of Broadway north of 42nd Street, and Ezio Pinza, of Broadway south of 42nd Street, work affectionately together. If she sings up in honor of Mr. Pinza and he sings down

in honor of Miss Martin, the result is more than everything it should be. Duet or solo, the Ensign and the Planter are alive, believable and zestful.

Cast Is Excellent

And there can be only enthusiasm for the lesser members of the cast assembled by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein as producers, in association with Leland Hayward and Joshua Logan, for Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein as concoctors, in association with Joshua Logan and James Michener, of Broadway's new musical must-see.

High among the supporters of Miss Martin and Mr. Pinza are Juanita Hall, whose Bloody Mary is flawless, Betta St. John, whose Liat is beautiful, and Myron McCormick, whose Luther Billis is too true to be good up to the evening's very end. As Lt. Joseph Cable, U.S.M.C., William Tabbert is a singing-actor to acknowledge.

But it's the Richard Rodgers songs you'll be hearing the most of in "South Pacific's" long run. They are made to order for Mary, the Martin, and Ezio, the Pinza to sing, and Bill, the barfly, to wear out in his jukebox...

Yes, this "South Pacific" has pretty nearly everything for pretty nearly everybody. It was a big hit before it got to the Majestic. It is a bigger hit now that it has moved in and taken over.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
April 8, 1949

'South Pacific' Opens;
Tuneful and Bright

By William Hawkins

Having more than justified some of the most terrifyingly enthusiastic advance reports ever circulated, "South Pacific" soared exquisitely over the Majestic stage last night and made it quite clear that the theater is going to be blessedly enchanted for many months to come.

This is the ultimate modern blending of music and popular theater to date, with the finest kind of balance between story and song, and hilarity and heartbreak.

Mary Martin, whose star has been riding high for a number of shows, achieves a new heaven for herself here with an authoritative versatility nobody in the theater can equal. And Ezio Pinza, one of grand opera's greatest, proves that new surroundings like these only make one more natural home for a fine singing actor.

"South Pacific" tells a touching romance wherein two worlds meet. It is the kind of love story that the war made familiar, as an American nurse becomes captivated by a French planter on a little island where she is stationed. An unconsolable rift arises when she finds he has two half caste children, but when she experiences the possibility of what his death would mean to her, she sees that his love is the only thing of importance.

There is a parallel love story of a young naval lieutenant whose carefully nurtured prejudices prevent his marriage to a Tonkinese girl he adores.

The story is related with the most direct simplicity, while the activities of the naval station afford a delightful variety of surrounding events.

Every song in the score has something to say that immediately advances the story or the characters' relationships, and the orchestra on its own often makes the most telling comment on silent stage action. There is a scene at the end of the first act between the two stars where the cuing of music to dialogue, singing and dance is sheer perfection.

If you agreed that Miss Martin was good in her last couple of local appearances, accept the fact that they were in the nature of practice for this. Here she is what everyone likes to think the typical American girl is, innately intelligent if short on academic curiosity, straight shooting, honestly emotional and generously good humored.

Not only does she sing ballads and rhythm numbers, and dance with deceptively untutored looking spontaneity, but she projects powerful emotions without substituting tricks for sincerity. Her first falling in love is a delicate submission to surprising emotions, and toward the end she can choke up your throat simply by saying, "Uh huh."

After Ezio Pinza's many magnificent portrayals at the Metropolitan, it is no great surprise that he should prove a past master at this sort of theater. Just to hear him sing the last phrase of "Some Enchanted Evening" is worth the admission, but beyond that he proves a realistic actor of simple intensity and the most agreeable relaxation.

The singer has never wanted for wide feminine admiration, and it is likely that there will be a whole new female public on his trail after this polished appealing performance.

There is an astonishingly authentic portrayal by Juanita Hall as the Tonkinese, Bloody Mary. In posture, aspect, manner and speech Miss Hall seems to belong utterly to this island world.

THE SUN
April 8, 1949

By Ward Morehouse

'South Pacific' Is Stunning

Some of the showmen of our frenzied metropolis who like the theater and are among those who do the most for it in New York and throughout America have put their talents together in creating a stunning new musical show - "South Pacific" a big and tumultuous affair, which began to play last evening at the Majestic.

"South Pacific" combines superb music and lyrics with first-rate book material, fine performances with skillful showmanship. It serves to bring fresh vitality to our soaring musical stage, and it finds Rodgers & Hammerstein functioning on the plane that they achieved in giving the theater such masterpieces as "Oklahoma" and "Carousel."

In considering the merits of this new "South Pacific," which was triumphant in its first performance, there are such vital factors as the scope and range of an unhindered Joshua Logan as the director; the frolicsome ways of an inspired Mary Martin as a wartime nurse; the heroic singing of a star from the Met, Ezio Pinza, and the capacity of Jo Mielziner for stage design and lighting. Put all of this with the contributions of Rodgers & Hammerstein and you have a show that is pretty wonderful.

Richard Rodgers has written some exhilarating song hits - "I'm in Love With a Wonderful Guy," "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair," "Some Enchanted Evening" and "Honey Bun." Hammerstein's lyrics were never sharper and his homey words for little Nellie Forbush's plainness go right along with his American-scene lyrics for "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning" and "The Surrey With the Fringe on the Top."

Ensign Nellie Forbush, Hammerstein lyrically insists, is as corny as Kansas in August, but Mary Martin, playing the role of the nurse from Little Rock, is completely captivating. She is festive and delightful in her lighthearted moments and is entirely believable in her serious ones. She gives the best performance of her career. Ezio Pinza, playing the Frenchman who has been an exile in the Far Pacific for many years, has enormous charm and facility; he asserts himself as a romantic actor, and he sings magnificently.

Rodgers & Hammerstein along with Joshua Logan and that canny showman, Leland Hayward, have assembled an excellent cast of co-players upon the stage of the Majestic. Myron McCormick, as Luther Billis, the conniver, the fixer, the finagler, the man of strategy, gives a grand performance, and he is tougher

than almost any Princetonian you ever saw. The choice of Martin Wolfson, short, compact and wiry, for the part of the fiery Naval Captain, is a bit of ideal casting. William Tabbert does some fine singing as an ardent and heroic lieutenant. Juanita Hall plays Bloody Mary, Tonkinese woman, with great gusto. Harvey Stephens is regulation all the way as a Commander. Don Fellows is brisk and amusing as in his characterization of a combat flyer, and Betta St. John is an appealing Tonkinese maiden.

"South Pacific," based upon portions of James Michener's "Tales of the South Pacific," is a musical play without ballet or chorus, the dancing is of an incidental sort, and it's a show in which the rowdyism and barbarism of the Marines and the Seabees blend well enough with the romantic story of little Nellie from Little Rock and her adoring French planter.

Great men of the theater, Rodgers, Hammerstein and Logan. "South Pacific" is a thrilling and exultant musical play. Let Broadway enjoy it for a couple of years.

NEW YORK POST
HOME NEWS
April 8, 1949

A Grand Musical Play
Called 'South Pacific'

By Richard Watts, Jr.

Few shows have been so handicapped by advance reports of their wonders as "South Pacific," which had its lavish opening at the Majestic Theatre last night. And few have lived up so handsomely to the out-of-town superlatives. For Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein 2nd and Joshua Logan have taken two stories and a number of characters from James A. Michener's memorable "Tales of the South Pacific" and weaved them into an utterly captivating work of theatrical art. I do not think it is first-night excess which causes me to hail it as one of the finest musical plays in the history of the American theatre.

It is not an easy thing to take a book dealing with the desolation of modern warfare, even when it takes place in the romantic isles of the Pacific, and turn it into a musical show without making it seem cheap and trivial. But the Messrs. Rodgers, Hammerstein and Logan have achieved the feat beautifully. "South Pacific" is not only delightful in its songs, humor and romantic narrative, but captures an enchanting mood of rueful, bittersweet sadness and even without forcing it, finds time for a sardonic glance at the tragedy of prejudice between people of different races.

Some Contributions

"South Pacific" is a work of great style and loveliness that is yet gay, vigorous and vital. It is both strangely touching and richly entertaining. All of its elements fit together with the rarest and most tasteful showmanship. Mr. Rodgers' music is haunting and beautiful, with half a dozen songs that are unforgettable. Mr. Hammerstein's lyrics are as distinguished as any he has ever written. The book mixes drama and comedy in highly skillful fashion. Joshua Logan's staging is imaginative, vigorous and never hackneyed. Jo Mielziner's sets achieve the perfect mood for the narrative. The acting is virtually inspirational.

For a long time everyone has known that Mary Martin was exceedingly expert and charming in the ways of musical comedy. But nothing I have ever seen her do had prepared me for the loveliness, humor, gift for joyous characterization and sheer lovableness of her portrayal of Nellie Forbush, the gay, high-spirited nurse from Little Rock, who is so shocked to find her early racial prejudices suddenly cropping up. Hers is a completely irresistible performance. As for Ezio Pinza, the eminent refugee from opera, he, of course, sings delightfully. But he is far more than a fine singer. As the planter De Becque, he emerges as an expert and charming actor, possessing rare romantic style.

Some Performers

As Luther Billis, the enterprising and irrepressible Seabee, Myron McCormick, who always gives a good performance, offers a comic characterization that is by far the best thing he has done in the theatre. I won't even try to describe the hilarity of an odd dance he does. Juanita Hall is splendid as the sharp-tongue Tonkinese called Bloody Mary, and Betta St. John is both lovely and moving as her tragic daughter. William Tabbert is just right as young Lieutenant Cable, who is frightened by his love for a native girl, and there is a gem of a characterization by Martin Wolfson as a testy Naval captain. Harvey Stephens does well what little he has to do as Lieut. Harbison.

As is already known, "South Pacific" is based chiefly on the two stories by Mr. Michener called "Our Heroine" and "Fo' Dolla'." The story of the Remittance Man, who operated behind the Japanese lines, has been allotted to De Becque and Lieut. Cable, and, while I missed the gallant Englishman, it is a wise change for the play's purposes. There are so many things to be said about "South Pacific" that I can here only note in passing that my favorite song is "Some Enchanted Evening," although I am very partial to "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Out of My Hair," "I'm in Love with a Wonderful Guy," "Younger Than Springtime" and "Happy Talk." Did I say that "South Pacific" is a joy?

DAILY MIRROR
April 8, 1949

'South Pacific' a Solid Hit,
With Great Cast, Score

By Robert Coleman

Those fabulous reports you've been hearing from the road about "South Pacific" were verified when the new Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein musical reached the Majestic last night. Almost completely different from "Oklahoma," it is another smash hit for the brilliant writer-manager team and their co-producers, Leland Hayward and Joshua Logan.

Programmed as a musical play, "South Pacific" is just that. It boasts no ballets and no hot hoofing. It has no chorus in the conventional sense. Every one in it plays a part. It is likely to establish a new trend in musicals.

Rodgers and Hammerstein have fashioned a score to rival the one they did for "Oklahoma." There isn't a bit of filler in it. Every number is so outstanding that it is difficult to decide which will be the most popular. However, we'll place bets on "Some Enchanted Evening," "There's Nothing Like a Dame," "Bali Ha'i," "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair," and "I'm in Love With a Wonderful Guy" to be heading the Hit Parade list.

Hammerstein, with an assist from Joshua Logan, penned the book after James A. Michener's Pulitzer Prize winning tome, "Tales of the South Pacific." It has to do with a romance between a pretty young Navy nurse and a gallant middle-aged French planter, who renders an invaluable service to our armed forces in beating the Japs. In Michener's original, the heroic Frenchman was killed, but Hammerstein and Logan bring him back from his dangerous mission for a happy ending. And that's okay by us.

The cast is terrific. Thumb the pages of your dictionary, pick out the brightest superlatives you can find and they'll fit the performances of Mary Martin as the nurse and Ezio Pinza as the French planter. They are truly magnificent.

There is a wonderfully hilarious contribution by Myron McCormick as an enterprising Seabee, with a flair for turning an easy buck and getting out of trouble. Juanita Hall is excellent as a native entrepreneur and William Tabbert merits a snappy salute as a serious and brave young Marine. Others due citations are Martin Wolfson, Harvey Stephens, Betta St. John, Henry Slate and Fred Sadoff.

"South Pacific" not only plows new technical paths, but is making history at the box-office as well. By the time you read this, there will be an advance sale of approximately a half

million dollars. Which proves that the public recognizes a good buy. A smart first-night audience rocked the Majestic rafters with robust applause for a truly great musical. They found, and we think you will find, "South Pacific" a beguiling, heart-warming, amusing and rewarding spot to spend an evening.

APPENDIX IV. CRITICS' REVIEWS OF "THE KING AND I"

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
March 30, 1951

They Do It Again

By Otis L. Guernsey Jr.

The adventure of Anna Leonowens at the court of Siam in the early 1860s has been given the Rodgers and Hammerstein treatment in the charming musical play, "The King and I." This new show has everything that one has a right to expect from these talented collaborators, including a libretto that stands on its own merits, music that transposes emotion into melody and a handsome production stylized according to a half-civilized, half-barbarous Eastern court. With Gertrude Lawrence as prim glamor opposed to the lilthe and bellowing authority of Yul Brynner as the king, there is fine contrast in the leading roles and a solid company around them. "The King and I" has not the masterpiece's brilliance, but it glows with its own softer lights of consistent entertainment.

* * *

This story of a governess's journey to a far and little land, this intrusion of British learning and decorum into a society only sleepily aware of Western ways and still troubled with savage nightmares has all of the curious electricity that made it a hit as a book and as a movie under the title "Anna and the King of Siam." The Messrs. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II have chosen Anna's desire for a house of her own, the incident of the errant slave girl Tuptim, and the visit of Queen Victoria's envoy as the material through which they can best express this strange conflict of personalities. There are many incidental battles of wits between the King and Anna throughout the show, over both big and little matters, and within these Brynner manages to create a striking royal personality in an excellent performance. His impulsive but inquisitive, domineering yet pathetic monarch is the most vital element in the show, which almost always lets down a little when he is not on stage.

* * *



Rodgers' music has only a few echoes of the land of the pointed headpiece; it is Broadway theater music, of a uniformly superior quality. Its most radiant number is a catchy air called "Getting to Know You," sung by Miss Lawrence surrounded by her chorus of brown, coroneted pupils. There is a flash of red in Tuptim's impassioned soliloquy "My Lord and Master"; of pink in the waltz "Hello, Young Lovers!" (delivered by Anna) as a sentimental reminiscence; and of humor in the King's "Puzzlement" as he expresses some musical doubts of his own infallibility. Miss Lawrence sings her songs smoothly and maintains a stately, hoop-skirted demeanor in a role that is simply not as colorful as that of the prancing monarch.

* * *

John van Druten has directed the characters into the angled movements and fluid obeisances of the East, and one of his arrangements is a feature of the show. It is the introduction of the king's children to their future teacher, by the king himself, a pantomime of ceremony which includes many fine character touches in the silent reactions between the kids and their courtly father; and which is accompanied by music rising to the crescendo of the crown prince's entrance and then falling to the final entrance of the littlest one of all. Jerome Robbins' ballet is another striking interlude, a comedy imagination of what "Uncle Tom's Cabin" would look like in the traditional form of Siamese dancing. With Yuriko dancing the leading role of Eliza, this ballet entitled "The Small House of Uncle Thomas" puts a hilarious reverse twist on adapting Eastern fancies to American forms.

* * *

Among the added attractions of "The King and I" are Doretta Morrow, in pleasing voice as Tuptim, the slave girl who does not love the King; John Juliano as the wise, fierce Kralahome; Dorothy Sarnoff as the number one Queen; Johnny Stewart as the proud, young crown prince, and a host of children who go through their paces without conspicuous effort. Jo Mielzner's palace settings and Irene Sharaff's costumes combine to give the impression of an exotic and peculiar society. "The King and I" is a good story told and decorated with all the Rodgers and Hammerstein technical competence and intuitive showmanship, and blessed with the presence of Gertrude Lawrence and Yul Brynner. Broadway can pull out that ermine-edged carpet for another welcome for its most reliable contemporary musical artists.

This and the following reviews of "The King and I" are contained in New York Theatre Critics' Reviews (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1951), XII, 304-307.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
March 30, 1951

Another Great Hit
For Dick and Oscar

By John McClain

The boys have done it again. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2d, creators of "Oklahoma!," "Carousel" and "South Pacific," last night presented their latest effort, "The King and I," at the St. James Theatre, and there is not the slightest doubt they have another big hit going for them.

Here they have Gertrude Lawrence returning to the musical comedy fold for the first time in a decade, and to celebrate the event they have given her the support of John van Druten's direction, settings by Jo Mielziner, incredible costumes by Irene Sharaff, dances by Jerome Robbins, and the solid assistance of Yul Brynner, as the King, and Dorothy Sarnoff and Doretta Morrow in the featured singing roles.

There also are a large number of apparently-Siamese children, each one cuter than the next. How can you miss?

Even the story, based upon Margaret Landon's novel, "Anna and the King of Siam" (which was later adapted into a notable movie) is both unconventional and exceptionally good box office.

You've got Miss Lawrence, playing the part of a prissy British school teacher, moving into the palace of the King of Siam to educate his 50-odd offspring.

With this premise it should require no crystal ball to predict that she will fall in love with the auburn sprouts and, through them, the dominant and truculent old man.

I guess the whole thing represents a gentle approach to the tragic inability of East getting together with West, although in this instance the principals must be credited with a near miss.

There has rarely been a better mounted show--the sets and costumes are superb--and there are these kids who begin creeping into your heart the minute you get to Siam, plus a ballet called "The Small House of Uncle Thomas," which is "Uncle Tom's Cabin" in Siamese and should rank with the great ones.



Miss Lawrence gave what I would regard as a thoroughly professional, though uninspired performance as Anna. It didn't quite seem that she was as carried away by the charm of the children and their prolific papa as she might have been.

On the other hand Mr. Brynner, the King, lent such strength and realism to his role that it became almost immediately acceptable that he should have a dozen wives, scores of children, and still appear attractive in the eyes of a conservative lady of Western extraction.

Dorothy Sarnoff was excellent as the King's principal wife and so was Doretta Morrow, a fugitive from "Where's Charley?" as the love interest in a sub-plot involving Larry Douglas, who sings well but has little else to do.

We now come to the matter of the music, and I feel obliged to say I think it is not a great score according to Richard Rodgers standards.

I realize it is a difficult chore to maintain a Siamese flavor throughout, keeping it popular the while, yet he was able to do a fine interpretive job with "South Pacific" and I had hoped for more here. I mean, there were no musical moments which made you almost jump out of the seat, knowing you were hearing a great hit for the first time, as there have been in most of his other successes.

Having thus put myself on the limb, I shall probably be dinned to death by selections from this show for the next six months.

And don't get me wrong--I love "Siam"!

THE NEW YORK TIMES
March 30, 1951

AT THE THEATRE

By Brooks Atkinson

Nearly two years having elapsed since they invaded the South Pacific, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2d have moved over to the Gulf of Siam. "The King and I," which opened at the St. James last evening, is their musical rendering of Margaret Landon's "Anna and the King of Siam." As a matter of record, it must be reported that "The King and I" is no match for "South Pacific," which is an inspired musical drama.

But there is plenty of room for memorable music-making in the more familiar categories. Strictly on its own terms, "The King and I" is an original and beautiful excursion into the rich splendors of the Far East, done with impeccable taste by two artists and brought to life with a warm, romantic score, idiomatic lyrics and some exquisite dancing.

* * *

As the English governess who comes out from England in the Eighteen-Sixties to teach the King's children, Gertrude Lawrence looks particularly ravishing in some gorgeous costumes and acts an imposing part with spirit and an edge of mischief. Yul Brynner plays the King with a kind of pierce austerity, drawn between pride of office and eagerness to learn about the truth of the modern world from a "scientific foreigner." Apart from the pleasures of the musical theatre, there is a theme in "The King and I," and, as usual, Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein have developed it with tenderness as well as relish, and with respect for the human beings involved.

Part of the delight of their fable derives from the wealth of beauty in the Siamese setting; and here Jo Mielziner, the Broadway magnifico, has drawn on the riches of the East; and Irene Sharaff has designed some of her most wonderful costumes. As a spectacle, "The King and I" is a distinguished work. In the direction, John van Druten has made something fine and touching in the elaborate scene that introduces the King's charming children to their English school marm. Jerome Robbins, serving as choreographer, has put together a stunning ballet that seasons the liquid formalism of Eastern dancing with some American humor. Yuriko, the ballerina, is superb as the Siamese notion of Eliza in "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

* * *

Mr. Rodgers is in one of his most affable moods. For Miss Lawrence he has written several pleasant and ingratiating numbers which she sings brightly--"Hello, Young Lovers!" "The Royal Bangkok Academy" and "Shall I Tell You What I Think of You?" Dorothy Sarnoff does something wonderful with "Something Wonderful," which is one of Mr. Rodgers' most exultant numbers. Probably the most glorious number is "I Have Dreamed," which Doretta Morrow and Larry Douglas sing as a fervent duet. Mr. Brynner is no great shakes as a singer, but he makes his way safely through a couple of meditative songs written with an agreeable suggestion of Eastern music.

Say a word of thanks to Russell Bennett for his colorful orchestrations that make a fresh use of individual instruments and that always sound not only interesting but

civilized. His orchestration should be especially appreciated in the long and enchanting scene that brings on the children one by one.

Don't expect another "South Pacific" nor an "Oklahoma!" This time Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein are not breaking any fresh trails. But they are accomplished artists of song and words in the theatre; and "The King and I" is a beautiful and lovable play.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
and
THE SUN
March 30, 1951

Long Reign on Broadway's
Likely for 'The King and I'

R. & H. Wed Drama-Music

By William Hawkins

In one way or another you always expect novelty from Rodgers and Hammerstein. In "The King and I," they have achieved it once more, in a balance between drama and music which is quite different from their earlier efforts.

The story here is by now familiar to nearly everybody. The novel "Anna and the King of Siam" was based on true sources and became a striking moving picture a few years ago.

In the 1860s, a British widow went to Siam where she was hired as tutor to the King's children. Though they fought bitterly for the years of her stay there, she and the ruler grew to respect each other deeply. Anna became a diplomatic adviser to the King, as well as a lasting social influence on his country. Before she left she was to see the new King trending toward the merciful reforms she had urged.

The music acts on the story, in much the same way that Technicolor does to a moving picture. It is not so much an addition as it is an illumination of the play.

You lose sight of the struggle which should be the constant thread of narrative. Visual beauty is breath-taking to the point of becoming more interesting than the governess' stubborn efforts. The subplots are carefully restrained to illustrate the main theme, but an enchanting ballet in the second act is all out of proportion in entertainment value and length.

Delightful Scenes

Once you accept the fact that this is a play with music rather than a musical, and adjust yourself to its remoteness, the high points of the story offer frequent enchantment.

The entrance of the royal children, and the schoolroom scene are utterly delightful. So, too, is the moment when Anna teaches the King to dance in Western style.

The ballet is offered as entertainment for visiting British who have called the King barbaric. He wants to show how progressive he has become under Anna's influence. The divertissement is a Siamese version of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." True enough it makes flavorsome comment on the slavery Anna hates. But every enchanting moment of it makes the principal characters recede farther into the background.

Exquisite Colors

"The King and I" is one of the loveliest things to watch I have ever seen. This is very largely due to the exquisite fabrics and soft colors used by Irene Sharaff in the costumes. Gertrude Lawrence wears several mammoth hoop skirts of lovely delicate shades, and the Siamese characters are costumed in endless variations of deeper, warmer colors.

Miss Lawrence, who has always been synonymous with glamour to me, disdains all her deft tricks and knowing enchantment, to play most simply as Anna. She is warm and human, and her natural humor keeps her from seeming to nag.

Many of the musical numbers take the form of asides or monologues in lyrical form. She has a lovely waltz, "Hello Young Lovers," and a cunning ditty called "Getting to Know You." Throughout the show she sings with more tonal stability than she has in several recent appearances.

Yul Brynner is splendidly positive as the King. He is naive, childishly ruthless and imperial all at once.

Doretta Morrow is tender and sweetly tuneful as the slave girl sent from Burma as a gift to the King. It is her effort to escape with her lover that brings the play to its climax, when the King would whip her but lets his spirit crack before Anna's courage.

Dorothy Sarnoff is remarkably in character in appearance and movement as the head wife of the King, and handles her brief vocal opportunities with ease and effect.

The play is unusual and tender and something rare to see. I can not help feeling that if it were to do complete justice to its startling narrative, the outcome would have approximated a popular form of grand opera. As it is, remaining palatable for its intended public, it is often lovely, occasionally languid and stays fragrantly on the surface.

NEW YORK POST
March 30, 1951

Another Triumph for the Masters

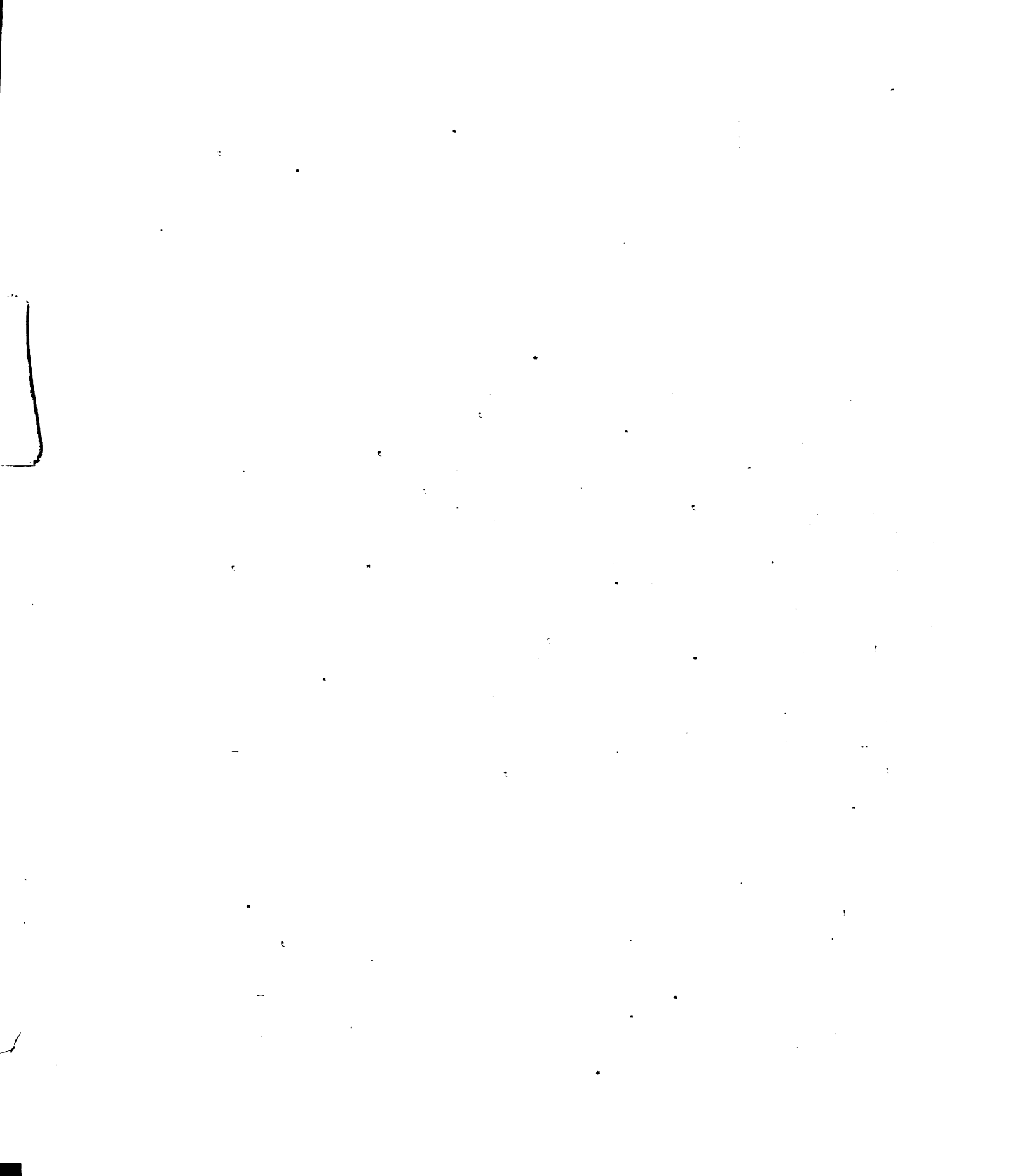
By Richard Watts Jr.

To get right down to it at once, "The King and I" is a beautiful and fascinating musical play, a splendid successor to the great "South Pacific." The eagerly anticipated new work by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2nd, which opened at the St. James Theater last night, has color, beauty, and a strange kind of sweetness, a good story, characteristically fine music and lyrics, a delightful ballet, some of the most charming children in the history of the stage, a remarkably believable performance in the first half of the title role by Yul Brynner, and the magic of Gertrude Lawrence. In a word, it is a show of rare quality.

Unfairly but inevitably, everyone will want to know if it is as good as "South Pacific," and I will confess that I don't suppose it is. But what is? "South Pacific" merely happens to be the finest of all American musical plays. The important thing is that "The King and I," which, as the world is well aware, is based on a famous book about a Victorian English lady serving as a tutor to the innumerable progeny of a half-barbaric Siamese King, is a lovely and exciting achievement, of unusual taste and imagination, and a great and resounding credit to its distinguished authors and the American theater.

Some Moments

There are, for example, some scenes and moments that are not only remarkably exciting but also remarkably touching. The King's introduction of his vast brood of children to the new tutor, for one instance, is a memorably lovely episode, and so is a delightful scene of a geography lesson, in which Anna has some difficulty in convincing her pupils that there is such a thing as snow. It is curious how moving such seemingly simple moments can be. Then there is a delightful ballet presenting a Siamese conception of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and nothing could be much more enchanting than a scene in which Anna teaches the King to dance.



It would be easy to go on giving individual examples of the splendid professional excellence of the production, but, more than anything else, it is the perfect taste, the wonderful atmospheric rightness, the high romantic style, and the elusive air of sweetness, already alluded to, that combine to make "The King and I" an almost continuous joy. The score, I am forced to say, didn't make the immediate impression on me that the songs in "South Pacific" did, but it is none-the-less distinguished and impressive, and it will take a long time for anyone to get tired of "I Whistle a Happy Tune" and "Shall We Dance?," to name two numbers.

The Performances

The Magic of Miss Lawrence is, of course, familiar to all playgoers, and she is a characteristic delight as the independent lady teacher. There is a fine portrayal of a tragic slave girl by the lovely Doretta Morrow, and the Oriental children, real or pretended, have the charm only Oriental children seem to possess. But there should be a special word for Mr. Brynner's notable characterization of the King, with his brilliantly persuasive combination of ruthlessness and goodness, of the longing to be a progressive and modern monarch at war with the instinctive leaning toward remaining a barbaric tyrant.

Never does Mr. Brynner fall into the facile way of being a dashing leading man putting on a superficial Oriental masquerade. To an amazing extent, he gets depth, honesty and complete credibility into an authentic characterization of a man whose awakening mind and emotion are at work. It is one of the year's fine acting jobs. The choreography of Jerome Robbins, the sets by Jo Mielziner, the costumes by Irene Sharaff and the staging by John van Druten have just the proper touch, and the combination of the idealized and the authentic in Far Eastern atmosphere is perfectly managed. Rodgers and Hammerstein have done it again.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
March 30, 1951

'The King and I' a Grand, Stunning
And Boldly Different Musical Play

By John Chapman

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2d are men of distinction in the musical theatre, so it can be no news that their most recent collaborative work, "The King and I," is a distinguished musical play. It is another fine example of their faith in themselves. They have cut away from the usual

music-show pattern once again and have achieved a very beautiful piece for the stage.

"The King and I" opened at the St. James Theatre last evening and as of this moment I have talked to nobody about it. But, just as sure as de Lawd of "Green Pastures" made little apples, the first time I do talk with somebody about it, somebody is going to ask, "Is it as good as 'South Pacific'? Or 'Oklahoma'? Or 'Carousel'?" And all I can answer is that there is no sense in asking for a comparison, for "The King and I" is something different.

It is beautifully set and sumptuously, stunningly, excitingly costumed. In it are some fine performances by Gertrude Lawrence, Yul Brynner, Doretta Morrow, Dorothy Sarnoff and many others. In it is an enchanting ballet created by Jerome Robbins. In it is some interesting music.

Story Comes First

But the most important part of this big, long show is the work of Mr. Hammerstein as the librettist and lyricist. He has taken Margaret Landon's book, "Anna and the King of Siam," and has quite magically transferred it to the stage. It is an intricate and expert piece of showmaking in which the story comes first -- and the fine sets, the glorious costumes, the splendid cast and the music are subordinate to this story.

In the tale the King of Siam is, of course, the King--back in the time of our country's Civil War. Anna is Anna Leonowens, an Englishwoman who has been imported to educate in Western culture the King's 67 children. Anna does this--and more; she manages to impart considerable education to the monarch himself, and he is a very tough, cocky and stubborn ruler.

Miss Lawrence is something dear and special as Anne, for she plays and sings with grace, intelligence and fine humor. Mr. Brynner is masterful as the King; his performance is one of extraordinary cunning and individuality. Miss Morrow, as a royal concubine who falls in love with a slave, is beautiful to see and to hear, and Larry Douglas sings well with her in a couple of rousing duets.

There are almost as many children in "The King and I" as there are at the fish fry in "Green Pastures," and they have some charming numbers. The two principal young men--Johnny Stewart as a Siamese prince and Sandy Kennedy as Anna's son--act and sing like the true troupers they are.

A Remarkable Ballet

There is a great deal of story in this musical, so very few of the songs are songs in the Broadway sense. In lyrics and music their main job is story-telling--but Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein do occasionally bust loose with "I Whistle a Happy Tune" or "We Kiss in a Shadow" or "Shall We Dance?"

The visual highlight--and entertainment highlight--is a ballet representing the Siamese notion of how "Uncle Tom's Cabin" should be presented on a stage. It is a remarkable piece of work in which the dancers Yuriko and Michiko are outstanding, and in which the costuming by Irene Sharaff is notable. As a matter of truth, the costuming is notable from first to last in the show.

Jo Mielziner's sets are another representation of this fine artist's work and John van Druten's staging of the musical is most admirable. "Anna and the King of Siam" is a boldly and handsomely, different kind of musical play.

NEW YORK DAILY MIRROR
March 30, 1951

'King and I' Has Heart,
Comedy, Top Lyrics

By Robert Coleman

"The King and I," which opened here at the St. James Theatre last evening, is another extraordinary musical by the amazing team of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein. It has heart, drama, comedy and eyefilling spectacle. The Rodgers score has been fashioned to follow the action of the book rather than to shine forth in individual segments.

The lyrics are among the best ever penned by Hammerstein. They have something more to say than "I love you," something more to do than rhyme June with moon. They, along with the libretto, based on Margaret Landon's best-seller, "Anna and the King of Siam," offer a philosophy that is decent and enlightened.

As those of you who read the Landon book may recall, "The King and I" has to do with a resourceful Englishwoman who, back in the 1860's, went to Siam to teach the royal children. She did much for that backward country, though she had to fight valiantly with a stubborn monarch to do it. And one of the most important of her achievements was the schooling of the Crown Prince, who was, on his accession to the throne, to stand for progress.

John van Druten has staged "The King and I" skilfully, Jerome Robbins has choreographed atmospheric dances. One in particular, the story of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" told in terms of Siamese symbolism, is a delightful show-stopper. The sets by Jo Mielziner and costumes by Irene Sharaff are magnificent.

Rodgers and Hammerstein, doubling as producers of their own work, were inspired when they signed Gertrude Lawrence to play the all-important role of Anna. She invests it with charm, sentiment and emotional impact. It is a superlative performance by a great artist.

Yul Brynner's King is a fitting match for Miss Lawrence's Anna. It would be outstanding in even a straight play, much less one with music. Dorothy Sarnoff and Doretta Morrow are excellent in other roles. Salutes also are due Johnny Stewart, Charles Francis, Sandy Kennedy, John Juliano, Larry Douglas, Robin Graven and Baayork Lee.

"The King and I" sets a new high standard for the musical stage. We see no reason to compare it with Rodgers and Hammerstein's fabulous "South Pacific." It has merits that are all its own. It is an event not to be missed.

"The King and I" looms as another R. & H. smash hit. Lines of expectant playgoers have been filing by the St. James box-office for several days. If you hope to see it soon, take our advice and purchase the first available tickets. They're going to be difficult to come by.

There is so much more we should like to tell you about the wonderful new arrival, but an onrushing deadline prevents at this time. It is a lengthy show, with a late final curtain for critics working on a split-second schedule.

APPENDIX V. CRITICS' REVIEWS OF "PIPE DREAM"

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

December 1, 1955

'Pipe Dream' Large, Handsome,
Tuneful, Well Sung, Cumbersome

By John Chapman

The new Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, "Pipe Dream," which opened last evening at the Shubert, combines some of the best and some of the least effective efforts of this famed team of collaborators. It has a couple of grand songs--"All at Once You Love Her" and "The Man I Used to Be"; it has two fine-voiced and attractive young lovers in Judy Tyler and William Johnson, and it has the dubious novelty of presenting the ex-Wagnerian soprano, Helen Traubel, in the role of the madam of an H-house.

It is a big show--big enough, it appeared last evening, to be unwieldy--and for a surprising amount of the time it is dull. Hammerstein and Rodgers are great gentlemen of the musical theatre and perhaps they are too gentlemanly to be dealing with John Steinbeck's sleazy and raffish denizens of Cannery Row, near Monterey, Calif.

A Friendly Home

As extracted from Steinbeck's novel, "Sweet Thursday," "Pipe Dream" concerns itself with Johnson, a marine scientist who is probing the secrets of life in fish tanks, and Miss Tyler, a girl tramp who is no bum. The girl manages to keep herself aloof even when she is taken into the town bordello by the friendly Miss Traubel, and finally makes herself thoroughly unassailable by setting up housekeeping in an abandoned steel boiler. This ultimate retreat finally inflames the emotions of the placid scientist to the point where he crawls in after her and offers his hand in wedlock.

The cast includes the entire community of Cannery Row and the settings range from between a biological laboratory, a flop-house, a pier restaurant and Mme. Traubel's establishment. I felt a little sorry for this lady when she had to

sing a paean of praise of her joint called "The Happiest House on the Block." Richard Wagner, of course, got her in a lot of dirty situations--but he wrote in German. Jo Mielziner's sets are pictorially effective and look deceptively simple, but it takes a long time to change them and as a result the various before-the-curtain "in one" scenes often are too long.

Judy Tyler a Find

The Rodgers score is always melodious, nicely varied and satisfyingly highlighted by some outstanding numbers. Robert Russell Bennett's orchestration, however, seems to take no chromatic risks and contents itself with the B. M. B.--the business man's bounce. Hammerstein's lyrics are uniformly admirable, but the story keeps getting in their way.

Miss Tyler, a very pretty girl with a remarkable mezzo voice, is a real find for the musical theatre, and Johnson certainly is the best baritone on Broadway . . . north of 40th St. Miss Traubel is, of course, a fine singer, but she is not the brassy type and will never run Ethel Merman out of business. There is an excellent party dance staged by Boris Rumanin, and Alvin Colt's costumes stick closer to Steinbeck than anything else in "Pipe Dream" does. Harold Clurman directed the production.

This and the following reviews of "Pipe Dream" are contained in New York Theatre Critics' Reviews (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1955), XVI, 198-201.

THE NEW YORK TIMES
December 1, 1955

Theatre: Rodgers and Hammerstein

'Pipe Dream' Is Based
on Steinbeck Novel

By Brooks Atkinson

Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein have written a pleasant, lazy romance, "Pipe Dream," which opened at the Sam S. Shubert last evening.

The story comes from John Steinbeck's "Sweet Thursday," a saga of sociable Vagrants in Cannery Row, where Mr. Steinbeck served time as a suburbanite years ago. Even with Jo Mielziner designing the scenery is not the sort of setting that produces the glamour of the traditional musical show. Nor are the waterfront indigent the sort of characters that Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein are most comfortable with. We mustn't expect "Carousel" every season.

On its own level as romantic entertainment, "Pipe Dream" is tender and entertaining. For Mr. Rodgers has written a beautiful score. And in Judy Tyler and William Johnson he has two young people who know how to sing it. Miss Tyler is a neat and winning young lady with an exciting voice, and Mr. Johnson is a first-rate baritone. All their songs together are delightful. But the song with which they conclude the first act, "All at Once You Love Her," is especially captivating. It is a typically Rodgers song of richness and feeling.

Among the paraphernalia of "Pipe Dream," and of "Sweet Thursday" before it, is a third-rate bordello--standard equipment in any yarn about uncomplicated people. In fiction and the stage it is a useful substitute for originality. Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein have improved the formula by casting Helen Traubel as the madame--with a heart of gold, naturally.

In the vernacular of the stage, this is known as "playing against it." Miss Traubel is an illustrious Wagnerian who can belt an aria clear across Times Square. Miss Traubel plays Madame Fauna with thorough good nature and she sings the small, folksy songs Mr. Rodgers has written for her without operative formality. But the joke of casting a musical heroine as the keeper of a squalid bordello is cute rather than hearty, and it explains why a sharp Bostonian correspondent has inquired of this department: "What's all the Traubel about?"

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It takes a huge cast to relate this fable of a penurious village on a California waterfront. As usual, the authors and their director, Harold Clurman, have cast the parts with good actors and arranged an agreeable performance. Mike Kellin and G. D. Wallace are the head men in the flop-house gang, able to sing satisfactorily and to hold their own in some tatterdemalion ballets. It is difficult to identify Madame Traubel's girls in the program, but they do look hospitable.



Love on Mr. Steinbeck's Cannery Row resembles love on the musical stage, where it is usually seen at its best advantage. In "Pipe Dream" Mr. Rodgers has written some enchanting music to keep love on a high romantic plane, and Mr. Hammerstein has written his usual effortless verses.

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In addition to "All at Once You Love Her" the score includes a touching song for Miss Tyler, entitled "Everybody's Got a Home but Me," a meditative song for Mr. Johnson entitled "The Man I Used to Be," a droll anthem for Miss Traubel and her household workers called "The Happiest House on the Block" and some jovial music for the entire population, called "A Lopsided Bus" and "Bum's Opera." As usual, Robert Russell Bennett has written colorful orchestrations in imaginative styles.

"Pipe Dream" represents Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein in a minor key. Being professional writers and men of taste, they have made it sweet, pleasant and enjoyable.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM

and

THE SUN

December 1, 1955

'Pipe Dream' Pleases Gently

By William Hawkins

"Pipe Dream" reveals the great team of Rodgers and Hammerstein off on a completely new tack.

The Shubert's new musical is based on some of John Steinbeck's Cannery Row characters, a gang living close to the ground on the Pacific Coast. The men inhabit a flop-house because it involves the least possible effort. The girls live in "The Happiest House on the Block," which is also one of the show's happiest songs.

Despite the stars and fine minor performances, the community itself is the center of interest in the show.

Doc is an oceanographic researcher, who is getting crochety from loneliness. Susie is a tough kid, on the bum all her life to escape rough breaks.

The neighborhood, under the leadership of Fauna, madame and ringleader, succeeds in getting the two young people together.

Leisurely . . . Gentle.

Remember that title, "Pipe Dream." Much of the show is leisurely. The songs are gentle. The action is casual except for a few outbursts. It is all about a lazy life that has cast a sure spell over certain people.

Helen Traubel never sings an opera-sized note. As the portly nemesis of the town, she lends a clear, sweet, languorous fireside tone to some lovely melodies like "Happiest House," "All at Once" and "Will You Marry Me?"

Bill Johnson has the air of being agreeably bewitched as the discontented scientist. His songs have a placid virility, as he muses over "The Man I Used To Be" or the lovely "All at Once."

Doll Face

Susie is played by Judy Tyler, a newcomer to Broadway with a doll face and the inner determination of a youthful policewoman.

The supporting roles are practically all splendid, with Mike Kellin rating particular praise for the dopey, lovable Hazel.

A certain homely swaying beauty of the music pervades the show. It is the sort of score you might hope Stephen Foster would write in the modern idiom.

When the story cuts loose it has an offbeat charm that is unforgettable. One's first view of the flophouse is a fabulous mock rumba, hilariously aped by the cheerful bums. And choreographer Boris Rumanin does another beautifully subtle number in the gentle memory of Doc himself when younger.

Triumph of Costuming

The big ball, in which the very dance hall is auctioned off, is a triumph of inventive costuming by Alvin Colt. It also offers a first-rate look at the cutest face on Broadway slithering and cavorting with a kelly green scarf about its neck.

The Mielziner sets are fine, most of them transparent outlines of buildings against the blue swirl of Pacific tide pools.

The whole tempo and attack of "Pipe Dream" are different. It is good-humored, never brashly comical. It is gentle, never maudlin. It is like swinging in a hammock that keeps going up, the way a hammock can only do in a good "Pipe Dream."

NEW YORK POST
December 1, 1955

Cannery Row's Musical Citizenry

By Richard Watts Jr.

The new Rodgers and Hammerstein musical play, "Pipe Dream," arrived at the Shubert last night, and that is automatically a theatrical event of high importance. If you will forgive a touch of economics, it is said to have reached town with an advance box-office sale that puts it into the millionaire category, which makes what the reviewers will have to say about it today a fairly academic matter. This may possibly be just as well, because "Pipe Dream," although it has some fine Richard Rodgers songs, hardly reveals the Masters at the peak of their distinguished form.

Based on John Steinbeck's novel, "Sweet Thursday," which deals with the concerns of the lovable but disreputable guys and dolls of Monterey County's Cannery Row, the narrative has the advantage of possessing some of the warmth and affection for amiable riffraff that Mr. Steinbeck can make so engaging. But it is strangely desultory in contemplating the wistful romance between Doc, the impoverished scientist, and Suzy, the virtuous waif, and it wanders along a little aimlessly while it is waiting for the songs and dances to make their enlivening appearance.

The Music

When the songs do come along, they are usually fresh, pleasant and happily tuneful ones. In such numbers as "All Kinds of People," "A Lopsided Bus," "The Man I Used to Be," "Sweet Thursday" and "How Long?," to name just a few of them, Mr. Rodgers demonstrates his notable touch in such matters, while Mr. Hammerstein's talent for getting a kind of gay colloquial poetry into his lyrics is almost always in evidence. It is at these times that "Pipe Dream" comes to properly entertaining life. But the authors have also brought us to expect a lot in their books.

Their libretto based on "Sweet Thursday" is filled with episodic matters that can be both humorous and touching when set down in the course of a Steinbeck novel. The girls



and their buxom madame at the Bear Flag Cafe and the proudly poor denizens of the Palace Flophouse with their schemes for helping along the faltering love affair of Doc and Suzy, should make for good, racy theatrical material, and frequently they do so. Unfortunately, there are too numerous occasions when they seem merely to take a long time to pass a given point.

The Pro Touch

What helps "Pipe Dream" greatly is that it has such a characteristically professional production. The dances, which aren't numerous, always fit into the text, and they never fail to be lively and imaginative. While it can hardly be said that things swing along dynamically, they are managed with enough skill to make them vivid and entirely believable in creating the atmosphere of Cannery Row. The new show is clearly the work of theater men who know their business. It merely appears oddly lacking in the sense of excitement that had been hoped for.

Of the performers, the one who comes out of the proceedings with the highest credit is young Judy Tyler, who plays Suzy. Miss Tyler has charm, sings attractively and has a nice sense of character. It is clear that she has a future. I had a feeling that Helen Traubel was less than comfortable in the role of the warm-hearted madame of the Bear Flag Cafe, but Bill Johnson as Doc and Mike Kellin, G. D. Wallace and John Call as eminent citizens of Cannery Row are of proper help. So are Jo Mielziner's sets. But I can't deny that "Pipe Dream" disappointed me.

NEW YORK DAILY MIRROR
December 1, 1955

Robert Coleman's THEATRE:

'Pipe Dream' Is Fine
Song and Dancer

. It's no dream of a musical but it'll do
until something better comes along.

Had anyone but Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein done "Pipe Dream," it would have been hailed as a pretty good musical. But we have come to expect so much from R&H that we feel let down when they give us less than their very best. And the new tenant of the Shubert Theatre is no masterpiece. It's just a pretty good musical.

Hammerstein based the book on "Sweet Thursday," novel by John Steinbeck. We haven't read the Steinbeck tome, but one who has says it doesn't boast much plot. Just a lot of interesting and more than slightly wacky characters along Cannery Row near Monterey. And that's about the way it comes across the footlights.

NATURALLY, there's a romance. What song-and dancer would be complete without one? It has to do with an ichthyologist, the good Samaritan of a raffish community, trying to find meaning in his life. This he finally does through a nice girl from a bad environment.

On this slight thread of a story, R&H have hung some vivid and hilarious episodes: in a scientist's shack, a broken-down flophouse and a tawdry bordelle. They have been set to a score that we are certain is better than it sounded Wednesday evening. Then it came over as a rather pedestrian sequence of songs.

But don't get the wrong idea--there are several Hit Parade champs in that score. We think you'll be hearing "Everybody's Got a Home But Me," "The Man I Used to Be," "All At Once You Love Her," "Will You Marry Me" and "Sweet Thursday" just about every time you turn on your radio or TV set, or drop a dime in the neighborhood juke box.

CASTING DIRECTOR John Fearnley has found just the right people to bring the Hammerstein-Steinbeck characters to life, and to do justice to the Hammerstein lyrics and Rodgers' music. There's Helen Traubel, for instance, as a salty, good-hearted mistress of a bevy of filles de joie.

Mme. Traubel, once one of the Met's greatest Wagnerian sopranos, has dropped her dignity for the nonce, to have a high old time of it along Skid Row. Instead of exhorting Valkyries over the mountains, she's managing the affairs of wayward girlies on a Western beach. With plenty of verve.

There's William Johnson, a handsome, full-voiced "Doc." He can act as well as sing. There's Judy Tyler, an exotic beaut with rich contralto pipes. And there's an array of striking types in other roles. They all deserve salutes, which an onrushing deadline prevents our bestowing individually.

JO MIELZIMER has done simple and atmospheric sets, while Alvin Colt has dressed the motley crew in fitting fashion. Harold Clurman has helped a so-so script with his detailed direction. And Robert Russell Bennett has come up with his usual first-rate orchestrations.

"Pipe Dream" is no dream of a musical, cut it will have to do until something better arrives on the Main Stem. After all, there's an advance in the Shubert till of a million and a quarter bucks, which spells click in any language. And that figure is no pipe dream.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
December 1, 1955

==THEATER==

'Pipe Dream'

By Walter F. Kerr==

In a forthright song called "The Man I Used to Be," the handsome, bearded hero of "Pipe Dream" tells us that he isn't having much fun any more because he's "got a mission now." I wonder if something strangely similar isn't beginning to happen to Rodgers and Hammerstein. All through the thoroughly possible new musical at the Shubert, the authors seem unable to keep their minds on cheerfulness. Philosophy keeps breaking in.

Right off the bat there's a sturdy, but fairly sober, number explaining that the lowest creatures of the sea--starfish, crabs, lobsters, the lot of them--are all vitally necessary to somebody. This is immediately followed by a further tribute to our turbulent hard-shelled friends in "The Tide Pool," pointing out that if you look close enough you can see the "stupid sons of fishes lousing up the sea."

Shortly thereafter the ragged denizens of The Palace Flop-house bestir themselves from their barrels and bunks to explain that they're all living their lives on a "Lopsided Bus." All they do, we are informed, is "rattle along and try to find our way," while "our hearts get lousy with hope." A little later, Helen Traubel helps push along the love story by convincing a wayward and frightened lass that, since she can walk by the sea and inhale the good, fresh air, she does have some sort of identity. ("If I am something that can do all this, why should I be ashamed to be me?"). And deep in the second act one of the zanier residents of Cannery Row is creasing his brow and--with almost no trace of comedy--meditating on the perils of "Thinkin'."

* * *

Every bit of this, it should be quickly said, is accomplished by light, deft, sometimes wonderfully melodic improvisation by Richard Rodgers. And sometimes the music is able to take such firm hold of the proceedings that genuine gayety rears its welcome head. As a trumpet blares out the giddy notes of a "Bums' Opera," a spindly no-good in red

suspenders, bandana, blue flannel shirt and obtrusive long winter underwear manages to set the stage writhing. When the heroine, out on her first 'legitimate' date, gets helpful hints in deportment from the orchestra, the old R & H sparkle is in evidence once more. The spectacle of Helen Traubel as a local madam sitting picturesquely among her girls and wishing everybody a Merry Christmas "from our house" is winning indeed.

But the frolicsome moments are rare; the story of how a bunch of the easygoing madmen of Monterey get together to help their scientific pal "Doc" get both a microscope and a wife is told at a sluggish pace, virtually unrelieved by dancing, and in a staid, straight-faced style that seems light-miles away from the raffish and roaring Steinbeck original. Nor is there sustained emotional interest to take up the slack: the boys tend to go their way, the girls theirs, and runners work between them to relay the plot. "Pipe Dream" moves in a curious hush.

There is no lack of professional polish. Jo Mielziner's skeletonized drawings for the Bear Flag Cafe and neighboring institutions are as airy and attractive as the curtain on which he has, in subdued tones, scrawled the junk heap that is Cannery Row. The Oscar Hammerstein lyrics are superbly efficient even when they are insisting that life is real, life is earnest.

Bill Johnson struts vigorously in his flopping boots and sings with effortless simplicity the already popular "All at Once You Love Her." Helen Traubel, possibly miscast as a hearty, rip-snorting mother to all men, is wonderfully game. If the red shoes, riotous earrings, and heavily fringed gowns fail to seem native to her, she still has a twinkle for a tune like "The Happiest House on the Block" and the right sort of heart for a weightier job called "Suzy is a Good Thing." Judy Tyler is pretty and spirited as a girl who may have to spend the night in an old boiler, and she makes a very nice thing out of "Everybody's Got a Home But Me."

The people are capable, the material keeps promising to turn into a party. But someone seems to have forgotten to bring along that gallon jug of good red wine.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
December 1, 1955

Fails to Meet R & H Norm
Score of New Musical Pleases
But Story Line Misses Mark

By John McClain

The personnel and the manner of life in John Steinbeck's Cannery Row, a segment of Monterey, Calif., has afforded me delight since the author first turned his talents toward these waggish indigents. Then, when it was announced that Rodgers and Hammerstein, no less, would fashion a musical from this material I guess I expected too much. For I do not believe that "Pipe Dream," which opened at the Shubert Theatre last night, is up to their high standard.

Perhaps the task was unattainable. Only at rare intervals did the sense of mockery come through; the characters were there, but their small loyalties and involvements became lost in a story which could never keep close enough to the central theme to be engrossing. Boy meets girl, sure, but who cares? There was never the slightest interest in why, or by what means they get together.

Story Leses

We are asked to become intrigued by a young scientist who collects undersea specimens and peddles them to colleges and museums, and his affection for a wandering girl who drifts into town and finds a haven with the local madam. There are the wonderful bums who live in the local flop house and pledge their allegiance to the Doc, and there is the madam, who is devoted to making this incipient romance flower. As reported in Steinbeck's "Sweet Thursday" it is an hilarious and moving tale; at the Shubert it is something less.

On the bright side of the ledger it must be recorded that this is a good R & H score; they have good numbers in "All Kinds of People," "Sweet Thursday" and "All At Once You Love Her." There is a rousing comedy interlude in the first act called "The Bums' Opera," which sets a key which one hopes will be followed but isn't. The big masquerade ball in the second act was, in my estimation, disappointing.

Lacked Power

Helen Traubel, as the madam, unveils her operatic pipes at frequent intervals, but it seemed to me she lacked power last night. Bill Johnson, in the role of the romantic aquarian, can deliver a song and swagger engagingly about the premises, but there was nothing in the script to make us root for him. Judy Tyler, the love interest, is an attractive young girl with a completely acceptable voice, period.

Jo Mielziner has produced a series of agreeable sets and Alvin Colt's costumes are soothing. But this is a far cry from the exalted talents of the team that produced "South Pacific." They must be human, after all.

APPENDIX VI. CRITICS' REVIEWS OF "ALLEGRO"

THE NEW YORK TIMES
October 11, 1947

THE PLAY

By Brooks Atkinson

Having carried song-writing to its logical conclusion, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II have gone one step further. They have composed a musical play without any of the conventions of form, "Allegro," which was sung at the Majestic last evening. For at least half its length it is a work of great beauty and purity, as if "Our Town" could be written, in music. To quote the program: "The story starts in 1905 on the day Joseph Taylor Jr. is born, and follows his life to his thirty-fifth year."

Looking at young Joe affectionately through the mists of sentiment Mr. Hammerstein and Mr. Rodgers have created something of magnificence in these early years of American life. The story has style and character; the music enriches it; the staging has the eloquent simplicity of genuine art. Until the disaster of 1929 overtakes it, "Allegro" has the lyric rapture of a musical masterpiece.

* * *

Even after 1929 it is a musical play of superior quality. For Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein are able composers in any vein, and they have some notable numbers for the modern portion of their play. "Money Isn't Everything" is skilful satire of materialism; "Yatata, Yatata, Yatata" is a savage cartoon of cocktail parties, and "The Gentleman Is a Dope" is topdrawer blues music, particularly as Lisa Kirk sings it.

If the first half of "Allegro" were not so overwhelming, the commonplaceness of the second act would be hardly worth noting. Perhaps it is only commonplace by comparison.

For the long first half is the comedy of growing up in America, told with tenderness and compassion. Although Joe



is an average lad, the authors respect him and guide him through his boyhood, college and his marriage with idyllic paternalism.

Abandoning the routine of musical comedy choruses, "Allegro" returns the chorus to its original function as comment and interpretation. All the elements of theatre are so perfectly blended that the music and the ballet are interwoven into one singing pattern of narrative; and here "Allegro" is torn out of the folk life of America.

* * *

Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein have had appreciative assistance. In honor of an epochal attempt, Jo Mielziner has created simple and spacious decor with shadowy overtones of narrative. Lucinda Ballard's costumes are beautiful. Agnes de Mille has given the play fresh direction with a number of original and clarifying ideas that leave the stage wide open for dancing. Although she has composed a number of beguiling ballets, it is difficult to recall them as music-hall numbers, for they open spontaneously out of the narrative. Kathryn Lee dances the most memorable one.

Part of the enchantment of "Allegro" springs from the good taste of the casting. The acting and singing escape the clichés of the musical stage. As Joseph Taylor Jr. the youthful hero of this odyssey, John Battles' candor and innocence are admirable and effecting. His parents are played with the same modest honesty by Annamary Dickey and William Ching.

John Conte plays a roommate and companion with friendly loyalty. Particularly in the first half of the evening, Roberta Jonay is coquettishly lovely without striking a common note; and the long cast includes a number of agreeable performers who have caught the spirit of an extraordinary enterprise.

For "Allegro" has made history on Broadway. Before the mood breaks after the first act it is full of a kind of unexploited glory. If this review sounds ungratefully reluctant it is because Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein have just missed the final splendor of a perfect work of art.

This and the following reviews of "Allegro" are contained in New York Theatre Critics' Reviews (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1947), VIII, 300-304.

THE SUN
October 11, 1947

**'Allegro' Is a Distinguished Musical Play,
Excitingly Produced at Majestic.**

By Ward Morehouse

"Allegro is a distinguished and tumultuous musical play. The new Rodgers & Hammerstein product, brought into the Majestic last night by the Theater Guild, is excitingly unconventional in form and it takes its place alongside of "Oklahoma!" and "Carousel" as a theatrical piece of taste, imagination and showmanship.

This new "Allegro" is produced with stark simplicity. There is no scenery in the accepted sense. Permanent platforms are used and Joe Mielziner's magical scene changes and effects are done with treadmills, curtains, colored slides, a few props and odds and ends of furniture.

"Allegro" has both solemnity and humor. Richard Rodgers has contributed some hypnotic music, the lyrics of Oscar Hammerstein 2d are pungent, and his story, if somewhat trite, is at least compact. The Hammerstein libretto is projected with the use of Agnes de Mille's enchanting ballet effects, and with the production's chorus serving in the role of a Greek chorus. Some of the sharpest dialogue is supplied in the form of comment from the chorus.

The Hammerstein book, which lets you down somewhat in the play's second act when it gets somewhat deeply into the city versus the country theme--something of the same note struck by Clyde Fitch in "The City" as far back as 1909--presents thirty-five years in the life of Joe Taylor Jr., son of a small-town doctor. Joe is followed from his birth through college, into marriage, and into the city, where he takes up a lucrative practice as a doctor for the rich. He is betrayed by his wife, and finally renounces it all to go back to the little town for a more useful life among people he knows and understands.

It is a simple story, but it becomes frequently touching and occasionally exalted as the chanting of the chorus and the music of Rodgers--sometimes humorous, sometimes gay, sometimes disturbingly somber--are carried along with it. There was a brief and delightful interlude in the first half when Rodgers turned back to a melody of his early years, "In a Mountain Greenery." His new songs that are outstanding are "One Foot, Other Foot," "What a Lovely Day for a Wedding," "A Darn Nice Campus," "A Fellow Needs a Girl" and "Yatata, Yatata, Yata," a devastating satire on the antics of the big-city cocktail set.

Rodgers and Hammerstein have done this new piece as they wanted to do it, with a cast consisting largely of new people--or nearly new. John Battles is an affecting Joe Taylor--forthright, bewildered and believable. Roberta Jonay is excellent as the small-town girl who marries her Joe and turns out to be a hussy once she is caught up in the whirl of the metropolis. Annamary Dickey and William Ching play Joe's parents tenderly. John Conte is enormously likable as Joe's cynical friend. Lisa Kirk is excellent as the nurse who sees Joe as the man he really could be. Gloria Wills turns in one of the evening's most amusing scenes. Kathryn Lee dances entrancingly and Lucinda Ballard's costumes are in fine taste, as they always are.

"Allegro" is a musical play of beauty and dignity, produced with perception and imagination. Our theatrical season is getting to be pretty wonderful.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
October 11, 1947

== By Howard Barnes ==

A Memorable Musical

A MUSICAL play of rare distinction has made its advent at the Majestic. "Allegro" is no ordinary song and dance production. Conceived by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, II in the happiest of collaborations, and staged to split-second perfection by Agnes de Mille, this is a show to be remembered with "Show Boat," "Oklahoma," or whatever other blend of melody, drama and ballet which might contend for top honors in its field. The Theater Guild has launched its thirtieth season magnificently. Although there are no well known stars in the cast and musical comedy conventions are rather rudely violated, the offering is a consummate theatrical achievement and an electrifying entertainment.

* * *

Rodgers may not have written his most haunting score for this fable of a small town doctor's son, taking the curious buffets of fate from his birth in 1905 to a crucial decision thirty-five years later. Much of the music is subordinated to a plot of depth and emotional power. The title number serves to accompany a superb bit of de Mille choreography, in which the frenetic aspects of modern living are underlined in no uncertain manner. At the same time, the gifted composer has written such eloquent tunes as "A Fellow Needs a Girl," "You Are Never Away" or "So Far," which will distinguish juke boxes across the land.

* * *

Hammerstein, on his part, has written a cohesive librette and pertinent lyrics to make a true "musical play." With the strictest of chronology, he has traced the career of Joseph Taylor jr. with unerring touches, employing a sort of Greek chorus to commentate on events in the biography, capturing the full spirit of the '20s, when the hero went to college, fell in love and got trapped by an ambitious sweetheart and falling back on straight pantomime for the most moving chapter in the work. He has had superlative aid from Miss De Mille, who emerges as a great director in addition to a celebrated dance arranger in "Allegro." In addition Jo Mielziner has devised a fluent and simple decor and Lucinda Ballard has designed perfect costumes.

It may seem remiss to have neglected the performing for so long in a review, but the fact remains that it is so beautifully integrated in a boldly exciting and original show that it can attend applause. Annamary Dickey is splendid as Joe's mother, who bequeathes him an abiding dignity and integrity. John Battles is perfect as the hero and Roberta Jonay succeeds in being both romantically attractive and venomous as the prideful sweetheart and wife. William Ching gives a fine account of himself as the elder Taylor and Muriel O'Malley has a resplendent moment or two as grandma. Meanwhile Gloria Wills does a superlative bit as a campus tramp and John Conte steadies every scene in which he appears as Joe's best friend. "Allegro" has bitter overtones, as it celebrates a rather frenzied era, but it is a memorable musical comedy.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
October 11, 1947

'Allegro' an Elaborate Sermon
By Two Very Serious Showmen

By John Chapman

In "Allegro" Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2d have gone philosophical; sententious, even. The title of their musical play, which the Theatre Guild presented last evening at the Majestic Theatre, refers to the tempo of life they are philosophizing about, and not, I fearfully believe, to the show itself. They have set "Allegro" to an andante beat.

This famous pair, who have made people glad to be alive with "Oklahoma" and have exquisitely wrung their hearts with "Carousel," are artists. Therefore much of what they

have done in "Allegro" is notable for its imagination and sensitivity.

Their songs seem rigidly stylized, to fit mood and story; and, although many of them are lovely, not many bust loose and make a bid for immediate popular acceptance.

Their story veers sharply away from the common practice of the musical stage both in the way it is presented--which reminds me some of "Our Town"--and in its content. The boy-girl romance here leads to discontent and infidelity; the girl is shallow and selfish, and the boy when he is mature, must find another love.

Rodgers and Hammerstein have not altogether forgotten that they are entertainers--among the best entertainers we have--and moments of gaiety may be found in "Allegro." But in the show itself they seem to disapprove of levity, and in the plot they defend their attitude against such profoundly regretful opinions as this one.

Go Back to the Country.

In the song number from which they get their title they argue that the allegro pace of a big city, with its hollow frauds and cheap pleasures, is the wrong tempo. A better rhythm for life would be the more placid one of smaller places.

It seems odd to be writing a sobersided piece like this about a show with some grand dances, pretty girls and good jokes--but that's the mood I'm in. And I guess it's the mood Rodgers and Hammerstein intend me to be in.

"Allegro" is the biography of Joseph Taylor Jr., son of a smalltown doctor, from the day he is born to the day, 35 years later, that he renounces big-city medical practice, striped pants, cocktail parties, society screwballs and even his wife and goes back to where he came from with a loyal nurse who has faith in his simple nature.

Fine Choral Work.

An excellent mixed chorus tells of Joe's birth and early years, and the event of Baby's first step is rousingly recounted in a number titled "One Foot, Other Foot." Not until Joe gets to college do things liven up, though. At college is a delightfully amusing Freshman Dance number, with the youngsters wearing the horrible clothes and committing the horrible contortions of years ago, to the tune of Rodgers' gay old "Mountain Greenery."

People die in the story--Joe's grandmother and mother--but their ghosts come back and try, fruitlessly, to steer him straight. He marries the wrong girl and gives in to her when



she wants the dazzle and wealth of a big city. The one scene which really touched me emotionally is the one where Joe, now an upcoming doctor, says goodbye to his small-town father.

Agnes de Mille has staged the dances and the book as well--creditably on both counts, although in her dance numbers I think she evidences some psychosis about having boys pick girls up and carry them around like-babies instead of babes.

Simple Setting.

The mise-en-scene, by Jo Mielziner, is not elaborate--a few skeletonized props which slide on and off, as in "Dream Girl," and a lantern-slide screen for a backdrop on which a few decorations are rather ineffectually projected.

The company is huge, and first class. Annamary Dickey sings charmingly as the mother, and so does Muriel O'Malley as the grandmother, Roberta Jonay, from Hollywood, plays the wrong girl and gets one break when she partakes in an amusing quintet, "Money Isn't Everything." The best of the sole dances is performed by Kathryn Lee for this same number.

As Joe, John Battles is admirable, particularly in the days when he is an awkward freshman making his first pass at a town girl. John Conte also is very good as his pleasure-loving roommate. Russell Bennett's orchestration of the Rodgers score is top-flight.

But I still feel pretty solemn about it all.

NEW YORK DAILY MIRROR
October 11, 1947

'Allegro Is Perfect
And Great

By Robert Coleman

Perfection is a thrilling thing, be it a Sid Luckman forward pass, a Ken Strong place kick, a Joe DiMaggio catch of an outfield drive, a Cushing brain operation, a Rembrandt painting, a Whistler etching, a Markova-Dolin "Giselle" or "Allegro" the great new musical by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, which the Theatre Guild brought to the Majestic Theatre last evening.

Perfection and great are not words to be lightly used. They have become commonplace through misuse. But "Allegro" is perfection, great. It is a stunning blending of beauty, integrity, intelligence, imagination, taste and skill. It races the pulses and puts lumps in the throat. But for its

utmost enjoyment, the patron out front must respond with mind and heart.

"Allegro" is a sort of "Our Town" set to music. And there are overtones of "Man and Superman" and "A Man to Remember." It is the story of a boy born to be a doctor. An honest and capable boy. Grown to manhood and educated to serve his fellow man, he marries the wrong girl. An ambitious, determined, treacherous hussy, who forces him to give up a practice in his hometown to become associated with a go-getter in a big city.

His grasp of medicine is threatened by ministering to rich neurotics. His happiness is destroyed by his wife's mania for money and social position. He finally is brought to his senses by a cynical college mate, a decent young nurse and a marital scandal. So back home he goes to serve people who need him.

Agnes de Mille, heretofore famed as a choreographer, has directed the production as well as the dances for "Allegro." Henceforth she will be famed as director and choreographer. Her choreography is magnificent, by all odds the finest work of her career. And her staging of the book is superb.

The list of principals--of singers, dancers and actors--is long, but every name on it merits a grateful salute. Particularly Annamary Dickey, William Ching, Muriel O'Malley, Roberta Jonay, Joan Conte, John Battles, Wilson Smith, Paul Parks, Lawrence Fletcher, Lisa Kirk and Kathryn Lee.

"Allegro" should be embraced affectionately by discriminating playgoers. It lends new stature to the American musical stage.

NEW YORK POST
October 11, 1947

Hammerstein-Rodgers' 'Allegro'
Third Hit of Unusual Week

By Richard Watts Jr.

The season's sensational succession of hits continued at the Majestic Theatre last night, making it three for the week and five for the fortnight. The occasion, of course, was the arrival of the much heralded "Allegro," latest work of the triumphant Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, and the most strenuously anticipated musical show of the post-war era. Indeed, "Allegro" has been the cause of so much speculation and prediction, with everything about it discussed, from the expensiveness of its production to the ambitiousness of its intentions, that the skeptical doubted if it could live up to it all.

Now that it has opened with fanfare and flourishes, it can be reported that it has overcome the handicap of its premature fame and is revealed as a distinguished musical play, beautiful, imaginative, original and honestly moving. I have certain reservations about it which will be discussed later, but there is no disputing the fact that it is a notable achievement in its field and another landmark in pushing back the frontier of the American music drama.

Simplicity

I think the most impressive thing about it is that, despite its size, costliness and lavish use of the stage's resources from treadmills and lantern slides to ballets and musical Greek choruses, "Allegro" retains a kind of pure simplicity in its story telling. It is merely the biography, from the cradle to the break-up of his marriage, of a boy who wanted to be a small-town doctor, was sidetracked by the ambitions of his wife to make him a success in the city, but, in the end, rebelled, went off with the nurse who loved him, and settled down as the modest general practitioner his father had been.

There is no more to it than that, and it sticks to what it has to say with straightforwardness and integrity. There is no attempt to whip up the plot or to go in for side issues, and even the element of comedy is confined to that which fits naturally into the young man's life or satirizes the problems besetting him. The result is an emotional honesty that brightens the music, the lyrics and the dancing as they go about the business of carrying on the story to its logical conclusion. Although Mr. Rodgers' music, Mr. Hammerstein's lyrics and Miss de Mille's ballets are splendid, they are always more concerned with keeping to the mood of the narrative than with being flashy or sensational on their own account.

I have already reported reservations. The first act, for one thing, is considerably more effective than the second, because the boy's adventures in childhood, college and courtship are more interesting than his disillusionment with life in the big city. In addition, I confess I am always made uncomfortable by scenes in which metropolitan authors pretend that they find all the virtues in small towns and only vice and decadence in cities. I have never believed this myself and I doubt if they do. It strikes me, too, that Mr. Rodgers, in the interest of the purity of his music, has been a little afraid of getting a really tuneful song into his skillful score, falling back on his wonderful "Mountain Greenery" from "The Garrick Gaieties" in the one scene in which such a song is needed.

These, however, are minor reservations in the face of the work's virtues. Among these is a well-chosen cast that manages story, singing and dancing properly. John Battles as the young doctor, Roberta Jonay as the wife who turns villainess in the second act, John Conte as the gay but loyal friend, Annamary Dickey and William Ching as the parents, and Lisa Kirk as the faithful nurse are just right for their roles, while Kathryn Lee's humorous ballet work and Gloria Wills' amusing bit as an amorous girl who is sadly disappointed by the shy hero help out greatly. As usual, Jo Mielziner's sets are ingenious and in the proper mood and Lucinda Ballard's costumes are colorful and gay.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
October 11, 1947

'Allegro' Hasn't Tempo of Title

By William Hawkins

The highly touted musical "Allegro" is a vast disappointment. The early conception of the work has a worthy beauty, but its realization crosses the stage like an impoverished sophomore class production.

It lacks consistency of mood, visual excitement and theatrical stimulation.

"Allegro" sets out to tell of a simple man's success, first worldly, then inwardly contented. It sings about the pull of phony riches against honest satisfaction.

Ballet, choir and ghostly voices clarify the forces that make a young doctor desert a lucrative practice for the integrity of service in his calling.

The progress of the show sees the original conception blotted out by unimaginative tricks. In the end it seems like the creation of a pretentious passe costumer who has nothing but cambric to work with.

No Standout Performer.

At the start a boy is born. Here the stereopticon images and the chorus voicing the parents' dreams and emotions are deeply moving. When he later marries, there is again a clarity about this comment. In between, and after the wedding, the story and its presentation are entirely lacking in exhilaration.

The Dr. Kildare narrative is painfully obvious. The mood of mixed imagination and reality is muddled, and there is never any visual substitution for the early twilight drabness.

Dancing Assemble Lively.

This treatment of ordinary people should be more interesting. Here the producers seem to have leaned over backward to avoid casting anyone of distinction in the musical.

Except in rare cases, the cast of "Allegro" is simply colorless.

Except for Annamary Dickey and Muriel O'Malley, the musicianship, audibility and enunciation of the principals is amateurish by comparison to the talents of the chorus.

Of the entire cast no one reveals such authority and clean performing as Kathryn Lee, dancing with fire and imagination. The dancing ensemble is lively, but Agnes de Mille's choreography has no very interesting departures from what she has done in the past.

William Ching is a pleasing father of the ambitious young doctor, and Gloria Wills sings her one number effectively, if entirely out of the character she has just previously been at some pains to create.

Some Good Melodies.

Several numbers from the score have already proven themselves to the popular taste. "So Far," "The Gentleman Is a Dope" and "Come Home" will undoubtedly be heard frequently, and there are a couple of other melodies which could easily equal their success.

The conception of the title number as sung and danced is indicative of the show's vagaries. It depicts the sort of frantic social life that was illustrated more effectively some years ago to Noel Coward's "Dance, Little Lady." These days it strikes a note of wastrel decadence that not many of us are privileged to encounter.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
October 11, 1947

Musical Play
Belies Its Title

By Robert Garland

To the Messrs. Funk and Wagnalls, publishers of "The Standard Dictionary," "allegro" means "brisk," "lively" and even downright "gay." But to the Messrs. Rodgers and Hammerstein, collaborators on The Theatre Guild's first production of the season, the word means nothing of the kind.

They, brighter than your reporter, seem to have confused "allegro" with, say, "lento," which means "slow," "unhurried" and even downright "serious." For the co-authors of "Oklahoma," still in New York, and "Carousel," now on the road, have turned out a serious "play with music."

Last night, their "Allegro" went its slow, unhurried way, telling, with the aid of moving platforms, traveling curtains, lantern slides, Greek choruses, loud speakers, a huge company of actors, singers and dancers, and a symphony sized orchestra, a simple run-of-the-U.S.A. biography.

It's as if the story of Dr. Foster, who went to Gloucester, were blown up out of Mother Goose and into the Metropolitan Opera House.

* * *

In Modern Clothes

Come to think of it, the young Dr. Taylor of "Allegro" really is our friend Dr. Foster of "Mother Goose" in 20th Century dress. Only young Dr. Taylor goes to Chicago. There, however, he does fall in a puddle up to his middle, and, like his predecessor, never goes there again.

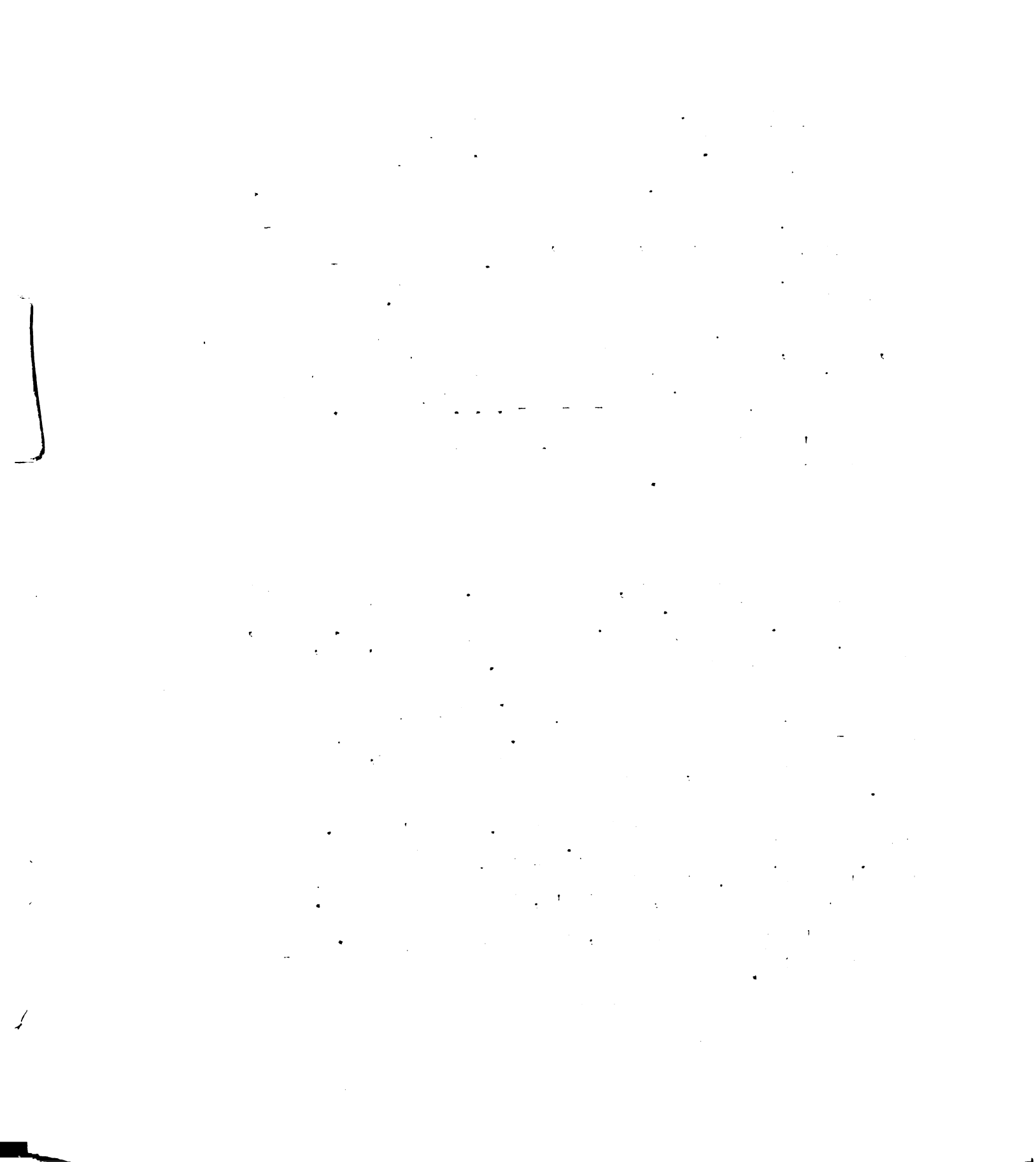
In "Allegro" you meet young Dr. Taylor at the moment of his birth, with a Greek chorus, a loudspeaker and some lantern-slides filling in the details. After college, he moves on to the American counterpart of Gloucester, where he meets with his mishap, returning afterward to his own home town.

There are two loves in young Dr. Taylor's life. The first leads him on to Gloucester. The second leads him home again. There, at the age of thirty-five, he follows his father's footsteps, with his mother and his grandmother, who are dead, and his father, who isn't, looking proudly on.

It's as simple as that, the story of "Allegro." At the Majestic, it suffers from over elaboration in its many-faceted telling.

Tunes Are Lifting

What I mean is that too little has been spared to



make "Allegro" a production milestone in the American showshop. The could-be heartening narrative of a small town medico who goes to the big town and sees the error of his ways is all but lost in the contrivance of its projection.

It's an exciting enough projection. But, as a play with music, it's at its winning best when the machinery has slowed down and the shrewdly selected cast is singing Richard Rodgers' more musical-comedy minded tunes, "A Fellow Needs A Girl," "So Far" and the lilting one whose name I don't remember.

Or when Agnes de Mille's lusty dancers fill every level of the Majestic's stage with their youth, skill and true de-Milleian dexterity. Then to the accompaniment of Salvatore Dell'Isola's excellent orchestra, "Allegro" is actually "allegro," instead of "lento"...

Don't get me wrong. "Allegro" is bigger than anything the Messrs. Rodgers and Hammerstein have written. But I do wish it had more consistently lived up to its title.

APPENDIX VII. CRITICS' REVIEWS OF "ME AND JULIET"

THE NEW YORK TIMES
May 29, 1953

'Me and Juliet' Is a Valentine
to the Theatre by Rodgers
and Hammerstein

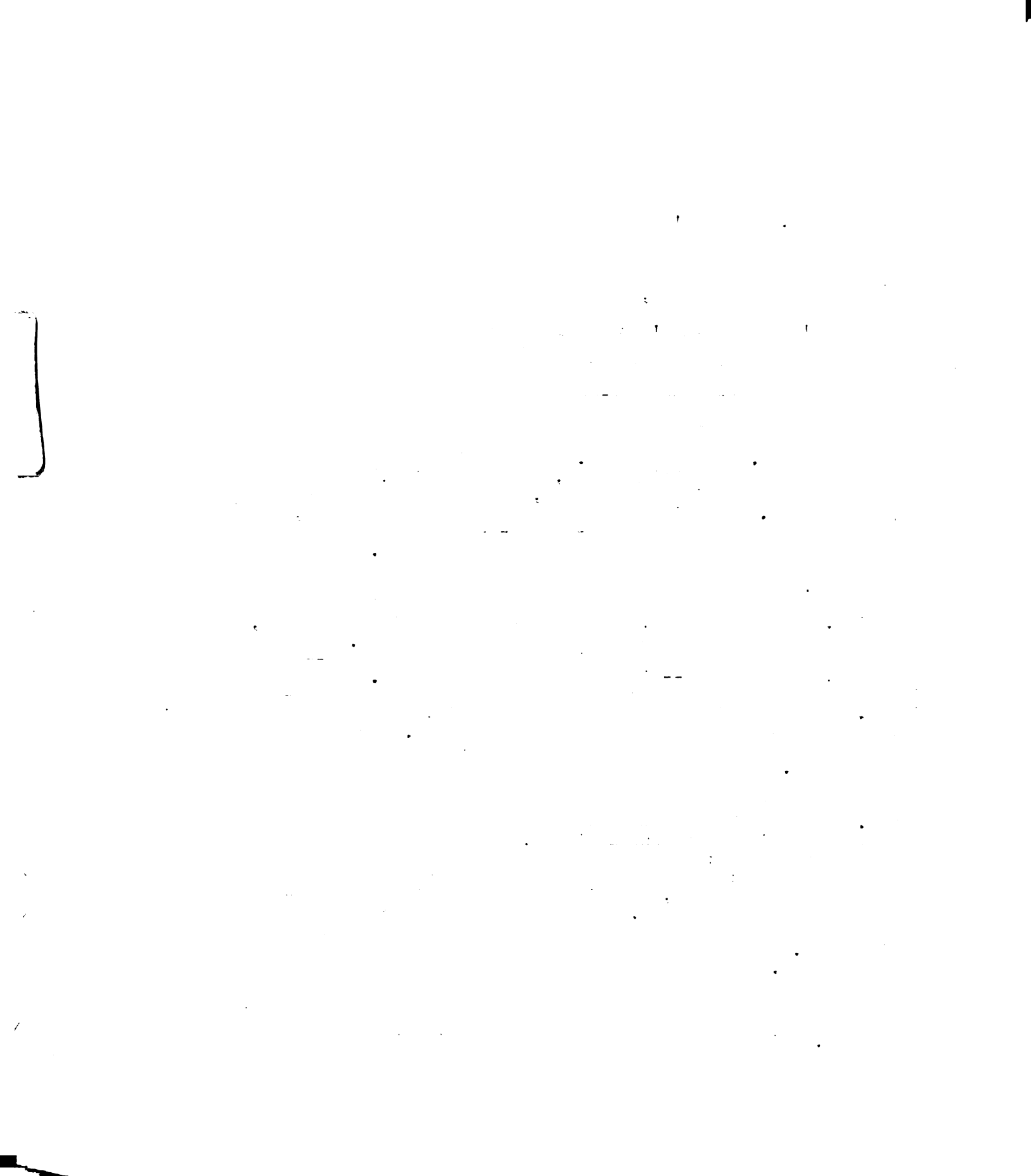
By Brooks Atkinson

When Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Hammerstein make up their minds what they are writing about, "Me and Juliet," which opened at the Majestic last evening, may turn out to be an enjoyable show. This is their Valentine to show business, expressed in the form of a show-within-a-show; and it has just about everything except an intelligible story.

Mr. Rodgers has written one of his most melodious scores in the endless variety of form that makes him a musician. "No Other Love," the theme-song of this production, has the warmth and richness of his most popular work. But his ode to the mysterious indomitability of an audience-- "The Big, Black Giant"-- is his most original song. Doubtless it expresses his own respect for the real king of show business. The score includes other good numbers, all of which have been vigorously orchestrated by Don Walker. Presumably he is also the man who has made the ballet-music so trenchant and exciting.

You can count a good many other blessings on the stage. It would be hard to collect a more attractive cast than one that includes Isabel Bigley, a belle that is still ringing beautifully; Joan McCracken at the top of her form as a comic dancer; Bill Hayes as a disarming assistant stage manager and Ray Walston, who gives another incisive performance with comic overtones. You can keep right on naming other delightful actors in a cast that George Abbott has set on its toes. "Me and Juliet" is populated with nothing but thoroughbreds.

Score several decisive victories also for Robert Alton, who has done the ballets in the flashy style prescribed by the story. Since you already know what Jo Mielziner can do



when he settles down to his drawing-board, you need not be told that his travelogue through backstage, the theatre alley, manager's office and smoking room shines with special magic. And Irene Sharaff has designed carnival costumes extravagantly. "Me and Juliet" looks better than a million dollars; it is gayer and more entrancing.

Sooner or later, however, we have to face the fact that the form of Mr. Hammerstein's backstage legend is cumbersome. None of the fine items in a gifted show can quite break through the elaborate heaviness of the story. "Me and Juliet" is intended to chronicle the backstage life of a successful musical show that has already settled down to a run. It involves romance as well as professional temperament; and it is obviously written by a man in love with his profession and full of sentiment about the people of the stage.

Even in the happiest of circumstances the play-within-a-play poses a difficult problem in craftsmanship. Mr. Hammerstein has complicated it by shifting back and forth repeatedly and separating the material into very small pieces. Although the content of the story is romantic and attractive, the form is unwieldy and verbose.

All the captivating things everyone loves in a Rodgers and Hammerstein show struggle in "Me and Juliet" with a book that has no velocity. To tell the truth, "Me and Juliet" looks a little like a rehearsal--beautiful, talented, full of good things but still disorganized. As the tired sages of show business invariably remark as though one phrase could solve everything: "It needs work."

This and the following reviews of "Me and Juliet" are contained in New York Theatre Critics' Reviews (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1953), XIV, 298-300.

THE NEW YORK DAILY MIRROR
May 29, 1953

New R. & H. Musical Opens
At the Majestic

By Robert Coleman

Having set new high standards for musicals throughout the world with such clicks as "Oklahoma!", "Carousel," "South Pacific" and "The King and I," Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein dipped into the lower drawer of their desk for a song-and-dancer called "Me and Juliet."

IT ARRIVED AT the Majestic Theatre last evening under their managerial auspices. It proved a big disappointment for this dyed-in-the-wool R & H fan. Had it been penned and composed by a team of tyres named Joe Smith and Harold Jones, we would probably write this morning that it was a fair start, showing promise of sorts.

But coming from the atelier of the masters, it was, to put it kindly, incredible. We kept saying over and over to ourselves: "Dick Rodgers and Oc Hammerstein didn't do it. They couldn't have done it. They'd have taken this one off in Boston for revamping. They would eventually have brought in a smash."

"Me and Juliet" is a pedestrian musical. It has to do with a nice little chorus girl who falls in love with a nice little stage manager, and has a big, jealous bully of an electrician try to send them into another world via drunken fists and sandbags. But you know as well as we do that by the final curtain's fall, there was a happy ending for the young romantics.

* * *

GEORGE ABBOTT, who in his time has given us many a top-flight eye-and ear show, has staged the book for all it's worth. Jo Mielziner has designed acceptable sets, and Irene Sharaff fair-to-middling costumes. Dance director Robert Alton comes off best of the lot with his choreography which, if not exactly dazzling, is okay.

Isabel Bigley is pretty as a picture, and sings like a nightingale as the love-smitten cherister. Bill Hayes is personable and likable as her harassed boy friend. Joan McCracken, in a costume borrowed from a Tenkinese sing-song girl and a dude rancher, is as attractive as her part permits.

Mark Lawson is swell as the swaggering electrician, displaying an excellent voice and plenty of muscles. Ray Walston, Jackie Kelk, Edwin Philips and Arthur Maxwell are good in other assignments.

* * *

ALL RIGHT, the book was dull and minus laughs. The score struck us as being mediocre Rodgers and Hammerstein. Radio, record and nitery bands may prove us wrong. For a lot of the customers were humming "Keep It Gay," "The Big Black Giant," "No Other Love" and "I'm Your Girl" as they exited.

But they don't represent the kind of lyrics and music that we want to keep on our permanent disc shelf. They don't belong beside the albums of previous R. & H. successes. They're the sort of chansons that are easy to forget.

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IT ARRIVED AT the Majestic Theatre last evening under their managerial auspices. It proved a big disappointment for this dyed-in-the-wool R & H fan. Had it been penned and composed by a team of tyres named Joe Smith and Harold Jones, we would probably write this morning that it was a fair start, showing promise of sorts.

But coming from the atelier of the masters, it was, to put it kindly, incredible. We kept saying over and over to ourselves: "Dick Rodgers and Oc Hammerstein didn't do it. They couldn't have done it. They'd have taken this one off in Boston for revamping. They would eventually have brought in a smash."

"Me and Juliet" is a pedestrian musical. It has to do with a nice little chorus girl who falls in love with a nice little stage manager, and has a big, jealous bully of an electrician try to send them into another world via drunken fists and sandbags. But you know as well as we do that by the final curtain's fall, there was a happy ending for the young romantics.

* * *

GEORGE ABBOTT, who in his time has given us many a top-flight eye-and ear show, has staged the book for all it's worth. Jo Mielziner has designed acceptable sets, and Irene Sharaff fair-te-middling costumes. Dance director Robert Alton comes off best of the lot with his choreography which, if not exactly dazzling, is okay.

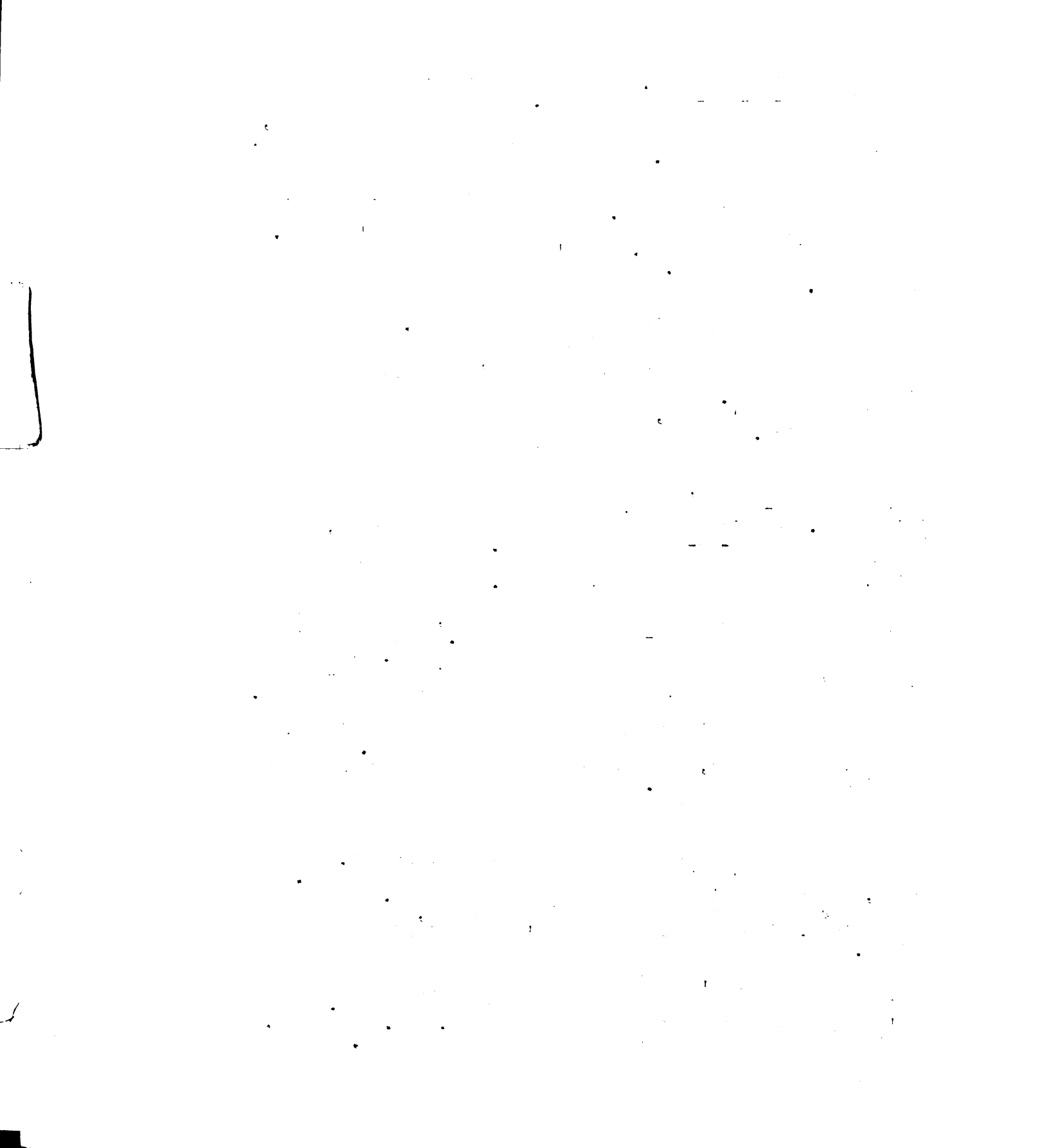
Isabel Bigley is pretty as a picture, and sings like a nightingale as the love-smitten cherister. Bill Hayes is personable and likable as her harassed boy friend. Joan McCracken, in a costume borrowed from a Tenkinese sing-song girl and a dude rancher, is as attractive as her part permits.

Mark Lawson is swell as the swaggering electrician, displaying an excellent voice and plenty of muscles. Ray Walston, Jackie Kelk, Edwin Philips and Arthur Maxwell are good in other assignments.

* * *

ALL RIGHT, the book was dull and minus laughs. The score struck us as being mediocre Rodgers and Hammerstein. Radio, record and nitery bands may prove us wrong. For a lot of the customers were humming "Keep It Gay," "The Big Black Giant," "No Other Love" and "I'm Your Girl" as they exited.

But they don't represent the kind of lyrics and music that we want to keep on our permanent disc shelf. They don't belong beside the albums of previous R. & H. successes. They're the sort of chansons that are easy to forget.



Dick Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein have done more than any others in the past to advance the musical comedy form. Their triumphs have won universal admiration. We owe them a lot. So it isn't pleasant to tell you this morning that "Me and Juliet" is a mistake.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
May 29, 1953

Below Par Job
By Great Team

By John McClain

THE GREAT team of Rodgers and Hammerstein, having established themselves as the best book-and-music boys in the business, hit a slight snag last night at the Majestic Theatre when they presented their latest effort, "Me And Juliet." It's by no means inferior, and it'll be a hit--but it should have been so much better.

In my ringside recordings the fault would lie partly with Oscar Hammerstein 2d, for a story which lacked style and excitement, and partly to both partners for an uninspired job of casting.

That the whole evening didn't go down the drain can be attributed to a first class score by Richard Rodgers (and Hammerstein), and to the constantly frantic talents of Jo Mielziner, who provided the settings, and Robert Alton who, as usual, turned in a superlative job with the dance numbers.

Against this there was the fact that no new names leomed on the horizon--even the old ones had appeared under more favorable auspices elsewhere--the book languished in a series of mild and familiar episodes, and there were few lusty laughs.

A first night audience which had come to tear the chairs out of the floor remained in polite and respectful silence until the final curtain.

Maybe Hammerstein made a mistake in trying to do a big musical with the familiar play-within-a-play formula, for it is difficult to make things hold still for all the plot development necessary.

During the first act there are long arid moments when people are singing songs and bending each other's ears in a rather confusing effort to get the audience oriented.

And once it is established that a girl in the show (Isabel Bigley) has been the girl of an electrician (Mark Dawson), but is about to find her true love in the Assistant Stage Manager (Bill Hayes) a lot of time has elapsed and there is slight doubt, or interest, in how everything will turn out.

But then Mielziner throws some truly ingenious and decorative stage tricks at you (to effect the dissolve from the real to the fake show); Alton puts the boys and girls through some of his prettiest paces; there is a quite amusing bit between the show's lead (Arthur Maxwell) and the orchestra leader (George Irving); and Rodgers' lovely tunes begin to creep into your heart.

So it goes through most of the proceedings, singularly routine story stuff enlivened by either production numbers like "Marriage Type Love," "No Other Love," skillful dancing by Bob Fortier and Joan McCracken, the brittle "Intermission Talk" by most of the company, or the decorative within-the-play numbers from the within-the-cast cast.

We are all aware of the charm and vocal aptitudes of Miss Bigley, there is not the slightest doubt that Joan McCracken can dance and sing and read a funny line, and Bill Hayes is a capable and engaging juvenile.

Jackie Kelk can be very funny, Mark Dawson is a lumbering "heavy" with a fine voice and Roy Walston has endless abilities in both comedy and straight drama. Many others in the cast are equally gifted.

But it seems they have been given little new or notable to do and, in the absence of this, have not been provided with the services of an Ezio Pinza, a Rox Russell, a Mary Martin, or a Yul Brynner to carry the load.

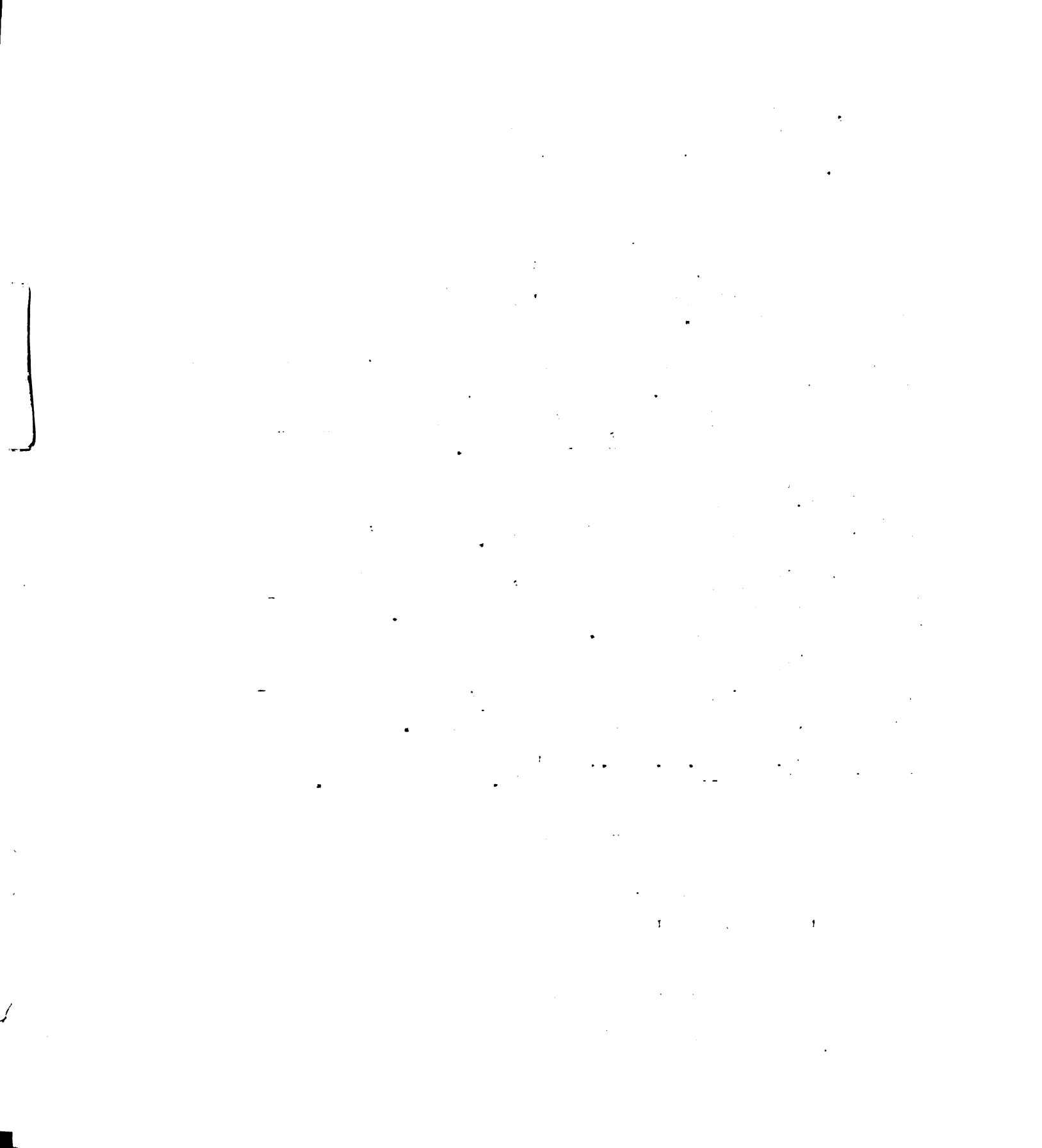
Sorry, Messrs. R. & H., you'll probably make another mint with this one -- but you shouldn't. Not up to par.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
and
THE SUN
May 29, 1953

'Me and Juliet' Dares Tradition

By William Hawkins

One of the most exciting things about Rodgers and Hammerstein as a creative team in the theater is that they never



repeat themselves. In "Me and Juliet" they have copied nobody at all, and the resultant novelty is often a fascinating use of theater.

What they have aimed at is to tell the story of a big musical, giving it the leading role. The action flashes back and forth, and in and out, like a very fluid X ray. You are behind the scenes one moment, at rehearsal, in the manager's office, up on the electrician's balcony above the stage, or just sitting in the audience watching the "show" which is the real heroine of "Me and Juliet."

Story Shallow.

Sometimes you will think they have bitten off more than anybody alive could chew. So that nothing will distract the attention due the "show," there is a great shallow splash of story. The action has so many places to go and so much to establish that it is a long time before anything reaches out and really "sends" you.

The first major lift for me was when Bill Hayes as an assistant stage manager rehearses Isabel Bigley as a chorus girl in a song that makes them fall in love. And the first hearty comedy was a primed rehearsal between Jean McCracken as a dancer and Ray Walston as the stage manager, whose heart she is out to get for good.

When things move on, try as everybody might, the "show" loses out to the people. The Bigley-Hayes triangle with Mark Dawson as a red tempered electrician becomes wild melodrama, which deserves more heroics than it gets for its resolution. Miss McCracken gets her prey, not by prowess but by luck.

Little Glamour Here.

The reason most backstage stories are fascinating is that they seem glamorous. This one rarely does. People in the theater incline to be indignantly sensitive and proud about whatever they appear in. The "show" here inspires nobody.

This "musical" the excitement is all about is a weak copy of some very ordinary extravaganzas. It is not specifically dated, nor specifically satirical. It is just timelessly superficial, except for some bright dances and some ingenious costumes. Miss Bigley's character doesn't want a better role. She is only in the theater for money. Nobody else cares anything for the "show" and would just as soon quit it any minute.

Now, this may be true of plenty of casts. I would really rather not hear about it. If the theater is going to turn inside out to be realistic about itself it should do so with bitter humor.

Better Movie Script.

The scheme of "Me and Juliet" asks for the fluidity of a movie camera, but demands the operation be in realistic terms. This is simply invading a field which can be conquered more neatly with less strain by the camera itself. Why fight City Hall?

If this is carping, it is so with admiration for the courage to experiment and regret that it does not aim in a happy direction.

The Mielziner scenery is absolutely breathtaking and the Sharaff costumes have an abandon and wit all their own.

NEW YORK POST
May 29, 1953

Rodgers & Hammerstein Backstage

By Richard Watts Jr.

There is no escaping the fact that Rodgers and Hammerstein are not at the top of their distinguished form in their new musical play, "Me and Juliet," which opened at the Majestic last night. This melancholy truth brings up a highly debatable question. Is the latest work of the men who have given the popular American musical theater such excitement and importance disappointing merely because it doesn't live up to the high standard its creators have set for themselves? Or are we made to think it is somewhat better than it actually is because we read into it our memories of the previous achievements of its eminent authors?

Not even such theatrical experts as Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2d can be counted upon always to give us masterpieces, and, if "Me and Juliet" is far from a peak achievement, it still has its pleasant virtues. For one thing, it isn't a bore. It is lively, vigorous and filled with the showmanlike craftsmanship of its makers. It has, of course, a number of attractive songs, its lyrics are bright and intelligent and sung so that you can understand them. It is good-looking and ingeniously mounted, and its cast is made up of attractive singing actors who always know what they are up to in their playing.

Show Within Show

These are commendable qualities, and they are assuredly not to be ignored. But for all the creative professionalism of the new show, there is a curious and surprising air of the common-place hanging ominously over the evening. "Me and Juliet"

is a backstage story, with the action taking place in a theater during the performance of a musical comedy, and those shows, within shows do present a handicap. For one thing, the authors have to give us not one good show but two, since both the play that is actually being presented and the one that its characters are supposed to be staging have to be properly entertaining.

This, I think, is one of the failures of "Me and Juliet." A number of the scenes are given of the musical comedy that the players are staging during the course of the plot, and none of them manages to suggest that the show within the show has any degree of merit. As for the central backstage story, Mr. Hammerstein has provided an amiable melodrama about a jealous electrician who tries to break up a romance between the girl understudy and the assistant stage manager, and he tries rather handsomely to avoid the clichés of such tales. For example, the understudy goes on for the star only during a rehearsal. But it doesn't quite work out.

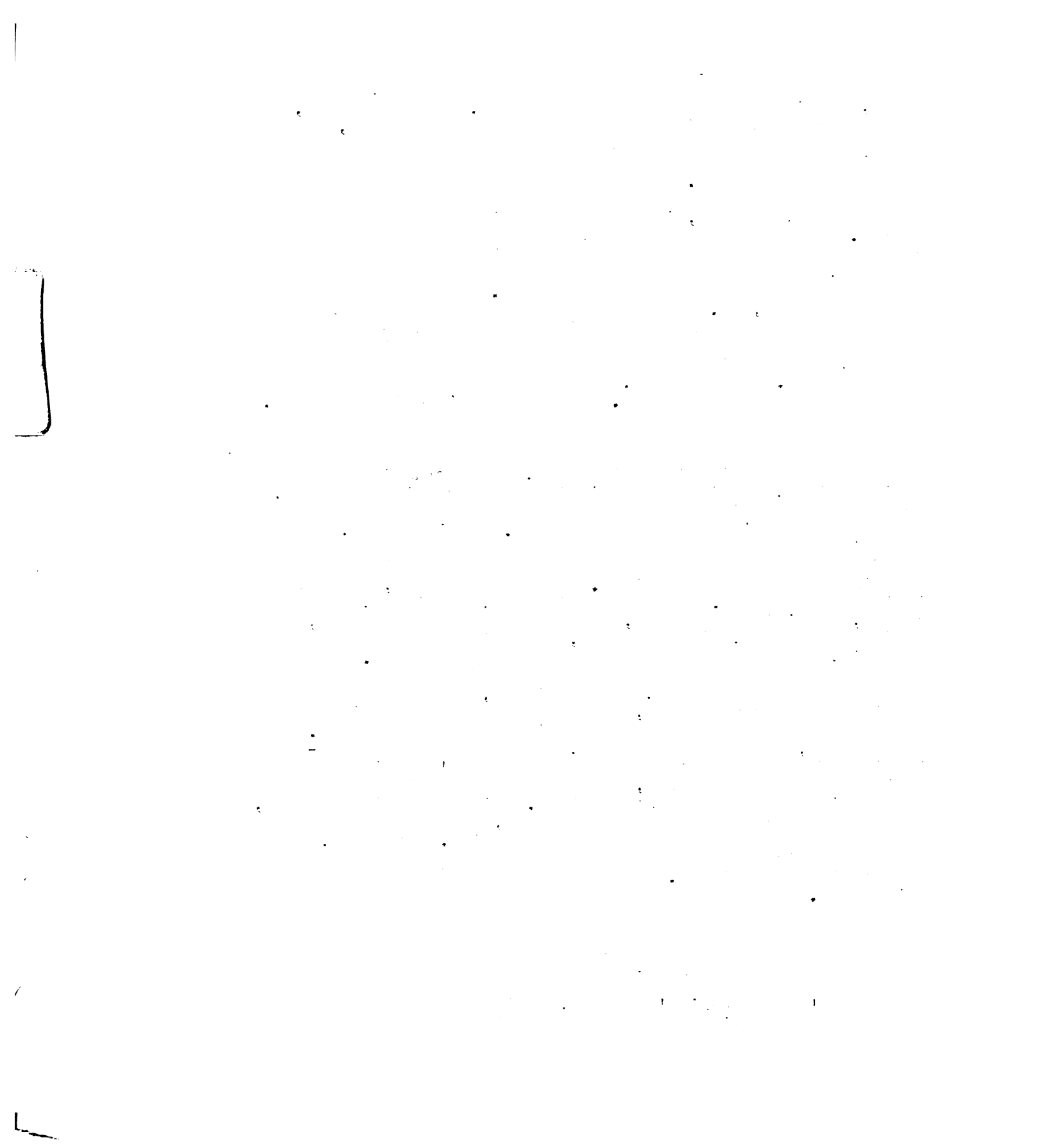
The Songs

The narrative is at its best, not during its plot manipulations, but in the wry incidental comments on actors, producers and audiences that have been knowingly injected into the proceedings from time to time. Incidentally, the plot might have been resolved quickly if the stage manager had just called a copy when the vengeful electrician started dropping sandbags on his rival. As for the music, I doubt if it represents Mr. Rodgers at his best, but it is, of course, unfailingly tuneful, and there are several songs, such as "No Other Love," "Keep It Gay," "Marriage Type Love" and "The Big, Black Giant" that are especially pleasant.

As the understudy, Isabel Bigley, the memorable heroine of "Guys and Dolls," again reveals that she is one of the loveliest of the younger musical comedy actresses. Ray Walston, always a fine actor, makes a real characterization of the tough stage manager who doesn't believe in having a girl in his shows, and Joan McGracken is engaging as the girl he nevertheless acquires. Bill Hayes is pleasant, as the romantic assistant stage manager, and Mark Dawson is properly dynamic as the maddened electrician. George S. Irving has a good bit as an orchestra leader who thinks he has an admirer in the audience. But "Me and Juliet" is less than triumphant.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
May 29, 1953

**'Me and Juliet' a Large, Lavish
And Dullish Tribute to Show Biz**



By John Chapman

Rodgers and Hammerstein, who have done so much to improve the American musical comedy stage in the last decade, have written and produced "Me and Juliet" as a tribute to the business they are in--show business. It is a big and beautiful tribute which they presented to a big and beautiful audience early last evening at the Majestic Theatre, where their "South Pacific" flourished for more than four years.

My own enthusiasm for show business leads me to applaud many lovely and miraculous things in "Me and Juliet"--a fabulous scenic scheme by Jo Mielziner, a melody here, a lyric there, a fine Robert Alton dance or two, some notable costumes by Irene Sharaff and a number of attractive principals. Such elements as these, backed by the Rodgers and Hammerstein reputation, should make the musical one of the items on a showgoer's shopping list.

Yet "Me and Juliet" does not strike me as a major R & H work because its story is either too involved or incapable of competing with the remarkable scenic plot. Like "Kiss Me, Kate," it is a backstage yarn--a show within a show; but unlike "Kiss Me, Kate," it lacks a libretto by Shakespeare.

Oscar Hammerstein 2d tells what goes on in and around a theatre where a musical titled "Me and Juliet" is playing, and Richard Rodgers provides pleasant musical accompaniment. The principal story element involves the love of an assistant stage manager for a chorus girl and the drunken jealousy of a burly electrician. There are other elements, such as the affection of a dancing girl for a reluctant stage manager and the misplaced egotism of an orchestra leader, which serve more to confuse than to enlighten. "Me and Juliet" seems simplest and most enjoyable when it is giving a technical demonstration of how a big musical comedy is put on, from rehearsals to an actual performance.

Scenery Steals Show

And it is at its most interesting when Mielziner's scenery is in motion, ranging from front to back and top to bottom of a big theatre. There is a first-act chorus dance number, "Keep It Gay," which is sheer wizardry--an instantaneous change from a performance in costume as a paying audience would see it to a backstage rehearsal of this same number with the boys and girls in their practice clothes. Light bridges, "pipes," back walls and a smoking lounge interchange effortlessly with the glamorous curtains and settings a theatre audience sees from its chairs.

Isabel Bigley is pretty and sings prettily as the chorus girl, Bill Hayes is amiable as the assistant stage manager, and Joan McCracken, the dancer, gives out with a sultry voice in a song or two. Mark Dawson, big man with big voice, has the unrewarding role of the jealous electrician, George S. Irving is funny as the orchestra leader, and Ray Walston provides some dry humor as the stage manager.

Rodgers' score, as orchestrated by Don Walker, has lots of brass and bounce, but its melodies have eluded me on first hearing, except for "Keep It Gay" and "Marriage Type Love." And Rodgers and Hammerstein have written a very solemn hymn to the theatre audience, titled "Big Black Giant," which is over-stressed. Director George Abbott has performed heroically in keeping this big show moving.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
May 29, 1953

—THEATER—

'Me and Juliet'

By Walter F. Kerr

AS THE "Me and Juliet" overture rides to a finish, and the Majestic curtain goes up on a warm and dusky lighted backstage, it is clear that Rodgers and Hammerstein's longstanding love affair with the theater is about to break into the open. Instead of training their guns on the customers out front, the town's most skillful showmen have ducked in under the proscenium to shake hands with, and pay a fervent salute to, the boys and girls who make the business tick.

One of the musical's love stories starts on a light-bridge, suspended high above a rehearsing company. Another tees off in the casual agonies of an audition for understudies, with fledgling dancers competing for jobs, a bored director barking orders over a loudspeaker, and an improvised trio meddling with the drums.

Before we are through with this affectionate survey of footlight life, we have been whisked into dressing rooms, allowed to relax in a colorfully dingy alley before curtain-time is called, hurried to the little bar across the street, permitted to rub elbows with the intermission crowd at the candy counter. There's a climactic melee in the manager's office, with ticket stubs flying in all directions, and there's a show-within-a-show, too--an onstage musical comedy called "Me and Juliet."

Mechanically, the show is pure magic: a proscenium arch slides gently to one side to reveal the prompter's corner; a whirling ensemble of gaily costumed dancers dissolves suddenly into the same frenzy, and what appears to be the same people, in rehearsal clothes.

Musically, it is good basic Rodgers, Rodgers with some of the violins sent home and all of the brass thoroughly roused. If the score doesn't have the emotional weight or the gentle, lilting line of some of the composer's recent romantic journeys, it's because he is trying for something else: for straight musical-comedy verve ("Keep It Gay"), for bright, caustic comment ("Intermission Talk"), for brash, breezy nonsense ("We Deserve Each Other"). And nobody is short-changed on the ballads. "Marriage-Type Love," "No Other Love," and "I'm Your Girl" are all run-of-the-gold-mine Rodgers--fresh, sweet, and infinitely singable.

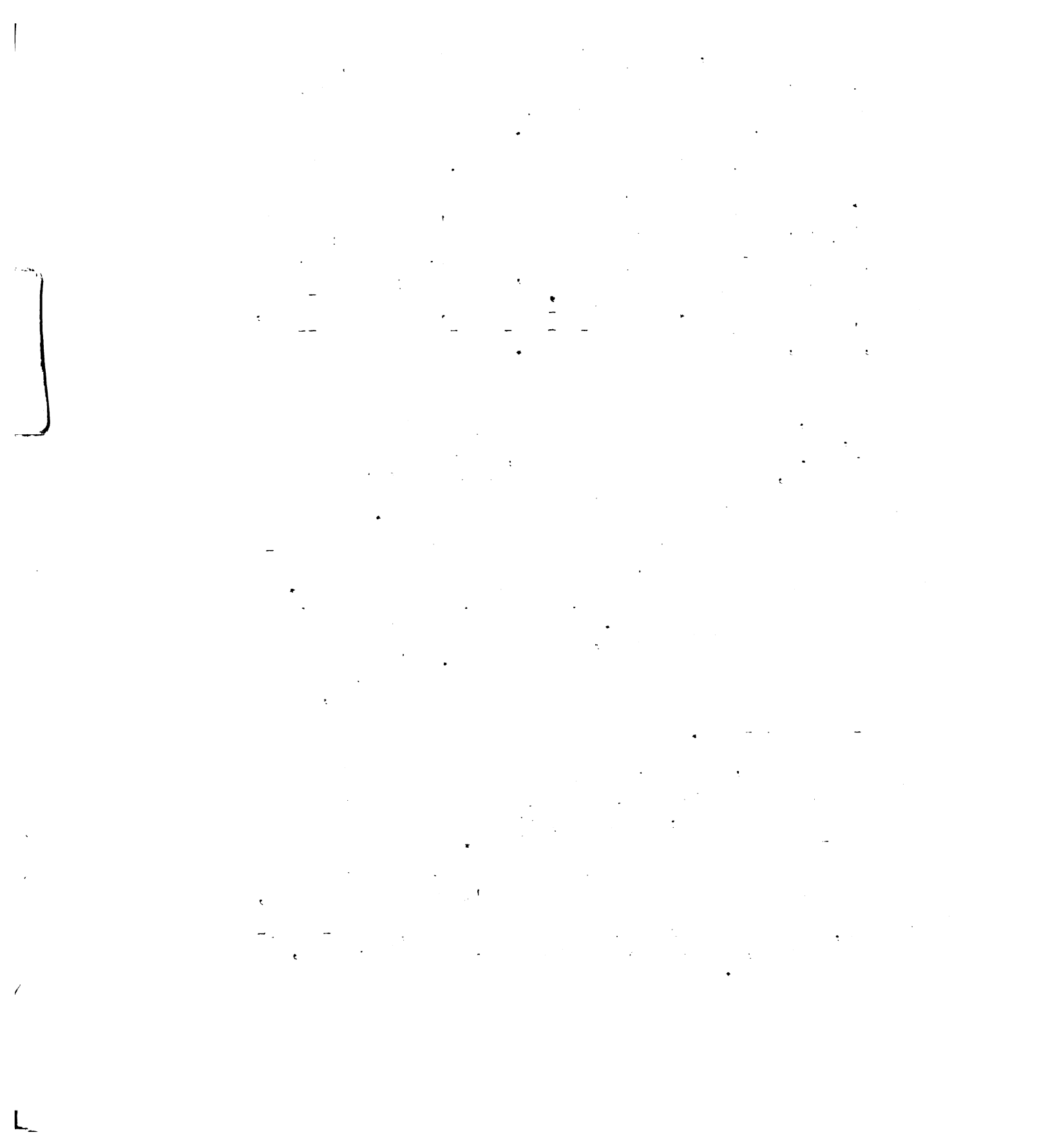
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But, like a lot of lovers bent on declaring their passion, the authors strike a point at which they become tongue-tied. They want to say so much, they want to say it so burstingly, they want to be so sure that no heartfelt endearment is omitted anywhere, that they wind up gasping for breath and making slightly disconnected sounds.

"Me and Juliet" is a dizzying collection of independently attractive fragments, so eager to embrace everything that half its treasures slip through its outstretched arms. The love stories begin winningly, and then, in the scurry, lose individuality and warmth. The show-within-a-show begins in what seems a satirical vein, and then blurs and goes limp in the restless and overly ingenious evening. (This last is quite a serious loss; by failing to whip real gayety, humor and a consistent point of view into the onstage musical, Rodgers and Hammerstein have come perilously close to writing a show-without-a-show.)

There are, however, some striking melodramatic effects: a spotlight gone crazy and sweeping into the wings to catch a clandestine couple kissing; a fire-eyed drunk charging through a dance routine; a hulking, silhouetted figure ripping the grill-work from a barred office window.

And there are attractive performances: from lithe Isabel Bigley, as an understudy who doesn't want to be a star, from Bill Hayes as the stage manager who is secretly in love with her, from Arthur Maxwell as a temperamental, scene-stealing matinee idol, and from Joan McCracken, as a pint-sized, long legged Amazon.



Most interesting of the acting jobs, though, comes from Ray Walston, a gimlet-eyed, tight-lipped, single-minded backstage tyrant. Mr. Walston has combined genuine characterization and musical-comedy style with enormous felicity, and when he is hiking his belt after a bit of tough talk, or fighting his way offstage amid a hurricane of dancers, he is extremely funny as well.

The Mielziner settings are expert, the George Abbott staging is swift and pointed, the Irene Sharaff costumes are good to look at. Choreographer Robert Alton is at his best when he is inventing a rehearsal imprompty; the "show" dances suffer from the same indecision which mars Mr. Hammerstein's book.

On their own say-so, Rodgers and Hammerstein did this one for "fun." What is curious about the show is that so little of this spirit shines through. "Me and Juliet" seems more deeply in earnest and a lot less lighthearted than their more significant work.

~~Administrative Cont.~~

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