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Taylor, Betty Sue, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1985

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE SCRIPT AND SCORE OF OKLAHOMA!, A PROTOTYPICAL MUSICAL PLAY

by

BETTY SUE TAYLOR

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre Arts in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1985

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BETTY SUE TAYLOR

1985

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty of Theatre Arts in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SCRIPT AND SCORE OF OKLAHOMA!, A PROTOTYPICAL MUSICAL PLAY

by

Betty Sue Taylor

Adviser: Professor Glenn Loney

The musical play, Oklahoma!, opened on Broadway on 31 March 1943 to a receptive audience because it bridged the gap between the trivial musical comedy and the old-fashioned operetta of the previous decades and because it was a skillful, integrated blend of music, dance, and drama.

The libretto and lyrics were written by Oscar Hammerstein II, and the score was composed by Richard Rodgers. Their works tend to be conservative, decent plays, in which all songs and dances are integrated into the libretto. They oversaw all aspects of the productions and can be credited with the unprecedented run of the show for 2,156 performances.

The play was a close adaptation of Lynn Riggs's Green Grow the Lilacs, a 1931 folk play with incidental music. The plot of this Oklahoma! is concerned with the romantic pursuit of the heroine, Laurey, by the hero, Curly, and the villain, Jud. But Rodgers and Hammerstein added a

comic subplot that is also a triangular love affair and therefore parallel of the main plot. In the end, the hero succeeds in winning the heroine; the villain is killed; the comic lovers are joined, and the comic blocking character is mildly punished.

Therefore, Oklahoma! is also a melodrama with good winning over evil. The play is set in the Oklahoma Territory of 1900, just before it became a state. The outdoor settings, local dialect, and patriotism all add to the realism, nostalgia, and general appeal of this play.

Another major element in the success of the play was the addition of a ballet which psychologically pantomimes the possible outcome of the story.

The score consists of thirteen original songs that are repeated, either individually or as part of potpourris, to equal thirty-three music cues. All songs serve a function in the plot, most often characterizing those who sing them.

The major significance of Oklahoma! is that every aspect is integrated to produce a unified whole. It became a new prototype of musical theatre that was copied for many years to come.

PREFACE

This dissertation has given this researcher the opportunity to combine her loves for music and theatre, which have existed since her childhood. For that opportunity, she is grateful.

First, she owes particular gratitude to her examining committee, Drs. Loney, Roberts, and Waren, whose guidance and patience were so valuable in the preparation of this manuscript. Second, she is grateful to the many friends and relatives who have suffered through the struggle with her. Although there are too many to mention them individually, a few who helped so immeasurably with their patience, kindness, empathy, and help are Dr. Ann Seidler, Mrs. Mirael Smith, Ms. Frances Rickett, and Mr. Kevin Miller. And gratitude is due to a group of her peers to which the writer belonged for two years, her Dissertation Support Group, who helped immeasurably. Additionally, the many people who cooperated by granting interviews and offering information unselfishly include Mr. Stanley Green and Mrs. Oscar Hammerstein II.

And last, eternal gratitude goes to Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II for having written an excellent work that was such a pleasure to analyze. It is the sincere hope of this researcher that their works will forever remain treasured as the masterpieces they are.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Justification of Choice of Topic

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II's run of nine Broadway musicals began in 1943 with Oklahoma! This play is considered by many to be a significant turning point, after which those who wrote Broadway musicals became more conscious of the ingredients that went into a musical and of the artistic integration of those ingredients.[1] Musical theatre director, historian, and teacher Richard Kislan states:

> The Rodgers and Hammerstein collaboration brought about the maturation of the American musical. . . . Theirs .

---

[1]Brooks Atkinson, Broadway (New York: MacMillan, 1974), pp. 226, 341, 343; Gerald Bordman, The American Musical Theatre (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 534-36; David Ewen, Complete Book of the American Musical Theatre (New York: Henry Holt, 1959), p. 251; Hugh Fordin, Getting to Know Him, with an Introduction by Stephen Sondheim (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 203; Stanley Green, ed., Rodgers and Hammerstein Fact Book (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1980), pp. 514-16; Stanley Green, The Rodgers and Hammerstein Story (New York: John Day, 1963), pp. 105-9; Stanley Green, The World of Musical Comedy (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1960), p. 245; WNET, "Musical Comedy Tonight," Part I, 1 October 1979, Sylvia Fine Kaye; Abe Laufe, Broadway's Greatest Musicals (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1970), p. 57; Alan Jay Lerner, The Street Where I Live (New York: Norton, 1978), pp. 34, 43; Richard Rodgers, Musical Stages (New York: Random House, 1975), pp. 227-29; Cecil Smith, Musical Comedy in America (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1950), p. 344.

> . . [were] the talent, forethought, and skill to consolidate the musical theatre's resources and reshape them into the splendid artifacts that became models to a generation. . . .
>
> . . . Oklahoma! was more than a spectacular critical and popular success; it was a revolutionary manifesto that banished June-moon musicomedy, as it raised the "integrated" musical to the seat of power and influence.[1]

The description of Oklahoma! in the title of this dissertation as "prototypical" signifies that Oklahoma! has been popularly acclaimed to be the culmination of many efforts towards an integration of the ideal proportions of the appropriate elements to yield a new model for a successful musical--new for 1943, that is, although this was not Rodgers and Hammerstein's intent.[2] This model served as a pattern that was followed by many subsequent composers and authors who wished to write a similarly successful musical play.[3] Alan Jay Lerner openly admits that his and Frederick Loewe's musicals immediately following Oklahoma! were based on its formula, and he claims that those of most other writers for about the next twenty years were influenced by the pattern which was set by this show; he calls this period "the golden era of musicals that had begun with 'Oklahoma!' in 1943."[4] He describes the change in

---

[1]Richard Kislan, The Musical (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-hall, 1980), pp. 142-43.

[2]Fordin, p. 187.

[3]Lerner, The Street, pp. 15, 137.

[4]Alan Jay Lerner, "Once Again There Is a Longing for Melody," New York Times, 12 October 1980, sec. 2, p. 1.

formula as follows: "The brash, breezy, satirical musical of the 30's had disappeared overnight . . . . The hunger for sentiment, joy and, if you will, escape had not only been captured by 'Oklahoma!' but Rodgers and Hammerstein . . . had added a new dimension to musicals that became known as lyric theatre."[1]

Oklahoma! had an initial consecutive run of over five years.[2] This broke the previous record for the longest running book-musical on Broadway, set by Irene (1919) which ran a little more than a year and a half. Hellzapoppin (1938) ran over three years, but it was a revue, not a book-musical.[3] The five-year record was held by Oklahoma! for about thirteen years until broken by My Fair Lady (1956).[4] Oklahoma! also broke records for gross receipts, previously held by Rose-Marie (1924).[5]

In addition to its prototypicality, long run, and financial success, there is another reason for the importance of Oklahoma! And this is that it rejected the sophisticated, contemporary, urban life usually portrayed in the musical comedies of that period, for the earnest

---

[1]Ibid.

[2]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 536; Laufe, p. 65; Ewen, Complete Book, p. 249.

[3]Jack Burton, The Blue Book of Broadway Musicals, with additions by Larry Freeman (New York: Century House, 1969), pp. 159, 199, 240, 248.

[4]Laufe, pp. 198, 207.

[5]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 536.

depiction of earthy, bygone Americana, and instilled in the audience a patriotic pride during the unsettling time of World War II.[1] Agnes de Mille, choreographer of the original production of Oklahoma!, said in an interview that was reported in the New York Daily News: "'Oklahoma!' was about the earth, about the American earth. And when we opened the show in 1943 there were row upon row of men out front in uniform who were about to go out and die for that land."[2] And Sylvia Fine Kaye said, "Oklahoma! was a reaffirmation of our values: love of land, love of family, humor, friendship, joy in simple things--like a beautiful morning."[3] In addition, it was awarded a special Pulitzer Prize for drama[4] and won enormous critical acclaim, summed up by Harold Hobson, a London theatre critic, who said simply, "It is almost impossible to imagine anything better . . . ."[5]

This play with such an impressive record surely deserves a thorough analysis to determine what arrangement of genetic elements in the script and score were the seeds

---

[1]Ibid., p. 534.

[2]Barton Wimble, "DeMille Is Back at the Dance," New York Daily News, Sunday Leisure Section, 9 December 1979, p. 5.

[3]Kaye, "Musical Comedy Tonight," Part I.

[4]Green, Fact Book, p. 518.

[5]Joseph T. Shipley, Guide to Great Plays, (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1956), p. 550, citing Harold Hobson.

that blossomed into a play that has become so overwhelmingly successful that it has served as a pattern for imitators. This is, however, the first analytical study of this kind to be undertaken on Oklahoma!

And it is not merely Oklahoma! that has been overlooked. Perhaps because the musical play is a relatively new form, little analytical research has been done on this form or on the broad range of popular musical shows.[1] The bookshelves abound with anecdotal, biographical, and general survey works on Broadway musicals, but technical analyses are virtually non-existent. Many authorities on music and theatre tend to deprecate those areas of entertainment that combine aspects of these arts, with the exception of opera. The music is frequently declared to be too simple, and thus too trivial, to warrant analysis, and the drama is considered too shallow by many because, without the music, it cannot stand alone.[2] Glenn Loney, theatre critic, teacher, and historian, states: "Although the musical comedy is obviously a popular form, it has seldom been respected by serious critics of the drama except as relaxation . . . ."[3] Brooks Atkinson points out

---

[1]Earl L. Sherman, "American Musicals Are Elusive," Music Journal, XXV (December, 1967), p. 44.

[2]Harold Schonberg, "A Special Kind of Theatre," New York Times, 1 October 1979, Book Review Section, pp. 15, 28-29.

[3]Glenn Loney, "Musical Comedy," in the Reader's Encyclopedia of World Drama, ed. John Gassner and Edward Quinn (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1969), p. 596.

the merit of the musical, however, when he observes that "if the art of theatre began with tribal festivals, with singing, dancing, pantomime, mummery, and celebration in primitive times, the musical show retains more of the original ingredients and spirit than the spoken drama."[1]

Having training in both music and theatre, this researcher has attempted to begin filling this gap by analyzing this work of art. Thus the justification for undertaking this work is that it was a job that needed to be done and one that this writer was qualified for and wanted to do.

Purpose of the Study and Limitations

In discussions of Oklahoma!, both Rodgers and Hammerstein declared that, by having done this show so differently from the prior successful formulas, they proved that it is not possible to set up a pattern which guarantees a successful musical.[2] Oklahoma! did vary from the old formula, but it merely set up a new successful formula that was copied by Rodgers and Hammmerstein and other writers in varying degrees in many subsequent works, although this formula also did not guarantee success.[3]

The purpose of this study is to discover the ingredients that helped to make Oklahoma! so successful as

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[1]Atkinson, p. 314.

[2]Green, Story, p. 106.

[3]Laufe, p. 57.

to become a prototypical musical play. Through analysis of the script and score, its constituent elements have been extracted and categorized. This has been done in order to facilitate other researchers' comparisons of subsequent works to determine the relationship of those works to the formula of Oklahoma!

It is not, however, the intent of this report to establish the prototypicality of this work, since that could constitute another dissertation. The fact that Oklahoma! has been repeatedly referred to in books and articles as a classic work that was frequently copied for at least twenty years is accepted as a premise upon which the need for analyzing its formula is based. For example, Jack Burton says:

> On the night of March 31, 1943, . . . Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II dropped a bomb on Broadway that not only rocked the street to its very foundation, but pulverized century-old theatrical conventions and traditions.
>
> This atomic block buster was labeled Oklahoma [sic] . . . .
>
> The Oklahoma [sic] success story . . . is far more than a glowing treasurer's report. This phenomenal production set a new pattern for girl and music shows . . . .
>
> This was a formula that called for meticulous craftsmanship and a passion for perfection with which both Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II are uncommonly gifted.[1]

Therefore, identifying which specific elements were copied in subsequent shows is outside the realm of this study. The intent here is to analyze and isolate only what was done

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[1]Burton, p. 275.

in writing and composing Oklahoma! Therefore, other than an occasional reference to an example for emphasis, the comparison with other works and the tracing of specific elements' usage is left to others who may use the formula that has been derived and recorded here.

In order to analyze the musical's book, the libretto has been broken up into the constituent elements of plot, characters, and lyrics, and these parts have been critically examined, in order to determine how they relate to each other to constitute the whole. The printed source for this analysis of the script was the text that was copyrighted in 1942 by Oscar Hammerstein II and published by Random House in 1959.[1] This script includes the dialogue, stage directions, scene descriptions, song lyrics, and some basic instuctions for the dances.

The complete musical score, as copyrighted and published in 1943 by the Williamson Music Company, with music composed by Richard Rodgers and edited by Albert Sirmay, was used for the musical analysis.[2] This score includes the musical notes that constitute both the melody and the harmony that are to be sung and/or played, the lyrics, and a few general instructions concerning the

---

[1]Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, Six Plays by Rodgers and Hammerstein, play 1: Oklahoma! (New York: Random House, 1959), pp. 1-84.

[2]Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, Oklahoma!, a Musical Play Vocal Score, ed. Albert Sirmay (New York: Williamson Music, Inc.), pp. 1-208.

movement and/or dances to be performed to the music. The score used in this analysis is not an orchestral score, but a piano accompaniment, which is what Rodgers himself wrote.[1] The orchestrations of this score were executed by Robert Russell Bennett, not Richard Rodgers, and thus were not analyzed for this report. According to John Rockwell, "It is the practice on Broadway for composers to turn over their handiwork to specialists who work out the instrumentation. . . . He [the orchestrator] has taken the time to learn the orchestral craft--which the composer has often not been able to do . . . ."[2]

In a telephone conversation between Bennett and this researcher in 1981, Bennett stated that Rodgers always gave him a complete piano score that indicated the melody, harmony, and the flavor of the accompaniment he wanted. Bennett said that Rodgers was more accomplished at this task than most of the composers for whom he had orchestrated. There were occasions, according to Bennett, when composers had merely hummed a tune to him over the phone, expecting him to complete the orchestrations from that. But Rodgers always gave him a neat, well written, complete copy of the songs' melodies and accompaniments, he said.[3]

---

[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 46.

[2]John Rockwell, "Composers Who Don't Do It All," New York Times, 12 June 1983, Arts and Leisure Section, pp. 1, 23.

[3]Telephone interview with Robert Russell Bennett, New York City, June 1981.

The term "musical play" is used in the title to refer to Oklahoma! because that is the subtitle printed on the musical score and also because this term is the most accurate description of the work. Writers on musical theatre disagree as to the definition of specific musical theatre forms. For the purposes of this paper, however, a musical play refers to a twentieth-century combination of a drama (more comic than serious) and music in nearly equal proportions in terms of time required to perform them and of importance in conveying the intended story, thoughts, and moods; the drama and music are equally necessary to complete the entertainment. This conveyance is done by mimicry, spoken and sung dialogue, dancing, and instrumental numbers. The story conveyed most often concerns a somewhat serious romantic love story; some comedy is almost always present, and the ending is usually happy--or at least not tragic.[1] The characters generally are ordinary people who speak in common language. Standard elements include many spectacular scenes and costumes, elaborate choreography, a large cast, and its main purpose is to provide light entertainment.[2] Lerner says that Oklahoma! is responsible for making the musical comedy into a musical play, although Bordman asserts that the genre began with

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 72.

[2]Ibid., p. 183.

Show Boat in 1927.[1] Gerald Bordman, musical theatre historian, describes the form as a "lyric piece with a relatively serious romantic story about essentially everyday people set to music neither as clipped as typical musical comedy writing nor as fully arioso as operetta although leaning toward the latter."[2]

This report is limited to the results of an examination of only the printed script and score cited above and does not delve into the added visual and auditory experiences audiences may have when witnessing any performance. Thus the following elements are not a part of this analysis: interpretations created in the characterizations by delivery of dialogue and song by individual actors/singers, the refinements upon mood and meaning imposed by directors, the choreography of the dance steps and movements, and the visual enhancement of sets, lighting, and costumes. That is, this is not intended to be a study of a production, but a study of those raw materials that were created by Rodgers and Hammerstein and have been used as the basis for conceiving and putting together many performances of this play by many performers, directors, choreographers, and designers for more than forty years.

Musical theatre is commonly said to be "the most collaborative form of all arts," with each contributor being

---

[1]Lerner, The Street, p. 33; Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 435.

[2]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 435.

essential to the final result, which is then greater than the sum of its parts.[1] Although many artists have been necessary to make Oklahoma! the success it has continued to be, this report is not long enough to cover every artist involved in the productions. The fact that the play is still being revived after forty years is an indication that the script and score are the sources of the inherent quality that made the show the success it was and is, since various artists perform the additional duties, often differently for each new production. However, the other artists' contributions in production are recognized to be valuable to the results in performance.

Methodology and Organization

In taking apart the ingredients in the script and score, this researcher worked on three levels: (1) the minute, microscopic level, reducing everything to the smallest constituent elements (e.g., the words, notes, and chords), (2) the intermediate level where these small parts fit together to create medium-sized portions of the whole (e.g., the songs, single actions or confrontations in dialogue), and (3) the larger level where these medium-sized portions fit together to create the major divisions of the work (e.g., the six scenes of the play, each of which may contain several musical numbers). Since Rodgers and Hammerstein chose the small elements which made up the

---

[1]Kislan, The Musical, p. 4.

medium-sized units that constituted the larger sections, it seems appropriate to break the script and score down to these different-sized sections in order to try to understand what Rodgers and Hammerstein did in the creative stage of this work. Each section of this report contains an explanation of how that particular phase of the analysis was accomplished to achieve the purpose of that section.

The process of dissecting and counting the minute elements was time-consuming, but the reduction of the material to its most basic components was necessary in order to provide a thorough analysis. The writer of this dissertation does not feel that merely viewing examples of art in their overall shape is an adequate means of analysis. This writer felt a need to reduce the show to its basic components in order to determine how the shape of the final object was created. Learning about Rodgers and Hammerstein's experiences, theories, and objectives has given the researcher an insight into the choices of combinations of smallest elements into medium-sized units and then into the major sections to form the complete whole. This was a result of intensive study of their prior works, their script and score for Oklahoma!, and other manuscripts.

In searching for details to provide this background material, preference was given to original sources, over published works of general information on the theatre. For example, many typescripts, including early versions of the

libretto and letters concerning the original production of Oklahoma!, were found at Lincoln Center. These were deemed to contain more nearly accurate information than the printed, sometimes conflicting, information in books by various theatre historians which were published years later. Research also included personal interviews and letters to and from this researcher and people who were directly involved in the original production of Oklahoma!--that is, people who were present, witnessing, and participating in the creation and formulation of what became the successful, original production. Their personal observations concerning why and how Rodgers and Hammerstein made their choices, or approved suggestions for changes made by others during rehearsals, were considered to be more valuable than those observations of "outsiders" whose knowledge is secondhand.

In addition, Richard Rodgers's autobiography, Musical Stages,[1] and Oscar Hammerstein II's book, Lyrics,[2] and numerous articles, either written by these artists or resulting from personal interviews with them, were given more weight for the purposes of this research than books or articles about them.

Finally, it is possible to learn a great deal about Rodgers and Hammerstein by reading their plays and songs. Many of their interests, goals, outlooks, values, and other

---

[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages.

[2]Oscar Hammerstein II, Lyrics (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949).

preferences are evidenced through their words and music. Thus virtually all of their previous works were read and studied, in order that this researcher might understand these men more fully: how their thinking processes worked, and how their attitudes, training, and experiences blended together to yield the final product of Oklahoma!

Technical words which may not be familiar to the reader, such as musical terms, are footnoted as they appear in the text, and the reader is then referred to the Glossary of Terms at the end of the paper.

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters. In order to show how Oklahoma! is different, it is necessary to know something about the formulas that preceded it. Thus chapter 2 gives the background information needed to understand what kinds of musicals were being done before 1943. Chapter 3 discusses the men who created Oklahoma!, their training, experience and theories. Chapter 4 analyzes the play from which Oklahoma! was adapted.

The two major portions of this dissertation are the analyses of the script and of the score of Oklahoma!, which constitute chapters 5 and 6 respectively. These analyses are lengthy and detailed and require a concluding section to summarize the formula, which is chapter 7.

Contribution of This Project to the Field of Musical Theatre History

Theatre historian and teacher Abe Laufe describes Oklahoma! as a musical that changed "the whole concept of

musical theatre," that "set more precedents than any other musical produced during the war years and had more imitators . . . ."[1] According to Burton's Blue Book of Broadway Musicals, the 1940s marked a "Renaissance of the Broadway musical, sparked by Rodgers and Hammerstein."[2] Since Oklahoma! was such a success and became a prototype, the laborious analytical procedure seemed worthwhile and satisfying to this writer.

This researcher believes that others can utilize this analysis of significant elements in Oklahoma! in investigating the use of such elements appearing in later Broadway musicals, so that this study will be a valuable contribution to the field of musical theatre.

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[1]Laufe, p. 57.

[2]Burton, p. 275.

CHAPTER II

AMERICAN POPULAR MUSICAL THEATRE BEFORE OKLAHOMA!

What kind of world was Oklahoma! born into when it opened on March 31, 1943? The United States had been involved in World War II for over a year.[1] The American public was extremely patriotic as the young men went away to fight and perhaps die for their country.[2] Rodgers and Hammerstein, both in their forties, were too old for military service, but each adamantly supported his country, and each experienced personally the abomination of the war.[3]

This was a troubled, yet patriotically united, period. This was not a time for frivolity. What kind of theatre would appeal to audiences in such precarious days? Would their diversions continue to be the generally shallow musical comedies, revues, and operettas that had populated stages in the preceding two decades?

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[1]Encyclopedia Britannica, 1970 ed., s.v. "Roosevelt, Franklin Delano."

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 209-210, 227; Encyclopedia Brittanica, 1970 ed., s.v. "World War II."

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 195, 210; Fordin, p. 177.

In the nineteenth century, the Irish playwright Dion Boucicault pointed out that the theatre mirrors society--i.e., by studying one, the other is also revealed: "Drama is the necessary product of the age in which it is the moral, social, and physical expression. The contemporaneous drama possesses an archaelogical value. It is the only faithful record of its age. In it the features, expressions, manners, thoughts and passions of its period are reflected and retained."[1] This theory can be verified in a survey of musical theatre, which has always reflected American society. Thus, a brief review of the history of the American musical theatre prior to 1943 will suggest the need in the theatre for something new, different, and more serious, which arrived in the form of Oklahoma! during this new, different, and more serious time.

The term musical can be used in its broadest sense to refer to any form of popular entertainment that relies on music as a substantial part of its presentation. Throughout America's history, this has encompassed the ballad opera, ballet, burlesque, comic opera, farce comedy, extravaganza, melodrama, minstrel show, musical comedy, operetta, revue, vaudeville, and other variants. While there may never be complete agreement among scholars as to which specific work should be classified under which form, in this paper the term is being used to refer to virtually any popular stage

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[1]John Fell, "Dissolves by Gaslight," Film Quarterly, Spring, 1970, p. 22, quoting Dion Boucicault.

entertainment that requires music. Harold Schonberg, in a New York Times article, isolated three characteristics of a musical, which distinguish this form from opera: (1) the musical is a commercial form with a basic intent to please, and thus entertain, the public; (2) the musical caters to current tastes in music, dance, humor, and other public-pleasing elements; and (3) four collaborators or more may be required to create the script and score used for a Broadway musical production.[1] In other words, the Broadway musical usually uses the services of many creators to create a work that will appeal to the current public, whereas an opera may be created by only two artists who may create their art for art's sake with intended perpetual appeal.[2] Gerald Bordman claims, simply, that there was too little difference in the characteristics of popular stage musicals to categorize them uniquely as one form of musical or another until well into the twentieth century.[3] The following is a brief chronological survey of the popular American musical theatre from approximately 1735 to 1943.

Pre-1900 Musicals

According to Bordman, the first musicals to be performed in the United States were British ballad operas in

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[1]Harold C. Schonberg, "Why Isn't a Musical Comedy an Opera?" New York Times, 25 November 1979, sec. 2, p. 13.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 118.

the eighteenth century. He says, "These were dramas and comedies in which the plot was developed in the dialogue rather than in recitative and in which songs were interspersed to underline the play's sentiments."[1] In the early days even many non-musical plays contained a few songs, and there were also numerous productions of European operettas.[2] But one of the main elements in the early American musical theatre was broad comedy, such as existed in the musical farces which were done by Harrigan, Hart, and Braham in the late nineteenth century.[3]

Most writers on American musical theatre agree that the movement toward the modern musical began in 1866, with The Black Crook, a melodrama by Charles M. Barras. It was combined with the talents of a French ballet troupe, whose original booking had been cancelled, to result in an extravagant, highly successful production.[4] It contained a hero, heroine, villain, comedy, romantic plot, subplot, complete ballet, pretty girls, music--elements that are common to many modern musicals--and this is probably the

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[1]Ibid., p.1.

[2]Lehman Engel, The American Musical Theatre: A Consideration (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 28.

[3]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 45; John Tasker Howard, Our American Music: A Comprehensive History from 1620 to the Present, 4th ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1965), pp. 712-15.

[4]Burton, pp. 6-9; Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 18; Smith, p. 3; Howard, p. 712; Lerner, The Street, p. 39.

major reason that this work is frequently singled out as the first American musical.[1] However, The Black Crook can hardly be called an example of a modern and truly American musical because its plot is based on German stories, its music is a collection of songs from various composers who were born and trained in several different countries, and its first production contained a ballet and many visual effects that were previously created to be performed as a part of a French light opera.[2] But the major difference from a modern musical was that it almost totally lacked integration of its melodrama, ballet, songs, vaudeville acts, and spectacular visual effects.[3] In fact, many people came to see the show repeatedly, making it even more successful at the box office, because the productions varied constantly with the addition of the new scenic effects, new dances, and new vaudeville acts--such as jugglers, trained animals, and even the first roller-skating on stage in

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[1]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 18.

[2]Julian Mates, "The Black Crook Myth," Theatre Survey 7 (May 1966): 31-39; George Freedley, "The Black Crook and The White Fawn," Dance Index, no. 4 (January 1945): 4; Bernard Hewitt, Theatre U. S. A. 1665 to 1957 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), p. 195; the opera was La Biche au Bois (1845) by Auguste Pilati; the story is a melange of several German folk tales, including Faust, Undine, and Der Frieschutz.

[3]Joseph Whitton, The Naked Truth, An Inside Story of "The Black Crook" (Philadelphia: H. W. Shaw, 1897), p. 17; David Ewen, Complete Book, p. 348.

America.[1] However, its major attraction was visual spectacle, including exposed female "limbs," flying fairies, fire, and trap doors. Joseph Whitton, treasurer of Niblo's Garden, where this musical was first performed, wrote:

> I have said nothing of the literary merits of the Crook for the best of reasons--it had none. This, however, is no serious fault. Elegant writing, with its daintily picked words and smooth-flowing sentences, is all well enough in its place; but that place is not in the drama of this prosy, money-grabbing age. The play-goer doesn't relish it. What he wants is something to strangle his cares and cut the throat of his troubles--something to make him laugh and forget he has a note to pay to-morrow, with no money to meet it, and shrewd managers will show their shrewdness by accommodating him.[2]

Thus, the American musical theatre until about the turn of the twentieth century was frequently an admixture of disparate elements thrown together, with little thought for how the pieces complemented each other. One show might have some characteristics of operetta, musical comedy, and some vaudeville routines, too.[3] Cecil Smith, a musical theatre historian, comments that in the late nineteenth century it was "hard to tell a comic opera from a musical comedy, since musical comedies were no more than vulgarizations of the comic opera formula."[4] As an

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[1]Mates, p. 39; The Boston Ram, 23 March 1892, p. 11; The Stage, 25 October 1867, p. 5.

[2]Whitton, p. 32.

[3]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 118; John McCabe, George M. Cohan: The Man Who Owned Broadway (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), p. 48.

[4]Smith, p. 130.

example of this lack of integration, the printed program for A Tin Soldier (1866) contained a comically blatant admission by listing the songs in this show as "musical interruptions."[1]

One characteristic that was common to most of these early shows was a foreign flavor. No matter what the form was called, there was still an identifiable foreign quality in musicals--even when being written by American-born composers and writers.[2] Kislan points out that America inherited its language and most of its customs from England, that "the earliest work of the American artists was never less than European in form, style, and spirit,"[3] and that, therefore, the "American audiences supported a musical theatre that was European in origin, form, and style."[4] According to theatre historian John McCabe,

> The American theatre before 1900 was to large degree a theatre of revival, import, and adaptation. Its potential in respect to native drama was enormous--it had hardly anywhere else to go but up. . . .
> . . . New York theatregoers had their choice of three basic forms of musical shows: operettas heavily European in flavor, musical vaudeville, and musical farce. The operettas were endlessly self-imitative, following plot formulas as undeviating as they were unimaginitive. Musical vaudeville and its close kin, burlesque, had abounding vigor and little artistry. . . . Musical farce was not much more sophisticated in its treatment of the immigrants but it frequently tried

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[1]Ibid., p. 65, citing program of A Tin Soldier.

[2]Kislan, The Musical, pp. 15-16; Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 18.

[3]Kislan, The Musical, p. 11.

[4]Ibid., p. 16.

at least for authenticity in costume and decor when presenting these minorities on stage.[1]

Therefore, in summary, the musicals that were done prior to the twentieth century tended to be mixtures of various forms with a touch of broad comedy, a detectable European influence, and little, if any, integration of the music and the story. In 1900 George M. Cohan wrote a song for his musical The Governor's Son in which he describes the typical musical of that time:

> Same old songs about the same old moon;
> Few new words but the same old tune;
> Dashing on before us,
> We see the merry chorus,
> And everything they do you know's been done;
> You hear the same old hit,
> The scenery's just the same
> But it's painted up a bit;
> You can ask most any showman
> Inquire of Charley Frohman,
> And he'll say there's nothing new beneath the sun.[2]
>
> George M. Cohan,
> "Nothing New Under the Sun"

Early Twentieth Century and The Princess Musicals

The American musical theatre of the first decade of the twentieth century was dominated by operetta. It was not a period of great change nor of development. Bordman says,

> Comic opera remained arioso, sentimental, and, thanks usually to a dialect comedian, comic. Musical comedy remained boisterous, loose-jointed, and filled with specialties that generally had little or nothing to do with the matter at hand. Scenery was rarely . . . conceived architecturally. Painted flats predominated .

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[1]McCabe, pp. 49-50.

[2]Ibid., p. 53, citing George M. Cohan, The Governor's Son.

> . . . Not scenery but casts of 60 to 100 or more filled musical stages.[1]

Alan Jay Lerner explains that the lyrics' only requirement at this time was that they fit the music. The words did not have to have any connection with the show since singers could rarely be understood anyway. Lerner states that the singers "in these early pre-war days were either foreign-born and could not be understood, or, if they were of native stock, had been carefully tutored in the art of singing in code."[2]

World War I lasted from approximately 1914 to 1918, and the United States became officially involved in 1917.[3] With the approach of the war, however, there was a movement away from the foreign flavor in the musical theatre because there was an almost total distaste for anything European.[4] Again Boucicault's theory of the theatre's mirroring society was shown to be valid.[5] Although the second decade was dominated by opulent revues, most notably the annual Ziegfeld Follies, European domination of the American book-musical theatre came to an end with the so-called

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[1]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 183.

[2]Lerner, The Street, p. 40.

[3]Encyclopedia Britannica, 1970 ed., s. v. "World War I."

[4]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 297.

[5]Fell, p. 20, citing Boucicault.

"Princess musicals," according to Lerner.[1] These musicals were written from 1915 to 1918.[2]

The term "musical comedy" had originated with Evangeline (a burlesque on Longfellow's work, by Rice and Goodwin) in 1874, but the definitive musical comedy form emerged somewhere around 1900 as the result of the combination of several of the older forms, including burlesque, musical farce comedy, and vaudville.[3] But it was as much an English invention as an American one, with such British shows as A Gaitey Girl and Florodora being imported in the 1890s.[4] The Princess shows were different in several ways, however, and may be said to be the real beginning of the American musical comedy form, according to Lerner.[5]

The stories of the Princess musicals concern American characters, usually from the New York area, in rather ordinary situations. They get themselves into some amusing predicaments while boy chases girl, but the couple always ends up together.[6] Lerner explains how the music

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[1]Lerner, The Street, p. 40.

[2]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, pp. 305-6, 310-11, 318-20, 324, 329-30, 336-7.

[3]Ibid., p. 43; Smith, p. 19.

[4]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 118.

[5]Lerner, p. 40.

[6]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 105-6.

of these shows also became uniquely American in style:

> The American musical began when the American theatre began, roughly at the end of World War I. Until then, the national musical staple was essentially old Vienna in English . . . . Storyville . . . had been filling the night air with Dixieland music since before the turn of the century, but as far as Broadway was concerned . . . the beat of Jazz did not exist.
>
> When the Provincetown Theatre presented Eugene O'Neill's Beyond the Horizon [1918], the American theatre stopped reaching across the ocean and started reaching into its own soul. Shortly thereafter, at the Princess Theatre in New York, composer Jerome Kern, lyricist P. G. Wodehouse . . ., and book writer Guy Bolton began creating a series of smallish musicals that became known as the Princess Theatre shows. Even though Bolton and Wodehouse were both English, those smallish musicals inaugurated the American musical. Kern was writing genuine, eighteen karat American popular theatre music, and elegantly, discreetly but distinctly the music had a beat.[1]

And so, there was a revolution between 1915 and 1920, establishing American music, dance steps, situations, places, and characters (and fewer of them than in foreign plots) in the Broadway musical. Lehman Engel says that during this period the "comedy material grew out of character and situation; the books had reasonable and contemporary plots and characters; and the language of the books and lyrics was everyday."[2] But the plot lines in these early musicals generally dealt with the trivial situations of shallow characters, although they were now American situations and characters, wearing ordinary clothes in front of familiar scenes, with credibility stretched in

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[1]Lerner, The Street, pp. 39-40.

[2]Engel, Theatre: Consideration, p. 28.

order to get a laugh.[1] The greatest shortcoming, however, was probably the continued use of vaudeville acts, now usually called "specialty numbers," with virtually no integration into the rest of the show.[2] In fact, artistic integration of any of the elements was still virtually non-existent in the American musical theatre, although there were some songs in the Princess musicals that "defined character and carried the story forward . . . ," according to Brooks Atkinson.[3] Bordman adds, however, that statements claiming integration of the parts of the musicals "were forthcoming at the start of each great era of the American musical theatre. At this early day these standards were not a little utopian."[4]

Lerner sums up the contribution of the Princess musicals:

> The books were light and amusing and the music in the popular voice range, and Wodehouse wrote lyrics that were appropriate to both: clever, graceful, and wittily rhymed. . . .
>
> . . . The musical books were lighthearted, simple-minded, and innocent. Most were tailored to the talents of the stars--as a rule, comic stars. The "love interest" was disposed of in short order in an occasional scene in front of a curtain downstage while the set was being changed. Its functional raison d'etre was to give the composer and lyricist an opportunity for a ballad.[5]

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 105-6.

[2]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 183.

[3]Atkinson, Broadway, p. 110.

[4]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 330.

[5]Lerner, The Street pp. 40-41.

Thus two of the main contributions of the seven Princess musicals may have been more sensible plots and the necessity for more literate lyrics, because all of the lyrics had to be understood in the more intimate theatre.[1]

One important composer, writer, and performer in pre-World War I musical comedy is George M. Cohan. Although he composed music, lyrics, and sometimes librettos for about twenty musical comedies during the early twentieth century, his works have not become classics--i.e., they are not often revived. His works were called "musical melodramas," and his tunes and lyrics are almost childlike in their simplicity. The casting (of his family and friends) was done before the story was created and the plots always have the same formula: a petulant, patriotic, egotistical hero (Cohan) is worshipped by some girl, but their union is blocked by a villain, who is eventually overcome by the righteous patriotism of the hero, with the help of some mysterious additional character, frequently in disguise, who helps to expose the villain. His plays were currently popular because of Cohan's performances in them, their blatantly topical appeal to the period's patriotism, and their unsophisticated, vaudevillian humor. His main contribution to the musical theatre was his brushing aside of the European influence and creating a new, vital American

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[1]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, pp. 305-6, 310-12, 318-20, 324, 329-30, 336-7.

spirit.[1]

The musicals done in the first twenty years of the twentieth century, therefore, moved away from the European quality and toward a simpler, more contemporary, American type of show. The dialogue and lyrics were written in the American vernacular, and the music was composed with a distinctly American, jazz-oriented beat.

The Twenties: Some New Ideas

In the decade following World War I prosperity reigned and the musical theatre reflected the carefree, happy nature of American society. Fordin describes the musical theatre of the 1920s as being "a formula of songs, dances, favorite stars, comedy, romance, pretty girls, production numbers, novelty numbers and grand finales. The story existed as a string to hang these elements on and had little relation to them or to reality and real emotion. The pattern was a bit of story, song cue, a bit of story, song cue."[2]

A common trait of the musicals of the 1920s was the general lack of integration of the lyrics with the plot. Oklahoma!'s integration of these elements only twenty years later was so complete that it prompted Sylvia Kaye to

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[1]McCabe, pp. x-xii, 35, 51-52, 61, 67, 75, 77, 81, 83, 114, 127, 142, 171, 217; Smith, p. 151; Howard Taubman, The Making of the American Theatre, revised ed. with an Introduction by Richard Rodgers (New York: Coward-McCann, 1967), p. 143.

[2]Fordin, p. 42.

observe that, in Oklahoma!, "If you knew the songs, you knew the plot!"[1] But in the twenties, although the lyrics were by now meant to be understood in a more intimate theatre, they usually reflected the wit of the lyricist, not the character who sang them.[2]

There was some small movement toward integration of music, lyrics, and plot in the twenties, especially by Rodgers and by Hammerstein, working individually. For example, Rodgers said of his dissatisfaction in 1927 with the old formulas:

> . . . we were well aware of the number of producers and writers who, having had one hit, simply tried to duplicate the formula the next time out--or even worse, tried to duplicate someone else's formula! Rarely, if ever, did these imitative productions succeed in being more than hand-me-down products.
>
> Indeed, there was an appalling monotony of subject matter in even the best musical shows of the twenties. The themes seemed to be built almost entirely around the boy's pursuit of the girl, their breaking up in time for the first act finale (you gotta make the customers want to come back to see how it all turns out), and the eventual reconciliation. There were plenty of variations on the Montague-Capulet theme or the Cinderella--or its variant, the Pygmalion theme . . . . The important thing was that everyone had to end up happy so that the people who bought tickets would leave the theatre happy.[3]

As a result, Rodgers and Hart made a valiant attempt toward integration with Chee-Chee (1928), their shortest-running musical, when they added the following notation in the program: "Note: the musical numbers, some of them very

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[1]Kaye, "Musical Comedy Tonight," Part I.

[2]Lerner, The Street, p. 33.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 105-6.

short, are so interwoven with the story that it would be confusing for the audience to peruse a complete list."[1]

Hammerstein likewise longed for a more integrated theatre while working within, and poking fun at, the existing formula of the day. For example, these are the lyrics to a song from his 1920 show, Always You:

> Start with a little plot,
> Cook it but not too hot,
> Throw in a heroine,
> Maiden so simple and ingenuous.
> Then let your tenor shine,
> With his high C:
> Write in a well known joke,
> Use all the old time "hoke"
> For this is the surest plan
> To entertain the tired businessman.[2]

And Hammerstein had even preceded Rodgers in trying to integrate music into the plot of his Rose-Marie (1924) when the following notice appeared in the show's program: "The musical numbers of this play are such an integral part of the action that we do not think we should list them as separate episodes,"[3] and again in the program for Golden Dawn (1927): "The musical numbers are an integral part of the show as it evolves and therefore are not listed separately."[4] However, Hammerstein's biographer, Fordin, says, "This represents wishful thinking more than full

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[1]Ibid., pp. 118-9, citing program for Chee-Chee.

[2]Fordin, pp. 50-51.

[3]Stanley Green, Story, p. 42, citing program for Rose-Marie.

[4]Ibid., p. 55, citing program for Golden Dawn.

realization of the goal of integration, since the musical still followed the story-song-cue-story-song-cue pattern in some measure."[1]

Thus, while there were some attempts toward maturing and improving the musicals of the twenties, the use of the same old formula in most shows continued. One giant step forward was Kern and Hammerstein's Show Boat in 1927. Fortunately, Hammerstein worked on the libretto and lyrics for this show over a long period, in contrast to the rapid, haphazard, throwing-together of a Broadway show, as was customary in that day.[2] Ziegfeld was to produce the show, and he kept postponing its opening; so Hammerstein kept improving it.[3] There were many departures from the twenties formula--no opening chorus line, the romantic couple's marriage at the end of Act I (rather than the traditional break-up), and treatment of such previously unmentionable subjects in American musicals as racial prejudice, miscegenation, and gambling addiction.[4]

Show Boat defies classification, because it contains elements of several genres. Its resemblence to a musical comedy includes the fact that its night club and show boat scenes include specialty numbers, and it contains

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[1]Fordin, p. 56.

[2]Ibid, pp. 79, 117.

[3]Ibid., p. 83.

[4]Ibid., pp. 80-83; Taubman, Making American Theatre, pp. 194-95.

songs that are not integrated into nor even written for the play--e.g., Kern's "Bill", which was dropped from two scores (Oh, Lady! Lady! in 1918, and Sally in 1920) before being used in Show Boat.[1] One reviewer of the original production even called it "a beautiful example of musical comedy."[2] The specialty numbers also made the show resemble a vaudeville show or a revue. Yet some of the songs from the show (e.g., "Make Believe" and "Why Do I Love You?") require the trained voices more common to operetta than to musical comedy or revue. However, its handling of more serious subjects and its three-dimensional characters who develop during the play suggest its similarity to a musical play.[3] Whatever its form, Show Boat was unusual for 1927, and yet strangely it did not become a prototype of a new, improved form to be successfully copied, as Oklahoma! did some sixteen years later. It did, however, mark a crucial step toward a more modern form of Broadway musical: it made operetta old-fashioned and trivial musical comedy outdated.[4]

Other than Show Boat, the twenties musicals were generally "as giddy and lighthearted as the euphoric age in

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[1]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, pp. 115, 329-30, 357, 434-35.

[2]Richard Watts, Jr., "'Show Boat' Here with Cargo of Song and Color," New York Herald Tribune, 28 December 1927, p. 13.

[3]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, pp. 434-35.

[4]Taubman, Making American Theatre, p. 191.

which they had been spawned," according to Stanley Green.[1] Therefore, Green says that, in spite of some valiant attempts at integration, the twenties' major contribution was the introduction of new, talented composers and lyricists (including Rodgers and Hammerstein) who would later lead the American musical theatre to become preeminent in the world.[2]

Thirties Musicals: Movement Toward Maturity

The economic depression and the worsening world relations that would result in World War II caused people in the 1930s to think more seriously, and the musical theatre mirrored this attitude. While it retained its fun, music, glamour, and escapism, it placed less emphasis on sex, romance, unreality, and trivial issues, than it had in the twenties.[3] The creators of the thirties' musicals discovered that they could comment effectively through song and perhaps even reach a wider audience than the writers of serious drama; their songs became humorous conveyors of social messages about poitical corruption, the folly of war, and the plight of the common man in contemporary society.[4] A tangible result of this more serious approach to musical

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[1]Stanley Green, Ring Bells! Sing Songs! Broadway Musicals of the 1930's (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1971), p. 12.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Green, Ring, pp. 12-13.

[4]Ibid., p. 13.

theatre resulted in the first award of a Pulitzer Prize to the script of a musical: Of Thee I Sing, by Kaufman and Ryskind in 1931; the second Pulitzer Prize to a musical would go to Oklahoma! in 1944.[1]

Operettas decreased in popularity in the thirties with only thirty-four being done in the entire decade, while topical revues and musical comedies reigned. Of the 175 musicals produced in this decade, 77 were comedies, and 64 were revues.[2] Rodgers says, "The best of these never went in for preaching or propaganda, but managed to make their comments on the conditions of the world without forgetting that the basic function of entertainment was to entertain."[3]

The thirties became a period of standardization in musical production. For example, there was less mixing of forms, i.e., a musical comedy, an operetta, and a revue by this time tended to be different forms with different formulas. Also, composers now did a whole score for a specific show, instead of one show's having songs by several composers, a long-standing practice. In the music of shows of this period, the 32-bar, AABA popular song form was standardized, and the lyrics became sophisticated and witty, with melody reigning supreme over the jazzy beat that had

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[1]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 474; Green, Fact Book, p. 518.

[2]Green, Ring, p. 13.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 183.

been so popular in the previous decade.[1]

The competition offered by the less expensive entertainments of radio and talking movies dictated that the live stage shows should offer something more than escapism, if they were to attract the few people who could afford to buy tickets. Thus the musicals of the thirties tended to be optimistic shows, which were written by new, burgeoning talents, containing humor that made the more mature audiences of this period think.[2] Green sums up what was happening at the close of the thirties:

> As the world itself was irretrievably sinking into the savagery and squalor of World War II, the musical productions being displayed . . . offered theatregoers a good deal of boisterous fun, a measure of social commentary, some lavish spectacle, three or four brilliant clowns, many talented, youthful performers, and a worthy number of distinctive original songs. In the decades to come the themes would become more and more dependent upon pretested literary and dramatic works as the medium itself would continue to seek new ways to say it with music. But the foundations that the future would build upon were laid during a turbulent ten years in which the American Musical Theatre not only roused the tired businessman from his torpor, but woke up to its own unlimited potential for growth both in form and in content.[3]

And the thirties did produce a few major works, such as Porgy and Bess, Gershwin's 1935 folk opera, and On Your Toes, the 1936 musical comedy by Rodgers and Hart that moved one step closer to integrating ballet into the

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[1]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 388; see Glossary: thirty-two bar AABA popular song form.

[2]Green, Ring, pp. 14-15.

[3]Ibid., p. 190.

plot.[1]

Thus there was a reflection of a change in public taste in American musical theatre forms that led from operetta to revue to musical comedy, with lots of variation, development, and experimentation. There was also an accompanying modification in the style of music that was used in the twentieth-century musical theatre, a change that merits additional discussion.

Changing Musical Styles

The predominantly tertiary beat of the Austrian operetta music of the nineteenth century was first challenged by the addition of a prominent binary beat to the American musical when ragtime became popular around the turn of the century. This was an Afro-American musical form that quickly spread to vaudeville. It was fast, highly syncopated, gay, and made the listeners happy in a way that the Austrian music never had done.[2] Its major change was one of rhythm. Ragtime died out after the death of Scott Joplin in 1917.[3] However, a new musical variation, also of Afro-American birth, was quick to take over: jazz. It had a new, more elaborate, syncopated beat, introduced new chordings and patterns, was aggressive, contrapuntal, and

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[1]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, pp. 494-95, 498.

[2]Ibid., p. 119; Howard, p. 720.

[3]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 297.

improvisatory.[1] This latter characteristic particularly prevented carefully written, commercial material, such as that which was composed for the theatre, from incorporating the strict jazz idiom. But that did not prevent the beat and many of the other devices of jazz from working their way into theatre music. So Kern developed his own style of American music, devoid of improvisation and the cacophonous sound of jazz, but incorporating elements of ragtime and jazz, when he composed the Princess Theatre musicals.[2]

The next major innovation in popular music appeared during the thirties; it was called swing. Although any piece of music can be played in "swing" style, swing was not much adapted to the stage, because of its predominance of rhythm over melody, which made lyrics difficult to write and difficult to sing with intelligibility in performance. Swing was the popular music of the youth of the thirties, and by this time the young people went to the movies, a less expensive form of entertainment, leaving the stage musicals to a generally older audience who would not accept this new sound. Swing was mainly used for social dancing, not the same as show dancing, in which the livelier jazz beat was still preferred. However, the Broadway songs were frequently adapted by swing arrangers for non-theatrical, commercial use in social dancing, and there was much

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[1]Howard, p. 721.

[2]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 298.

complaining about this by Broadway composers, including Richard Rodgers.[1] In his autobiography, Rodgers discussed his and Lorenz Hart's objection to swing music:

> Our . . . beef was registered in "I Like to Recognize the Tune," in which we voiced our objection to the musical distortions then so much a part of pop music because of the swing-band influence. We really had nothing against swing bands per se, but as songwriters we felt it was tough enough for new numbers to catch on as written without being subjected to all kinds of interpretive manhandling that obscured their melodies and lyrics. To me, this was the musical equivalent of bad grammar.[2]

Bordman describes Broadway's response to swing:

> . . . Broadway never responded [to swing] with the enthusiasm or imagination it had brought to ragtime and jazz. At least two reasons probably account for this cool reception. Swing was, to no small extent, unmelodic and untheatrical. Its insistent, driving rhythms and strictly coordinated ensemble sounds were designed for what became known as "the big bands." . . . Though jazz, of course, originated far from theatrical footlights, its personal qualities allowed it to be adapted, however impurely, to theatrical purposes. But swing without its big bands was not as malleable, and big bands would have been lost in theatre orchestra pits. . . . Broadway was growing old. . . . The average age of Broadway's principal creators and stars was markedly higher than it had been twenty or forty years before.[3]

In addition, Bordman further explained the situation in a letter to this researcher:

> To me, each Black-inspired musical innovation--ragtime, jazz and swing--moved a step further away from orderly melody which could conveniently frame words. All three of course started as purely musical revolutions, but ragtime melodies, with their patent formality, were

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[1]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 503.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 193.

[3]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, pp. 493-94.

> quickly given lyrics. Truly improvisational jazz made words almost alien, but commercial jazz could easily sustain them and the blues form would be vitiated without them. But swing, with its emphasis on blaring orchestrations and insistent, repetitive rhythms--while it might allow some interesting dance numbers--discouraged the sort of lyric required to advance a Broadway show. Of course, as I mentioned in the book another reason for swing's lack of Broadway acceptance was the theatre's aging audience.[1]

Thus the Afro-American rhythms developed from ragtime to jazz to swing in the first half of the twentieth century in America. The first two styles were incorporated into theatre music as a change from European styles--i.e., from a tertiary, slower, elegant rhythm, to a faster, binary, syncopated, more bouncy and informal sound. This new sound was easily adapted to the theatre because it could accommodate the happy words, melodies, and dances that were so desirable in the early twentieth-century revues and musical comedies. Although swing grew from these first two forms, its emphasis on rhythm, loudness, and orchestration at the expense of melody and lyrics made it unsuitable for theatrical use.

The Forties: Setting the Stage

During approximately the last five years prior to Oklahoma! the Broadway musical was, as described by Bordman, in a lull, with trite books, little satire, and generally dull shows.[2] Due to political unrest that

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[1]Gerald Bordman to Betty Sue Taylor, 28 August 1982.

[2]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, pp. 493-94.

eventually drew the United States into World War II, there was little likelihood around 1940 that Americans would allow any foreign influence in their aesthetic works. By 1942 most of the young talent was either participating in the war or working in Hollywood, so the older writers led. This resulted in a less flashy and optimistic, more conservative, sober, nostalgic and sentimental era for the musical theatre, with emphasis on the return to the joys of peace, home, bygone Americana, and thus a more serious musical theatre.[1] As Lehman Engel says, "The stage, by 1940, was set for the big period."[2]

The 1942-43 season on Broadway found business booming with twenty-five musicals and fifty-six non-musicals. But these musicals included an ice show, a Yiddish musical, seven revivals, and eleven revues, so the competition was not very tough.[3] The four new musical comedies that constituted Oklahoma!'s competitors were: Count Me In (61 performances), Once Over Lightly (7 performances), You'll See Stars (4 performances), and the one success, Something for the Boys (422 performances), starring Ethel Merman, singing Cole Porter songs, with book by Herbert and Dorothy Fields.[4] Therefore, this was a

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[1]Ibid., p. 529; Lerner, p. 42.

[2]Engel, Theatre: Consideration, p. 44.

[3]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 530.

[4]Ibid., pp. 532-33.

receptive stage for the entrance of Oklahoma!, which was to find no serious competition during its reign of over five years on Broadway.[1]

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[1]Green, Fact Book, p. 511.

CHAPTER III

THE MEN WHO CREATED THE SCRIPT AND SCORE OF OKLAHOMA!

Oscar Hammerstein II

"The Hammerstein family is to the American theatre what the Adams family is to American politics . . . ," Clifton Fadiman once commented.[1] Oscar Greeley Clendenning Hammerstein II (1895-1960) was a member of the third generation of famous Hammerstein theatrical talents.

The first Hammerstein to be involved in the theatre was a German immigrant, Oscar Hammerstein I (1847-1919). He came to the United States as a penniless, eighteen-year-old boy with a passion for opera.[2] He made and lost fortunes by his inventions, real estate investments, theatrical endeavors, and much publicized legal feuds (once forty at one time).[3] But he can be credited with being the first to make Times Square into the prime theatre district of New York and with giving the Metropolitan Opera

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[1]Fordin, p. 4, citing Clifton Fadiman.

[2]Vincent Sheean, Oscar Hammerstein I, The Life and Exploits of an Impresario, with a Preface by Oscar Hammerstein II (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), pp. 9, 18.

[3]Ibid., pp. 30, 33, 39-45, 57, 61, 67, 76, 81, 101, 108, 116, 117, 181; Fordin, p. 21.

a great deal of competition in opera production.[1]

In the second generation of Hammersteins, William, Oscar II's father, was the foremost vaudeville theatre manager of the early twentieth century in New York City.[2] When he died in 1914, the New York Times's headline read, "Hammerstein, the Barnum of Vaudeville, Dead at Forty," and taps were sounded on Broadway when he was laid to rest--as they would be for Oscar II forty-six years later.[3]

However, William Hammerstein shared neither his father's nor his son's love of the theatre. To him, it was merely a lucrative business.[4] Before his death, William Hammerstein confronted his son: "Ockie, you must promise me that you will never do anything so foolish as to consider making the theatre your livelihood. Become a lawyer."[5] And indeed Oscar Hammerstein II received his Bachelor of Arts in Pre-Law and finished two years of law school at Columbia University, before succumbing to the call of the

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[1]Sheean, pp. 83, 101, 166, 168, 180, ch. 24; Fordin, pp. 7, 21; David Ewen, Richard Rodgers (New York: Henry Holt, 1957), pp. 199-200.

[2]Sheean, pp. 122; Fordin, pp. 2, 9, 17, 19, 21; Deems Taylor, Some Enchanted Evenings (New York: Harper, 1953), p. 94; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 200.

[3]Fordin, pp. 26-7; David Ewen, With a Song in His Heart (New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1963), p. 172.

[4]Fordin, pp. 9-10, 17; Taylor, pp. 98-99.

[5]Fordin, pp. 17, 25-6, citing unpublished notes written by Oscar Hammerstein II for a projected autobiography.

professional theatre.[1]

During his childhood Hammerstein was a pampered, even over-protected, child. Fordin says,

> Mama, Grandma, and Aunt Mousie . . . seemed constantly at his beck and call, doing things for him, and always with the attitude that he was worth it. Oscar could do almost anything except go outside the house. His overseers impressed on him the idea that he was a little too good to play with any of the ordinary children on the street. . . . Oscar was skinny and pale and he slipped quite easily into the role of "delicate boy" . . . .[2]

Furthermore, Oscar was always extolled as the genius of the family. This encouragement was apparently good for his own intellectual development, but it was detrimental to that of his only brother, Reginald, who was told he was not bright, but was a clown.[3] In school and in their later theatrical careers, each boy fulfilled his parents' expectations. Oscar always made good grades in school, often read two books a day, wrote for his school newspapers, and was even skipped forward twice in elementary school.[4]

Amateur productions

As a child Hammerstein was convinced that he would become a professional performer.[5] He took piano lessons as a child and learned to read music well and also to play by ear.[6] Hammerstein wrote of his musical ability:

It took me years to learn that I did not play the piano

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[1]Fordin, pp. 28, 33. [2]Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[3]Ibid., p. 13. [4]Ibid., pp. 14-16, 58.

[5]Ibid., pp. 13, 17, 23-24, 27. [6]Ibid., p. 19.

> very well. I so enjoyed my own playing. . . . What expression I could put into . . . music! What exaltation I felt! . . . But when I became fifteen or sixteen my own friends began to express less sympathetic reactions, and it became clear to me that they were not hearing the same music I thought I was hearing when I played.[1]

But his faculty advisor at Columbia, Carl Van Doren, recognized Hammerstein's greater potential as a writer and encouraged him to enter that profession; this pleased him very much.[2]

The major event for Hammerstein while at Columbia University was his participation in the yearly Columbia Varsity Show, both as a performer and writer. In his first, the 1915 show, Hammerstein sang, acted, danced, and wrote some of the script. Another member of the cast was Lorenz Hart, who would become Richard Rodgers's first collaborator. Hammerstein met Rodgers at this first Varsity Show when Rodgers came to see the show with his older brother, Mortimer. The acquaintance between the two future showmen continued during the next few years as Mortimer brought Richard to his and Oscar's fraternity house, where Richard played the piano. And, in fact, Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote a few songs together during these amateur days.[3]

Early professional work

Another member of the second generation of

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[1]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 3. [2]Fordin, p. 28.

[3]Ibid., pp. 19, 28, 29, 31; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 198.

theatrical Hammersteins was Oscar's Uncle Arthur, a successful producer of Broadway musicals, particularly of operettas.[1] When Oscar wanted to quit law school at the age of twenty-two to go to work in Arthur's organization, Arthur put up a fight in an attempt to see that William's wishes for his son were carried out, but gave in to Oscar's argument that "it's in my blood."[2] About his first job with Uncle Arthur, Hammerstein wrote, "I was an office boy by day, stage manager by night, and an eager kibbitzer [sic] at the rehearsals of the new shows."[3] This was 1917, and Hammerstein made it clear to his uncle that he intended to become a writer of Broadway musicals.[4]

Although Hammerstein's familial connections in the theatre opened doors for him, he did not depend on the Hammersteins' fame and influence to replace hard work and perseverance, which--with his talent--brought him the greatest success of the family.[5]

Reflecting the world situation in the 1920s, the musical theatre, for which Hammerstein wrote his first musicals, offered audiences an opportunity to escape the ugly memories of World War I, while the economy was booming. He gave the public what it wanted--not real life on the

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[1]Sheean, p. 133.

[2]Fordin, p. 33; Taylor, p. 105.

[3]Fordin, p. 35, citing Hammerstein's autobiographical notes.

[4]Fordin, p. 40. [5]Ibid.

stage nor anything that required mental energy, but a predictable combination of pleasant situations, humor, beauty, novelty, gimmicks, simple upbeat music, and happy characters played by popular performers. Hammerstein wrote in 1950 about how his twenties musicals were written according to the accepted formula of that decade:

> During the early twenties, when I was making my start, I don't believe that musical comedy standards were as high as they are today. We followed a rigid construction formula. There was always an opening chorus at the rise of the curtain, and it was never expected that the audience would understand the words. The boys and girls were picked for all-around work, singing, dancing and appearance. The appearance was the first consideration. Most of them were indifferent singers and the quality of their dancing was due more to the agility and energy of their youth than to their training. As a matter of fact, when I was a stage manager, I used to train the understudies and the replacements for all the dancers. There was no step that they did that I couldn't do, or at any rate, show them how to do.
>
> After the opening chorus came a number professionally called the "ice-breaker." This was admittedly not one of the major efforts of the composer and lyric writer. It was a fill-in song written to quiet down the audience after the opening chorus and postpone any important action in the story until all the latecomers had been seated. In other words, if you got to the theatre on time, you had to sit through several minutes of nothing at all, waiting for those who chose to come late. . . . The very existence of the "ice-breaker" indicates a lack of integrity in the musical comedy writing of those days. The composer and lyric writer concentrated mainly on a few major efforts: a big dance number, a love ballad, a light comedy duet and one or two songs for the comedians . . . . I'm speaking, of course, of a general attitude. . . . In no period have the really fine musical plays been tainted by this shoddy approach. . . . The general attitude, however, toward musical comedy was cynical. Neither the public nor the critics expected more than a display of girls, jokes, and tunes.[1]

However, Hammerstein was working toward improving the

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[1]Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 39-41.

musical theatre formula, even in the twenties. Fordin says,

> As Oscar practiced his craft in the early years, he stayed in touch, as he always would, with popular taste and interest. But even as he mastered the existing structure of the musical, a determination grew in him to bring the elements together in a relationship that would make songs an integral part of the story and make both express something more real and expressive of human life and emotion. This determination, shown only haltingly at first, would eventually change the structure of the American musical.[1]

For example, Rose-Marie (1924, written in collaboration with Friml, Stothart, and Harbach) paved the way to making the plot of a musical more serious by portraying the first killing ever to take place on stage in a musical.[2] The portrayal of this event would be repeated in Porgy and Bess (1935, Gershwin, Gershwin, Heyward)[3] and then again in Oklahoma![4] Hammerstein also broke new ground in Rose-Marie by ending the show with only two people on the stage, instead of having the customary crowd, singing the grand finale.[5] He wrote, concerning Rose-Marie's bridging the gap between operetta and musical comedy:

> . . . the revolution in musical comedy which Rose-Marie has wrought was not accidental. It was a carefully directed attack at the Cinderella show in favor of operatic musical comedy. . . . The history of musical comedy has passed through a variety of phases,

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[1]Fordin, p. 42.

[2]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 391; Fordin, p. 55.

[3]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 495.

[4]Ibid., p. 535.

[5]Fordin, p. 55; Green, Story, pp. 42-43.

> but the type that persists, that shows the signs of ultimate victory, is the . . . musical play with music and plot welded together in skillful cohesion . . . . Is there a form of musical play tucked away somewhere . . . which could attain the heights of grand opera and still keep sufficiently human to be entertaining?[1]

Bordman points out that Oklahoma! provided the answer to this question, some eighteen years later.[2]

However, another Hammerstein show of the twenties, Sunny (1925, music by Kern), was built around a collection of specialty numbers. One star even insisted that his contract should specify that his specialty would occur between ten o'clock and ten-fifteen. Fordin says, "Their job was to build a show around a cast that had already been assembled as if for a revue."[3] Thus, these two shows, Rose-Marie and Sunny, reveal Hammeratein's ability to work within the conventions of his day, as well as to break the rules successfully on occasion.

Hammerstein's professional record

His first Broadway show was the musical comedy Always You, with music by Herb Stothart, which ran for sixty-six performances in 1920.[4] Table 1, which follows, contains a complete list of his professional works which were written before his collaboration with Rodgers.

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[1]Bordman, American Musical Theatrte, p. 392, citing Oscar Hammerstein II, Theatre Magazine (May 1925).

[2]Bordman, Amercian Musical Theatre, p. 392.

[3]Fordin, pp. 59-64.

[4]Green, Fact Book. p. 254.

TABLE 1

OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II'S PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTIONS
NOT IN COLLABORATION WITH RICHARD RODGERS

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Librettist[a]	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
			NON-MUSICAL PLAYS				
1919	The[b] Light		Hammerstein[c]			Wilson	
1921	Pop[d]		Hammerstein			Lonergan	
1924	Gypsy Jim	41	Hammerstein, Gropper			Brooke	
1924	New Toys[e]	24	Hammerstein, Gropper			Forrest	
			MUSICALS				
1920	Always You	66	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Stothart	Arthur Hammerstein	
1920	Tickle Me	207	Hammerstein, Mandel	Hammerstein, Mandel	Stothart	Collier	

[a]"Librettist" is the term used throughout this table to refer to the person who authored the script, whether for a musical, play, or film.

[b]Produced in New Haven only.

[c]Unless otherwise specified, the name "Hammerstein" on this table refers to Oscar Hammerstein II.

[d]Produced in Atlantic City only.

[e]One film version, 1925.

Table 1--Continued

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Libbretist	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
1920	Jimmie	71	Hammerstein, Harbach & Mandel	Hammerstein, Harbach	Stothart	Eagle	
1922	Daffy Dill	71	Hammerstein, Bolton	Hammerstein	Stothart	Mitchell	
1922	Queen O' Hearts	39	Hammerstein, Mandel	Hammerstein	Gensler & Wilkinson	Harda	
1923	Wildflower	477	Hammerstein, Harbach	Hammerstein, Harbach	Youmans & Stothart	Eagle	Bennett
1923	Mary Jane McKane	151	Hammerstein, Duncan	Hammerstein, Duncan	Youmans & Stothart	Price	
1924	Rose-Marie [a]	557	Hammerstein, Harbach	Hammerstein, Harbach	Friml & Stothart	Dickey	Bennett
1925	Sunny [b]	517	Hammerstein, Harbach	Hammerstein, Harbach	Kern	Short	Bennett
1925	Song of the Flame [c]	219	Hammerstein, Harbach	Hammerstein, Harbach	Gershwin, Stothart	Reicher	Bennett

[a]Three film versions: 1928, 1936, 1954.

[b]Two film versions: 1930, 1941.

[c]One vilm version: 1930.

Table 1--Continued

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Librettist	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
1926	The Wild Rose	61	Hammerstein, Harbach	Hammerstein, Harbach	Friml	Wilson	
1926	The Desert Song[a]	471	Hammerstein, Harbach & Mandel	Hammerstein, Harbach	Romberg	Hurley	
1927	Golden Dawn[b]	184	Hammerstein, Harbach	Hammerstein, Harbach	Kalman & Stothart	Reginald Hammerstein	
1927	Show Boat[c]	572	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Kern	Colvan & Hammerstein	Bennet
1928	Good Boy	253	Hammerstein, Harbach & Myers	Kalmar	Stothart, Ruby	Reginald Hammerstein	
1928	The New Moon[d]	509	Hammerstein, Mandel, Schwab	Hammerstein	Romberg	Hammerstein, Mandel & Schwab	Gerstenberger & Goodman
1928	Rainbow[b]	29	Hammerstein, Stallings	Hammerstein	Youmans	Hammerstein	

[a]Three film versions: 1929, 1943, 1953.

[b]One film version, 1930.

[c]Three film versions: 1929, 1936, 1951.

[d]Two film versions: 1930, 1940.

Table 1--Continued

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Libretist	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
1929	Sweet Adeline[a]	234	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Kern	Reginald Hammerstein	Bennet
1931	The Gang's All Here	23	Hammerstein, Crouse, Ryskind	Murphy, Simon	Gensler	Hammerstein, McCoy	Spialek
1931	Free for All	15	Hammerstein, Schwab	Hammerstein	Whiting	Hammerstein	
1931	East Wind	23	Hammerstein, Mandel	Hammerstein	Romberg	Hammerstein	Spialek
1932	Music in the Air[b]	342	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Kern	Hammerstein	Bennet
1933	Ball at the Savoy[c]	148	Hammerstein, Grunwald & Lohner-Beda	Hammerstein	Abraham	Hammerstein	
1934	Three Sisters[c]	45	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Kern	Hammerstein, Kern	Bennet
1935	May Wine	213	Mandel	Hammerstein	Romberg	Ruben	Bennet

[a]One film version, 1935.

[b]One film version, 1934.

[c]Produced in London only.

Table 1--Continued

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Libbrettist	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
1938	Gentlemen Unafraid[a]		Hammerstein, Harbach	Hammerstein, Harbach	Kern	Colvan	
1939	Very Warm for May[b]	59	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Kern	Hammerstein	Bennet
1940	American Jubilee[c]		Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Schwartz	Leonidoff	Spialek
1941	Sunny River	36	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Romberg	Hammerstein	Walker
1943	Carmen Jones[d]	502	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Bizet	Short	Bennet
			FILM MUSICALS				
1930	Viennese Nights		Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Romberg	Crosland	
1931	Children of Dreams		Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Romberg	Crosland	
1935	The Night Is Young		Woolf, Schultz	Hammerstein	Romberg	Murphy	

[a]Produced in St. Louis only.

[b]One film version, 1944.

[c]Produced at the World's Fair only.

[d]One film version, 1954.

Table 1--Continued

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Libbretticist	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
1936	Give Us This Night		Mayer, Starling	Hammerstein	Korngold	Hall	
1937	Swing High, Swing Low		Hammerstein, Van Upp	Freed, Coslow, Robin	Lane, Siegel, Rainger, Kisco	Leisen	Young, Boutelje
1937	High, Wide and Handsome		Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Kern	Mamoulian	Bennet
1938	The Lady Objects		Lehman, Kenyon	Hammerstein, Drake	Oakland	Kenton	
1938	The Great Waltz		Hoffenstein, Reisch	Hammerstein	Strauss	Hyman	Tiomkin
1939	The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle		Hammerstein, Sherman & Yost	Conrad, Kalmar	Ruby	Potter	Bennet & Webb

SOURCE: Stanley Green, ed. Rodgers and Hammerstein Fact Book (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1980), pp. 247-507.

Note: All plays and musicals opened in New York City, unless otherwise noted. The number of performances listed refers to the Broadway run only, not counting performances in out-of-town tryouts, except for the two shows that ran in London only. In the latter two cases, the number of performances refer to those performances in London.

As this table shows, his creative writing talent was involved in forty-three professional theatre works, besides those which were done in collaboration with Rodgers. He participated in the writing of a total of thirty stage musicals, four non-musical plays and nine musical films. Stanley Green, who has summarized all of Rodgers and Hammerstein's works, estimated in 1980 that if the performances of all the stage works written by Hammerstein that had ever taken place on Broadway were done consecutively, with eight performances per week, they would equal an unbroken run of approximately forty years, a prolific record of Broadway productions.[1]

Prior to his collaboration with Rodgers, Hammerstein wrote the books of only fourteen professional productions without writer-collaborators; these fourteen included nine musicals, two non-musicals, and three musical films. But he wrote the lyrics for twenty-three shows alone, which points up the fact that he preferred to write song lyrics rather than librettos or scripts; he collaborated on the scripts of twenty-five shows, but shared lyric-writing credits on only twelve productions. Hammerstein said he wrote the librettos only because he could not find anyone else who could do the job to suit him.[2] He explained,

> The longer I write, the more interested I become in expressing my own true convictions and feelings in the

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[1]Ibid., p. 248.

[2]Fordin, p. 263; Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 20-21.

> songs I write. . . . I became convinced that whatever I wanted to say could be said in songs, that I was not confined necessarily to trite or light subjects, and that since my talent and training in the writing of lyrics is far beyond my attainments in other fields of writing, I had better use this medium.[1]

He collaborated with thirty writers in all, but his major collaborators on books and lyrics were Otto Harbach (who collaborated on eleven librettos and nine sets of lyrics) and Frank Mandel (who collaborated on nine librettos).[2]

As for the composers with whom Hammerstein collaborated in these early days, Fordin says, "Unparalleled in the annals of collaboration was Oscar's ability to work with so many composers, of such varying styles, and create shows that for each composer were artistic successes, and often the greatest successes of their careers."[3] His major composer-collaborators were Herbert Stothart (ten scores), Jerome Kern (eight scores), and Sigmund Romberg (eight scores).[4]

Hammerstein's greatest work prior to "Oklahoma!"

The greatest critical and most lasting success of his pre-Oklahoma! days was Show Boat (1927, music by Kern, lyrics and libretto by Hammerstein). Some interesting facts about the show include that its original

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[1]Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 20-21.

[2]Green, Fact Book, pp. 247-507.

[3]Fordin, p. 42. [4]Green, Fact Book, p. 247.

run of 572 performances is 15 longer than Rose-Marie (although still not breaking Irene's record) and that it grossed about thirty million dollars. Cecil Smith says, "Show Boat in its day was perhaps the only musical comedy to achieve a dramatic verisimilitude that seemed comparable to the speaking stage."[2] Bordman adds that it was "the outstanding commercial success and artistic triumph of the 1927-28 season, and it has survived as one of the masterpieces of our lyric stage."[3] The show originally ran three and one-half hours. Ziegfeld wanted to cut the book, but Oscar insisted on cutting the specialties.[4] Rainbow (1928, Youmans and Hammerstein), was intended to follow in the footsteps of Show Boat, according to Fordin, but it closed after only twenty-nine performances.[5] Sweet Adeline (1929, Kern and Hammerstein) was also called a second Show Boat, and it had a respectable run of 234 performances.[6] Fordin says,

> Ziegfeld pressed him and Jerry to come up with another Show Boat using Jerry's idea of following Kim's life and bringing in Paul Robeson as the son of Joe and Queenie who goes on to a successful concert career. Neither man was very enthusiastic about the sequel and, to Ziegfeld's dismay, the matter was dropped.[7]

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[1]Fordin, p. 56; Burton, p. 314.

[2]Smith, p. 274.

[3]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 434.

[4]Fordin, p. 89.

[5]Ibid., p. 86. [6]Ibid., p. 100.

[7]Ibid., p. 115.

Hammerstein as a director

One accomplishment for which Hammerstein has never been adequately recognized is his play direction. However, it may be observed on table 1 that he directed eleven of his stage productions, including the very successful original production of Show Boat.[1] Fordin says, "All actors loved him and enjoyed working with him. He knew how to talk to actors, didn't scare them and was exceedingly patient with them. As a result, they would try anything he suggested they do."[2] His son, James Hammerstein, now a successful director, says that his father was

> "an amazing director," with great self control and a clear and logical approach, who said simply and directly what he was looking for. . . . He seemed to be completely at ease once he stepped inside a theatre. . . . Because he understands the theatre's framework of rules, conventions and expectations so thoroughly, he experiences a self-confidence in his workplace that he never feels anywhere else.[3]

Hammerstein as pupil and teacher

Hammerstein's theatrical training was not academic, but experiential by watching, listening, taking notes, and following the advice of his collaborators.[4] For example, he attended many Broadway shows as a child, sitting in special, free boxes provided as a courtesy to the Hammerstein family by the prominent theatre owners of the

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[1]Fordin, pp. 384-451. [2]Ibid., p. 110.

[3]Ibid., pp. 307-8, citing James Hammerstein.

[4]Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 43-44.

day.[1] Once he entered the profession, he never missed seeing any show that opened on Broadway, and he took copious notes on the writing and production details of every show; these notes, plus his personal criticisms, eventually filled 280 pages of a scrapbook.[2]

Otto Harbach, his first collaborator, was considered by Hammerstein to have been his best teacher on theatre. Hammerstein often said he was born into the theatrical world with two gold spoons in his mouth: his family name, which opened doors, and Harbach, who was his musical play writing teacher. Harbach taught him, among other things, that the audience does follow the story line, no matter how much splendor, movement, and how many pretty girls are put before it. And even in the day of the shallow musicals of the 1920s, Harbach taught him to make an attempt at integrating the songs and jokes into the plot. Harbach also taught him to think a long time about a situation before beginning to write about it, and never to quit working on anything as long as it could still be improved.[3] Another teacher was Jerome Kern, who taught him to be finicky about perfecting small details in a show. Hammerstein wrote, " . . . while people may not take any particular notice of any one small effect, the over-all result of finickiness . . .

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[1]Fordin, pp. 13, 17, 22; Taylor, p. 100; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 201.

[2]Fordin, p. 40.

[3]Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 43-44.

produces a polish which an audience appreciates."[1] And from Sigmund Romberg he said he learned the habit of working hard and not to procrastinate.[2] Finally, Hammerstein says, his collaborators taught him, "When you are creating a work of art, or any other kind of work, finish the job off perfectly."[3]

Hammerstein also tried to teach others what he had learned, perhaps to continue the legacy of Harbach and others to him. He wrote, "When I first began writing, I too made all these same mistakes, and I am frantically anxious to prevent others from making them. . . . Loathing all dishonest and sloppy work for the sorrows it has caused me, I loathe it in others as I would any poison, and if I can knock it out of anyone, I will."[4] What he meant by "dishonest and sloppy work," he went on to explain, was writing too fast, being too easily satisfied with one's work, and imitating other people's work.[5] Among the "mistakes" that he tried to prevent his students from making was just copying what was currently popular instead of adhering to one's own style; he wrote:

> The most important ingredient of a good song is sincerity. Let the song be yours and yours alone. However important, however trivial, believe it. Mean it from the bottom of your heart, and say what is on your

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[1]Ibid., p. 44. [2]Ibid, p. 45.

[3]Ibid., p. 46.

[4]Ibid., pp. 35-36.

[5]Ibid., pp. 33-36.

> mind as carefully, as clearly, as beautifully as you can. Show it to no one until you are certain that you cannot make one change that would improve it. After that, however, be willing to make improvements if someone can convince you that they are needed.[1]

He said this was simple, basic advice, and yet hard to follow. He added,

> This tendency to skip over the fundamental things and grasp the superficial is the tragedy of man's history from the beginning of time. I do not, therefore, place undue blame on misguided songwriters. They are merely keeping up with the tradition of the stupidity of the human race when, instead of writing what they honestly feel, they invent fancy rhymes and foolish jokes and tricky titles and imitative phrases and lines that merely "fill in."[2]

However, he also admitted that there are no invariable rules; rules help to keep a writer on the right track, but sometimes successfully breaking the rules can be the mark of a genius.[3]

One of Hammerstein's most successful students was his surrogate son, Stephen Sondheim, who virtually lived at the Hammerstein home in the 1940s.[4] Sondheim gives Hammerstein almost complete credit for teaching him how to write musicals.[5] Sondheim says,

> He saved my life with his counsel and his presence. He taught me not everything I know but everything I needed to know in order to write for myself and not for him.

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[1]Ibid., p. 34. [2]Ibid., p. 34-35.

[3]Ibid., pp. 26-27.

[4]Fordin, Introduction by Sondheim, pp. xi, xiii-xiv; Robert Berkvist, "Stephen Sondheim Takes a Stab at Grand Guignol," New York Times, Arts and Leisure section, 25 February 1979, pp. 1, 5.

[5]Fordin, p. 214, citing Stephen Sondheim.

> . . . he taught everybody. . . . He understood everything about teaching because that's what he was, a teacher, and what he liked best about it was that "by your pupils you are taught" (verse, "Getting to Know You," The King and I, 1951).[1]

Thus, Hammerstein as an adult was an avid pupil and teacher, especially in the theatrical art. Even in his lyrics and librettos, Hammerstein evidences a continuing desire to teach or advise his audience in order "to improve man's personal, moral or economic condition," according to Kislan.[2]

Hammerstein and drama critics

It was in 1924 that Hammerstein began a long feud with drama critics. It was his contention that drama critics were not qualified to criticize musicals because they were ignorant of what constituted a good one. He wrote many well publicized letters to the drama critics at this time. He wrote in his autobiographical notes: "The critics' problem is that they do not recognize what a good libretto is, and do not realize that a good musical comedy must not necessarily be a good play."[3] He also contended that the ideal musical reveals its plot through songs, as Oklahoma!

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[1]Ibid., Forward by Sondheim, pp. xi, xiii-xiv.

[2]Richard J. Kislan, "Nine Musical Plays of Rodgers and Hammerstein: A Critical Study in Content and Form" (Ph. D. dissertation, New York University, 1970), p. 91.

[3]Fordin, p. 57, citing Hammerstein's autobigraphical notes.

does.[1] Finally, he disagreed with some critics' contention that the book of a musical does not matter: "I am completely positive of this principle only because I have been kicked in the pants so hard every time I have disobeyed it."[2]

Hammerstein's theories on writing lyrics

Although Hammerstein began making notes for an autobiography in his last years, unfortunately he died before it could be written. Hugh Fordin, however, used these notes plus many other sources in 1977 to compile his biography of Hammerstein, Getting to Know Him. But in 1949 Hammerstein had published his own book, Lyrics, containing the lyrics to his most famous songs up to that point and fortunately including a forty-five-page introduction explaining his ideas on how lyric writing should be done. Since he thought of himself primarily as a lyricist, his theories on lyric-writing will be discussed in more detail than his theories on playwriting. Many of his ideas, however, do apply to both.

Lyrics first. In his early lyric writing Hammerstein added words to music that had already been composed, which was standard procedure in Broadway musicals

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[1]Ibid., p. 57.

[2]Ibid., p. 168.

during that period. Hammerstein gives two reasons for this tradition in his book Lyrics:

> The best musical plays of that time were being created in Vienna. When they were imported, American librettists had to write translations and adaptations for melodies that had been set to another language. . . . Lyric writers who submitted verses to be set were horrified by the abortive accents written to their words, and they soon found it less trying on their nerves to let the foreign musician have his say first and then write a lyric to fit his melody.
>
> The second influence was not foreign at all. It was distinctly an American one--the broken rhythm. First came ragtime, then jazz. For the purpose of creating these eccentric deviations from orthodox meters, it was better to let the composer have his head. . . . The hit melodies of that time had to be good dance melodies. This being the most important consideration, it was better for the lyric writer to trail along after the composer and fit his words to a refain written mainly to be danced to.[1]

Hammerstein does point out that there are some advantages of having music already composed to which to set lyrics:

> If one has a feeling for music--and anyone who wants to write lyrics had better have this feeling--the repeated playing of a melody may create a mood or set a train of thought that results in an unusual lyric. Words written in this way are likely to conform to the spirit of the music. It is difficult to fit words into the rigid framework of a composer's meter, but this very confinement might also force an author into the very essence of poetry. There is in all art a fine balance between the benefits of confinement and the benefits of freedom. An artist who is too fond of freedom is likely to be obscure in his expression. One who is too much a slave to form is likely to cripple his substance. Both extremes should be avoided, and no invariable laws or methods should be obeyed.[2]

According to Hammerstein, "There is . . . no invariable or

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[1]Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 5-6.

[2]Ibid., p. 7.

inevitable method for writing songs. Sometimes the words are written first, sometimes the music. Sometimes two or more collaborators lock themselves in a room and write words and music at the same time. The kind of songs, the individuals involved and the conditions under which they work dictate the process."[1] He pointed out, however, that grand opera scores are virtually always set to texts that were written first. He also cites as an example of this method the fact that Gilbert always wrote the words before Sullivan set them to music to create their comic operas.

He concludes that the words should come first, a practice he most often followed after beginning his collaboration with Rodgers: "It would seem to most people--and I am one of them--that writing the words first would be a more logical procedure, music being the more flexible and less specific of the two mediums."[2]

References to nature. Hammerstein's lyrics are known to have several common characteristics. In other words, there came to be recognized a "Hammmerstein" type of lyric. For example, he liked references to nature, which is so often evident in Oklahoma! with such references as "chicks and ducks and geese" and cattle "standing like statues" and "a bright, golden haze on the meadow."[3] But

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[1]Ibid., p. 4.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., pp. 51, 53.

as early as 1930, he wrote so many references to animals that a common gag about him was, "Oc must have been born in a zoo."[1] The truth is that he was born in New York City, but he liked the great outdoors, and in 1941, he bought Highland Farm in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, which became his major residence until his death.[2]

Repetition. Another characteristic of Hammerstein's lyrics is repetition. He wrote that he used this device "for the sake of musical continuity and design" and to compensate for the lack of too much rhyming.[3] Some pre-Oklahoma! examples of this from the musical Show Boat are:

> Tell me he's lazy, tell me he's slow,
> Tell me I'm crazy . . . .
> Oscar Hammerstein II, "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man"[4]

> Let me go 'way from de Mississippi,
> Let me go 'way from de white man boss;
> . . . . . .
> He jes' keeps rollin',
> He keeps on rollin' along.
> He don' plant taters,
> He don' plant cotton, ...
> Oscar Hammerstein II, "Ol' Man River"[5]

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[1]Fordin, p. 110.

[2]Ibid., p. 176; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 308.

[3]Fordin, pp. 176-7; Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 22.

[4]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 159.

[5]Ibid., pp. 162-3.

Only make believe I love you,
Only make believe that you love me.
. . . . . .
Could't you? Couldn't I? Couldn't we? . . .
Oscar Hammerstein II, "Make Believe"[1]

Some additional examples from other musicals are:

There's a hill beyond a hill
Beyond a hill beyond a hill--
. . . . . .
Follow along,
Follow along!
There's a dream beyond a dream
Beyond a dream beyond a dream-- . . .
Oscar Hammerstein II, "There's a Hill Beyond a Hill," Music in the Air[2]

You are the promised kiss of spring time
. . . . . .
You are the breathless hush of evening
. . . . . .
You are the angel glow . . . .
Oscar Hammerstein II, "All the Things You Are," Very Warm for May[3]

Use of the word "dream." Another characteristic of Hammerstein's lyrics is the use of the word "dream." Fordin says, "The word bothered Oscar for years; he claimed it turned up uninvited in his lyrics and he wasn't sure what this meant precisely . . . ."[4] For example, in one show, Music in the Air (1932), the word appears in five songs. Probably his most enduring "dream" song is "When I Grow too Old to Dream," (from the film The Night Is Young, 1934). In Oklahoma! the word appears in two songs, not to mention the whole concept of the "Dream Ballet."[5]

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[1]Ibid., p. 167. [2]Ibid., pp. 172-3.

[3]Ibid., p. 184. [4]Fordin, pp. 121, 131-2.

[5]Hammerstein, Lyrics p. 55, 71.

Rhymes. Hammerstein did not like obvious or tricky rhymes in his lyrics. He used a rhyming dictionary, but only as an adjunct to his own ingenuity, not as a substitute for it. Hammerstein said, "A rhyming dictionary is of little use and may, in fact, be a handicap when one is writing a song which makes a feature of rhyming. If you would achieve the rhyming grace of W. S. Gilbert or Lorenz Hart, never . . . open a rhyming dictionary. Don't even own one!"[1] Furthermore, he recommended that rhymes should be unobtrusive and unexpected, using unusual words for the infrequent rhymes:

> A rhyme should be unassertive, never standing out too noticeably. It should, on the other hand, not be a rhyme heard in a hundred other popular songs of the time, so familiar that the listener can anticipate it before it is sung. There should not be too many rhymes. In fact, a rhyme should appear only where it is absolutely demanded to keep the pattern of the music. If a listener is made rhyme-conscious, his interest may be diverted from the story of the song. If, on the other hand, you keep him waiting for a rhyme, he is more likely to listen to the meaning of the words.[2]

Function in libretto. Above all other rules of lyric-writing, Hammerstein emphasized that a song must have a function in the musical play. He wrote: "There are few things in life of which I am certain, but I am sure of this one thing, that the song is the servant of the play, that it is wrong to write first what you think is an attractive song and then try to wedge it into a story."[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 20. [2]Ibid., p. 21.

[3]Ibid., p. 19.

Meaning of words. His second most important rule was that the words of a song must not be meaningless. He wrote: "A great many compositions which achieve temporary popularity on the radio are shallow and trivial, but every song that has a long life says something fundamental . . ."[1] In other words, "a song writer's genius . . . [is] to say simply what everybody . . . [is] subconsciously feeling."[2]

Sound of words. Although Hammerstein was particular that words should have an accurate meaning, he also admitted that it was desirable to have lyrics that just "sound good" to the ear, although they may be more opaque in meaning. That was why he chose "elephant's eye" over "cow pony's eye" in "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" for Oklahoma!.[3] He says, "'Cow pony' was more indigenous to the western background, but I had reservations about it . . . It reads better than it sounds."[4] On this subject, he wrote:

> The words, instead of being literal, are like music superimposed on music. The lyric and the melody swing together in a happy union, and the pleasure they find in each other infects the singer and the listener with a kind of irresponsible satisfaction. . . . It belongs with the general flight from literalism in all art expression--notably painting--which characterizes the

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[1]Ibid., p. 27. [2]Atkinson, p. 112.

[3]Fordin, pp. 132, 187; Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 10.

[4]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 10.

creative works of this century.[1]

Words easy to sing. He emphasized that, "The job of the poet is to find the right word in the right place, the word with the exact meaning and the highest quality of beauty or power. The lyric writer must find this word too, but it must be also a word that is clear when sung and not too difficult for the singer to sing on that note which he hits when he sings it."[2] He said that the message of a song must be said "in an attractive way musically and lyrically. Every song of this kind requires little effort to sing or to listen to. A song that requires little effort to sing or to listen to is usually the result of great effort on the part of its creators."[3] In Lyrics he discussed such requirements as fitting the words to the time and accent pattern of the beats in music, leaving the singer opportunities to breathe, and the suitability of various kinds of phonemes for high notes and endings of lines.[4] He concluded, "No word, however fine and lofty and exact its meaning may be, is a good word in a song if it is too difficult to sing,"[5] and "if a song is not singable, it is no song at all."[6]

Hammerstein's lyrics as poetry. Irving Berlin once said, "The differece between Oscar and the rest of us

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[1]Ibid., p. 32. [2]Ibid., p. 23.

[3]Ibid., p. 27. [4]Ibid., pp. 23-24, 26.

[5]Ibid., p. 24. [6]Ibid., p. 23.

lyric writers is that he is a poet."[1] This idea was carried further by Deems Taylor, who wrote:

> Oscar Hammerstein II is something of a phenomenon, a writer of Broadway musicals who is a poet. His lyrics have a beautiful simplicity and directness, great warmth and sincerity of emotion, and a love and understanding of simple people. . . .
>
> . . . Hammerstein's lyric has a quiet glow, an unconscious poetry that is the work of an artist who is concerned with what he has to say.[2]

Hammerstein's theories on writing librettos

As a librettist, Hammerstein chose to write a show because he liked the subject and the characters in it, not because he wanted to create new trends. He wrote: "I don't think very often of trying to create any new tendency or revolution. Sometimes the revolution comes but it is incidental to the main aim of trying to write something that's good."[3] Fordin adds: "Professionally he became a solid craftsman, a lyricist and librettist who knew all the rules and used them carefully to construct lyrics and books. Yet it was the ability of this conservative man to defy theatrical convention, discard the rules and take risks which lifted him above the ordinary run of craftsmen."[4] An article in the New Yorker in 1951 stated that in his plays Hammerstein "is content to stay close to what he considers the fundamentals--love, jealousy, death. . . . A

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[1]Fordin, p. 225, quoting Berlin.

[2]Taylor, pp. 223, 225. [3]Fordin, p. 56.

[4]Ibid., p. 4.

great many observers of his career regard this simplified attitude towards life as evidence of almost surpassing wisdom . . . ."[1] And Richard Rodgers wrote, "Oscar was a perfectionist not only about his own work but about every aspect of a production. He was also the most self-controlled person I've ever known."[2]

Hammerstein's paternal family was Jewish, but he was baptized into his mother's Episcopalian faith. Although he never formally practiced any religious faith, his works do evidence strong moral beliefs.[3] In the librettos of Hammerstein the hero and heroine are generally pure in heart and have a romance that ends in marriage. About sex, his attitude was often described as "prudish" or "Victorian," even "puritanical."[4] Fordin says, "He was the least flirtatious and bawdy of men . . . ."[5] An article in Variety in 1960 stated that Hammerstein "celebrated the decencies of life."[6]

In libretto writing Hammerstein did a better job at adapting an existing story than he did at creating an original. Fordin points out that this was one weakness that Hammerstein had as a librettist: he did not recognize a weak

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[1]Philip Hamburger, "The Perfect Glow," The New Yorker 27 (May 19, 1951): 39.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 296.

[3]Fordin, p. 16. [4]Ibid., pp. 276, 328.

[5]Ibid., p. 276.

[6]Ewen, With a Song, p. 172.

basic structure in a story line. He was gifted in wording the dialogue and developing the characters after the plot was laid out. He was also a genius at choosing which scenes in a story should be used to convey which aspects of the plot or the desired character traits or moods. But if the underlying structure of the plot line was not sound, he seemed unable to see this weakness nor to strengthen it. Fordin says, "Time after time his libretti were the strongest when adapted from another source in which the basic structure already existed, weakest when they were originals in which he had to build that structure."[1]

Hammerstein's goal of integrating the musical

Although Show Boat, Rose-Marie, and other shows are sometimes cited as early steps in the direction of integrating the musical play, the actual fulfilment of Hammerstein's ideal in that direction was not possible until Oklahoma! Fordin says,

> An integrated musical had popped up from time to time since Show Boat, on the screen and on the stage, but it was not widely accepted as an example of what the musical ought to be until 1943, when Oklahoma! burst upon the scene. Arthur Freed, a successful lyricist who became the MGM producer virtually solely responsible for the Golden Age of the film musical . . ., would later call Oscar Hammerstein II the man who made it all possible. . . .
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> . . . Arthur Freed, a worshipful admirer and devoted friend, was, by his own admission, inspired by Oscar's concept of the organic musical and recognized that such

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[1]Fordin, pp. 80, 161.

integration must be essentially the work of one man.[1] Fordin does give Hammerstein credit for beginning the move toward integration with Show Boat and then continuing it with the film High, Wide and Handsome (1937), which was directed by Rouben Mamoulian, who also directed the original production of Oklahoma![2]

One point on which Hammerstein was definitely persuaded was that all songs must be integrated into the plot of a musical.[3] This is why he disliked writing for films. He felt that he was rushed and that he was asked for isolated songs and bits of dialogue, instead of a complete, integrated work.[4] Hammerstein emphasized that the song must serve a function in the play. He felt that the lyrics of a song must be welded into the libretto as a continuation of the story line.[5] In fact, he usually wrote songs, only after he knew the story and characters he would write for. Other than some personal songs for clubs, World War II, and his children, he wrote only one song that was not planned for a production: "The Last Time I Saw Paris" (1940, music by Kern). This song won Hammerstein's first Academy Award as best song in a film, when it was added to the film,

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[1]Ibid., p. 147.

[2]Ibid., p. 146.

[3]Ibid., p. 62.

[4]Ibid., p. 153.

[5]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 17.

Lady Be Good in 1941.[1] His feelings regarding integration of words and music are also expressed when he said,

> This is the great secret of the well-intentioned musical play. It is not so much a method as a state of mind, . . . an attitude of unity. Musical plays, then, are not "books" written by an author with songs later inserted by a composer and a lyric writer. They are often written this way, but it is not a good way to write them and such plays seldom have a very long life. They are sure to lack form, and they cannot sustain a story interest when it is interrupted continually by songs that are of little value to the plot.[2]

Furthermore, he said, "We [Rodgers and Hammerstein] write songs in whatever manner seems best for the subject with which we are dealing, and the purposes of the song in the story which we are telling."[3]

Hammerstein's personality, private life, and work habits

It was in 1938, while Hammerstein was living in Hollywood, that he became a political activist and champion of the underdog.[4] He tended to befriend people who were being challenged for their outspokenness, including Paul Robeson, for example.[5] All of these activities led in 1953 to Hammerstein's being accused of being un-American

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[1]Fordin, p. 173.

[2]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 15.

[3]Ibid., p. 7.

[4]Fordin, pp. 141-3

[5]Ibid., p. 312.

during the McCarthy "witch hunt."[1] He was forced to write a statement of his support of the United States government in order to be granted an unlimited passport, but the truth is that Hammerstein was extremely patriotic. His 29-page statement contained this observation: "If I am a security risk, I have been fooling a great many people--including myself."[2] The fact that other people involved in the same causes were less dedicated to America than he was, was responsible for his being accused of lack of dedication to his country, by dint of association. In the Hollywood League Against Naziam, for example, there were some Communists involved. Hammerstein defended his involvement with this group by writing,

> My interest now is to do all I can to stamp out Nazism, which I think is the greatest threat to our culture and our safety. If there are Communists in this organization, and if they are willing to help me do this, I can work with them without becoming a Communist myself. If there were a forest fire outside of Los Angeles and we all ran out with buckets to pour water on it, I would not ask the man at my shoulder what his philosophy was.[3]

Hammerstein's humanitarianism was shown in his anti-racist, as well as anti-Nazi, activities.[4] James Michener, Pearl Buck, and Hammerstein wrote a book against

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[1]Ibid., pp. 141-2.

[2]Ibid., p. 312, quoting Hammerstein's 1953 document that was submitted to the U. S. Passport Division.

[3]Fordin, p. 143.

[4]Ibid., pp. 141-2, 211; Ewen Richard Rodgers, pp. 306-7.

racial prejudice in 1957, but it was never published.[1] Hammerstein articulated his philosophy on humanity: "I don't idealize people. I am conscious of their imperfections. In fact, I haven't got a high opinion of human beings. When they make mistakes, I am not surprised. It is the perfectionist who gets indignant when people let him down. If a man is disillusioned about people, it is his own fault. He had no business having illusions. I love people."[2]

Another example of Hammerstein's humanity includes the fact that he spearheaded the project to erect the statue of George M. Cohan in Duffy Square.[3] It was Hammerstein's contention that Cohan's contribution to the theatre and the country's patriotism were as valuable as the many political and military figures who had been so recognized.[4]

In 1962 the former British Prime Minister, Earl Clement Attlee, said Oscar Hammerstein ". . . was deeply aware of the world in which he lived and deeply sensitive equally to human emotion and human folly. Hatred was his chief abomination."[5] And Sir Percy Claude Spender, president of the International Court of Justice at The

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[1]Fordin, p. 335.

[2]Ibid., p. 271, citing an unspecified interviewer quoting Hammerstein.

[3]Atkinson, pp. 114, 454-5.

[4]Fordin, p. 334; Atkinson, pp. 454-5.

[5]Green, Fact Book, p. 737, citing a letter from The Rt. Hon. Earl Clement Attlee to the United World Federalists, 1962.

Hague, wrote the same year that Hammerstein's "profound belief in the worth and dignity of all men and women directed his mind constantly to their welfare and happiness and in particular to the problem of how his fellow humans could dwell in peace together . . . . His talents were indeed great, his love of his fellow man greater still, and his vision was rare."[1]

His patriotism is shown occasionally in his writings prior to 1940, and it shines brightly in the characters' pride in their "Brand-new state/ Gonna treat you great!" in Oklahoma![2] And his anti-racism is shown most strongly in Show Boat and South Pacific.[3]

In his private life, Hammerstein was described as a quiet, gentle, likeable man who enjoyed his home and family.[4] He was a notoriously early-to-bed-and-early-to-rise person who was extremely conservative in his lifestyle and tastes.

Hammerstein was universally liked. Fordin describes him as "a man who didn't have a mean bone in his body, who was loved by everyone, revered by both his friends and his

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[1]Green, Fact Book, p. 737, citing letter from Sir Percy Claude Spender to United World Federalists, 1962.

[2]Rodgers, Six Plays, pp. 75-76.

[3]Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 161-3; Rodgers, Six Plays, pp. 346-8.

[4]Fordin, p. 57.

fans."[1] He always exuded a homespun outlook on life and he chose to use a simple vocabulary to project this image of himself.[2]

In the preface to a publication of Hammerstein's songs, Winthrop Sargent is quoted as describing Hammerstein as

> . . . an unabashed sentimentalist, a believer in optimism, religion, noble causes, and wholesome living . . . . He lacked the bitterness of the true satirist, and he found real life a wonderful thing. But he was a very skillful lyric writer . . . . It was inevitable that he should give the musical show a new atmosphere--one in which the accent was on romantic love, political idealism, tolerance, and serious . . . dramatic ideas.[3]

Hammerstein was inclined to be optimistic in his own philosophy of life and he often expressed this hopeful viewpoint in his lyrics and librettos. In fact, he once said in an interview, "I guess I just can't write anything without hope in it."[4] Richard Rodgers wrote of him:

> . . . almost to the day he died everything about him was an affirmation of life. . . . he was infused with a faith and optimism that only grew stronger as he grew older.
>
> In many ways Oscar was a study in contrasts. He was a passionately loving man, yet he never gave any overt indication of that except through his lyrics. He was a meticulously hard worker, yet he'd roam around his farm

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[1]Ibid., p. ix.

[2]Ibid., p. 347.

[3]Leo Snider, ed., The Songs of Oscar Hammerstein II (New York: Williamson Music, Inc. and J. B. Harms Co., n. d.), p. 6, citing Winthrop Sargent.

[4]Russel Crouse, "Oscar Hammerstein: A Healing Sort of Guy," Reader's Digest, 84 (January, 1964), 82.

> for hours, even days, before putting words on paper. . . . He was a genuinely sophisticated, worldly man, yet he will probably be best remembered for his unequaled ability to express the simplest, most frequently overlooked pleasures of life.
>
> For all his days Oscar sang with a clear voice about everything that was good and decent and enjoyable.[1]

And this optimism is expressed in the title song of Oklahoma!, which specifies what the new state of Oklahoma will give to its inhabitants:

> Plen'y of room to swing a rope!
> Plen'y of heart and plen'y of hope.
> Oscar Hammerstein II, "Oklahoma"[2]

In spite of the simple, conservative, prudish exterior of Hammerstein, he was a successful, rich person. For example, although the 1930s were comparatively unsuccessful years for him, his ASCAP income averaged about $25,000 a year by the end of the decade.[3] And by 1950, he was earning $17,500 a week.[4]

Physically, Hammerstein was described by Lawrence Langner, co-producer of Oklahoma!, as "a big, slow-moving man with a broad kindly face--slow moving but quick thinking. Unlike so many men I have met in the musical field, his interests are wide, his reading extensive and his knowledge of philosophy, economics, and world affairs, greater than almost any other man I have met in the

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 303.

[2]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 72.

[3]Fordin, p. 172.

[2]Ibid., p. 304.

theatre."[1] Deems Taylor said his appearance caused many people to say he looked more like a construction foreman than a poet-writer.[2] Mary Martin described him as she first saw him, to have been "a tall, craggy man who looked like a mountain . . . . "[3] Ewen adds that he had a pock-marked face, but was gentle in speech and manner, never temperamental, loud, or angry.[4]

State Senator Jacob Javits told the New York State Senate on the occasion of Hammerstein's death that Hammerstein was "interested in a better organization of the world."[5]

Hammerstein "learned from Show Boat that his writing was markedly better when he devoted his time and attention to it for a long period without distraction," according to Fordin.[6] Prior to Show Boat, Hammerstein used to write a complete lyric on his Long Island Railroad trip home.[7] He disliked Hollywood because there he was rushed from one job to the other and his writings were not

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[1]Lawrence Langer, The Magic Curtain (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1951), p. 369.

[2]Taylor, p. 216.

[3]Mary Martin, My Heart Belongs (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1976), p. 59.

[4]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 307.

[5]Ewen, With Song, p. 172, citing Senator Jacob Javits.

[6]Fordin, p. 117.

[7]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 35.

his property, so they could be changed or deleted without consulting him. He just worked for a weekly salary. According to Fordin, he knew that

> his best work had been done when he worked for many months and even years on a libretto and lyrics; his worst, even on Broadway, when he had rushed and spread himself too thin . . . . In the theatre, Oscar felt, the words were his "child" and were directed immediately to the audience. Whether the public liked them or not, came to see the show or did not, was the direct responsibility of the creator of the show and would directly determine his fortunes. Writing the Hollywood way was more secure, bringing a high weekly salary with it, but for Oscar the work produced was not likely to be good.[1]

As Much as Hammerstein loved his work, he admitted that

> . . . writing is very, very hard work. Most of us do some work every day. Some get up early in the morning, as I do, and go straight to their studies as other men go to their business offices. . . . all of us are trying to write something nearly all the time. Nobody waits to be inspired. Some days the work comes easier than other days, but you keep going because the chances of getting good ideas are more likely while you are trying to get them than when you are doing nothing at all.[2]

And he adds, "Struggle, fatigue and frustration face him who would re-create himself or a part of himself in another form."[3] David Ewen says that

> Hammerstein wrote his lyrics in long hand, since each word was selected most meticulously, each phrase pruned

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[1]Fordin, p. 153.

[2]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 12.

[3]Oscar Hammerstein II, ed., The Jerome Kern Songbook, arranged by Albert Sirmay (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955), p. xi.

> most carefully, each sentence formed most fastidiously before Hammerstein was satisfied. When he finally had the first draft of a lyric on paper--and a single lyric sometimes took him several weeks to write--he invented a dummy melody for it and started to sing it at the top of his voice to get the "feel" of the rhythm and cadence of his poem.[1]

The dialogue for the librettos, however, was dictated into a Dictaphone, typed by a secretary and then edited by Hammerstein. Ewen says, "Dialogue had to sound natural and musical to his ear before he would let it pass. Complexity had to be reduced to simplicity. It took a good deal of rewriting and refining before that wonderfully simple diction and easy turn of phrase, which were the hallmarks of Hammerstein's greatness, became apparent."[2]

A myth about writing that Hammerstein adamantly wanted to destroy was that of inspiration. He wrote:

> Any professional author will scoff at the implication that he spends his time hoping and waiting for a magic spark to start him off. There are few accidents of this kind in writing. . . .
>
> . . . [Writing results from] the stored-up memories of the writer's emotional reactions . . . . I suppose that every worth-while work is inspired by what has been seen or thought or felt by the writer at another time. Most bad fictional writing is the result of ignoring one's own experiences and contriving spurious emotions for spurious characters.[3]

In conclusion, Stephen Sondheim sums up Hammerstein's character and influence:

> Oscar was elegant . . . . patrolling that delicate territory between the casual and the formal . . . .

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[1]Ewen, With Song, p. 146.

[2]Ibid., p. 147.

[3]Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 11-12.

He chuckled a lot. . . . His own humor was dry and restrained, distanced. . . . I think of him as a moderate man. But the moderation was a decision, not a convenience. . . . He chose to use parts of himself at certain times and not at others. That makes for elegance . . . .

. . . He was often conservative, but never reactionary. Moderate.

He was judgmental, a true moralist. Moralists tend to make better giants than they do fathers. His expectations were high, never higher than where his children were concerned, and so, given his moralism, he wasn't always a tolerant parent. . . . He was the best surrogate father one could have wished for: always encouraging, always understanding, always gentle . . . .

. . . he <u>was</u> a giant. He changed the texture of the American musical theatre forever, first with Kern, then with Rodgers. And to change that means not only to change musical theatre all over the world, but to change American theatre as well, because musical theatre has affected playwriting profoundly and permanently. There may be librettists and lyricists (very few) whose work is admired more, but there are none greater.[1]

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[1]Fordin, from Introduction by Sondheim, pp. xii-xiii.

Richard Rodgers

According to a survey published in the New York Times in 1968, Richard Rodgers's compositions since 1940 constitute the music that is more often played by American symphony orchestras than any other compositions of that same period.[1] However, this accomplished composer, Richard Charles Rodgers (1902-1979), was not from a musical background, except for his family's leisure activities.[2] His father and only brother were medical doctors, and the prior generations of Russian immigrants, on both sides of the family, were in commercial business ventures.[3] But Rodgers's family supported his lifelong ambition to compose for the Broadway stage, which led to his composing the score for *Oklahoma!*[4]

Rodgers's training

Richard Rodgers was a bright student who made only mediocre grades in school because he was so impatient to succeed in his ambition to become a musician that he tended

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[1]"Beethoven and Richard Rodgers," New York Times, 10 March 1968, Arts and Leisure Section, p. D15.

[2]Ewen, With Song, p. 12; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 44.

[3]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 5, 41, 48; Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 5-8.

[4]Green, Story, p. 27; Taylor, p. 5; Kislan, The Musical, pp. 57-58.

to neglect subjects other than music in his education.[1] The fact is that he graduated from only one school during his entire academic career, and that was after completing his eighth grade studies in 1916. He left high school one year before graduation to enter Columbia College under a special program. After two years at Columbia, he decided to drop his academic studies in favor of going to the Institute of Musical Art, now Juilliard.[2] Although he won a scholarship after his first year there, he became involved in his music career by the second year and he decided to leave.[3]

This lack of formal education, however, belies the experiential training that Rodgers received throughout his life. For example, his mother was a well trained pianist, and his father liked to sing. The parents and grandparents often attended the theatre, and many evenings at home were spent around the piano, singing the latest songs they had heard on their evenings out. In addition, as a talented child, Rodgers was often asked to perform for guests, winning him love, praise, and thus encouragement in his

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 55; Ewen, With Song, p. 55; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 18.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 53-58; Taylor, p. 5; Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 18, 34-36, 44-45; Ewen, With Song, pp. 33-40; Green, Story, p. 41.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 46, 56; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 82-83.

chosen field.[1]

Rodgers wrote of his childhood:

> . . . the main object in . . . my life--was the Steinway upright near the window. . . . When I was little more than a baby . . . I learned that exciting sounds came from the piano itself when my mother played it. This was the beginning of my lifelong love affair with music.
>
> . . . I had heard all those beautiful sounds my mother could make simply by pressing her fingers down on the keys, and I wanted more than anything else to be able to make the same beautiful sounds. I wasn't much more than a toddler when I discovered that I was able to reproduce the melodies with accuracy.
>
> . . . Formal piano lessons, however, were not successful, chiefly because being able to play by ear made me lazy and I never bothered to practice. Why waste time reading notes when I could play just about anything I heard simply by listening?[2]

According to Rodgers, by the age of four he could play little melodies on the piano with one finger of each hand. By six, he could play melodies with his right hand, while playing simple accompaniment with his left hand.[3]

Furthermore, Rodgers wrote:

> I was nine years old when I discovered that I could devise my own bits of melody. The appropriate harmonies were no trouble, since I already played quite well by ear. Soon I was writing complete tunes of my own. . . . I knew I gained deep satisfaction, both emotional and mental, from making up my own pieces. Of course, this was nothing more than improvising, but what is composition but formal improvisation? Certainly I was on my way, and from then on I never wanted to do anything else with my life.[4]

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[1]Ewen, With Song. p. 12; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 40-41, 44; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 9; Kislan, The Musical, p. 57.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 5, 8-9.

[3]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 49-56; Kislan, The Musical, p. 59.

[4]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 16.

From about the age of ten, Rodgers played the piano for school assemblies and at summer camp, where he composed his first "song."[1] When he was sixteen, a musically trained friend taught him "the rudiments of musical notation and conducting."[2] From then on, he always wrote the complete piano score for everything he ever composed.[3]

An early incident in his life helped to determine his becoming a composer, rather than a pianist. When he was eight years old, he had osteomylitis in his right index finger, thus preventing his playing the piano for over a year and then leaving the finger too wide to fit between the black keys on some pianos. Rodgers later modestly added, however, that, "Any lack of brilliance in my playing today is not due to that illness but to the fact that technically I am just not very proficient, though good enough to communicate musically anything I have to say."[4]

Although he liked to listen to classical music, too, and regularly attended opera and concerts, he never had any desire to compose any music, other than for the popular stage.[5] His parents started taking him to see

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 49, 53-54, 57; Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 16-19, 23.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 36.

[3]Ibid., 46.

[4]Ibid., pp. 13-14.

[5]Ewen, With Song, pp. 20-23; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 59-60; Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 18-19.

operettas when he was about six years old. Thereafter, he eagerly awaited these occasions, always talking excitedly about everything he had seen: the lighting, costumes, dancing, orchestra, and all other details.[1] But attachment to musical comedy began when, at the age of fourteen, he went to see one of the Princess musicals, Very Good Eddie, which he went back to see many times.[2] He wrote of this experience:

> . . . it was the Kern score that captivated me and made me a Kern worshipper. The sound of a Jerome Kern tune . . . . was all his own--the first truly American theatre music--and it pointed the way I wanted to be led . . . . Actually, I was watching and listening to the beginning of a new form of musical theatre in this country. Somehow I knew it and wanted desperately to be a part of it.[3]

Rodgers credits experience and The Institute of Musical Art as the major sources of his musical knowledge. Because of his finger problem, he could take only secondary piano training at the Institute, but the courses he loved the most were in ear training, music theory, harmony, and composition.[4] Rodgers wrote of his studies:

> I loved my years at the Institute. I could devote myself completely to something I cared for deeply, and for the first time in my life I was surrounded by

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 13, 50-51; Ewen, With Song, pp. 13-14; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 13.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 52-53; Ewen, With Song, pp. 15-16; Green, Story, p. 27; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 20; Wilder, p. 179.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 20.

[4]Ibid., pp. 44-45; Ewen, With Song, p. 40; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 82.

> students and teachers whose addiction to music was as great as mine . . . . Because I was the only pupil there whose goal was to write for the musical stage, I felt a bit self-conscious at first in being among people whose aims in life were, at least by tradition, considered loftier. But it didn't take long before I realized that my fellow students didn't look down their noses at someone whose aim was the tinseled world of Broadway. From teachers and classmates alike I can recall nothing but an attitude of mutual help and respect, and I'm sure that's why for the first time in my life, I was actually learning something in school.[1]

There was never any question that Rodgers's family approved of their youngest son's ambition and choice of profession, paying for his education, his theatre and concert tickets, and his upkeep, until he was established in his profession.[2] He wrote:

> I don't suppose anybody ever went into music with less opposition or more encouragement than I. . . . I cannot recall a single instance when there was even the slightest hint from my parents that I was wasting my time. . . .
>
> . . . Not once did I ever hear Mom or Pop say a single word that was not sympathetic, or show in any way that they were not behind me in whatever I wanted to do.[3]

Amateur productions

Rodgers was only fifteen years old when he was first asked to compose the score for an original amateur production of his brother's club. This was followed by a series of other such productions, for which Rodgers always composed the music, acted as rehearsal pianist, and then

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 47.

[2]Ibid., pp. 57-58, 77, 125; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 44, 59; Kislan, The Musical, pp. 57-58.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 44, 57.

conducted the orchestra for the performances. Two of these productions were Columbia Varsity Shows, three were the Institute of Musical Art's annual shows, and the rest were shows for whatever club or organization asked him, totalling about fourteen amateur works, done in about eight years.[1] Rodgers advised newcomers to show business:

> My advice is to reject at the start the idea that "amateur" is a dirty word, and to remember that while the qualitative differences between amateur and professional productions may be vast, the resemblances are equally great. Both require singers, actors, lighting, scenery, costumes, musical accompaniment and eventually an audience. On the way to that audience, writers, whether amateur or professional, are constantly polishing and making changes; through trial and error they learn what makes dialogue funny or touching and what makes a song not only suitable but remembered.
>
> As in a showcase, the amateur production can even have immediately practical results. In the audience may be someone's uncle who knows an agent or a producer--or who may even be an agent or a producer--and the amateur may have taken the first giant step toward becoming a professional.[2]

Rodgers got complimentary reviews, and thus encouragement, in the newspapers for his amateur efforts. For example, S. J. Kaufman commented in the Globe about the songs for Rodgers's first Varsity show: "Several of the tunes are capital. They have a really finished touch and will, if transplanted, be whistled. We had not heard of Richard Rodgers before. We have a suspicion we shall hear

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[1]Ewen, With Song, pp. 24-25,33-37, 40-41; Taylor, p. 6; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 60-61, 82-83; Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 24-49; Green, Story, p. 30-41; Green, Fact Book, pp. 6-10; "Bad Habits," New York Times, 9 February 1925, p. 17.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 40-41.

of him again."[1] And after another amateur show in 1921, the reviewer for Theatre World prophesied: "Mr. Rodgers . . . will some day be among our great composers."[2] In addition, Rodgers made some valuable contacts during his amateur days, including writing three songs with Oscar Hammerstein II as lyricist and beginning his collaboration with the man who would be his only professional lyricist before Hammerstein, Lorenz Hart.[3]

Rodgers's first collaborator: Lorenz Hart

Rodgers was sixteen years old when he met the twenty-three-year-old Hart who had previously been writing translation-adaptations of German operettas for the Shuberts, for little pay and no recognition.[4] Rodgers described their first meeting: "I left Hart's house having acquired in one afternoon a career, a partner, a best friend, and a source of permanent irritation."[5]

Rodgers and Hart had no partnership contract, but

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[1]Ewen With Song, p. 34, citing S. J. Kaufman, Globe, 24 March 1920.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 78, citing Theatre World, March 1921.

[3]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 25-27.

[4]Ibid., p. 27; Taylor, p. 7; Dorothy Hart, ed., Thou Swell, Thou Witty: the Life and Lyrics of Lorenz Hart (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 35-36; Ewen, With Song, p. 27; Green, Story, p. 33; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 27.

[5]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 28.

they wrote exclusively with each other for twenty-five years, from 1918 to 1943, when Rodgers then began his partnership with Hammerstein on Oklahoma! Together Rodgers and Hart wrote about a thousand songs, many of which are still performed today.[1]

Hart was a tortured man because of his lack of height and his homosexuality in a society that did not accept this life style. After his only brother and his partner, Rodgers, both got married, Hart was even more frustrated, because he no longer had any single buddies with whom to spend his leisure time, and he was unable to get married himself. He was a talented, brilliant, and witty man, but could not function well under the personal pressures of his maladjustment to his situation. He turned increasingly to alcohol for escape, until Rodgers found that working with him became almost impossible. He disappeared for days at a time, was unreliable at keeping appointments, and when he did appear, had a very short attention span.[2] Hart is described by his sister-in-law as a childish, independent, angry person who turned his rage inward, because he felt that he was a freak in appearance and he hated the kind of person he was.[3]

Rodgers always tolerated Hart's irresponsible

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 189; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 114; Ewen, With Song, p. 103.

[2]Fordin, p. 185; Hart, pp. 159-65.

[3]Hart, pp. 160-2.

behavior, because he did not want to upset their successful professional relationship and also because Hart was a sweet-natured person. Late in their collaboration, Rodgers urged Hart's family to commit Hart to a mental institution for his own good, but they insisted that Hart should seek help only voluntarily, which he refused to do.[1]

Rodgers and Hart are credited by some theatre historians as having been among those few who attempted to do away with some of the old formulas for writing a musical comedy in the twenties and thirties, to use new subjects in their shows, to use more three-dimensional characters, and to avoid some of the clichès that were so common in the songs of the period.[2] Two innovations they should get credit for are writing the first musical with no opening chorus (Peggy-Ann, 1926) and being the first to adapt a Shakespearean play as a musical comedy (The Boys from Syracuse, 1938, based on Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors).[3] They also sought integration of the book,

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[1]Hart, pp. 159-162; Fordin, p. 185; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 205.

[2]Ewen, With Song, pp. 27-29; Bobby Short, "With a Song in His Heart," The New York Times Book Review, 21 November 1976, pp. 3, 53.

[3]Green, Story, p. 52; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 191; Alden Whitman, "Richard Rodgers Is Dead at Age 77; Broadway's Renowned Composer," New York Times, 31 December 1979, p. A12.

lyrics, music, and dance, daring to be different, trying for a new form, which they never quite reached.[1] Hart was quoted in 1935 as saying that he and Rodgers wanted to write "a new form of musical show for Broadway. It will not be a musical comedy and it will not be operetta. The songs are going to be part of the progress of the piece, not extraneous interludes without rhyme or reason."[2]

Rodgers and Hart enjoyed poking fun at political figures and the current problems of the day, as was so popular in the theatre of the thirties.[3] For example, their 1932 film The Phantom President is concerned with political shenanigans during a presidential campaign; it starred George M. Cohan in his first film role as the successful presidential candidate.[4] In 1937 Cohan starred as Franklin D. Roosevelt in I'd Rather Be Right, their stage parody on the federal government's attempt to balance the national budget.[5] Rodgers claimed that this musical had the distinction of being the first to portray the

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 192-3.

[2]Ibid., pp. 146-47.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 183.

[4]Green, Fact Book, p. 132; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 154.

[5]Green, Fact Book, p. 173; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 154.

current president as the protagonist in a book musical. Rodgers wrote: "Suddenly all [people] . . . were beginning to realize that ours was one of the few nations on earth where people weren't afraid of their leaders. We could talk against them, we could vote them out of office--and we could even put them up on a Broadway stage as the butt of ridicule in a song-and-dance show."[1] And in Hallelujah, I'm a Bum, a 1933 film, fun was made of the New York City government, with a mayor modeled after the then Mayor Jimmy Walker.[2] Even as far back as 1925, the first Garrick Gaieties contained a skit that depicted Calvin Coolidge, and again in 1927, Rodgers and Hart's A Connecticut Yankee modeled its King Arthur after President Coolidge, so they may have been pioneers in this kind of humor, since it became prevalent only in the thirties.[3] In spite of his humor concerning them, Rodgers tended to befriend the rulers of his day, being a personal friend of the Roosevelts, Jimmy Walker, Eisenhower, and even the Prince of Wales.[4]

Rodgers and Hart's works commented on other current issues, such as problems of the Depression (in Hallelujah,

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[1]Green, Fact Book, p. 134; Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 183-4.

[2]Green, Fact Book, p. 134; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 155.

[3]Green, Fact Book, p. 69; Ewen, With Song, p. 62.

[4]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 203-4, 256-7, 104.

I'm a Bum) and racism (in Babes in Arms, 1937).[1] Thus, although Rodgers was not so actively involved in trying to effect social change as Hammerstein was, he certainly was aware of and commented on the current issues. Perhaps the difference in their respective degrees of activity was based merely on the difference between one who customarily comments by means of music and one who usually comments in words.

Hammerstein met Hart at summer camp in 1911 and subsequently they were also classmates at Columbia. He liked Hart, but they never collaborated professionally. Hammerstein described Hart thus: "I think of him always as skipping and bouncing. In all the time I knew him, I never saw him walk slowly. I never saw his face in repose. I never heard him chuckle quietly. He laughed loudly and easily at other people's jokes and at his own too. His large eyes danced, and his head would wag. He was alert and dynamic and fun to be with."[2]

Rodgers and Hart's work habits were not so organized as Rodgers and Hammerstein's would be. Hart rarely wrote lyrics until after Rodgers had composed the music to which they were to be set, instead of having the completed lyrics of the song to set to music, as he would later do with

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 155; Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, Babes in Arms, 14 April 1937. (Typescript.)

[2]Fordin, p. 29.

Hammerstein.[1] Rodgers wrote,

> Larry [Hart] seldom gave me a completed lyric; at best it would be no more than a verse or opening chorus. Occasionally he would give me a title which would suggest a melody. Most of the time I would play a completed melody for him and we'd sit around tossing titles and lyric ideas at each other. Once we agreed on the general theme, Larry would write the words and we'd have a finished song.[2]

Various critics disagree as to whether Rodgers's music was better with Hart's lyrics or Hammerstein's lyrics or even someone else's. Certainly these two writers created very different lyrics. Basically Hart's lyrics have been described as being witty, sophisticated, urbane, and sparkling, and Hammerstein's as more poetic, simple, warm, sincere and earthy.[3] It would appear that the stimulation of Rodgers's having had Hammerstein's completed lyrics in front of him when composing would have influenced the creation of music that was more closely linked to the meaning of the words than the music that Rodgers composed for Hart's yet unwritten lyrics. But Rodgers may have had more artistic freedom when creating the music for Hart's "ideas," rather than having to fit his music, note for note, to Hammerstein's existing lyrics. In addition, Rodgers and

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[1]Ewen, With Song, p. 65.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 206.

[3]Taylor, p. 223; Alec Wilder, American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900-1950, with a foreword by James T. Maher (New York; Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 217; Gerald Nachman, "The Lyrics of Larry Go Straight to the Heart," Sunday News, Leisure Section, 26 December 1976, p. 7.

Hart wrote only musical comedies, while few of Rodgers and Hammerstein's works are customarily classified as of this genre, and the music intended for a musical comedy obviously is of a different kind from music that is composed for more serious Broadway musicals. The preference for Rodgers and Hart or Rodgers and Hammerstein songs remains, of course, a personal choice, but the above facts may explain the discernible differences in the compositions. Walter Kerr commented in 1963 on the two lyricists, saying he wished someone would come along who could write lyrics half as "good" as Hart:

> I mean half as crisp, half as perky, half as (deceptively) easy, half as witty in stealing a note from what ought to be the next line. . . .
>
> No need here to dwell on Richard Rodgers, either, the Richard Rodgers who is so adaptable that after having buttoned his tunes so snugly to Mr. Hart's fit, he was able to unbutton them without thrashing and write just as good music for an altogether different kind of lyricist. When I say 'just as good music,' I hear wrinkling of noses. Surely, everyone will say, 'better' is the word for what came out of Oklahoma![1]

When the occasion arose to write Oklahoma!, Hart did not want to write the show. He gave as his reasons: he did not like Green Grow the Lilacs, did not like the the idea of working with Hammerstein as librettist, did not want to work with Rodgers at that time, and, in fact, did not feel like working at all.[2] Rodgers, realizing that the situation was a critical one, contacted

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[1]Hart, p. 184, citing Walter Kerr, Herald Tribune, 13 October 1963.

[2]Hart, p. 169.

Hammerstein about writing the lyrics, thus breaking up the Rodgers and Hart team.[1] Rodgers later observed, "I needed a little calm in my life after twenty-five years, . . . and I got it with Hammerstein."[2]

Rodgers related the events on the opening night of Oklahoma!:

> After the final curtain we all went over to Sardi's to await the New York Times review. As we jostled our way into the restaurant, I suddenly saw a little man break through the crowd. It was Larry. Grinning from ear to ear, he threw his arms around me. "Dick," he said, "I've never had a better evening in my life! This show will still be around twenty years from now!"[3]

Later the same year Rodgers and Hart staged a revival of A Connecticut Yankee and Hart stopped drinking and made a genuine effort to be reliable and cooperative during the preparation. But by opening night of the show, he went on a drinking binge, contracted pneumonia and died a few days later.[4] Ewen speculates as to the possible influence of the success of Oklahoma! on Hart: "It is more than probable that the awareness, subconscious or otherwise, that Oklahoma! had finally accomplished what he had been reaching for all his life and had never quite attained, proved more deadly to Larry Hart than pneumonia."[5]

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[1]Fordin, p. 186.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 305.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 226.

[4]Ibid., pp. 230-31; Hart, pp. 180-81; Green, Story, p. 35.

[5]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 193.

Rodgers's professional record

In 1919 Rodgers met Lew Fields, formerly of the comedy team of Weber and Fields. Fields was then starring in a musical comedy on Broadway, A Lonely Romeo, which he also produced. Immediately upon hearing Rodgers play some of his and Hart's songs, Fields bought one and put it into his show the next week. Thus an unknown seventeen-year-old high school student had a song in a Broadway show.[1]

This was only weeks before Rodgers would enter Columbia College for his first year. In the following spring, Lew Fields came to see the Columbia Varsity Show, with songs by Rodgers and Hart, and he immediately hired them to write the score for his new Broadway show, Poor Little Ritz Girl. Before the opening, Sigmund Romberg was brought in to write half the songs, but it is still remarkable that a seventeen-year-old college freshman should compose even half of a Broadway score.[2]

Rodgers was goal-oriented, with a tireless drive toward becoming a Broadway composer. His not having had a family already in show business, as Hammerstein had, does not seem to have impaired his entrance into the field. After he had songs in Broadway shows, however, he still

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 30; Ewen, With Song, pp. 32-33.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 35-39; Ewen, With Song, p. 33; Smith, p. 247.

continued his formal and informal educations by going to school and writing amateur shows.[1]

In spite of his early successful start on Broadway, however, the road was not always smooth. After this first Broadway half-score, Rodgers did not have another professional show for four more years. He was trying all that time to sell his talent, but no one was buying. Finally in 1924 Herb Fields (son of Lew), Rodgers, and Hart put together a comedy with only two songs in it, which they were able to persuade Lew Fields to produce and star in on Broadway. But The Melody Man was not a hit, and Rodgers decided to quit his short show business career at the age of twenty-two to enter the babies' underwear business. Just then a call came from the Theatre Guild to write the songs for a benefit revue for them.[2] There would be no pay, but it would be in association with this prestigious theatrical institution. Although the production, featuring such heretofore unknowns as Lee Strasburg and Harold Clurman in the cast, was originally scheduled to run for only two performances, The Garrick Gaieties was such a success that it finally replaced the then current production of the Guild for a regular Broadway run of 211 performances.[3] This was

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 77-78; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 40.

[2]Ewen, With Song, pp. 42-46; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 87-90; Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 52-58.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 61-66; "Garfick Gaieties," New York Times, 18 May 1925, p. 12.

Rodgers's first Broadway success, the first time he had been paid a living wage from his composing; from then on doors began to open for him. In fact, during the next year, 1926, Rodgers had five shows on Broadway, and his weekly income exceeded one thousand dollars by the end of the year.[1]

Table 2, which follows, contains a complete list of professional works which were composed by Rodgers, except for those works in collaboration with Hammerstein. And since Rodgers lived for another nineteen years after Hammerstein's death and continued composing for the theatre, these works are also included in table 2.

Prior to 1943, Rodgers wrote all of his Broadway musicals and musical films with Hart as lyricist. But the musicals written after Rodgers's collaboration with Hammerstein had lyrics by various writers, including Stephen Sondheim, Martin Charnin, and Sheldon Harnick.

Since he had never worked with just one librettist, he continued to work with a variety of writers. The librettist with whom Rodgers worked most was Herb Fields, who was involved in the writing of eight of Rodgers's Broadway librettos and three of his filmscripts. Most of the other librettists with whom he worked contributed the libretto of only one show.

Although most of the directors of Rodgers's shows directed only one of his shows, among those who directed

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[1]Ewen, With Song, pp. 46-52; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 67, 87-90.

TABLE 2

RICHARD RODGERS'S PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTIONS NOT IN COLLABORATION WITH OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Librettist[a]	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
			NON-MUSICAL PLAYS				
1924	The Melody Man[b]	56	Herbert Richard Lorenz[c]	Herbert Richard Lorenz	Herbert Richard Lorenz	Marston, Leftwich	
			MUSICALS				
1920	Poor Little Ritz Girl	119	Campbell, Lew Fields	Gerber, Lorenz Hart	Romberg, Rodgers	Wayburn	
1925	The Garrick Gaieties[d]	211	Kaye, et al[e]	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Loeb	

[a]"Librettist" is the term used throughout this table to refer to the person who authored the script, whether for a musical, play, film, documentary, or ballet.

[b]Contained two songs by Herbert Richard Lorenz: "Moonlight Mama" and "I'd Like to Poison Ivy"; one film version, 1930, but it used neither of the original songs.

[c]Pseudonym for Herbert Fields, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart.

[d]Rodgers conducted the orchestra.

[e]Also Sullivan, Ryskind, Sorin, Jaffe, Green, Meiser, Hockey, and Levy.

Table 2--Continued

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Librettist	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
1925	Dearest Enemy[a]	286	Herbert Fields	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Sinclair, Ford, Anderson	Gerstenberger
1926	The Girl Friend	301	Herbert Fields	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Harwood	de Packh
1926	The Garrick Gaieties	174	Kaye et al[b]	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Loeb	
1926	Lido Lady[c]	259	Jeans	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Hulbert	
1926	Peggy-Ann	333	Herbert Fields	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Milton	Webb
1926	Betsy	39	Caesar, Freedman, McGuire	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	McGuire	
1927	One Dam Thing After Another[d]	237	Jeans	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Collins	Bennett
1927	A Connecticut Yankee	418	Herbert Fields	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Leftwich	Webb

[a]Rodgers conducted the orchestra.

[b]Also Levy, Johnson, Herbert Fields, Heywood, Hope and Loeb.

[c]Produced in London only.

[d]Produced in London only.

Table 2--Continued

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Libbrettist	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
1928	She's My Baby	71	Bolton, Kalmar, Ruby	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Royce	
1928	Present Arms[a]	155	Herbert Fields	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Leftwich	
1928	Chee-Chee	31	Herbert Fields	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Leftwich	Webb
1929	Spring Is Here[b]	104	Davis	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Leftwich	
1929	Heads Up![c]	144	McGowan, Smith	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Hale	Bennett
1930	Simple Simon	135	Wynn, Bolton	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Colvan	
1930	Ever Green[d]	254	Levy	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Collins	Bennett
1931	America's Sweetheart	135	Herbert Fields	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Wooley	Bennett
1935	Jumbo[e]	233	Hecht, MacArthur	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Anderson, Abbott	Deutach, et al[f]

[a]One film version, called Leathernecking, 1930.

[b]One film version, 1930.

[c]One film version, 1930.

[d]Produced in London only; also one British film version, 1934.

[e]One film version, 1962.

[f]Also Cutter, Nussbaum, Spialek, and Salinger.

Table 1--Continued

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Libbrettist	Lyriciat	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
1936	On Your Toes[a]	315	Rodgers, Lorenz Hart, Abbott	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Miner	Spialek
1937	Babes in Arms[b]	289	Rodgers, Lorenz Hart	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Sinclair	Spialek
1937	I'd Rather Be Right	290	Kaufman, Moss Hart	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Kaufman	Spialek
1938	I Married an Angel[c]	338	Rodgers, Lorenz Hart	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Logan	Spialek
1938	The Boys from Syracuse[d]	235	Abbott	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Abbott	Spialek
1939	Too Many Girls[e]	249	Marion	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Abbott	Spialek
1940	Higher and Higher[f]	108	Hurlbut, Logan	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Logan	Spialek

[a]One film version, 1939, which included no songs, only music for dancing and background.

[b]One film version, 1939.

[c]One film version, 1942.

[d]One film version, 1940.

[e]One film version, 1940.

[f]One film version, 1943.

Table 2--Continued

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Libbrettist	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
1940	Pal Joey [a]	374	O'Hara	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Abbott	Spialek
1942	By Jupiter	427	Rodgers, Lorenz Hart	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Logan	Walker
1962	No Strings	580	Taylor	Rodgers	Rodgers	Layton	Burns
1965	Do I Hear a Waltz?	220	Laurents	Sondheim	Rodgers	Dexter	Burns
1970	Two by Two	343	Stone	Charnin	Rodgers	Layton	Sauter
1975	Rodgers and Hart [b]	111	Lewine, Fearnley	Lorenz Hart[c]	Rodgers	Shevelove	Henderson
1976	Rex	49	Yellen	Harnick	Rodgers	Sherin	Kostal
1979	I Remember Mama	108	Meehan	Charnin, Jessel	Rodgers	Feuer	Lang
			FILM MUSICALS				
1931	The Hot Heiress		Herbert Fields	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Badger	
1932	Love Me Tonight		Hoffenstein, et al [d]	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Mamoulian	

[a]One film version, 1957.

[b]No new compositions.

[c]Posthumously.

[d]Also Young and Marion.

Table 2--Continued

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Libbrettist	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
1932	The Phantom President		DeLeon, Thompson	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Taurog	
1933	Hallelujah, I'm a Bum		Behrman	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Milestone	
1934	Hollywood Party		Dietz, Kober	Lorenz Hart, Kahn, Dietz, Freed	Rodgers, Donaldson, Brown	Goulding, et al [a]	
1935	Mississippi		Martin, Cunningham, Herbert Fields, Binyon	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Sutherland	
1936	Dancing Pirate		Harris, Faragoh	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Corrigan	
1938	Fools for Scandal		Herbert and Joe Fields	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	LeRoy	Deutsch
1941	They Met in Argentina		Cady	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Goodwins, Hively	
1948	Words and Music [b]		Finklehoffe, Feiner	Lorenz Hart[c]	Rodgers	Taurog	Salinger

[a]Also Mack, Boleslawsky, Dwan and Roland.

[b]No new musical numbers.

[c]Posthumously.

Table 2--Continued

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Librettist	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
			NIGHT CLUB REVUE				
1926	Fifth Avenue Follies	31	Atteridge, MacDonald	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers	Felix	
			BALLET				
1939	Ghost Town[a]	6	Platoff		Rodgers		Spialek
			TELEVISION				
1952	Victory at Sea	13 hours	Salomon, Hanser		Rodgers		Bennett
1960	Winston Churchill--the Valiant Years	13 hours	Reynolds, et al[b]		Rodgers		Dolan, Kay, Sauter
1967	Androcles and the Lion	1 1/2 hours	Stone	Rodgers	Rodgers	Layton	Bennet

[a]Commissioned by Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo; Rodgers conducted the Metropolitan Opera orchestra for all six performances.

[b]Also Shirer, Tregaskis, Wolfson, Bryant, Lay, and Pirosh.

Table 2--Continued

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Libbrettist	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
			SYMPHONIC NARRATIVE				
1936	All Pointe West	3	Lorenz Hart, Rodgers	Lorenz Hart	Rodgers		Deutsch
			ORCHESTRAL SUITE				
1938	Nursery Ballet	1			Rodgers		Bargy

SOURCE: Stanley Green, ed. Rodgers and Hammerstein Fact Book (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1980), pp.247-507.

more than one show were George Abbott, Joshua Logan and Joe Layton. One significant early director was Rouben Mamoulian (film, Love Me Tonight, 1932), who would later direct the original Broadway version of Oklahoma! This film reached new heights of integrating music with script, in that the background music (Rodgers's only instance of composing such music) moves into and away from the songs of the film as the scenes change, and the songs are incorporated into the action of the film by being led into by dialogue spoken rhythmically to the lead-in music.[1]

During the early days Hans Spialek did most of Rodgers's arranging (ten shows), but Robert Russell Bennett orchestrated six of Rodgers's scores. Rodgers wrote that Bennett had no equal in orchestrating his music: "He fully deserves the credit, which I give him without undue modesty, for making my music sound better than it was."[2] In 1943 Bennett would orchestrate Oklahoma!

In addition to his thirty-one Broadway shows written without Hammerstein (of which twelve were made into films), Rodgers composed the music for three London musicals, ten film musicals, one television musical, two television documentaries, one night club revue, one ballet, one symphonic narrative, and one orchestral suite. Green estimated in 1980 that, if all of the performances on

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 149-54.

[2]Ibid., p. 279.

Broadway of Rodgers's shows were done consecutively at the rate of eight performances a week, they would run for about forty-three and a half years.[1] This qualifies Rodgers to be called a prolific writer of Broadway musical hits.

Rodgers's most significant works prior to "Oklahoma!"

Rodgers's longest running work before Oklahoma! was By Jupiter (1942), the last show he composed with Hart. But Rodgers wrote that, "Pal Joey was the most satisfying and mature work that I was associated with during all my years with Larry Hart. . . . the show . . . wore long pants and in many respects forced the entire musical-comedy theatre to wear long pants for the first time."[2] This comment refers to the fact that Pal Joey (1940) has disreputable characters, deals with the seedy side of life and has an unhappy ending--characteristics uncommon in the musicals of the thirties.[3] Stanley Green adds that Pal Joey paved the way for Oklahoma!, because of its adult theme.[4]

However, Rodgers's most significant and

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[1]Green, Fact Book, p. 4.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 202.

[3]Ewen, With Song, p. 95; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 198; John O'Hara, Pal Joey (New York: Random House), 1983.

[4]Green, Story, p. 92.

innovative work in the field of musical theatre, prior to Oklahoma!, was probably in the area of dance. In 1926 Rodgers, Hart and Fields wrote Peggy-Ann, which contained a sort of "dream ballet," using real ballet steps, not soft-shoe or tap, which the New York Times reviewer declared ". . . bends the dream play to the musical comedy form . . . ."[1] The next step along this line was in 1936 when Rodgers, Hart, and George Abbott wrote On Your Toes, which contains the now famous ballet, "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue," originally choreographed by George Balanchine.[2] Rodgers explained that this ballet was integrated into the plot line more than previous ballets in musicals, in that most prior ballets were in revues or were specialty numbers in book musicals.[3] The only reason that this ballet does not pre-date Oklahoma! as the first ballet that was totally integrated into a Broadway musical is that the story in "Slaughter" is not the same as that of On Your Toes and thus does not achieve the level of integration that is present in Laurey's dream ballet sequence in Oklahoma! Ewen also credits "Slaughter," the first sustained piece of orchestral composition by Rodgers, as being the progenitor

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[1]"'Peggy-Ann' Is Here Bright and Fantastic," New York Times, 28 December 1926, p. 16; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 91; Ewen, With Song, pp. 60-61.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 175; Green, Story, p. 79.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 175.

of jazz-ballet music.[1] These experiences with ballet in Broadway musicals, along with composing the music for the western ballet Ghost Town, helped prepare Rodgers for composing the "Dream Ballet" sequence in Oklahoma! and thus for pioneering the integration of dancing, particularly ballet, into Broadway musicals.[2]

Rodgers's functions in theatre, other than composer

Conductor. Since Rodgers had learned the basic rules of conducting an orchestra when he was sixteen years old and had conducted the orchestras for the amateur productions for which he had composed the music, it is not surprising that one of his earliest professional jobs was conducting the orchestra for a traveling vaudeville show in 1922.[3] He was only twenty years old at the time, and he considered this experience to be education in preparation for the Broadway stage: "I learned a lot about keys, tempos, and the various ways an orchestra could help a singer project a song."[4] He also conducted the orchestra for the two Broadway shows he composed in 1925.[5] Subsequently, he occasionally conducted the orchestra for part or all of one

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[1]Ewen, With Song, p. 89; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 149.

[2]Green, Story, p. 89.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 36, 48.

[4]Ibid., p. 48.

[5]Green, Fact Book, pp. 20, 28.

performance of a show.[1] In addition, various symphony orchestras around the country have performed an evening of his music with Rodgers as guest conductor.[2]

Lyricist. Rodgers wrote the complete lyrics for his Broadway show No Strings and his television musical Androcles and the Lion. Rodgers wrote of his realization, after Hammerstein's death, that he should try writing his own lyrics:

> With Oscar gone it was simply too much to expect that I could adjust to anyone else without a lengthy interval between.
>
> Still, there was never any question of my determination to continue. Primarily this was a matter of creative drive. . . . While my career had been long and fulfilling, I could not imagine spending the rest of my days reliving past glories and withdrawing from the vital, exciting world that I loved.
>
> Under the circumstances, there was only one logical path: I had to try to write my own lyrics. The roster of men who are adept at writing both words and music is not long, but it does include some of the elite members of my profession. . . . While I had no illusions about matching their lyric-writing skills, I knew that something must have rubbed off on me after all those years with Larry and Oscar. In fact, I had already had some limited experience; because of Larry's numerous disappearances, I'd frequently been forced to supply additional lyrics of my own during out-of-town tryouts. After Larry's death, I was also called on to update some of his lines for revivals of our shows.[3]

Rodgers also added new lyrics and even whole new songs to revivals of some of his and Hammerstein's works, after the

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 108, 194, 229.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 277-8; Ewen, With Song, p. 154.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 306.

latter's death.[1]

Rodgers says of his lyric-writing:

> I soon discovered the major benefit of writing one's own lyrics: I was always there when I wanted me. . . . I also was stimulated by being able to do the entire job myself. I loved the independence it gave me. If I wanted to, I could work until four in the morning--or I could get up at four and start working. I've always had a compulsion to finish something once I've started it, and at last I had the opportunity of polishing off a complete song at one sitting.
>
> As any songwriter will tell you, writing lyrics is more demanding than writing music. Music is created with broad strokes on a large canvas, whereas lyrics are tiny mosaics that must be painstakingly cut and fitted into a frame. I found that I never really had any method of self-collaboration. Sometimes the title of a song and the first few bars would occur to me simultaneously and I'd finish them together. At other times I'd jot down a few lines of a lyric which would suggest a melody. Occasionally this would be reversed and I'd think of the musical phrase first. Never, however, did I write a complete lyric and then set it to music.[2]

As a lyricist, Rodgers received good reviews. New York Times reviewer Howard Taubman wrote of his lyrics for No Strings: "He has taken on the challenge of being his own lyricist and met it like a professional. . . . His lines have a touch of the wholesomeness of Oscar Hammerstein and a soupçon of the peppery impertinence of Lorenz Hart. . . . Give the chief credit to Mr. Rodgers who has lost neither his zest nor his art."[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 307.

[2]Ibid., p. 308.

[3]Howard Taubman, "No Strings," New York Times, 16 March 1962, p. 24.

Librettist. Rodgers customarily had sessions with his lyricists and librettists to help develop the scripts for his musicals. And Rodgers contributed enough to the formation of the librettos of five of his Broadway musicals to get credit for co-authorship.[1]

Writer on theatre. In addition to his autobiography, so valuable to this dissertation, Rodgers also wrote about twenty-five published articles on the subject of musical theatre.

Businessman. Rodgers also enjoyed the business aspects of theatre, i.e. negotiating contracts, etc. This job fell to him from the beginning because Hart was never involved in any element of their shows, except the writing. Rodgers says of the occasion of their first audition to sell a song for a Broadway show: "Though the audition was a major opportunity to break through into the ranks of Broadway songwriters, Larry, claiming a splitting headache, begged off. I would soon discover that whenever it came to 'selling' or negotiating, he would always find some reason not to be available."[2] So this arrangement continued throughout Rodgers's collaboration with Hart, with Rodgers handling all the business. And in spite of the fact that Hammerstein had two years of law school to his credit,

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[1]Green, Fact Book, pp. 16, 151, 166, 181, 234.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 30; Fordin, p. 185; Short, p. 3.

Rodgers still led in handling the business matters of their collaboration. Hammerstein was quite satisfied to let Rodgers lead in this area, although he did contribute much more than Hart ever did.[1] Rodgers said during the thirties, "I'm a commercial-theatre kid. . . . I don't write for posterity,"[2] and later, "when they say, 'You're a genius,' I say, 'No, it's my job.'"[3]

Producer. In 1941 when Hart was entering his most severe state of unreliability, Rodgers decided to try his hand at another type of theatre business. His experience in negotiating contracts for Broadway shows and films helped him when he decided to try producing. He co-produced one show with George Abbott in 1941, and then was emboldened to produce his and Hart's next (and last) show, By Jupiter (1942).[4] Subsequently he produced fourteen more shows in collaboration with Oscar Hammerstein II during their years together, including six of the nine shows that they wrote.[5] And finally he was President and Producing Director of the Music Theatre of Lincoln Center during its five years of existence, adding another nine productions to

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[1]Fordin, p. 276.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 30.

[3]Alden Whitman, "Richard Rodgers, Who Composed 'South Pacific' and 'Oklahoma!,' Dies," New York Times, 1 January 1980, p. 24.

[4]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 208, 210-11; Green, Fact Book, p. 234.

[5]Green, Fact Book, pp. 560, 579, 600, 606, 621, 631, 701-2.

the list of shows he produced."[1]

Complete theatre man. Rodgers was obviously more than just a composer for the theatre. Agnes De Mille, choreographer of the original Oklahoma!, admired Rodgers's complete theatrical knowledge:

> Rodgers is not only a very great song writer, he is one of the most astute theatre men in the world. He concerns himself zestfully and relentlessly with every detail of production. Nothing escapes his attention and he takes vigorous and instant action. This might be interfering if he were not sensitive, sensible and greatly experienced. He knows also when to keep his hands off. Mamoulian and the Guild frequently said, "It can't be done." It was always Rodgers who urged, "Let's see."[2]

And after De Mille clashed with Mamoulian and others while Oklahoma! was being put together, she credits Rodgers with pulling her through the ordeal: "I think I can confidently say I would have gone down under the conflicting opinions if Richard Rodgers had not lent me his incomparable knowledge and authority as running interference. Due to his jealous care, my work came shining through for whatever it was worth."[3]

Bobby Short sums up Rodgers's attention to detail: "Rodgers, disciplined from the beginning and with a solid musical education, approached his work like a surgeon. He left no detail undone even if it meant doing it himself

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[1]Green, Fact Book, pp. 703-4.

[2]Agnes De Mille, Dance to the Piper (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1952), p. 248.

[3]De Mille, p. 248.

instead of relegating it to another next in line."[1] But this complete theatre man was rewarded financially as well as with fame and satisfaction. The New York Times estimated at his death that he had earned well over one hundred million dollars in the theatre.[2]

Rodgers versus the critics

As did Hammerstein, Rodgers had a running battle with the theatre critics. Theatre critic Brooks Atkinson reported that Rodgers and other members of the Dramatists' Guild wrote a letter to the Drama Critics Circle complaining that "a small number of your members come to opening nights (a) in a physical condition that precludes the capacity to appraise a play intelligently, (b) after curtain time, and (c) carry on audible conversations with their companions during the performance."[3] Since the theatre critics often influence the success of a play's original run on Broadway, Rodgers and others involved in the creation, as well as the profits, of plays were very concerned that the critics should be alert, competent and receptive to their works. Rodgers complained about the critics' lack of ability in appraising musicals:

> Critics are not seers. They simply react to what they are hearing for the first time, and their reactions vary just the way most people's do. Of all

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[1]Short, p. 53.

[2]Whitman, "Rodgers Dead," p. 24.

[3]Atkinson, p. 261.

> the elements they must comment on in reviewing a show, music is probably the one that most strongly resists interpretive appraisals. Music produces an emotional response, and it is little wonder that the terms used to describe it are often imprecise. Perhaps this is because most critics are not musicians--but for that matter, neither are most of the people in the audience. The difference is that the critics' views are in print and are likely to influence vast numbers of people. Because of this responsibility, in addition to the fact that there are usually over a dozen songs in a show, I have always thought that reviewers should have access to the entire score, either in the form of sheet music or records, before they cover a production. At least familiarity should give them a greater understanding of what has been written and why. I venture to say that my ear is at least as well trained as any theatre critic's; yet, unless the music is extremely simple and childlike, I wouldn't dare to pass judgment on a Broadway score on the basis of only one hearing. I don't think anyone can come away from a score after listening to it for the first time with a feeling that the music is either good or bad. It is only after repeated listening that a person can appraise the individual songs with any degree of analytical judgment. Critics, however, are called upon not only to comment on music and lyrics after only one hearing, but also to make intelligent observations about every other area of the production. And of course they must never equivocate. Every time I read in a review that a score is weak or tuneless, I am amazed that a writer, after a single hearing, could make such a rash or damaging statement. I can never help wondering if such a judgment might not be entirely different if the critic had the opportunity to become familiar with a score before rendering his verdict, the way critics of "serious" music do.[1]

Rodgers's theories on composing

Leonard Bernstein once wrote: "Can anyone explain in mere prose the wonder of one note following or coinciding with another so that we feel that it's exactly how those notes had to be? Of course not. No matter what rationalists we may profess to be, we are stopped cold at

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 133-4.

the border of this mystic area."[1] Music is a subjective art. Even Rodgers said, "What is tuneful or not tuneful is, of course, subjective."[2] In other words, what sounds good to one person may not sound good to another. Yet there is some music that is appealing to a majority of people. In view of the success and popularity of Rodgers's shows and the music from them, apparently Rodgers's music has somewhat universal appeal.

It is interesting that Rodgers composed a variety of kinds of music. Not only was he able to compose songs for films and Broadway musicals, but he also composed background music for films, ballet music, and even scores for television documentaries--and he was successful in all. There were reviewers, however, who commented that his orchestral compositions had "musical comedy leanings"[3] and that his ballet was "really not so much a ballet as a musical comedy without singing."[4] Taylor confirms Rodgers's diversity: "One of the most striking things about Rodgers's music is his extraordinary versatility. . . . He can handle a sentimental mood, a serious one, or a comic one. . . . Since his association

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[1]Leonard Bernstein, The Joy of Music (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959) p. 11.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 252.

[3]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 152, citing Linton Martin, Inquirer, 28 November 1936.

[4]Ibid., p. 154, citing John Martin, New York Times.

with Hammerstein he has gained greatly in dramatic power, and, rising to the challenge of his partner's variety in lyrics, has written music in many unorthodox forms."[1] In fact, Rodgers deplored the idea that one kind of music should be differentiated from another. He wrote:

> Unfortunately, too many people still believe that there are only two kinds of women and two kinds of music--one too popular to be good, the other too good to be popular. Why should we assume that goodness and popularity can't coexist?
>
> . . . . Musical labels have always bothered me, in part because the terms in common usage are imprecise and confusing. Is every "classical" work a classic? Aren't there any unpopular "popular" songs? Are we to assume that all forms of music other than "serious" must be "frivolous"? Is there no heavy "light" music--or light "heavy" music? All too often such words merely serve to build barriers around each form, attracting one group of people while putting off others. What we enjoy should have nothing to do with the descriptive labels currently in fashion. . . .
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> By this I don't mean to denigrate the contributions of atonal, so-called "modern" music. Nothing should be brushed off because it is not immediately understood. What may be far-out to one listener may very well be near-in to another. When I was a kid and first heard a Strauss tone poem I found it exciting but I didn't really understand it. Now it's too easy. I can't say that I fully appreciate rock music, but there's no denying that it fills an emotional need for a large part of the population.
>
> Personally, I'd like to see musical labels disappear entirely. Whether it's Bach or Bacharach, the important thing is not the label or the name of the composer, but the music itself. Symphonies abound with dance tunes. The popular music of Italy is grand opera. Within the last ten years or so the theatre music of Gershwin, Bernstein, Kurt Weill, Fritz Loewe and others has become a fixture in the repertories of symphony orchestras. Whenever barriers crumble, the result can only be the broadening and strengthening of music's appeal.[2]

Furthermore, Rodgers discussed his displeasure with the

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[1]Taylor, p. 227.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 280-1.

idea that music is supposedly always written either by established rules or by emotional feeling, but not by both concurrently:

> In school I can remember being taught that there were two kinds of "good" music, program and absolute--in other words, descriptive and abstract. There was always a snide connotation that descriptive music lacked the purity of the abstract composition and was thus of a lower order. This undoubtedly grew out of the fact that the great symphonies are allegedly abstract. I say "allegedly" because I believe that while it may be possible to create an unspecific work, the listener supplies his own description. He will hear surf pounding on rocks, relive the parting from a loved one, or even feel impending doom creep down his spine. Painters often see color combinations while listening to music, and I'll bet that the Schumann Piano Concerto makes a first-class cook water at the mouth. The horn solo in the second movement of Tchaikovsky's Fifth has always evoked my mother because it has a contralto voice, as she had, and because it even sounds the way she looked.[1]

Rodgers thought of music as a way to express emotions: "What I do is not as fancy as some people think . . . . It is simply using the medium to express emotion."[2] Rodgers felt strongly that music was the one element of a musical that was sure to have emotional appeal: "The most important function of any composition, whether song or symphony, is that it has the power to affect its listener's emotions. I cannot simply admire a piece of music; I must also feel it. In fact, when I feel it strongly enough the hairs on my arms actually stand straight out. People have an emotional need for melody, just as they need food or

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 280.

[2]Cleveland Amory, ed., Celebrity Register (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 530, citing Rodgers.

personal contact."[1] Rodgers said plainly that he was just an artist who used notes, instead of paint or clay, to express an emotion, to tell the audience what the character is feeling.[2] Kislan credits Rodgers with changing the song-and-dance musical comedy into a dramatic musical play by using new techniques in the use of music to intensify emotions.[3] And Sheldon Harnick said that his own lyrics were influenced by the "rich emotional quality of Rodgers's music."[4]

Rodgers learned the rules of composition by formal training. But he also stated that theatre music should affect his listeners' emotions, and so he wrote music that he felt would achieve the desired effect at the moment it was performed. Therefore, Rodgers composed music that was a combination of program and absolute music. But since Rodgers wrote music that was specifically intended for a definite character to sing at an exact spot in a story, having an intended emotional effect on the audience, and since these prerequisites were the overwhelming factors that determined the composition of the music for the song, it seems safe to say that his music is more of the program variety than of the absolute variety. As he said, "Whenever

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 281.

[2]Green, Story, p. 104.

[3]Kislan, The Musical, p. 216.

[4]Marilyn Stasio, "Rex, the Making of a Musical," Cue, April 1976, p. 10.

I get an idea for a song, even before jotting down the notes, I can hear it in the orchestra, I can smell it in the scenery, I can see the kind of actor who will sing it."[1]

Characteristics of Rodgers's music

Although chapter 6 reports the result of an in-depth analysis of Rodgers's music for Oklahoma!, some of the general characteristics in his music are isolated here to give an overview of the kind of music he composed.

Form. In the compositions with Hart, music analyst Milton Kaye found that Rodgers usually followed the traditional forms of the theatre music of the day. But in his compositions with Hammerstein, Rodgers altered sections of about 75 percent of his songs to create unique, although not always totally new, forms of theatre music.[2]

In his autobiography, Rodgers discussed many of the conventions of theatre music during the times he was composing, such as the song forms of each period. He admitted that he basically followed the conventional format during his collaboration with Hart. He quoted himself from a 1936 newspaper interview: "If you're bursting with independence, you might add a few bars here or take away a

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 239.

[2]Milton Kaye, "Richard Rodgers: A Comparative Melody Analysis of his Songs with Hart and Hammerstein Lyrics" (Ed. D. dissertation, New York University, 1969), pp. 44, 59, 73.

few bars there, but the form is almost inflexible."[1] However, he always wanted to be innovative, to try ideas of his own in his composition, to be more creative, "to introduce surprises for the ear, not for the sake of novelty as such, nor for shock appeal, but to increase and intensify the expressiveness of the melody."[2]

One example of the traditions in the thirties that Rodgers and Hart followed was to use the title of a song in the first eight bars and then to repeat it at the end of the song. Another was the convention of the thirty-two-bar, AABA refrain.[3] Rodgers described this form and wrote that in 1926, during his early days of Broadway composing,

> Most of the songs Larry and I were writing during this period were in the traditional form of song construction . . . . That is, there would be a verse, or lead-in, followed by the refrain, or main body of the song. The verse could be any length, but the refrain was almost invariably limited to thirty-two bars. Construction within the thirty-two bars was also pretty standardized. First there would be a main melodic theme of eight bars, which was then repeated for another eight bars. The third eight--called the "release"--would be a different theme, with the final eight bars returning, often with some variation, to the main theme. This was called the "AABA" form. Another thirty-two-bar form--the "ABAB"--gave equal weight to two melodic themes, though here, too, there might be some variation in the final section.[4]

He added, however, that "Larry and I never felt restricted

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 180.

[2]Ibid., p. 180; Ewen, With Song, pp. 87-88.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages., pp. 79-80, 180; Taylor, 227.

[4]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 81.

but rather enjoyed the challenge of coming up with something fresh within the prescribed regulations."[1]

James T. Maher comments that the creative genius always takes note of current trends, while still moving in new directions:

> It is the unconscious role of the innovator to conserve in his creative reflexes both past and contemporary innovation while moving his own work in new directions. He assimilates what is fresh and stimulating, and he then explores his own intuitive sense of the further possibilities implicit in even the most daring forms and devices wrought by others. On the other hand, the hack song writer assimilates nothing; he stays on the surface of change, deliberately imitating innovation. His contribution is the cliché.[2]

Thus, by this definition, Rodgers was an innovator. Although Rodgers followed many of the conventions of theatre music of his day, he also dared to be different when he felt compelled to do so by the needs of a song to fit a certain situation and character.

Harmony. In the area of harmony, Rodgers used almost entirely traditional harmonic patterns in his songs written with Hart. This included diatonic chords, chord progressions based on the cycle of fifths, and cadences usually ending in dominant-to-tonic chord progressions, with the few exceptions being based on jazz-oriented

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 81.

[2]Wilder, p. xxviii.

alterations.[1] But in the songs written in collaboration with Hammerstein, Kaye finds "a freer and less conventional trend," with more modulations, less dependence on the cycle of fifths for chord progressions (although still strongly used), and virtually no jazz influence at all. However, the chords, even when altered, are clearly of diatonic derivation. In both collaborations, Rodgers most often began each section of all songs with tonic chords.[2]

Rhythm. Kaye also finds a progressive move away from jazz orientation in Rodgers's rhythms. Although Kaye says that there are jazz rhythm patterns in about one-third of Rodgers's songs written with Hart, these are rarely found in the songs written with Hammerstein. Most of the songs in the latter category have more even beats, suggesting folk songs or classical music, or looser rhythms, utilizing such time alterations as fermatas and changing tempos from one section to the next.[3]

Melody. Rodgers's melodies are generally simple and easy to sing. For example, he wrote his melodies within a comfortable range for the singer, using many repeated

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[1]Kaye, p. 44; music terminology that may be unfamiliar to the reader is defined in the Glossary at the end of this dissertation.

[2]Ibid., pp. 44-45, 60, 72-73.

[3]Ibid., pp. 45, 60-61, 72-73.

notes.[1] Repeated notes in classical music constitute only the third most common melodic device, behind chordal and then stepwise movement.[2] But Kaye says repeated notes are the most often used melodic contour in all of Rodgers's music, followed by chordal movement, and then stepwise structure, in that order.[3] Kaye also observes that the songs with Hammerstein contain about twice as many instances of repeated melodic notes as those with Hart; thus Rodgers apparently progressively increased his use of this stylistic device as he became more experienced in composing.[4] Alec Wilder says that Rodgers first used this structure in the song "The Blue Room," from The Girl Friend (1926), in which two notes are repeated four times in each of the A sections of its AABA refrain.[5] Taylor notes that this melodic device of Rodgers is probably most prominent in Oklahoma!'s "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top."[6]

Wilder asserts that the significance of this predominent melodic feature of Rodgers's compositions is

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 316.

[2]Kaye, pp. 2-3, 45, 59, 70.

[3]Ibid., p. 58.

[4]Ibid., pp. 72, 74.

[5]Wilder, p. 169.

[6]Taylor, p. 227.

that the use of repeated notes makes music sound aggressive and driving, as in Rodgers and Hart's "Mountain Greenery," from the second Garrick Gaieties (1926).[1] And Kaye says that "repetition of an element enhances its importance."[2]

Another use of repeated notes appears in Rodgers's ostinato bass lines, meaning "a figure repeated in the bass throughout a composition, while the upper parts change," thus being more an element of the harmony than of the melody.[3] Wilder points out that he used this device in "Mountain Greenery," which virtually started a trend, because George Gershwin and Vernon Duke began to use it in their compositions immediately thereafter.[4]

One last characteristic of Rodgers's melodies is the use of an unexpected, chromatically altered tone at a pivotal point in a song.[5] This has been pointed out as the one element that makes a song identifiably by Rodgers.[6] Taylor calls it "Rodgers's most effective trick."[7] Walter Kerr commented, "I don't know that

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[1]Wilder, p. 170.

[2]Kaye, p. 16.

[3]J. A. Westrup and F. L. Harrison, The New College Encyclopedia of Music (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1960), p. 476.

[4]Wilder, p. 170.

[5]Kaye, pp. 62-63.

[6]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 316.

[7]Taylor, p. 229; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 316.

anyone has written more melodic surprise into what was meant to be a conventional musical comedy than Mr. Rodgers did . . . . Mr. Rodgers never did live along Tin Pan Alley; he was lost at sea as a boy and, when rescued, kept hearing inappropriate sounds. They are still inappropriately perfect."[1]

Thus Rodgers's music tends to be basically traditional in form and structure. There is a noticeable, gradual move away from jazz influence in his harmony, rhythm, and form that took place as his composing matured during the thirties. Two outstanding melodic characteristics of Rodgers's music that make it different from other composers' music are the predominant use of repeated notes and the use of a chromatically altered note at a pivotal point in a song. Basically, Rodgers wrote simple music, using a limited vocal range, a minimum of melodic ornamentation, uncomplicated harmony, and even (as opposed to uneven) rhythms.[2]

Rodgers on integrating music and theatre

"Integration" is a word that has appeared in theatre language since at least the 1920s. Ewen defines it: "integration . . . meant that every element of musical

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[1]Hart, p. 184, citing Walter Kerr, Herald Tribune, 13 October 1963.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 316.

comedy--singing, dancing, staging, dialogue, humor, production numbers--had to be parts of a well organized and coherent whole. All of the parts had to serve the text."[1] Rodgers and Hart were always working toward this ideal, as they tried to relate their music to the stories of Peggy-Ann, A Connecticut Yankee, Chee-Chee, On Your Toes, and other shows.[2] Rodgers did not want to "stop the show" with his musical numbers. He said,

> There is a great need for a form of musical theatre more serious in intent and more lasting in its nature than that to which we have become accustomed. . . . It could be an extension of musical comedy into a field where music has emotion as well as rhythm, where lyrics become poetry, where design has artistry, and where dancing has meaning and is not a succession of hammer blows on a wooden stage.[3]

Rodgers never wrote just "songs," then hunting for a spot to fit them into a show. They were planned as part of a musical production. His songs were designed "to fill an essential role in a play whose story line and character delineations depended at least as much on its musical-lyrical structure as on the spoken word."[4] His objective was to "create a show intended to produce an emotional reaction in the audience, to create musical sequences that conformed to the action and the mood of the piece."[5]

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[1]Ewen, With Song, pp. 85-86.

[2]Ibid., p. 86.

[3]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 288-9.

[4]Ibid., p. 288.

[5]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 292-3.

Although Rodgers planned each piece of music specifically for a definite place in a certain show, he was willing to be flexible and to "bend his music to the needs of the show as a whole--even if it meant cutting a favorite song that slows down the action of a play."[1] In other words, Rodgers thought the production as a whole was the most important thing.[2] He said there was a prevalent theory among many composers that

> the simpler and more predictable the story, . . . the more ready the audience is to appreciate the music. If the plot is especially fresh or daring, . . . the composer risked audience resentment at the intrusion of his songs. . . . I have always believed that the story and the music must be closely interrelated, and that each component should be strong enough to help the other and contribute to the overall effect. Why should songs rescue a juvenile, hackneyed story? Or even, . . . an intelligent, adult story save a weak score? Why can't they both be equally bright, original and enjoyable?[3]

This conviction influenced Rodgers when he was confronted with the problem of writing music to suit different locales and societies, as in Oklahoma!, The King and I, and Flower Drum Song. He said his custom was to write "the best music I could for the characters and situation without slavishly trying to imitate the music of the locale in which the story is set. . . . If a composer is to reach his audience emotionally--and surely that's what theatre music is all about--he must reach the people through

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 288.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 246.

[3]Ibid., pp. 105-6.

sounds they can relate to."[1]

Rodgers said that his music had to complement the dialogue, the characters, and the action that made up the story of a play.[2] But he said that he mainly concentrated on the characters that he wrote for: "My big involvement is with . . . people. Not the actors, but the characters they play. I must know how they feel, and then I can give them a song to express it."[3] For example, when he was composing the music for "It Might as Well Be Spring" (film, State Fair, 1945), he said,

> it is a good example of the way a tune can amplify the meaning of its lyric. The first lines are: 'I'm as restless as a willow in a wind storm,/I'm as jumpy as a puppet on a string.' Taking its cue directly from these words, the music itself is appropiately restless and jumpy. Moreover, since the song is sung by a girl who can't quite understand why she feels the way she does, I deliberately ended the phrase on the uncertain sound of the F natural (on the word 'string') rather than on the more positive F sharp . . . ."[4]

Rodgers is said to have had an outstanding ability to write the appropriate kind of music for characters to sing; according to one reviewer, "Rodgers possesses a rare ability to catch the essence of a man in meaningful musical

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 273.

[2]Kislan, The Musical, p. 76.

[3]Phyllis Battelle, "Their Scores Come Only after Long Planning," New York Journal-American, 13 November 1959, p. 9.

[4]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 236.

terms."[1]

Rodgers did not achieve his goal of relatively complete integration until he created Oklahoma!, but he did not stop there. He came up with some innovative ideas for his musical No Strings (music and lyrics, 1962), some of which were meant to integrate the show even further. These innovative ideas included: (1) a romance between a Negro girl and a white man, (2) using less, and therefore more suggestive, scenery, (3) opening with the two leads singing from a dark stage, instead of with an overture, and (4) perhaps most important of all, putting the orchestra on the stage, out of sight except when a single musician occasionally walked on and played around the characters. Ewen says that this broke "the artificial barrier separating the music, down in the pit, from the action on the stage . . . . The music is permitted to flow naturally and inevitably in and out of the texture of the play as though it were just so many more strands of unspoken dialogue."[2]

Rodgers wrote about how songs are to be integrated in a musical:

> No matter what the medium, a score is more than a collection of individual songs. It is, or should be, a cohesive entity whose words and music are believable expressions of the characters singing them. . . . [A song is] simply part of a score, and it is the score in toto that either succeeds or fails. Like a symphony, concerto or opera, some portions have greater

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[1]Ewen, With Song, p. 170, citing O. B. B., High Fidelity.

[2]Ewen, With Song, pp. 174-6.

> appeal than others, but it is the work as a whole that makes the overall impression.[1]

Rodgers said he thought the audience would respect this attitude in the creators of a show. He recognized the intelligence of his audience and never worried about being too innovative for it in his writing. He said that he thought the audience was smarter than he was and that "The public is not only willing but anxious to go along with us in the theatre in search for better things, if we continue that search with honesty."[2] He said that this was "one of the wonderful things about audiences. People want to believe what they see on a stage, and they will gladly go along with whatever is done to achieve the desired effect. . . . they are prepared to meet you nine-tenths of the way even before the curtain goes up."[3]

And although Rodgers was a businessman, he emphasized that his songs were written to function as a part of the show first; their popularity as dance tunes was incidental: "If a song catches on, fine--every writer loves to have a hit--but it must be a part of what is happening onstage."[4] But when one of his songs from a show was performed apart from the show, he disliked the obscuring of the melody by some band arrangements. He and Hart

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 293.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 289.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 295.

[4]Ibid., p. 72.

labeled some of the swing-band adaptations of the 1930s "musical distortions." Rodgers explained that he did want his show tunes to become popular, but he felt that the "interpretive manhandling" in the adaptations that were to be used for social dancing in that period "obscured their melodies and lyrics." However, Rodgers admitted that he did not object to an artist's giving one of his older songs new life: "I can't say I'm exactly grief-stricken when something I've written years before suddenly catches on again because of a new interpretation." [1]

Rodgers's private life and personality

Rodgers always wore custom-tailored business suits and carried a briefcase. He was described as a neatly and conservatively dressed man of medium height (five feet seven inches) who looked more like a prosperous banker than a Broadway showman.[2]

Ewen, who wrote three biographical books on Rodgers, characterizes Rodgers as a methodical, energetic, early-to-rise, fast-working perfectionist. He says Rodgers was an amiable person who smiled a lot and spoke in quick, witty, choppy sentences. Furthermore, Rodgers was intolerant of anyone who was inept, indifferent, or careless about his work; he detested wasted motion, generalities,

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 193.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 25-27; Whitman, "Rodgers Dies," p. 24; "Rodgers Dead," Whitman, p. A12.

inaccuracies, or sloppiness.[1] However, he was receptive to new talent and was a rational, sober, pragmatic man who thought and talked with intelligence.

Lawrence Langner, producer of Oklahoma!, said Rodgers was a quick, volatile businessman,[2] a fact which apparently did not always win friends for Rodgers, because Cleveland Amory says that he had his share of enemies in the Broadway milieu.[3]

Socially, Rodgers liked dinner parties with lots of celebrities, but was a light drinker and neither smoked nor gambled. He was indifferent to sports, except croquet, which he played very seriously.[4] Between shows, he did little in the way of musical activity as an adult, rarely even practicing the piano.[5] He was a member of Temple Emanu-El in New York City, but did not have strong convictions about the Jewish religion.[6]

At home he was an adoring husband and a doting father and, later, grandfather. His wife Dorothy, whom he married in 1930, had training in art and

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[1]Ewen, With Song, p. 181, 184; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 28.

[2]Langner, p. 369.

[3]Amory, p. 530.

[4]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 31; Ewen, With Song, p. 186.

[5]Taylor, p. 222.

[6]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 32, 54-55; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 4.

sculpture. She holds patents on several inventions, has written several books and articles, and has had her own business of repairing valuable home furnishings.[1] Rodgers once wrote a letter to his wife, crediting her with being a stimulus for his composition:

> I think it's awfully important. . . . to recognize the part you play in my work. If the things a man writes are an expression of his personality (and they can't be anything else), then what greater influence can his personality and his writings have than a woman with whom he has lived for fifteen years? . . . .
>
> To this testimony of devotion I set my hand and seal this 3d day of April, 1945.
>
> In other words, I'm crazy about you.[2]

Rodgers had equal pride in his daughters, whom he discussed in his autobiography:

> Most people have a strong desire for continuity. One way we continue ourselves is through our work; what we create or accomplish is our method of reaching out and becoming part of others. But the most basic way we manifest our desire for continuity is by having children. This is biological continuation, but it can also be a form of creative continuation when one's children become involved in the field that we are.[3]

His two daughters, Mary and Linda, have both demonstrated musical talent, although the six grandchildren have shown no interest in that field. Mary Rodgers has composed music for Broadway, Off-Broadway, and television, and has written

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 28-34; Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 135, 185; Dorothy Rodgers, My Favorite Things (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1977), pp. 3-10; Ewen, With Song, pp. 74, 78, 83, 184-6.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 242.

[3]Ibid., p. 298.

books and articles.[1]

The Rodgerses usually maintained both an apartment in Manhattan and a house in the country for summers and winter weekends. The city dwelling was decorated by Dorothy with expensive antiques and paintings by the masters. The country estate, also decorated by Dorothy, was always less formally decorated and was surrounded by lots of acreage with flowers.[2]

Rodgers was extremely interested in world affairs. When Franklin D. Roosevelt died, he actually cried over the nation's, as well as his personal, loss.[3] During the second World War, he applied for a commission in the Air Force, but was turned down: "Eventually I came to accept the fact that the best thing I could do to help the war effort was to continue doing exactly what I had always been doing: writing songs and shows that could make some small contribution to the morale of our armed forces and of all the people supporting them."[4]

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 35-36; Ewen, With Song, p. 188; Amory, p. 529.

[2]Ewen, With Song, pp. 184-5; 188; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 36, 141, 177; Dorothy Rodgers, pp. 3-70, 84, 88, 238, 247; Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 266-7.

[3]Ewen, With Song, pp. 184-5, 188; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 36, 141, 177; Dorothy Rodgers, pp. 3-70, 84, 88, 238, 247; Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 266-7.

[4]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 210; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 32, 178; Ewen, With Song, p. 187.

Rodgers admitted a tendency toward hypochondria, which he believed was due to having had his adenoids removed at the age of seven and the long bout with osteomyelitis when he was eight. However, he did have some serious illnesses as an adult, including surgery for cancer of the jaw in 1955, a heart attack in 1969, and a complete laryngectomy in 1974.[1] But none of this ever slowed him down. When he returned to rehearsals only ten days after his surgery in 1955, he said, "I know that all of you realize what's happend to me. I don't want any nonsense in the way of long faces, or sympathy, or consideration that you wouldn't normally give me. . . . let's forget about the whole thing, roll up our sleeves, and get down to work."[2] Later he wrote:

> At the time I am writing these words--April 1975--I find that I am probably more active than at any other period during the past ten years. . . . I have a new show [Rex, 1976], and there's no feeling like it in the world. Nothing else matches the exhilaration of helping to conceive, plan and create something that has no purpose other than to give people pleasure.
>
> Yet there is more to it than that. Naturally, I'd like the show to be a hit, but it has to be creatively new, not just chronologically new. I don't want more of the same; I want everything I do to make some contribution, no matter how small, to push out the theatre's walls a bit further. The past is helpful; it can guide us in giving shape and direction to our work. But no production ever succeeds by looking over its shoulder. I know the form can be expanded because every day people are doing it, whether through a new approach

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 14, 285-7, 322, 327; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 298-9; Whitman, "Rodgers Dead," pp. A1, A12.

[2]Ewen, With Song, p. 160.

> in stagecraft, a new theme or a new sound in music. . . . One night a show opens and suddenly there's a whole new concept. But it isn't the result of a trend; it's because one, two, three or more people sat down and sweated over an idea that somehow clicked and broke loose. It can be about anything and take off in any direction, and when it works, there's your present and your future.[1]

Even at the age of seventy-three, he was eager to continue in his life's passion, his profession, because, as he once said, "the sweetest sounds I'll ever hear are still inside my head" (from No Strings, 1962). Even in the year he died, 1979, he opened a new show, I Remember Mama, and a Broadway revival of Oklahoma! opened in the same month that he died. Thus it is safe to say that he was an inveterate, untiring composer for Broadway.

Work habits

While Hart might have written his lyrics in a taxi or bar, on the backs of envelopes or napkins, Rodgers felt the need for privacy and orderliness to do his work. And during his collaboration with Hammerstein, an office was opened on Madison Avenue to house the Rodgers and Hammerstein enterprises, which by that time included many facets. Early in his career, however, he usually composed at home. He preferred to write alone at his country estate, but was capable of composing at any place, any time. He did confess that he usually called in his wife to test his tunes on, before submitting them to anyone else. Rodgers said,

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 327.

"My equipment consists of paper, pencil, piano, the ability to hum, whistle or sing (horribly) and a knowledge of musical language acquired in the theatres, on the streets, and in serious study."[1] His usual procedure was to sit at the piano, humming the melody, while experimenting with harmony on the keyboard. When the melody and harmony were done, he first made a "lead sheet," and then added suggestions for the orchestration. Finally he wrote out a complete piano score, before giving it to the orchestrator.[2] Neal Ashby reported in Playbill in 1976 on Rodgers's method of composing:

> Though Richard Rodgers does much of his composing in an office, where he presides banker-like at the piano, he also may write in less formal dress at his apartment or his country place in Connecticut. The legend is accurate--he does create his warming melodies and swirling waltzes rapidly. "But after thinking about each one for a long time," he relates. "I know so much before I start to write notes. I'm steeped in the story, the characters, the color and the mood. Sometimes roles have been cast and I even know the singers, their vocal range and their best notes. I do a lot of 'work' just sitting at this round table with a lyric sheet in front of me. When I feel I'm prepared, it does come fast."[3]

But Rodgers said he kept no notebook of ideas for future reference; ideas did not come to him when he had no specific project to work on: "Songs never come to me. . .

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[1]Ewen, With Song, pp. 17, 148, 180, 188.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 314-5.

[3]Neil Ashby, "Music of Broadway . . . and Some of the Men Who Write It," Playbill, March 1976, pp. 3-4, 6, 8.

. I have to go after them."[1]

Like Hammerstein he shunned the idea that an artist must be "inspired" in order to create. He said that composition was not a matter of "sitting on the top of a hill and waiting for inspiration to strike. It's work."[2] He wrote:

> I have always cringed at the word "inspiration." It is simply impossible to create something solely as a result of the stimulation of a single experience. I firmly believe that the single experience, whatever it is, becomes part of the totality of one's personality, and it is this personality that expresses itself through whatever medium the individual uses. . . . It is the excitement of the event combined with the excitement of having a job to do combined with one's background combined with one's talent that results in the song, painting or novel. I've never believed that after a man has an affair with a beautiful girl he is inspired, almost as a reflex action, to dash to the nearest piano, canvas or writing desk and pour out his emotions in a lasting work of art. The affair simply becomes part of the man's experience, which in turn helps form his personality.
>
> In my own case, I found emotional stimulation in music when I was very young by listening to my mother play the piano. There was further excitement when my grandparents introduced me to opera, and going to Broadway theatre was even more fascinating. But what compelled me to express myself through music was never a single stimulus; rather, it was a great number of them, combined with heredity, environment and a certain native ability. Later, increased activity and technical knowledge contributed to the proficiency I gained through the years.
>
> One other element was also influential: the encouragement of people whose judgement and values were important to me. Because my parents loved theatre music and nurtured my love for it, I found myself going in that direction because of my desire for continued parental approval. This also gave me the impetus to work harder so that I might feel worthy of that

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 22.

[2]Amory, p. 530.

approval.[1]

Rodgers is often spoken of as a man who wrote swiftly. For example, Alan Jay Lerner said, after he and Rodgers had worked together, "Creation with Dick is--well, he's like a gun. You just touch the trigger and off it goes. He seems to carry around all this music. Just press a button and out comes music. Yet obviously it's all thought out."[2] Rodgers insisted that he spent a great deal of time studying the story, the character who was to sing the song, the mood of the scene, and all the aspects of the situation before starting to compose the song to fit all of this.[3] Rodgers said:

> I've heard about the boys who get swell ideas in bathtubs and my baby's arms, but not me. I have to beat myself into submission by picturing the boy and the girl on the stage and imagining that they are singing to the accompaniment of a full orchestra in the pit and a full audience in the house. Then I am ready to start searching for a melody that will conform to a number of arbitrary conditions.[4]

Therefore, although Rodgers may have taken a short time to write a song down on paper, he had spent a lot of prior time thinking, discussing, analyzing, selecting, and revising in

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 122-3.

[2]Ewen, With Song, p. 177, citing Alan Jay Lerner.

[3]Amory, p. 530; Ewen, With Song, pp. 64-65, 147; Taylor, p. 221; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 279.

[4]Ewen, With Song, p. 64.

his head before he started to write.[1] Rodgers explained, "Yes, it takes me about an hour to write, . . . but there were about 50 years of study before that. And months of mulling over each melody. And deciding to do it in 3/4 time. And having to decide: (1) Will Oscar like it? (2) Will Dorothy like it? (3) Will I like it? And then I pick up my pencil to write."[2]

In addition to his belief that one does not have to be inspired to compose, Rodgers also discarded the theory that an artist has to be just a little bit mentally unbalanced in order to create: "I liked working in the morning because I felt fresh after a good night's sleep, . . . two highballs made it impossible for me to work at all."[3]

Ewen theorizes that Rodgers had a compulsion to write. He was so filled with the creativity and visions of a genius that he could not rest until he shared these dreams with the world; he always saw some new height to scale. Ewen says he had the ideas, personal viewpoint, imagination, and taste that "enables one to create important, possibly endurable, works of art."[4] Kislan describes Rodgers: "A

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[1]Ewen, With Song, p. 65; Taylor, p. 221; Amory, p. 530.

[2]Amory, p. 530.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 123.

[4]Ewen, With Song, pp. 5, 7.

deeply conscientious man who has taught his heart to listen to his head, he holds a devotion for his job that is akin to religion, but he can and does discuss it in cool, undramatic fashion."[1]

Basically Rodgers said he just loved writing for the theatre: "Say that I'm a guy who's in love with the theatre. If you're really in love you don't start adding up the profits or losses to be derived from going out with your girl. . . . when an idea for a new show seizes me it will just leave me no peace or rest until I have fulfilled it."[2] Furthermore, he said, "I don't find it work to write music, because I enjoy it. . . . There isn't anything I wanted to do that I haven't. At the same time, there isn't anything I've ever done that I didn't want to do better."[3] However, he says,

> I have never had the artistic motivation to write serious abstract music in large designs, or a formal grand opera, having always found complete satisfaction in getting my musical stimulation from a play or motion picture. The only inspiration I need comes from a plot and the lyrics--and occasionally from a member of the cast whose personality may suggest an added development of character.
>
> I'm just about the luckiest man in the world. I'm working for the theatre, the only place I really want to be, and I guess the only place I belong. I'm writing the kind of music I want and I have made a big success at it.[4]

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[1]Kislan, The Musical, p. 65.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 286.

[3]Whitman, "Rodgers Dead," p. A12.

[4]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 287.

Honors and awards

Rodgers never needed to fret over not having received a college degree; he eventually received eleven honorary doctorates from various colleges in the nation.[1] In addition, he has been awarded several Tonys, Oscars, Grammys, and Pulitzers, besides other tributes too numerous to list. But some of the more significant ones include an exhibition at the Library of Congress in 1955 honoring his career, the second non-classical composer ever so honored (the first was Stephen Foster); "An Evening with Richard Rodgers," shown coast-to-coast on NBC television in 1950; the Kennedy Center Honor in 1978; in 1967 the Handel Medallion, New York City's highest award for contributions to the city's cultural life; and the Lawrence Langner Special Award for Distinguished Lifetime Achievement in the Theater in 1979.[2] Additionally, Rodgers's picture was on the cover of Time magazine in 1938 and a twenty-minute film was made at Paramount Studios in 1929, starring Richard Rodgers and Larry Hart telling how to write songs.[3]

Not all of the honors and awards came to Rodgers, however. He established several awards and scholarships for

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[1]Green, Fact Book, pp. 5-6.

[2]Green, Fact Book, pp. 6, 707-8; Ewen, With Song, p. 154; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 265, 297; Whitman, "Rodgers Dead," p. A12.

[3]Hart, pp. 69, 128.

talented newcomers as his way of sharing his success with those who would follow.[1] He also built a million-dollar amphitheatre in his childhood neighborhood in 1970 and started plans for an art center building at Columbia University, which never came to fruition.[2]

Conclusion

Richard Rodgers was a conservative, efficient, well trained (both in school and by experience) combination of musical theatre creator and businessman. His idol was Jerome Kern. Rodgers said, "I have never felt that enough has been said about Kern's contribution to the American musical through his influence on subsequent writers of music in this country."[3]

Several people have categorized Rodgers's music. For example, Cole Porter said, "I can spot one of Dick Rodgers' tunes anywhere. There's a sort of holiness about them."[4] Ewen goes further to say that Rodgers composes three kinds of songs: childlike (such as "Do Re Mi," The Sound of Music, 1959), inspirational (such as "You'll Never Walk Alone," Carousel, 1945), and poetic (such as

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[1]Green, Fact Book, p. 4; Ewen, With Song, pp. 183-4; Whitman, Rodgers Dead, p. A12.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 247; Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 256-8.

[3]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 53.

[4]Taylor, p. 221, citing Cole Porter.

"Where or When," Babes in Arms, 1937.[1]

Rodgers could be said to have had three different careers in the theatre: 1920-1942 with Lorenz Hart, 1943-1960 with Oscar Hammerstein II, and 1961-1979 with various lyricists. Each of these periods varies in the kinds of productions that Rodgers was involved in, as he worked with different collaborators and gained experience in the ways of the theatre.

During the first period, Rodgers composed music for twenty-nine stage shows in twenty-three years, or an average of a new show about every nine months. These shows were usually musical comedies and they averaged 218 performances.[2] There were also ten films written during this period, but Rodgers said he would prefer to forget all of his films, except Love Me Tonight (1932, with Hart) and The State Fair, (1945 with Hammerstein.)[3] He objected to writing just a few songs for a film that was conceived and put together without his having a hand in anything but the songs, and most of the films he composed for were created this way. He said that Broadway writers, including himself, were not happy with the way Hollywood worked.[4]

During his third period Rodgers was involved in the

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[1]Ewen, With Song, pp. 167-8.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 189.

[3]Whitman, "Rodgers Dies," p. 24.

[4]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 166.

creation of 6 musicals during 20 years, an average of a show about every 3 years with an average run of 235 performances. He was not so prolific in his later life as in his youth, but his slower speed allowed him to spend more thought on what he created and he tended to approach these shows more seriously than he did those of his early or middle periods. He thus tended to ignore the established format and to try some new things, such as breaking the barrier that traditionally separated the orchestra in the pit from the singers on the stage. However, his experiments did not lead to any great successes. Walter Kerr pointed out one possible reason for Rodgers's waning success in his mature years. Kerr says that in the early days of Broadway musicals, the music was the most important element; the composer was chosen before the producers even thought about the librettist who would devise a story for the tunes.

But in the fifties and sixties, popular music outside the theatre changed. It was no longer the same kind of music that is necessary for musical theatre, in that musical theatre requires intelligible lyrics that have meaning. Popular music during these decades turned to rock and then disco, both of which tend to obliterate lyrics, and any feeling that is conveyed must come from the loudness of the beat and gyrations of the performers, rather than from the message expressed in the music and lyrics. Thus, theatre music and popular music used to be the same type, whether one sang it, danced to it, or listened to it. But

with the change in beat and focus, popular music became a different form from theatre music. Since Rodgers still wrote traditional theatre music, his music tended to be popular only with older audiences, who still liked this traditional sound, and his songs did not therefore gain much popularity outside of the theatre, where the younger listeners tend to determine what is popular in music.[1]

Thus, neither his first nor his third period were as successful, in length of runs nor in critical acclaim, as his middle period with Hammerstein, which will be dealt with in the following section on the Rodgers and Hammerstein collaboration.

In all, Rodgers composed about fifteen hundred songs, of which nearly one hundred are popular classics. In 1975 one critic estimated that the works of this prolific writer are so popular that "Probably not a day goes by without a show of his being performed somewhere in the world."[2] And in 1972 Alec Wilder wrote that, "Legend has it that somewhere amongst the many radio stations of the United States a Richard Rodgers song may be heard at any time, day or night, the year round."[3]

The main importance of Richard Rodgers's work in the

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[1]Walter Kerr, "First Came the Songs, Then the Show," New York Times, 11 March 1984, Arts and Leisure Section, pp. 2, 16.

[2]Whitman, "Rodgers Dead," p. A12.

[3]Wilder, p. 164.

American musical theatre, however, is not just the quantity of his output, nor is it the popularity of that work, but it is his contribution to the development of the American musical theatre form. Ewen says:

> The history of the American musical stage since 1925 is also the history of Richard Rodgers. Its evolution from the now-dated musical comedy of the early 1920's to the vital and vibrant musical play of the 1950's can be traced step by step in the successive stages of Rodgers's career. . . . More than any other single composer of our era he has helped to change the destiny of our musical theatre.[1]

Perhaps most important, Rodgers is credited by many to have "symbolized the evolution of American musical comedy into an art form of stature, in which plot, music and dancing were closely integrated and frequently employed to explore serious, even tragic, themes."[2]

Alan Jay Lerner says that every decade witnesses changes in musical theatre style. He says it is not the demands of the audience for these changes, but "the restlessness of authors for new forms of expression, which audiences then discover to be exactly what they were unconsciously longing for."[3] Rodgers maintained that experimentation was good, whether it took hold as a new, vital part of theatre or not: "When a worthwhile production comes along, nothing can keep the audience away. There is no force quite like that magnetic strength the theatre has

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 19.

[2]Whitman, "Rodgers Dies," p. 24.

[3]Lerner, The Street, p. 282.

to draw people out of their homes to spend an evening with others watching real actors on a real stage."[1] For his own contribution, Rodgers said, "I would like, if I can, to broaden the possibilities of the musical theater. I think there's a better 'Oklahoma!' someplace, a better 'West Side Story.' And I'd like to be mixed up in it."[2] And his genius was not confined to composing songs; he also knew how to integrate them into the story line, how an entire production should be put together and how it should look when finished.[3]

Rodgers did not, however, set out to be deliberately innovative. That is, when he started to plan a show, he did not think up some new ideas and then plan a show to accommodate them: "Every show is special . . . . I don't try to be innovative. How I work depends entirely upon the needs of each individual show."[4] And there were times when he had to be innovative, simply because he could not say what he wanted to say by traditional methods. Therefore, when necessary, he has invented his own language and techniques to rise to the occasion.[5]

Rodgers felt that his job was to translate the

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 282.

[2]Whitman, "Rodgers Dead," p. A12.

[3]Whitman, "Rodgers Dies," p. 24.

[4]Stasio, p. 10.

[5]Ewen, With Song, pp. 5-6.

mental aspects--i.e., the emotions, thoughts, motivations, etc.--of the characters to the audience by means of the mood he could set by the sound of the music he composed: "I have a story. I see a stage. I know what my settings are going to be. I know in most cases who will be the performers. I am standing in the orchestra pit. The lights are beginning to dim; the curtain is going up. I must have a song with the proper mood. I sit down and write that song. It's as simple as all that."[1] He said that songs must "fill an essential role in a play whose story line and character delineations . . . [depend] at least as much on its musical-lyrical structure as on the spoken word."[2]

Praise was showered on Rodgers throughout his life; for example, Leonard Bernstein said, "He [Rodgers] is, perhaps, the most imitated songwriter of our time. . . . He has established new levels of taste, distinction, simplicity in the best sense, and inventiveness."[3] And in another publication, Bernstein explained why Rodgers's music was so successful: "Ultimately one must simply accept the loving fact that people enjoy listening to organized sound (<u>certain</u> organized sounds, anyway); that this enjoyment can take the form of all kinds of responses from animal excitement to spiritual exaltation; and that people who can

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[1]Ewen, <u>Richard Rodgers</u>, pp. 314-5; Green, <u>Story</u>, p. 288.

[2]Ewen, <u>Richard Rodgers</u>, p. 286.

[3]Ibid., p. 18, citing Leonard Bernstein.

organize sounds so as to evoke the most exalted responses are commonly called geniuses."[1] Lyricist Sheldon Harnick called Rodgers a "living legend."[2] Alan Jay Lerner said, "Dick's got that pipeline to heaven that goes through him."[3] And author Howard Lindsay said, "There is no greater talent in the American musical theatre than Richard Rodgers. It is a talent disciplined by character and a sound musical education, enriched by humanity and mother wit."[4]

Alec Wilder has written a book on popular song writers, including Kern, Berlin, Gershwin, Porter, and others, but he says of Rodgers's work:

> Of all the writers whose songs are considered and examined in this book, those of Rodgers show the highest degree of consistent excellence, inventiveness, and sophistication. . . all of Rodgers' songs were written for the theatre. They have that elegance, sophistication, and creative quality which . . . used to distinguish theatre songs from popular songs.
>
> His distinction stems more from remarkable melodic sensibility and experimentation than from new departures in song structure. . . . Rodgers achieved his amazing innovations without resorting to more than an unexpected note here and there . . . [5]

Most of all, people seem to remember Rodgers as "a nice guy who finished first."[6] His contributions are

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[1]Bernstein, p. 11.

[2]Stasio, p. 10.

[3]Whitman, "Rodgers Dead," p. A12.

[4]Green, Fact Book, p. 736.

[5]Wilder, pp. 163-4.

[6]Green, Fact Book, p. 735, citing Peter DeVries.

credited with making life more pleasant. For example, playwright Sidney Kingsley said, "In an age of unprecedented horror, cruelty and inhumanity--that one man [Rodgers] could fill the world with such beauty--to make life worth the living--attests to the miracle of the human spirit."[1] And Senator Everett Dirksen said, "Frankly, I do not know how we would measure the inestimable debt that I think the country owes to Richard Rodgers and his associates for all those tuneful melodies and those entrancing things in the whole field of performing arts that have made life in America so real . . . ."[2] And finally, a tribute by the then Governor of the State of New York, Nelson A. Rockefeller, stated: "If, as the poets say, 'music is the speech of angels' then--at the very least--. . . Richard Rodgers, must be classified as a very heavenly body."[3] This "heavenly body" composed the music analyzed in chapter 6.

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[1]Green, Fact Book, p. 736, citing Sidney Kingsley.

[2]Green, Fact Book, p. 735, citing Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen.

[3]Green, Fact Book, p. 736, citing Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller.

The Collaboration

The Theatre Guild was not best known for its musical productions, but rather for serious drama, although it did produce a few notable musicals. For example, the Guild's first musical, the first Garrick Gaieties (Rodgers and Hart, 1925) was not planned as a regular production and only became one after it was a success as a benefit show.[1] In 1935 the Guild produced Gershwin's folk opera Porgy and Bess, with only mild success at 164 performances.[2] By 1942 the Guild had had a series of flops and its directors decided to try a musical version of Lynn Riggs's Green Grow the Lilacs, a folk play they had presented in 1931, in an attempt to boost their sagging finances and add to their record of successes. They called on their first composer-lyricist team, Rodgers and Hart, to create the songs for the show that would eventually become Oklahoma![3] In fact, the early newspaper announcements about the production said that Rodgers, Hart and Hammerstein were adapting Green Grow the Lilacs.[4] This is the event that brought about the collaboration of Rodgers and Hammerstein.

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[1]Roy S. Waldau, Vintage Years of the Theatre Guild, 1928-1939 (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972), pp. 25-26.

[2]Waldau, p. 453.

[3]Taylor, p. 147; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 208-209.

[4]Fordin, p. 186.

A collaboration in the theatre

A collaboration is a very special relationship between people. According to Rodgers:

> Of all the theatrical art forms, none is more of a collaborative effort than the musical play. While most of the essential components--the libretto, direction, dancing, set designs, lighting, and the others--can be and usually are handled by a single person in each area, the one department that generally requires the services of two people is the score. A composer can provide only one-half the finished product; without a lyricist he simply cannot function.[1]

And Hammerstein said:

> Collaboration is the biggest word in the theatre. It is the most important element in theatrical success. . . . To get along in the theatre you must enjoy working side by side with other people. You must be willing not only to give your best to them but to accept their best and give them the opportunity of adding their efforts to yours to their full capacities.
>
> . . . If you want privacy in your work, and if you want to make your flights of fancy solo, stay away from the theatre. The theatre is a welding of many arts into one. No one person can be efficient or talented in all these arts, and if any man could write and produce and direct and act and play the music, shift the scenery, design the costumes and, in short, do everything that could be done on one stage and come up with what was literally a one-man show, he would still need one more thing, an audience. You cannot get away from collaboration.[2]

Alan Jay Lerner adds, "Because a musical is a collaborative art form, there is no question that this kind of partnership is the most ideal way to function. You not only grow, but you grow together, in every sense of the word."[3]

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 306.

[2]Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 47-48.

[3]Lerner, The Street, p. 33.

How Rodgers and Hammerstein got together

At about the same time that the Guild asked Rodgers and Hart to write the musical, Hammerstein approached Jerome Kern, saying that he was interested in turning Green Grow the Lilacs into a musical. He said he liked the earthy characters, the vital drama that existed between them subliminally under the gentle surface of the play's story, and the natural setting. In fact, Hammerstein even called the Guild's directors, Helburn and Langner, to ask about the possibility of his and Kern's turning the play into a musical, but he was told that the Guild was already negotiating with Rodgers and Hart on the project. Kern was not enthusiastic because of the original play's short run and its rather depressing second act, which would be hard to make into a traditional, cheerful musical. Hammerstein dropped the matter.[1] When Hart refused to work on the adaptation, however, Rodgers went to see Hammerstein about collaborating, by writing the lyrics and libretto, and Hammerstein was delighted to say yes.[2] And when Hart was told that Hammerstein was going to collaborate with Rodgers, Hart said to Rodgers, "You couldn't pick a better man."[3]

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[1]Fordin, p. 184; Tony Palmer, All You Need Is Love (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1976), p. 126; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 209.

[2]Fordin, p. 184; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 198; Green, Story, p. 102.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 217.

In spite of Hammerstein's long and generally successful career in the theatre, his more recent successes, before Oklahoma!, were minimal. His reputation was at its all-time low. The thirties were not a fruitful decade for the theatre in general, but for Hammerstein, they were particularly unsuccessful, with only two shows on Broadway since 1935, both flops. In spite of the changes in financial and social conditions in America, Hammerstein was still writing mainly operettas, when audiences had a taste for something more modern.[1]

However, Rodgers had been writing mostly musical comedies--and quite successfully. From 1935 to 1943, Rodgers and Hart had ten shows on Broadway, and all except one were successful. But both Rodgers and Hammerstein really wanted to write something different, less formal than operetta and less shallow than musical comedy. Rodgers later wrote, "Oscar's kind of theatre was rapidly becoming passé and mine was all too often in a rut."[2] They wanted to write something with a stronger story that used music as a necessary tool in the plot line.[3] As Lehman Engel said, "The stage, by 1940, was set for the big period."[4] And

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[1]Green, Story, p. 97; Fordin, pp. 178; Snider, Songs of Hammerstein, p. 8.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 207-8.

[3]Green, Story, pp. 56-57.

[4]Engel, Consideration, p. 44.

Rodgers and Hammerstein were the men to launch this new period with Oklahoma!

Rodgers and Hammerstein had been friends since they wrote some amateur songs together in 1919.[1] And in 1941 Rodgers, Hart, and Hammerstein had considered collaborating on a musical version of Saratoga Trunk, although that never came to fruition.[2] But they kept in contact socially and saw each other's shows, so that they knew each other personally and respected each other's talents.[3] Hammerstein's first two children were even delivered by Rodgers's father.[4] Since neither Hart nor Kern showed any interest in the project, while both Rodgers and Hammerstein were excited about it, their partnership began.

There were some strong similarities in Rodgers and Hammerstein's backgrounds. Both were native New Yorkers, whose families were upper middle class; both were bright students who were skipped ahead in school; both attended Columbia College and wrote for the Varsity shows; both kept regular hours and lived moderate, conservative lives; both fell in love with the theatre early in life; and later in life, both became home-centered, happily married men whose

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[1]Green, Fact Book, p. 3.

[2]Fordin, p. 174.

[3]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 199.

[4]Ewen, With Song, p. 107.

wives were interior decorators named Dorothy.[1]

For Hammerstein, who had collaborated with many composers, the adjustment to Rodgers was not a new kind of experience. For Rodgers, having collaborated with only one man for a quarter of a century, the change was extreme--from the sophisticated, cynical, witty Hart to the simple, sentimental, optimistic Hammerstein.[2] Rodgers wrote, "It is only natural to feel some apprehension in forming a new partnership, especially after having worked exclusively with one man for so long a time, but because of the circumstances that brought Oscar and me together and because of the kind of man he was, I never had to go through a period of adjustment."[3] And later Rodgers said,

> Oscar was more sentimental. It wouldn't have been natural for Larry to write 'Oklahoma!'
>
> . . . Oscar Hammerstein's view of life was more positive, more optimistic. He had a wonderful family. He was a joiner, a leader, a man willing to do battle for whatever causes he believed in . . . . He was as meticulous a craftsman as Larry, and he was extremely versatile. As a partner, he was completely dependable.
>
> As far as his work with me was concerned, Oscar always wrote about the things that affected him deeply. What was truly remarkable was his never-ending ability to find new ways of revealing how he felt about three interrelating themes--nature, music and love.[4]

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 6, 7, 9-10, 16-17, 19, 57-58, 77, 125, 208; Fordin, pp. 3, 12-17, 24-25, 186; Ewen, With Song, pp. 107, 143; Kislan, "Nine Musical," p. 68; Green, Story, p. 14; Taylor, pp. 215-6; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 207.

[2]Palmer, p. 132.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 217.

[4]Whitman, "Rodgers Dead," p. A12, citing Richard Rodgers.

And after the two men decided that their collaboration would be a permanent one,[1] Hammerstein wrote,

> There are advantages to this kind of collaboration, provided that the two people get along as well as we do. We have fallen into a rhythm of work which suits us both. Our social lives and our personal habits are similar. Our theatrical tastes and standards are as nearly identical as they could be. The course of our professional union has been incredibly smooth and happy.[2]

For the first time since childhood, Rodgers took piano lessons again in 1941, practicing many hours a day. It helped not only his piano playing, but also his composition. It helped him to prepare for composing suitable music for Hammerstein's sensitive poetry.[3] Specifically, he said playing Debussy taught him new ideas for melody writing and playing Brahms gave him a better appreciation of what could be expressed through harmony.[4] The result was described by Martin Gottfried:

> After 22 years of working with Lorenz Hart, writing witty scores for brainless musical comedies, here was Richard Rodgers composing rich and mellow songs for a serious play. Instead of worrying about the change of style and partner, Mr. Rodgers worked. He went on to a second career as distinguished and celebrated as his first.[5]

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 235.

[2]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 46.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 202; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 178-9, 317-8.

[4]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 179.

[5]Martin Gottfried, "Is Broadway Drowning in Revivals?," New York Times, 25 November 1979, pp. 3, 21.

Working relationship

Rodgers and Hammerstein developed a method for working together which they followed during their entire eighteen-year collaboration. Hammerstein never wrote a word of the librettos or lyrics before he had long sessions with Rodgers in which they worked out all the details. Thus, Rodgers deserves credit for more than just the music of the productions. Similarily, Hammerstein deserves part of the credit for the music, because they also discussed the music before it was composed. Therefore everything either of them wrote was influenced by the other. Their works were the result of a truly close collaboration. Hammerstein descibed their working sessions in detail:

> . . . it will be noted that the composer and author work in very close collaboration during the planning of a song and the story that contains the song. This is an important point. It must be understood that the musician is just as much an author as the man who writes the words. He expresses the story in his medium just as the librettist expresses the story in his. Or, more accurately, they weld their two crafts and two kinds of talent into a single expression. This is the great secret of the well-integrated musical play. It is not so much a method as a state of mind, or rather a state for two minds, an attitude of unity. Musical plays, then, are not "books" written by an author with songs later inserted by a composer and a lyric writer. . . .
>
> Dick and I stay very close together while drawing up the blueprint of a play. Before we start to put words or notes on paper we have agreed on a very definite and complete outline, and we have decided how much of the story shall be told in dialogue and how much in song. We try to use music as much as we can. . . .

> After we have passed the blueprint stage, we then work together on the interior problems. We approach the spots we have chosen for songs and we discuss each song very carefully. It is not at all unlikely that Dick will give me valuable lyric ideas and I, on the other hand, frequently contribute important suggestions for the music. I don't mean to imply that I give him ideas for melodies. I have no melodic gift whatever, but I have a feeling for the treatment of a score, ideas for its structure.
>
> One of the most helpful features of these periods of collaboration is the quick reaction you can get from your collaborator which helps you throw out bad ideas quickly and sustains your confidence in good ideas so that you go ahead. . . . This is the annoying part of our collaboration. It takes me a week, and sometimes three weeks, to write the words of a song. After I give them to him it takes him an hour or two and his work is over. He responds remarkably to words, and when he likes them they immediately suggest tunes to him.[1]

Rodgers described their working relationship from his viewpoint:

> For twenty-five years, the only way I could get Larry to do anything was virtually to lock him in a room and stay with him until the job was finished. Oscar's working habits were entirely the opposite. . . . I did not have to be with Oscar every time he got the urge to write a lyric. Since the actual creation of a melody has always come quickly to me, I was spared the endless hours I formerly had to spend playing nurse.
>
> Oscar usually created his lyrics with 'dummy' melodies going through his head--which he frankly admitted were stolen from fragments of other people's tunes. Often the melodies I wrote for his lyrics did not subscribe in time signature or scansion to his concept. . . . For some reason the change always pleased him. Though Oscar was not a musician, he did possess a superb sense of form. He knew everything about the architecture of a song--its foundation, structure, embellishments--and because we always had thorough discussions on the exact kind of music that was needed, this method of collaboration helped us enormously in creating songs that not only were right for the characters who sang them but also possessed a union of words and music that made them sound natural.[2]

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[1]Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 15-16.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 220-1.

Thus their procedure was to have long discussions, sometimes for months, before either actually started writing the actual musical play. They collaborated on every aspect of the production. Both agreed on the events of the plot, an outline of their order, the divisions of the script, where the songs would be placed, the purposes of the songs, what would be sung and what would be spoken, and the mood and texture of the songs, plot events, scenes, and characters. Both cooperated and offered suggestions freely on all elements. Then with the entire production planned, they separated in order to do their individual work alone. Hammerstein wrote the lyrics first 90 percent of the time. Thus it is easy to understand how Rodgers could compose music so rapidly, that fit the mood, character and situation, with all of this background work done in advance.[1] Rodgers said, "When the lyrics are right, it's easier to write a tune than to bend over and tie your shoelaces,"[2] and "When you're given words like that you get something to say musically,"[3] and again, "All you have to do with a Hammerstein lyric is to put it on the piano--and the song

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[1]Fordin, pp. 186, 189, 190-2; Ewen, With Song, pp. 144-7; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 217; Kislan, "Nine Musicals," p. 69; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 217, 309, 311-2; Taylor, pp. 219-20.

[2]Atkinson, p. 337, citing Richard Rodgers.

[3]Fordin, p. 189, citing Richard Rodgers.

writes itself."[1] But Hammerstein just said, "I hand him a lyric and get out of his way."[2]

This extensive joint planning no doubt accounts for the skillful integration of every element of their productions. Ewen says that in Oklahoma! they agreed that

> the play would always dictate the techniques employed; never would the techniques influence the way the play would be adapted. . . . . Rodgers and Hammerstein also agreed early that every song, every bit of humor, every dance, every production number must be germane to their text--otherwise it would not go in, no matter how sure-fire it might be in winning audience enthusiasm.[3]

Consequently, Hammerstein said,

> We realized that such a course was experimental, amounting almost to the breach of an implied contract with a musical comedy audience. I cannot say truthfully that we were worried by the risk. Once we had made the decision everything seemed to work right and we had the inner confidence people feel when they have adopted the direct and honest approach to a problem.[4]

Stanley Green said about their songs:

> . . . in each case the words fitted the music and the music fitted the words so perfectly that they seemed to be the product of one man. Yet, curiously, if the music of Rodgers can be enjoyed alone, so too can the lyrics of Hammerstein. Their songs have endured because they had something to say, both in their melodies and in their lyrics. They shed new insight on and new understanding of the eternal themes of love, fear, sadness, gaiety, hope, and so many others.[5]

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 314; Ewen, With Song, p. 141.

[2]Edward A. Jardim, "Who Said It?," New York Sunday News, Magazine, 19 July 1981, p. 2, citing Oscar Hammerstein II,.

[3]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 210.

[4]Ibid., citing Oscar Hammerstein II.

[5]Green, Story, p. 13.

And Kislan adds that, "the songs are so skillfully woven in and out of the story, that it becomes almost impossible to imagine the story without them. . . . Integration was the desired state in which two crafts, their two kinds of theatrical talent, were welded into a single expression."[1] Jonathan Schwartz added that their "Songs became extensions of characters. Even though an actor would break into music, it didn't seem as if anything unusual was happening. Rodgers and Hammerstein were the essential integrators."[2]

Ewen describes their close collaboration:

> As time went by, they became so inextricably bound up with one another, in their social life as well as in their work, that each could predict the other's response to any given situation. They often discovered on communication that they had the same ideas on a subject, or the same solution to a problem. Nevertheless, they never failed to contact one another when a decision had to be made.[3]

Oversaw whole production

Once a play was in rehearsals Rodgers and Hammerstein were just as involved in the play's production as they had been in its writing. Rehearsals usually lasted five weeks and the two creators worked seven days a week,

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[1]Kislan, The Musical, pp. 140-1.

[2]Jonathan Schwartz, "Rodgers," Village Voice, 21 January 1980, p. 8.

[3]Ewen, With Song, p. 143.

twelve hours a day during this time.[1] Agnes De Mille said that the traditional chain of command in a musical's rehearsals puts the composer at the head, followed closely by the librettist; the director and producer were next in authority and the choreographer after them.[2] De Mille said that during the first week of rehearsals for Oklahoma! the rehearsals lasted seven hours a day, the Equity maximum. The second week they worked out the crowd scenes. During the third week a lot of rehearsal time was taken with costume fittings. By the fourth week they were doing run-throughs and the fifth week was spent in dress rehearsals and traveling to the out-of-town tryouts. This meant that the dances, songs, lines and blocking had to be known by the end of the second week.[3]

Rodgers was never still at rehearsals, inspecting the production from every angle and checking on all aspects: lights, acoustics, and every small bit of stage business. He paced about nervously and demanded the best from everybody connected with the show.[4] But as the show neared opening, he gained confidence and became a pillar of strength and aplomb. As Oklahoma! was finishing

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[1]De Mille, Dance to the Piper, p. 243; Ewen, With Song, pp. 149-51.

[2]De Mille, Dance to the Piper, p. 242.

[3]Ibid., p. 243.

[4]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 312-3.

rehearsals and about to open in New Haven, everyone was nit-picking the show and saying that various things were wrong with it, but Rodgers said, "Do you know what I think is wrong? Almost nothing. Now why don't you all quiet down?"[1]

Hammerstein was quite the opposite during rehearsals, sitting quietly, taking notes, from which he would later make polite suggestions. Rodgers called him a "controlled perfectionist."[2] De Mille described the last few evenings of rehearsals before Oklahoma! opened in New Haven, when Hammerstein

> sat through the endless nights quietly giving off intelligence like a stove. He never got angry or hasty or excited, but when people were beating their heads on the orchestra rail made the one common-sense suggestion that any genius might think of if he . . . [were] not at the moment consuming himself. Lawrence Langner expounded. Terry Helburn snapped and badgered and barked at our heels, with a housekeeper's insistence on detail. Mamoulian created in spite of the hour and other people's nerves. But Oscar just quietly pointed the way.[3]

But on opening night, according to Ewen, they switched attitudes from those they had during rehearsals, with Rodgers's sitting confidently in the back row and Hammerstein's becoming the nervous one.[4]

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[1]De Mille, Dance to the Piper, p. 250, citing Richard Rodgers.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 296.

[3]De Mille, Dance to the Piper, p. 250.

[4]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 313.

Other endeavors

Rodgers and Hammerstein became more than just a famous and successful musical-play writing team. They eventually headed a theatrical empire, which included a Broadway producing firm, a London producing firm, a music publishing house, and a motion picture company.[1] Their producing firm began in 1944 with the non-musical I Remember Mama and included seven more shows that they did not write (the most successful being Annie Get Your Gun, with 1,147 performances) and six of the shows that they did write.[2] In the early fifties, Rodgers and Hammerstein bought the rights to their productions done by the Theatre Guild, so that in the future they would solely own all of their joint ventures. They paid $851,000 for the rights to Oklahoma!.[3] In 1953 they formed Rodgers and Hammerstein Pictures, Inc. to produce the first film of their work, Oklahoma!, in order to have complete control over it.[4] This corporation sold film rights to their plays with a guarantee of 40 percent of the profits to Rodgers and Hammerstein.[5]

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 18, 228.

[2]Green, Fact Book, pp. 560, 600, 606, 621, 631, 701-2; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 228-30; Taylor, p. 178; Rodger, Musical Stages, pp. 246-50.

[3]Fordin, p. 314.

[4]Ibid., p. 315.

[5]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 230.

Their reputation was that they were powerful, stern, and uncompromising businessmen. It was commonly said that "R & H would gobble you up for breakfast, R & H always got everything it wanted, looked out for its own interests, R & H was tough and powerful."[1] This harsh description of their tough business veneer, written by Hammerstein's biographer, seems a bit extreme when compared to all the nice things people said about these two men personally. They were often referred to as a "big, soft guy" (Hammerstein) and a "short, tough guy" (Rodgers).[2] But people do not get ahead in the theatre unless they take the business end seriously. It must be remembered that Rodgers, particularly, had to fight his way to the top. And Hammerstein, although having had an easier beginning in the theatre, had had eight years without a success until he collaborated with Rodgers. Obviously he did not want to do anything to upset his successful partnership. Fordin says, "There was in him, for all his tender qualities and sympathetic understanding, a selfishness that allowed him to look after his own best interests. . . . Within the poet, with his kindness and humor and caring, there was steel. The nature of R & H reflected the character of the two men who formed the entity."[3] So they shared both the honors

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[1]Fordin, p. 274.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 28.

[3]Fordin, p. 276.

and the somber, somtimes severe, business of success. Joshua Logan said that, when it came to business, "They were both tough as nails."[1]

At their office in New York City, first on Sixth Avenue, then at 488 Madison Avenue, and now at 598 Madison Avenue, the business end of their partnership was handled by many employees, with Rodgers and Hammerstein overseeing every aspect. The office is still very active, handling the continued use of the partners' creations. Rodgers was more energetically involved in the business, but both came in to handle correspondence, interviews, auditions, and to hold business meetings. They did not, however, write their shows at this address. They had their creative meetings in each others' homes. Rodgers summed up his and Hammerstein's business relationship:

> Most good collaborations between a lyricist and a composer depend on give and take, a willingness to accept suggestions and make concessions in the interest of the project as a whole. This was one of the most rewarding aspects of working with Oscar. He was never afraid to voice his ideas if they differed from mine, nor did he ever make me afraid to voice mine if they differed from his. Since we respected each other's views, even in our own particular bailiwicks, we were always grateful for the other's help. . . .[2]

And in another source, he said,

> A good collaboration is one where minds, emotions and intellects meet. Like a good marriage, you have to understand a person's needs. You have to give way to him. It's easier to say, "Let's try it your way first. Then let's try it my way." In that way there are no

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[1]Fordin, p. 276, citing Joshua Logan.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 290.

> hurt feelings. In all my years of working with . . . Oscar Hammerstein, I never had an argument.[1]

Although current figures are not available, Business Week magazine reported in August 1951, that Rodgers and Hammerstein Productions was grossing about fifteen million dollars annually.[2]

Besides affording Broadway and the world many pleasant evenings with their productions, Rodgers and Hammerstein were very generous with their talents and financial aid to help the war effort during World War II and to contribute to other charitable causes. For example, they wrote songs for each branch of the armed services to use in their recruiting drives. They also voluntarily appeared in many camp shows and were active in organizations that aided the government's war savings drive and other military causes.[3]

Another example of their generosity is the $200,000 they donated to Hebrew University in Israel to found the Rodgers and Hammerstein Cancer Research Institute.[4]

Additionally, Rodgers and Hammerstein established scholarships at Juilliard School of Music and at the

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[1]Green, Story, p. 104, citing Richard Rodgers.

[2]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 230, citing Business Week.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 209-10; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 178.

[4]Ewen, With Song, p. 179.

Professional Wing Training Program of the American Theatre Wing, and also commissioned Aaron Copland to write an opera, The Tender Land.[1]

Lawrence Langner said that Rodgers and Hammerstein's greatest gift to the theatre world was friendliness:

> . . . they are essentially artists in their approach to their work, have a simple, direct humanity, and take a warm personal interest in the lives of the dozens of men and women who work in the plays with which we have been associated. I think it is this generous endowment of friendliness for others which has been at the base of Oscar's poetic quality in his verses, and of Dick's popular appeal in his music.[2]

Shows written by
Rodgers and Hammerstein

Table 3, which follows, lists the nine Broadway shows, one film and one television musical that were written by this collaboration. Their longest running show on Broadway was their first, Oklahoma!, but most of the rest were quite successful, with the shortest run being the 246 performances of Pipe Dream. But many reviewers have pointed out that, "Rodgers and Hammerstein at less than their best were still better than most composers and lyricists at their best."[3] They wrote an average of one show every two years, with an average original run of 1,020 performances each. If all of the original Broadway performances of all their shows were done consecutively at

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 296.

[2]Langner, pp. 369-70.

[3]Fordin, p. 311.

TABLE 3

PRODUCTIONS OF RODGERS AND HAMMERSTEIN IN COLLABORATION

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Librettist[a]	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
			MUSICALS				
1943	Oklahoma![b]	2,156	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Rodgers	Mamoulian	Bennett
1945	Carousel[c]	890	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Rodgers	Mamoulian	Walker
1947	Allegro	315	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Rodgers	De Mille	Bennett
1949	South Pacific[d]	1,925	Hammerstein, Logan	Hammerstein	Rodgers	Logan	Bennett
1951	The King and I[e]	1,246	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Rodgers	van Druten	Bennett
1953	Me and Juliet	358	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Rodgers	Abbott	Walker
1955	Pipe Dream	246	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Rodgers	Clurman	Bennett

[a]"Librettist" is the term used throughout this table to refer to the person who authored the script, whether for a musical, film, or television show.

[b]One film version, 1955.

[c]One film version, 1956.

[d]One film version, 1958.

[e]One film version, 1956.

Table 3--Continued

Year	Title	No. of Perf.	Libretti-st	Lyricist	Composer	Director	Orchestrator
1958	Flower Drum Song[a]	600	Hammerstein, Joseph Fields	Hammerstein	Rodgers	Kelly	Bennett
1959	The Sound of Music[b]	1,443	Lindsay, Crouse	Hammerstein	Rodgers	Donehue	Bennett
			FILM MUSICAL				
1945	State Fair[c]		Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Rodgers	Lang	Powell
			TELEVISION				
1957	Cinderella[d]	1 1/2 hours	Hammerstein	Hammerstein	Rodgers	Nelson	Bennett

[a]One film version, 1961.

[b]One film version, 1965.

[c]Remake, 1962, with five of the six original songs plus five new songs, which had music and lyrics by Richard Rodgers.

[d]London Pantomime version, 1958; American television remake, 1965.

Source: Stanley Green, Rodgers and Hammerstein Fact Book. New York: The Lynn Farnol Group, Inc., 1980.

the rate of eight performances per week, it would equal an unbroken run of over twenty-five years for the artistic output of these two talented men. And this does not even take into account all of the many revivals of their works that have been done on Broadway.

A question arises as to the correct number of performances of Oklahoma! The usual authority on this sort of subject, The Rodgers and Hammerstein Fact Book, edited by Stanley Green, gives 2,212 performances, which includes 44 special matinees given free for the members of the armed forces, for which no one was paid to perform.[1] Without the special matinees, the total is 2,168 commercial Broadway performances. However, Gerald Bordman's highly regarded American Musical Theatre gives its total run as 2,248 performances.[2] Hugh Fordin, in his biography of Oscar Hammerstein II, gives the total as 2,243 performances.[3] In an attempt to find the correct number, this researcher telephoned Fordin to ask where he got that figure. Fordin's answer was, "Who cares? What difference does it make?"[4] Since further research revealed more disagreements on the exact number, and since

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[1]Green, Fact Book, p. 511; Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 229.

[2]Bordman, American Musical Theatre, p. 536.

[3]Fordin, p. 203.

[4]Telephone interview with Hugh Fordin, New York City, July 1981; all other references to Fordin in this disseration are to his book, Getting to Know Him.

this researcher did care and thought it did make a difference, she got some old calendars and did a manual, personal count. The following is the result of that count.

Oklahoma! opened March 31, 1943, and closed May 29, 1948. The opening night was on a Wednesday, which means that there were 5 performances the first week, counting one performance for each day except Saturday, which also had a matinee. From the next Monday, April 5, to Saturday, December 25, there were exactly 38 weeks. The last week of the year had performances from Monday, December 27, through Friday, December 31, which means 6 more performances, counting one for each day except Wednesday, which had 2. Multiplying the 38 weeks by 8 performances each totals 304 performances, to which must be added the 5 from the first week and 6 from the last week, making a grand total of 315 performances for 1943.

A year consists of a total of 52 weeks plus one or two days, depending on whether or not it is a leap year. Depending upon which day of the week the extra day or days fall, there might also have been a matinee on one of those days. Thus each year had to be calculated individually, with the following results.

The year 1944 had 52 weeks plus 2 extra days (Saturday and Sunday). Multiplying 8 times 52 yields 416, plus 2 performances for the extra Saturday, December 30 (there were no performances on Sundays) equals a total of 418 performances for 1944.

The year 1945 had 52 weeks, plus an extra Monday, which meant an exta performance, totaling 417 performances. The year 1946 had 52 weeks, plus an extra Tuesday, yielding the same as 1945: 417. The year 1947 had 52 weeks, plus an extra Wednesday--thus 2 extra performances, equalling a total of 418 for the year.

In 1948 Oklahoma! ran from January 1 (a Thursday) to May 29 (a Saturday). Thus there were 21 complete weeks of performances, plus the 3 days of the first week of the year: Thursday, Friday and Saturday--or 4 extra performances. This totals 172 performances for 1948.

By adding all of the years' performances together, the total is 2,157 performances. However, on Saturday, April 14, 1945, the matinee performances of all Broadway shows were cancelled out of respect for the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.[1] Therefore, one performance is to be subtracted, leaving a total of 2,156. If one adds the 44 special armed services matinees, however, the number comes to an even 2,200. The number used on table 3 is 2,156, since this is the correct total number of paid, commercial performances in the original run.

These numbers do not agree with any figures published prior to this detailed counting. However, Stanley Green said he was using these new figures, when apprised of

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[1]New York Times, 14 April 1945, p. 12; announcement in black border read: "Out of respect to the memory of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, all matinees for today, Saturday, April 14, have been cancelled."

them and how they were computed, in his latest article on Oklahoma!, giving credit to this researcher.[1]

Of their eleven works together, one libretto was by other writers, two librettos were original scripts by Hammerstein alone, and eight librettos were adapted by Hammerstein from other sources, although he had collaborators on two of these latter scripts (Joshua Logan on South Pacific and Joseph Fields on Flower Drum Song). But he alone wrote all of the lyrics for all shows.[2] Although Hammerstein was not fond of writing librettos, he was able to write ten generally successful ones for this collaboration. He told his son that he was happy to have a team as capable as Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse to write the libretto for The Sound of Music.[3] The fact that his talent lay in providing the exact wording, not in inventing a story, accounts for his adapting eight of the ten librettos he wrote. The two original scripts were Allegro, which he said was somewhat autobiographical, and Me and Juliet, which was about the theatre world that he also knew well.[4]

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[1]Telephone interview with Stanley Green, New York City, 22 April 1984.

[2]Green, Fact Book, pp. 513, 534, 581, 623; Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II, Joseph Fields, Flower Drum Song (New York: Williamson Music, Inc., 1958), p. 55.

[3]Fordin, p. 345.

[4]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 241; Snider, Songs of Hammerstein, p. 9.

All scores were written entirely by Rodgers. Robert Russell Bennett orchestrated eight of their eleven works. As for directors, there was a different one for each show, except that Rouben Mamoulian directed both Oklahoma! and Carousel.

In number of songs per show, they wrote from twelve in Me and Juliet to nineteen in Allegro. The average number of songs per show was fifteen, which, by comparison, puts Oklahoma!, with its thirteen songs, in the lower range.

The integrated ballet idea, which was considered so innovative in Oklahoma!, was used again in Carousel, The King and I, and Flower Drum Song.

The nine Broadway shows illustrate Rodgers and Hammerstein's variety. The first show was set in the Southwest (1900), the second in New England (1880s), the third in the Midwest (1905-45), the fourth in the South Pacific (1940s), the fifth in Siam (1860s), the sixth in New York (the present), the seventh near Monterey, California (the present), the eighth in the Chinese section of San Francisco (the present) and the last in Austria (1938 et seq.) Two of the shows had an anti-hero for the male lead: Carousel and The King and I. Allegro was built around the life story of a medical doctor, tracing his experiences and values from birth to middle age. Oklahoma!'s characters were cowboys and farmers. World War II sailors populated South Pacific. And they even

wrote about Siamese, Austrians, and Chinese Americans. Pipe Dream was filled with derelicts and prostitutes, and Me and Juliet was about the backstage life of the theatre. This latter show, incidentally, is the only one that they called a "musical comedy." The rest were called "musical plays." Rodgers said that they intentionally tried not to copy what they had done before, giving variety to their works: "We cannot repeat something we have already done. We have to seek out something new, fresh, and unexpected before we can become sufficiently excited to go to work."[1]

Significance of Rodgers and and Hammerstein's works

Rodgers and Hammerstein are credited with giving a new dimension to the Broadway musical. They combined the old-fashioned forms of musical comedy and operetta to yield a musical play that had a plot line that was more than an excuse for songs and dances, and characters that had several sides to their personalities and even developed during the play. They integrated the drama, music, lyrics, dance and every aspect of the whole production, giving birth to a fresh new theatrical form of musical that was the first to contain a libretto worthy of dramatic analysis as literature.[2] According to Alan Jay Lerner, Rodgers and

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 241.

[2]Richard Kislan, "Nine Musical Plays of Rodgers and Hammerstein: A Critical Study in Content and Form" (Ph. D. dissertation, New York University, 1970), pp. 88-89.

Hammerstein "radically changed the course of the musical theatre. The musical comedy became a musical play."[1]

Rodgers and Hammerstein felt that many musical comedies suffered from slavishly following the traditions of what can or cannot be done in a musical. But they believed that if the joy of life is shown through the story and characters, then the play's events can be dramatic, tragic, or comic, and they will make a successful musical.[2] By this means they were able to bring more depth and realism to the musical form. They tackled unconventional subjects and used unconventional methods. However, since most of their works were adaptations, they were careful to maintain the integrity of the original work.[3] But they made it clear that they did not set out to be different; they let the material dictate the course of action; they just did their best work on it and kept close to the original.[4] John Steinbeck said in a letter to Hammerstein concerning the musical form that Rodgers and Hammerstein created: "You and Dick invented this form and carried it to its high point . . . . When Oklahoma! came out it violated every conventional rule of Musical Comedy. You were out on a limb. They loved it and were for you. . . . People love

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[1]Lerner, Street, p. 33.

[2]Fordin, p. 189.

[3]Ibid. p. 328.

[4]Ibid. p. 187.

Oklahoma! as a classic . . . ."[1] Fordin says, "An integrated musical had popped up from time to time since Show Boat, on the screen and on the stage, but it was not widely accepted as an example of what the musical ought to be until 1943, when Oklahoma! burst upon the scene."[2]

Ewen tells how Rodgers and Hammerstein approached Green Grow the Lilacs in order to change it into a musical:

> Since they loved the play, they stood ready to deal with it on its own terms. If, in the process, most of the familiar ritual of musical comedy had to be abandoned, well then that's the way it would have to be. The tragic episodes and the ugly character would have to stay in. Humor would have to spring naturally from situation and characters. If the play made no provisions for a formal chorus-girl line as such, then such a line would be dispensed with. In fact, they decided, no girls would appear on the stage for half of the first act, since the plot did not call for them. If tap dancing was out of place in a play like this, then they would recruit the services of American folk ballet . . . . As for the music, neither Rodgers nor Hammerstein were at all concerned with creating song hits and then finding a convenient place for them in the story. They wanted to produce only such musical numbers as were inextricably bound up with plot and characters.[3]

And he added a description of the finished play:

> The story line was strong, colorful, logical, with but few lapses in dramatic interest. The dialogue and lyrics, though frequently in the American vernacular, were just as often touched with poetry. Agnes De Mille's folk dances stirred and excited both the eye and the imagination. The music--now rich and with the inflections of American folk songs, now tuneful,

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[1]Fordin, pp. 327-8, citing letter from John Steinbeck to Oscar Hammerstein II, October 1955.

[2]Fordin, p. 147.

[3]Ewen, With Song, p. 112.

> charming, and popular the way Broadway songs were supposed to be--was spellbinding. The first night audience finally realized that something truly historic was happening in that theatre. Oklahoma! was musical comedy no longer. It was an eloquent folk play with music.[1]

This last quotation brings up another difference of opinion about Oklahoma!--which genre of musical it should be called. Whereas Ewen here called it a "folk play with music," and in another publication a "folk opera," [2] Cecil Smith called it an operetta, while Gilbert Chase, among others, called it a musical comedy.[3] But Smith says that whatever it was, it was the first all American, non-Broadway musical comedy or operetta, free of European, English, and even previous Broadway influences.[4]

But before the great success of this new kind of musical, money to put it on was very hard to come by. The Theatre Guild had no reputation for hit musicals and had had nothing lately but flops. No stars were planned to be in the production. And people objected to a "cowboy" musical with chorus girls in long dresses who do not appear until almost halfway through the first act. And when prospective backers learned that the burning issue in the first act was merely who would take whom to a box social and

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[1]Ibid., p. 116.

[2]Ewen, Complete Book, p. 251.

[3]Smith, p. 343; Gilbert Chase, America's Music from the Pilgrims to the Present (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), p. 631.

[4]Smith, p. 342.

that there was a death in the second act, it became even harder to raise the necessary money. Backers' auditions were held for weeks, in which Rodgers and Margot Hopkins played the score on two pianos, Hammerstein narrated the story, and Alfred Drake and Joan Roberts sang some of the songs. Slowly investors were found for small bits of money, frequently one thousand dollars each. However, these investments were finally paid back at over 300 percent.[1]

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer owned the film rights to Green Grow the Lilacs and the Guild got an option to buy them back for $50,000 if the musical version was successful; this had to be exercised within thirty days after the show opened on Broadway. It was such a success that they exercised the option within thirty hours.[2]

To prove the continuing popularity of their works, the Educational Theatre Journal reported in 1961 that a survey of the 1959-60 academic year showed that 64.5 percent of the musicals produced in colleges in the United States were shows written by Rodgers and Hammerstein.[3] And in an interview with Bob Baumgart of the Rodgers and Hammerstein office in 1983, it was confirmed that Oklahoma! was still

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 223-4; Taylor, p. 166; Ewen, With Song, p. 110; Waldau, p. 386.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 224; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 209.

[3]Theodore J. Shank, "Provincialism in College and University Play Selections: 1962-1963," Educational Theatre Journal 13 (May 1961): 116.

the most often produced Rodgers and Hammerstein musical.[1] And as a sign of the continuing popularity of Oklahoma! with the Broadway theatre-going public, during the show's last revival on Broadway in 1979, Douglas Watt reported in the New York Daily News that

> the Golden Age of musicals . . . . ushered in by "Oklahoma!," which was to set the style for so much that followed in the '40's and '50's, seems to glow more warmly than ever in retrospect. It also invites a theater-going public that . . . wants to get away from it all for a couple of hours. No harm in that, especially if the escapism delivered, like that of "Oklahoma!," is first-rate, never truly dormant, and enlivening both to new audiences and new performers.[2]

Awards and honors

It is impossible to list all of the awards and honors bestowed upon these two men jointly, but a few selected ones are worth mention. For example, in 1953 they were invited to produce a show in President Eisenhower's honor at the White House, which they did. And also in 1953 they appeared in and wrote a song for a motion picture documentary Main Street to Broadway as an example of how a successful Broadway song-writing team works. In 1954, and again in 1985, ninety-minute television specials honored their works, with excerpts from their shows and their personal appearances. The 1954 version was carried by all

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[1]Interview with Bob Baumgart, Rodgers and Hammerstein Theatre Library, New York City, 12 September 1983.

[2]Douglas Watt, "The Great Musical Revival," New York Daily News, Leisure Section, 6 January 1980, p. 5.

four major networks simultaneously. In 1955 there was a six-week festival of Rodgers and Hammerstein works, given by the St. Louis Municipal Opera. New York's Mayor Impellitteri declared the week beginning August 31, 1953, "Rodgers and Hammerstein Week" in New York City, while they had four shows running concurrently on Broadway.[1] Walter Kerr commented during this week that, "We might as well have called the whole 1943-1953 period the Rodgers and Hammerstein decade. . . . No one working in the field of musical entertainment has been uninfluenced by the Rodgers and Hammerstein vision. The fact of musical comedy itself has changed beyond recognition."[2]

Their awards in the industry are equally numerous, including eighteen Antoinette Perry Awards, two New York Drama Critics Circle Awards, twenty-five Donaldson Awards, and fifteen Motion Picture Academy Awards.[3] Additionally, they won two Pulitzer Prizes and five gold records.[4] Incidentally, Oklahoma! was the first Broadway show to record an original-cast album.[5]

Perhaps the greatest honor of all is that the song

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[1]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, pp. 222, 248, 293, 293, 295; WNET, "Rodgers and Hammerstein: The Sound of American Music," 16 March 1985.

[2]Ewen, With Song, p. 153, citing Walter Kerr.

[3]Green, Fact Book, pp. 531, 537, 548, 558, 567, 578, 585, 593, 636, 645.

[4]Ibid., pp. 518, 567, 545, 567, 578, 637, 645.

[5]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 228.

"Oklahoma" was made the official song of the State of Oklahoma.[1]

Conclusion

This collaboration of two men who wrote for the musical theatre was perhaps the most successful one in the history of the Broadway stage.[2] Their success is built on the fact that they were able to blend their talents together in such a way as to become as one person, thus giving their works the benefit of the genius of two men, but out of one mind. Deems Taylor describes their music:

> There is a conversational quality about it that makes it easy to sing. It lets the words through. . . . [Rodgers] is the exact counterpart of Hammerstein. Both say their say as directly as possible and as simply as possible. The trimmings may come later, but the tune itself, the lyric itself, is simple. It is fundamental, but not holy. It is not sad, but it is serious.[3]

Green sums up their plays as having

> revealed their authors to be, as novelist Herman Wouk once wrote, 'not so much sophisticated as wise; not so much clever as civilized.' They wrote with warmth, understanding, a decent outlook on life, a respect for their fellow man and a basic feeling of optimism for the world. Their themes touched our heads as well as our hearts. Their plays did not preach sermons, but they did reveal their authors as two men who felt deeply about social problems. By never writing down to their audiences, Rodgers and Hammerstein helped to elevate them. By never following a proven hit formula, they paved the way for new talent to attempt daring and untrodden paths. Their influence was felt as strongly

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[1]Ibid.; p. 229; Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 222.

[2]"Rodgers and Hammerstein Shows Are Pushing $8-Million," Business Week, 11 August 1951, p. 96.

[3]Taylor, p. 231.

in front of the footlights as behind them.[1]

Kislan says that their work abounds with hope, love, education, a look at the happy side of life, and a conviction that good will conquer evil: "Studied together, the plays force a practical realization: all men need each other. Thus, hope evolves in the plays from personal optimism, to brotherhood, to the American Dream of success and achievement."[2] Rodgers said Hammerstein's work had three themes: nature, music, and love.[3] Green said their works had the themes of love, fear, gaiety, sadness, and hope, among others.[4] There seems to be general agreement that they did look on the pleasant side of life, that they had hope for a better future for the world, and that they tried to convey these ideas to their audiences. And their ideas were put forth so skillfully that the public liked what they heard and saw in their shows and thus welcomed this philosophy.

When the successful Broadway song writer Cole Porter was asked in 1960 what the most profound change had been in musical theatre in the past forty years, he answered simply, "Rodgers and Hammerstein."[5]

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[1]Green, Story, p. 13.

[2]Kislan, "Nine Musical," pp. 88-89.

[3]Whitman, "Rodgers Dead," p. A12.

[4]Green, Story, p. 13.

[5]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 195; Kislan, "Nine Musical," p. 2.

CHAPTER IV

THE PLAY FROM WHICH OKLAHOMA! WAS ADAPTED: GREEN GROW THE LILACS

Lynn Riggs (1899-1954) was an American singer, poet and dramatist, whose father's profession was that of a cowpuncher. Born near Claremore, Oklahoma, he attended the University of Oklahoma and sang professionally in motion-picture houses and with a circuit quartet on tour until he wrote his first play in 1922. He wrote a total of thirteen plays and published several books of poems.[1]

In the 1920s, Riggs was visiting Paris when he became lonely for Oklahoma. He remembered the old songs that the local folks sang there, and this was the seed that eventually grew into Green Grow the Lilacs, his first commercially successful play.[2] Produced by the Theatre Guild in 1931, it ran only sixty-four performances in New

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[1]Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, eds., Twentieth Century Authors (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1942, pp. 174-5; Barrett H. Clark, Introduction to Nine Modern American Plays, ed. by Barrett H. Clark and William H. Davenport, with Green Grow the Lilacs, pp. 88-135, by Lynn Riggs (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951), p. ix.

[2]Green Grow the Lilacs program, Knox Theatre, Galesburg, Illinois, 23 November 1933.

York, but reportedly gave the Guild "a modest financial gain."[1]

The critics generally found Green Grow the Lilacs to be fresh, natural, and enjoyable, and they expressed surprise that a simple folk play could be such fun.[2] One reviewer commented, "Lynn Riggs, who if failing as a playwright would have his poetic gifts to rely on, has written more play than plot."[3] And one prophetic reviewer even said that Rigga's play would make a good libretto for a musical.[4]

In addition to the poetic Americana of the play, another realistic and heartwarming aspect of the play was that the cast included some amateur actors who were really cowboys and rodeo stars. They performed their specialties as part of the play, doing rope tricks and singing cowboy ballads. But among the professional actors in the show were Franchot Tone as the lead cowboy and Lee Strassberg in the role of the Pedler.[5]

Forerunner: "Knives from Syria"

The forerunner of Green Grow the Lilacs was a

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[1]Waldau, pp. 106-7.

[2]Ibid., p. 105.

[3]Ibid., p. 105, citing Katherine Lyons, Boston Traveler, 9 December 1930.

[4]Ibid., p. 105, citing Philip Hale, Boston Herald, 9 December 1930.

[5]Waldau, pp. 105-6, 411.

one-act play called Knives from Syria, written by Riggs in 1925, his first published play. Set in the present in an Oklahoma farm living room, it has only four characters: Mrs. Buster, a still young, gaunt widow; Rhodie, her pretty daughter about eighteen years old; Charley, the hired man; and the Syrian Pedler.[1] Using intentionally misspelled words to approximate the Oklahoma dialect, Riggs's plot revolves around Mrs. Buster and Rhodie, who await the return of Charley from an errand in town. Mrs. Buster advises her daughter to marry Charley, so that he will always help them take care of the farm. But Rhodie prefers the excitement of the Syrian Pedler who has proposed marriage to her, although her mother disapproves. Charley returns, telling of an encounter with a man in a white scarf-mask with a knife. He leaves with a gun. The Pedler arrives, bringing gifts, to claim his bride. Among his wares are white scarves and knives, which he says can be used to revenge a lost love. In fear, Mrs. Buster says that Rhodie may marry him tomorrow. He leaves, and Charley returns. Rhodie is happy that she will marry the Pedler, and the impression is given that her mother may marry Charley.[2]

A few years later when Riggs expanded this one-act

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[1]Riggs spells this word with one d; Hammerstein spells it with two d's; this researcher will spell it Hammerstein's way, except when referring only to the specific characters in Riggs's plays.

[2]Lynn Riggs, Knives from Syria, in One-Act Plays for Stage and Study, 3rd series (New York: Samuel French, 1927), pp. 191-207.

play into a full-length play, he lessened the mysterious element, added more humor, and changed the characters a bit. Mrs. Buster became the somewhat older Aunt Eller Murphy, a "buxom, hearty woman about fifty," and Rhodie became her niece, Laurey Williams, a "fair, spoiled, lovely young girl about eighteen." Charley was divided into two characters: Curly McClain, a "tall, waggish, curly-headed young cowboy," and Jeeter Fry, the "dark, sullen," rather crude hired hand of "about thirty-five, with a curious earth-colored face and hairy hands."[1]

Structure, plot, dialogue

Green Grow the Lilacs consists of one act of six scenes with an intermission between scenes 3 and 4. The script specifies that the action in scenes 2 and 3 is to be considered as occurring simultaneously. There are 161 pages of script in the 5-by-7-inch Samuel French edition. This copy averages 27 lines and about 135 words per page, yielding about 4,300 lines or 22,000 words in the entire script, including dialogue, stage directions, and lyrics to the songs. In playing time, determined by actually timing a reading of the play aloud, the play would last about two-and-a-half hours.

The plot deals with Curly's romantic pursuit of Laurey, whose parents have died and left her with a farm

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[1]Lynn Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs (New York: Samuel French, 1930), pp. 4, 12, 20, 59-60.

and in the care of her paternal Aunt Eller.[1] One of the farm's hired hands, Jeeter, is also romantically interested in Laurey.[2] Although Jeeter succeeds in taking Laurey to the party in scene 4, he is shown to be a despicable villain whom Laurey fears, and when he becomes presumptuous and takes liberties with her at the party, she fires him.[3] Curly then comes to her aid, comforts her and proposes marriage, which she accepts.[4] As scene 5 begins, they have already eloped, and the male neighbors secretly gather at Laurey's farm on the wedding night to have a _shivoree_, which Riggs describes as "a corruption of the French _charivari_, a wedding celebration."[5] In this play, however, it is a loud tormenting of a newlywed couple on their wedding night, for the crowd of men drags the couple from their bedroom, puts them atop a haystack and harasses them by yelling sexually suggestive exclamations at them, accompanied by a lot of noise, such as is created by yelling and beating on pans. Jeeter appears during the bedevilment and attempts to set the haystack afire; Curly fights with Jeeter, who falls on his knife and

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[1]Ibid., pp. 3-17.

[2]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[3]Ibid., pp. 87-92.

[4]Ibid., pp. 103-7.

[5]Ibid., p. 166.

thus is killed.[1] Curly is taken into custody to await a hearing, while Laurey is forced to spend her wedding night alone.[2] A few evenings later (scene 6) Curly breaks out of jail and comes to his bride.[3] Aunt Eller convinces the deputy and his posse who come for Curly that they should allow Curly to spend the night with Laurey and that he will be at his hearing in the morning.[4] The play ends as the couple retires to the bedroom, and Curly is heard softly singing "Green Grow the Lilacs" to Laurey.[5]

The shivoree, as Riggs spells it, merits more discussion, for it is not just a good-natured hazing with everyone enjoying the festivities. Although William Safire, an etymologist who writes for the New York Times Magazine, says the word, spelled shivaree, is merely a western American term for a reception held after a wedding,[6] the event in Green Grow the Lilacs is an annoying, frightening, bawdy occasion that upsets and angers the bridal couple. The following is a sample of what happens:

[A few men drag CURLY in, struggling and angry,

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[1]Ibid., pp. 129-32.

[2]Ibid., pp. 133-4.

[3]Ibid., p. 149.

[4]Ibid., pp. 159-62.

[5]Ibid., p. 163.

[6]William Safire, "On Language: My Reception, Your Shivaree," New York Times Magazine, 23 January 1983, sec. 6, p. 3.

his hair in his eyes. His shirt has been ripped off in the struggle.

CURLY
God damn you, leave her alone! Don't ary son of a bitch put his hands onto her, I'll kill him--!

. . . . [A wide circle of men, shouting, whistling, beating their various noise implements, advances across the stubble. In the middle of the group, walking alone, pale and shaken is LAUREY in a nightgown . . . .

5TH MAN
Quiet down now, a minute! (To LAUREY.) Right up the ladder with you, you purty thing! . . .

8TH MAN
Make out it's a bed, why don't you!

[LAUREY looks around at CURLY, then climbs up the short ladder, the crowd shouting at her. . . .

10TH MAN
Put yer foot in the right place.

CORD ELAM
Don't wanta fall and break yer neck--cheat pore Curly outa his rights!

10TH MAN
All right, Curly--
. . . . Bring him on over here.

[THE MEN holding CURLY lead him over to the foot of the ladder, and let go of him. THE CROWD begins to call out in more jubilant, crazier derision.

1ST MAN
Go on, Mr. Bridegroom, there's yer bride!--

3RD MAN
Purty's a new bronc a-standin' and a-lookin', cain't hardly keep off her!

. . . . (After a moment, CURLY starts up the ladder, the crowd continuing to shout.) . . .

10TH MAN
Try to git off, you'll break yer neck, so watch out!

[CURLY reaches the top. Someone throws the ladder down.

CURLY

Laurey, honey--(She looks at him, in dumb misery.) I'd give my eye-sight, honey--! Try to stand it--I done all I could. I cain't he'p it--

[He takes her in his arms. The men break out into derisive and lascivious guffaws, and begin the deafening noises again, circling the hay stack, kicking up their heels, in an orgy of delight.[1]

The entire frightening shivoree in Green Grow the Lilacs occupies nine pages of the script, or about twelve hundred words. The fight between Curly and Jeeter, the latter's death, and the ensuing hysteria take five pages, or almost seven hundred words and result in a very tense, tragic state for everyone as Curly is taken away to jail, leaving Laurey in tears. The remaining scene (twenty-six pages, about thirty-five hundred words) is also extremely sad and depressing, as Laurey and Aunt Eller sit, lamenting Curly's being in jail for three days and the possibly dim future for the unfortunate couple. Then Curly enters: a hunted fugitive. The scene is filled with fear of the pursuing posse and of the hopelessness of the seemingly ill-fated love. Although Eller is able to arrange that the end has some hope as Curly is allowed to stay overnight, there is no jubilation. The lovers merely retire to their bridal bed with Curly reassuringly serenading Laurey as the curtain falls. Thus the entire sequence of unhappiness--i.e., from

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[1]Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, pp. 125-8.

the shivoree, Jeeter's death, and Curly's legal entanglement as a result of it, through the couple's reunion--covers forty pages, which is over five thousand words, or about one-fourth of the entire play. This was the problematic aspect that caused Kern to call Green Grow the Lilacs "utterly hopeless" as a musical comedy.[1]

Apparently, the original script of this play, used for the out-of-town tryouts, was even more saturnine than the published copy that was analyzed for this dissertation. Waldau reports that the play was re-written after the Boston tryouts to emphasize comedy more in the shivoree scene; Laurey should be shocked by Jeeter's death, not by the sadism of the shivoree.[2] Although an undated typescript of Green Grow the Lilacs was found at the Lincoln Center Library of the Performing Arts, no substantial differences from the published copy were found.[3] Therefore, the more sadistic version that was used for the Boston tryout was not found for comparison.

Riggs had a simple approach to writing a play. He says he felt, as did Aristotle, that a single story line was

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[1]Fordin, p. 184.

[2]Waldau, p. 105.

[3]Lynn Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, typescript, n. d.

adequate to constitute a complete play.[1] In this play there is merely the story of Laurey and Curly's falling in love and getting married, a common subject for a play. Jeeter provides some excitement as the blocking character, but no subplot exists. Riggs explained in his Preface to Green Grow the Lilacs that two people communicating constitutes drama; and even if they do not outwardly oppose each other, there is a conflict under the surface, which is the nature of drama. Riggs says that he wanted to explore

> the characters as deeply as possible, simple though they appeared to be, hoping to stumble on . . . the always subtle, always strange compulsions under which they labor and relate themselves to the earth and to other people. My beliefs, anyway, I find, about the nature of true drama run counter to the current notions about it. Two people in a room, agreeing or not agreeing, are to me truly dramatic. The edges of their being can never be in accord; psychically, as well as physically, they are assailed by an opposing radiation. And the nature of the flow of spirit from each determines both the quality of their conflict, and the shape of their story. This flow may be violent or comic or tender; it may be one-sided, subtle, maddingly recluse.
>
> And the dramatist, it seems to me, has no business to interfere just for the sake of making a "play," in its present--and idiotic--meaning. That he may be tempted to do so is lamentable, but not surprising--the rewards are great. But if he takes his work seriously, he will face his problems in a limbo beyond the knowledge of applause. His role will continue to be humility and abnegation.
>
> And sometime, his characters may do stirring things he could never have calculated. And sometime, if he is fortunate, he may hear from the people he has set in motion . . . things to astonish him and things to make him wise.[2]

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[1]Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, pp. vii-viii; S. H. Butcher, trans., Aristotle's Poetics, with an Introduction by Francis Fergusson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 67.

[2]Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, pp. vii-viii.

Riggs says in his Preface that the mood he wanted to capture had a wide range of emotion--from sad to humorous, from sentimental and sweet to robust, but never complex nor sophisticated. He wanted to keep the presentation quaint and simple. He described the mood that he intended to portray as "melodramatic."[1] The term melodrama was probably invented by Ottavio Rinucini around 1600 to apply to early opera, resulting from the combining of the Greek words for "music" and "action."[2] But since the nineteenth century, the word has been applied to a drama in which there are many perilous incidents, but a happy ending for the hero and heroine and music added for various effects.[3] The plot of a melodrama invariably involves a conflict between good and evil, which produces much emotional tension that is periodically relieved by comedy. But in the end, good is always rewarded and bad is always punished.[4] There is no doubt in pure melodrama as to who is good and who is bad. The characters are usually stock ones: an innocent heroine,

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[1]Ibid., p. vii.

[2]Montrose Moses, The American Dramatist (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1939), p. 292.

[3]Allardyce Nicoll, World Drama from Aeschylus to Anouilh (New York: Harcourt, 1950), p. 436; Eric Bentley, The Life of the Drama (New York: Atheneum Press, 1967), p. 218; Oscar Brockett, The Theatre: An Introduction, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 48; Frank Rahill, The World of Melodrama (Pennsylvania: State University Press, 1967), p. 122.

[4]Allardyce Nicoll, The Theory of the Drama, (New York: B. Blom, 1966), p. 233.

who is being pursued or mistreated in some way; a villain, who causes the mistreatment; the heroine's confidante; the hero who saves the heroine; and the hero's confidant, frequently a comic companion.[1]

Green Grow the Lilacs falls into the category of melodrama, because the heroine (Laurey) is being pursued by a villain (Jeeter), but is saved by the hero (Curly); the good characters are rewarded, and the villain is punished. Although the hero does not have a confidant nor comic companion in this play, the heroine has two confidantes, Aunt Eller and Ado Annie, and the latter is a comic character. Comedy is added (scenes containing Ado Annie and/or the Pedler), and music is inserted for local color, humor, mood enhancement, and relief from the tension created by the serious elements.

As can be seen from the samples of dialogue quoted herein, Riggs continued to imitate the local dialect of turn-of-the-century Oklahoma, as he did in Knives from Syria. Riggs said, "Their speech is lazy, drawling, not Southern, not 'hick'--but rich, half-conscious of its

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[1]James Bailey, British Plays of the Nineteenth Century (New York: Odyssey Press, 1966), p. 32; Brockett, pp. 46, 233; Allardyce Nicoll, History of the English Drama: 1660-1900, vol. 6 (Cambridge: University Press), 1959, pp. iv, 101.

rhythms, its picturesque imagery."[1] Riggs also included a Glossary at the end of the play to explain any colloquial terms that might not be familiar to the public.[2]

Characters

Since a musical has a shorter script than a play does, in order to make room for the musical numbers,[3] the dialogue in Green Grow the Lilacs gives more background information on the characters than does the script for Oklahoma! And since Hammerstein based his characters on the information given in Riggs's play, although not retaining all of it in his script, some of the additional information in Riggs's play is germane to the script analysis of Oklahoma! and should, therefore, be examined in this discussion of the characters.

In his Preface to Green Grow the Lilacs Riggs says, "I thought of the first three scenes as The Characters, the last three scenes as The Play. After the people are known (and I think they are known by the end of Scene Three, or I should never permit the play to be published) I let them go ahead acting out their simple

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[1]Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, p. 5; Riggs's misspelling of words is inconsistent. For example, "can't" is spelled both "caint" and "cain't," but each misspelling was copied into this dissertation as it appears in the script.

[2]Ibid., pp. 165-6.

[3]Aaron Frankel, Writing the Broadway Musical (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1977), p. 30.

tale."[1] Therefore, the bulk of the descriptions of the characters is contained in the first three scenes of the play.

The Pedler. The character of the Pedler is retained from Knives from Syria as Ali Hakim, a "little wiry, swarthy Syrian . . . . He is very acquisitive, very cunning. . . . His speech is some blurred European tongue with Middle Western variations, from dealing almost entirely with farmers."[2] In Green Grow the Lilacs the Pedler loses the mystery that he had in Knives from Syria and becomes merely a minor, comic character. He is shown to be a pseudo-lothario who chases all the girls, not Laurey in particular. Aunt Eller tells him, "Thought I was gone, didn't you? Well, I ain't. I'm gonna stay right here, fer spite. Not gonna leave you and two girls in no bedroom, all by yerselves."[3] And Laurey warns her girl friend: "You don't want to git to like a pedler man too good, Ado Annie. You hear me? They got wives in ever' state in the union."[4]

Ado Annie. The character of Ado Annie Carnes, Laurey's girl friend, was added in Green Grow the Lilacs:

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[1]Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, pp. vii-viii.

[2]Ibid., p. 47.

[3]Ibid., p. 49.

[4]Ibid., p. 46.

"She is an unattractive, stupid-looking farm girl with taffy-colored hair pulled back from a freckled face."[1] She functions as comic relief and as a confidante to Laurey, with no character development during the play. When Laurey agrees to go to the party with Jeeter, Laurey insists that Annie go along with them, since Laurey is afraid to be alone with him. Laurey tries to make Ado Annie prettier for the party with face powder and pretty garters that will attract the boys. And when they arrive at the party, Ado Annie wants to rush right in, so that she will be sure to get a partner for the dancing.[2] Although Annie has no boy friend of her own yet, she is in the process of discovering the opposite sex, as can be perceived in this confidential exchange between Laurey and Ado Annie:

> ADO ANNIE . . .
> Laurey! Them ole boys worries me. The minute I got in the house they started grabbin' at me. Whut'd they mean a-tellin' me, "Come out 'hind the barn 'th me?" That ole Payne boy said that.
>
> LAUREY
> Whyn't you ast him whut he meant?
>
> ADO ANNIE
> I was skeered he'd tell me.[3]

Curly. Curly describes himself to Jeeter in scene 3:

> Why, my name's Curly. Thought you knowed. Curly

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[1]Ibid., p. 44.

[2]Ibid., pp. 52-3, 55, 88.

[3]Ibid., p. 94.

> McClain. Born on a farm in Kansas. Cowpuncher by trade and by profession. I break broncs, mean uns. I bull-dog steers. I ain't never been licked, and I ain't never been shot. Shot <u>at</u>, but not <u>shot</u>. I got a good disposition, too, and when anything seems like to me it's funny, why I let loose and laugh till my belt breaks in two and my socks falls down.[1]

Furthermore, Curly reveals himself to be a braggart in scene 1 as he describes his singing as "purty," says he is "handsome," and claims to be the best bronc buster in the state and the best bull-dogger in seventeen counties. He works for a neighbor, Mr. Skidmore, who owns a ranch. Later in the same scene he shows that he is jealous of Laurey when he is told that Jeeter is sweet on Laurey, too, by threatening to blacken Jeeter's eyes.[2] He shows his bravery by not being afraid of Jeeter. He tells Jeeter that he is romantically interested in Laurey and defies Jeeter to do anything about it: "If you'd like to do anything to me, now's the best chanct you'll ever have. . . . A feller wouldn't feel very safe in here 'th you, 'f he didn't know you. (<u>Acidly</u>.) But I <u>know</u> you, Jeeter."[3]

Riggs's play tells of the first time Laurey and Curly met. Curly describes seeing her as a child when he was already a cowboy, and also tells that about a year ago he noticed that she had matured into a beautiful young lady:

> . . . . Oh, I 'member the first time I ever seen you!

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[1]Ibid., p. 64.

[2]Ibid., pp. 5, 8-9, 20.

[3]Ibid., p. 74.

> You was pickin' blackberries long side the road here years and years ago--you was a little tyke. (He laughs.) You'd been a-eatin' berries as fast as you could pick 'em. and yer mouth was black as a coal shovel!-- 'F you wasn't a sight! . . .
>
> Nen I seen you onct at the Fair--a-ridin' that little gray filly of Blue Starr's, and I says to someone--"Who's that little thing with a bang down on her forehead?" . . .
>
> Anh, and I seen you once--the Sunday a year ago, I'll never forget. I come over to break them broncs. You'd been out a-pickin' flowers next to that sorghum mill standin' in the cane patch. And you had a whole armful of Sweet Williams and wild roses and mornin' glories, and I don't know what all. My, I nearly fell off my horse a-lookin' at you! . . .[1]

Curly's age is not specified in the play. However, assuming that a young man is usually full-grown when he becomes a professional cowboy, Curly was probably at least eighteen years old when he first saw Laurey. Since Riggs specifies that Laurey's present age is about eighteen, how long ago was "years and years ago" when she was just "a little tyke"?[2] Young girls could probably be referred to as "little tykes" only well before puberty; thus it seems safe to guess she was under ten years old when Curly first saw her. This puts their ages about ten years apart. Additionally, since Curly occasionally describes, during the play, some of his past exploits, such as his notoriety as the "best bronc buster in the state" and having been in gun-shooting episodes, it would appear that he has been a grown man for several years.[3] It is not likely, however,

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[1]Ibid., pp. 108-9.

[2]Ibid., p. 108.

[3]Ibid., pp. 8, 64.

that his age is over thirty, because he is described at his entrance as a "young cowboy."[1] Therefore, it seems safe to estimate his age as being about twenty-eight.

There is a hint that part of Curly's attraction to Laurey is the fact that she can be considered somewhat rich at least when compared to his financial condition. For example, in scene 3 when Jeeter is trying to get rid of him, Jeeter says,

> . . . . If he's sent you over to buy up the oat crop, why it's done spoke fer. . . .
>
> CURLY
> Glad to find that out.
>
> JEETER
> We ain't got no cattle to sell, ner no cow ponies, you know that. And the farm ain't fer sale, and won't be.
>
> CURLY
> You shore relieved my mind considerable.[2]

And later he expresses his eagerness to cease being a cowboy, become a farmer and take over her farm.[3] He even suggests that she ought to buy him a nice wedding present as a sort of inducement to get him to marry her:

> And looky here, whut're you gonna give me fer a weddin' present? Well, you gonna marrry a good-fer-nothin' cow hand, 'thout a red cent in his breeches, 's yer own fault, they come high! How 'bout a pair of spurs? Er a nice new saddle blanket, eh, 'th red stripes onto it, and 'nitials stitched inside of a bleedin' heart on the corner? Whut's the use of gettin' married, don't git a

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[1]Ibid., p. 4.

[2]Ibid., p. 73.

[3]Ibid., pp. 107-8.

saddle blanket er sump'n purty out of it!--[1]

Curly's character does not change much during the play, but he does show himself as less astute at courting in the beginning, betraying his lack of sophistication and experience. First he tells Aunt Eller that he has come to ask Laurey to the party, but when Laurey comes out being arrogant, he says, "You c'n jist stay at home, for yer tongue. Don't you tell her whur it is, Aunt Eller. Me'n you'll go and leave her at home."[2] Yet later on, when he's a married man, he is protective of her in the shivoree scene. He says to Laurey, when he comes back from jail, that he takes the blame for all the trouble and openly admits his affection for her:

> Thinkin' and thinkin' about you--and me bringin' sich trouble on you. All my fault. . . . So you got to promise me sump'n. Whutever happens--<u>whutever</u> it is--you got to bear up, you hear me? (<u>Smiling</u>.) Why, I'm a purty one to go a-losin' sleep over, ain't I? . . . Oh, I hate to go away and leave you! I cain't.[3]

<u>Laurey</u>. Laurey reveals that her parents moved to Oklahoma territory from Missouri. Her parents died, leaving her the farm and in Aunt Eller's charge. Being an only child, Laurey's dialogue and actions reveal her to be a financially secure, but immature young girl, who is a bit spoiled and arrogant, while playing hard-to-get with Curly

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[1]Ibid., p. 110.

[2]Ibid., pp. 11, 13.

[3]Ibid., pp. 153-4, 157.

in scene 1.[1] She ridicules his voice and expresses jealousy of another girl in the area, saying to him,

> Heared a voice a-talkin' rumbly along with Aunt Eller. And heared someone a-singin' like a bull-frog in a pond--
>
> CURLY
> I don't talk rumbly. And I don't sing like no bull-frog--
>
> LAUREY
> Bull-frog in a pond, I told you. But how'd I know it was you, Curly McClain? You ain't so special. All men sounds alike to me. . . . You better ast that ole Cummins girl you've tuck sich a shine to over acrost the river.[2]

Laurey shows her immaturity in the beginning by being dependent on Aunt Eller, by being unable to express her love, and by her dream fantasies. Laurey tends to dream a lot, perhaps because her environment is a bit mundane for a bright young girl. Her intellectual boredom is expressed when she says that if she had stayed in Missouri, she would probably have had an education.[3] She longs to see places far removed from her isolated environment:

> Wish 't I lived in the White House, and had diamonds on my shoes, and a little nigger boy to fan me--when it was hot. . . .
> Er I wish 't I lived in Virginia or Californie. In Californie, they's oranges growin', and snow fallin' at the same time. I seen a pitcher of it.[4]

She fantasizes in scene 2 about the wonderful things that

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[1]Ibid., pp. 12-18, 34.

[2]Ibid., pp. 13-14.

[3]Ibid., p. 34.

[4]Ibid., p. 33.

she has never seen:

> Want things I c'n see and put my hands on. Want things I've heared of and never had before--pearls in a plush box, diamonds, a rubber-t'ard buggy, a cut glass sugar bowl. Want things I caint tell you about. Caint see 'em clear. Things nobody ever heared of. . . . Not only things to look at and hold in yer hands. Things to <u>happen</u> to you! Things so nice if they ever did happen yer heart ud quit beatin', you'd fall down dead. They ain't no end to the things I want.[1]

Early in the play when she is haughty to Curly, she tells Ado Annie that she has lots of beaux.[2] But Eller assures Curly that Laurey is very much in love with him, and Eller is happy with her niece's choice:

> I've knowed Laurey all her borned days, ain't I? And since her paw and maw died five year ago, I been paw and maw to her. And whutever I tell you about her way of feelin' is the truth. Er if it <u>ain't</u>, I'll give her a everlastin' good spankin', nen it will be! Fer I don't know whur her eyes was set in her head 'f she didn't see you come over of a Sunday a year ago and broke them three broncs all in one evenin', 'thout tetchin' leather er yellin' calf-rope.

CURLY
> Listen, whut low, filthy, sneakin' man has Laurey got her cap set fer?

AUNT ELLER
> You.

CURLY
> Now!--

AUNT ELLER
> Fer a fact, I'm tellin' you! From the way she flew at you jist now, I got my mind all made up. 'F she don't git <u>you</u>, Curly, she'll waste away to the shadder of a pin point. Yes, sir. Be put in a sateen coffin dead of a broke heart.

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[1]Ibid., p. 50.

[2]Ibid., p. 45.

CURLY (ironically)
I wouldn't want her to do that. I'd consider lettin' her have me, 'f that ud keep her from dyin'.

AUNT ELLER (wisely)
She's a young girl--and don't know her mind. She don't know her feelin's. You c'n he'p her, Curly--and they's few that can.[1]

Laurey shows that she likes Curly by her emotional outburst at Aunt Eller when she thinks Jeeter has shot him at the end of scene 2: "It couldn't be, couldn't! . . . Curly! . . . Why'd you let him go out there whur Jeeter is!"[2]

She shows that she is gradually beginning to feel comfortable around Curly in scene 3 by admiring the fact that he can shoot straight. This leads to her clinging to him in scene 4 for protection from Jeeter. When Curly proposes marriage to her, she tentatively accepts, but says she must ask Aunt Eller for permission, showing her lingering dependence on her aunt. In scene 5 she is shown to be a happily married woman. Scene 6 shows her to be much matured from the little girl in scenes 1 and 2 to a woman who is much concerned about her husband and their future lives together. Laurey expresses her realization that she has been immature: "Oh, Aunt Eller, I'm sich a baby--! . . . Ashamed of myself! I want to be the way you air."[3] And subsequently when Curly takes the blame for all the trouble,

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[1]Ibid., pp. 16-18.

[2]Ibid., pp. 54-5.

[3]Ibid., p. 153.

Laurey sensibly says, "Nobody could h'ep it."[1] Finally she declares her maturity to Curly in the face of an unsure future:

> Looked at it time and again, heared it--ringin' in my ears! Cried about it, cried about everthing! A plumb baby! And I've tried to figger out how it ud be if sump'n did happen to you. Didn't know how I could stand it. That was the worst! And nen, I tried to figger out how I'd go on. Oh, I've went th'ough it all, Curly, from the start. Now I feel shore of sump'n, anyway--I'll be growed up--like everbody else.[2]

Laurey is not a typical melodramatic heroine, because her character does develop during this play--from a spoiled, childish snob in the beginning to a more mature woman who takes a serious view of life in the end.[3]

Aunt Eller. Aunt Eller says she was the sister of Laurey's father, who died while only thirteen-year-old Laurey was at home. She tells how her last child died and the older ones all grew up, married and left her. She even tells how her husband, Laurey's Uncle Jack, was murdered by a neighbor farmer in a dispute over some hogs.[4]

She discusses her philosophy of a balanced outlook on life:

> They'a things you cain't git rid of--lots of things. Not if you live to be a hundred. You got to learn. You got to look at all the good on one side and all the bad on the other, and say: 'Well, all right, then!' to both

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[1]Ibid., p. 154.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., pp. 78, 103-4, 106, 108, 111, 117-20, 141-6.

[4]Ibid., pp. 133, 146.

> of 'em. . . .
>
> Oh, lots of things happen to a womern. Sickness, bein' pore and hungry even, bein' left alone in yer old age, bein' afraid to die--it all adds up. That's the way life is--cradle to grave. And you c'n stand it. They's one way. You got to be hearty. You got to be.[1]

One of Eller's strong traits is her extreme independence. For example, to Laurey's expression of fear of Jeeter, Eller says, "Why, I didn't have an idy you felt that-a-way about him! Why, we'll run him off the place if you're skeered of him--"[2] And when Eller is angry with the Pedler, she threatens, "I'll th'ow him in the branch, that's whut I'll do to him!"[3]

Her advancing age, however, seems to cause fear of becoming helpless and lonely as the years go by. Instead of accepting her children's growing up and leaving her, she apparently was offended by this desertion. She refers to "bein' left alone in yer old age, bein' afraid to die."[4] And when Laurey says that she admires Eller's maturity, Eller responds that Laurey will probably get tired of her soon and will want rid of her: "Why, in a year's time, you'll git so t'ard even of lookin' at me, you and Curly'll run me off the place, 'th a tin can tied to my tail--"[5]

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[1]Ibid., pp. 144, 146.

[2]Ibid., p. 42.

[3]Ibid., p. 43.

[4]Ibid., p. 146.

[5]Ibid.

Jeeter. According to theatre historian Vera Roberts, "The prime mover of the action in the melodrama is the villain, who pursues the heroine, connives to discredit or kill the hero, and keeps thinking up 'dastardly plots.' He is strong-minded and bold, grim, determined, and immensely evil."[1] Jeeter Fry is clearly the villain in Green Grow the Lilacs, never smiling nor even being friendly or pleasant during the entire play. Only his hard work on the farm is to his credit; Eller says, "He's a big help around here. Jist about runs the farm by hisself."[2] Curly dislikes him and describes him as "That bullet-colored growly man 'th the bushy eyebrows that's alwys orderin' the other hands how to work the mowin' machine er sump'n!"[3] When Eller says he lives in the smoke-house, which used to be the dog-house, Curly comments that that is an appropriate place for him.[4]

In his smoke-house quarters, Jeeter spits in a spittoon and looks at pornographic cards. His living quarters and his clothing are described as dark, dirty, grimy, and greasy.[5] He shows that he has bad manners; he bangs open the door to the farmhouse, without knocking, and then goes out, leaving the door open.[6] And when Curly

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[1]Vera Roberts, The Nature of the Theatre (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 223.

[2]Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, p. 19.

[3]Ibid. [4]Ibid., pp. 20-21.

[5]Ibid., p. 59. [6]Ibid., p. 21.

goes to visit Jeeter and knocks on the door, instead of coming to the door, Jeeter yells out, "Well, cain't you open it?"[1]

There is a great deal of contrast between Curly's life style and that of Jeeter. Curly tells him, "It's shore a funny end to a fine purty mornin' to find yerself shet up in a dark hole bent over a table a-fingerin' a pack of cards 's greasy 's a ole tin spoon . . . ."[2] Curly expresses his disgust at Jeeter's way of life when he tells Jeeter:

> In this country, they's two things you c'n do if you're a man. Live out of doors is one. Live in a hole is the other. . . . as long's you live in a hole, you're skeered, you got to have pertection. . . . How'd you git to be the way you air, anyway--settin' here in this filthy hole--and thinkin' the way you're thinkin'? Why don't you do sump'n healthy onct in a while, 'stid of stayin' shet up here a-crawlin' and festerin'! . . . You'll die of yer own pizen, I tell you![3]

At one point Curly even has to open the door to the smoke-house to let a little fresh air inside, because he feels contaminated there, being a cowboy who is used to the great open spaces.[4] A good example of the contrast in their personalities is that, when they ask the Pedler for self-defense items, Curly asks for brass knuckles while Jeeter buys a long knife.[5] This indicates that Curly intends to defend himself, but not to kill, whereas Jeeter intends to kill. Ironically, this is the same knife on

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[1]Ibid., p. 60. [2]Ibid., p. 68.

[3]Ibid., p. 75. [4]Ibid., p. 71.

[5]Ibid., p. 80.

which Jeeter falls and dies.

However, more information is hinted about Jeeter's lurid past than is actually revealed. He is pictured as a very lonely man whose alienation from society is the result of his stupidity, a feeling of resentment for not being more important, and a mean streak that constantly drives him to get even with the world. He lives in a dream world in which he looks at pictures of naked girls and fantasizes a dream life, showing a detachment from reality. He is secretive about his past, but does mention that he has moved around a lot. He indicates that the people for whom he has worked were "Bastards to work fer . . . . Alwys makin' out they was better. Yeah, lots better!"[1]

At one point Curly sings a song about a man who was hanged for killing a man over a girl. It appears to awaken a guilty conscience in Jeeter, because Jeeter listens intently and uneasily, until a buggy drives up. Jeeter rushes to see who it is and is very relieved to see that it is only the Pedler. Jeeter says the man in the song should have killed the girl, too, and then tells stories of men who killed girls: one man killed a girl because she was unfaithful to him; one man killed his pregnant girl friend, binding her hands and feet and burning her in a haystack, because he could not stand being unable to have her while

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[1]Ibid., p. 71.

she was pregnant.[1] Jeeter tells these stories as if they happened to someone else, but the suggestion is that he may have been the man involved, because he describes too many details of the events not to have been there--for example:

> He went jist hog-wild, and found a piece of old rope in the tool box of the mowin' machine, tied her hands and feet with it, nen throwed her up on top of a stack of hay and set f'ar to it. Do you know why? He didn't keer about her goin' to have the baby, that wasn't it. He jist didn't know how he was goin' to live 'thout <u>havin'</u> her all the time while she was carryin' it![2]

How did Jeeter know the exact location of the rope and the exact motivation for the murder, unless he did it?

Laurey expresses fear that Jeeter might set the house afire. She recalls having seen a house that was burned down by a vagrant, whom the occupants had refused to feed. It is intimated that she suspects Jeeter did it and that he might burn down her house if she crosses him. Laurey says to Aunt Eller, "You know whut a f'ar is, don't you? And you know Jeeter? . . . Sump'n funny about him. Sump'n black a-pilin' up. Ever since a year ago. Sump'n boilin' up inside of him--<u>mean</u>."[3]

When Aunt Eller asks her why she agreed to go to the party with Jeeter if she were afraid of him, Laurey says, "I'm afraid to tell him I won't, Aunt Eller. 'F I done what I wanted to, I'd f'ar him off the place so quick! Whut're we gonna do, Aunt Eller! He'd do sump'n turrible, he makes

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[1]Ibid., pp. 69-71. [2]Ibid., p. 71.

[3]Ibid., p. 40.

me shiver ever' time he gits close to me--"[1] At the party Jeeter grabs her in his arms, Laurey tries to free herself, and Jeeter says to her,

> You won't git away from me--! . . . You've kep' outa my way, and kep' outa my way-- . . . Cain't think of nuthin' else! It's killin' me. Lay awake at nights. God damn you, quit a-tryin' to git away--I got you now-- . . . So goddamned purty! [She frees an arm and strikes him in the face, with desperate strength. He releases her, and stands uncomprehending, tranced. . . .
>
> You hit me-- . . . Like 'em all! I ain't good enough, am I? I'm a h'ard hand, ain't I? Got dirt on my hands, pig slop-- Ain't fitten to tetch you! You're better, so goddamned much better! Yeah, we'll see who's better--we'll see who's better, Miss Laurey! Nen you'll wish 't you wasn't so free 'th yer airs, you're sich a fine lady--!

LAUREY

> Air you makin' threats--to me? Air you standin' there tryin' to tell me 'f I don't 'low you to slobber over me like a hog, why you're gonna do sump'n about it! Why, you're a mangy dog and somebody'd orta shoot you! . . . You think so much about bein' h'ard hand. Well, I'll jist tell you sump'n that'll rest yer brain, Mr. Jeeter! You ain't a h'ard hand fer me, no more! . . . You ain't to come on the place again, you hear me? . . .

JEETER

> Said yer say. Brought it on yerself. (In a voice harsh with an inner frenzy.) Cain't he'p it, I tell you! Sump'n brung it on you. On me, too. Cain't never rest. Cain't be easy. That's the way it is. Ay, I told you the way it was! You wouldn't listen--[2]

There is an implication that this kind of thing has happened before to Jeeter ("You hit me-- . . . Like 'em all!") and that his revenge is inevitable ("we'll see who's better, Miss Laurey! Nen you'll wish 't you wasn't so free 'th yer

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[1]Ibid., p. 41. [2]Ibid., pp. 90-2.

airs . . . . Cain't never rest. Cain't be easy. That's the way it is.") Thus Jeeter is shown as the villain, threatening the heroine increasingly throughout the play until he attempts to burn the hero and heroine to death during the shivoree. And as is to be expected in a melodrama, the hero saves the heroine. The villain is punished by death, and the heroic couple is rewarded by the expectation of a happily married life in the future.

Thus, the only character who undergoes significant development in Green Grow the Lilacs is Laurey. Out of a total cast-listing of thirty-three characters, only Laurey is significantly different at the end of the play. Her major change is one of maturity, but her goal also undergoes modification from longing for a glamorous life to settling for the more realistic, traditional, happy marriage.

Riggs's intent

More important than the plot or characters of this play is the author's aim and how much of it he accomplishes. Fortunately, Riggs's Preface specifies his intent:

> It must be fairly obvious from reading or seeing the play that it might have been subtitled An Old Song. The intent has been solely to recapture in a kind of nostalgic glow (but in dramatic dialogue more than in song) the great range of mood which characterized the old folk songs and ballads I used to hear in my Oklahoma childhood--their quaintness, their sadness, their robustness, their simplicity, their hearty or bawdy humors, their sentimentalities, their melodrama, their touching sweetness.
>
> For this reason it seemed wise to throw away the conventions of ordinary theatricality--a complex plot, swift action, etc.--and try to exhibit luminously, in

> the simplest of stories, a wide area of mood and feeling. This could only be done, it seemed to me, by exploring the characters as deeply as possible . . . .[1]

Thus, Riggs's goal was to encapsulate the various moods he remembered in the folk songs of his childhood and he specifies the following: quaintness, sadness, robustness, simplicity, humors, sentimentalities, melodrama, and sweetness. Quaintness means "pleasingly odd and antique";[2] certainly the local color of turn-of-the-century Oklahoma on a 1931 New York stage would seem odd and antique, and according to the reviews, pleasingly so. There is sadness in the separation of the newlywed couple and sweetness in the compassion of the posse to allow them to spend the night together, with Curly comforting his bride by singing to her. Sentimentality means "showing tenderness, emotion, delicate feeling,"[3] as is shown between Curly and Laurey in the last scene. Aunt Eller speaks of the heartiness that is required to live in their environment, and the entire life style that is portrayed by working in the fields all day and then going to a local farm to square dance on Saturday night implies the robustness of the characters. Humor is furnished any time Ado Annie or the Pedler are on stage, because of their respective naivety and inept slyness. The melodramatic format of the play has

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[1]Ibid., p. vii.

[2]Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language, 2nd ed., s.v. "quaint."

[3]Ibid., s.v. "sentimentality."

previously been discussed, but even if Riggs meant the lay definition of melodrama as "emotional,"[1] certainly there is emotion in the shivoree, the attack and death of Jeeter, and the fear of the pursuing posse. And the entire play glories in the simplicity of the life style of these pioneers, unsullied by the sophistication of a modern, urban society. Therefore, this researcher concludes that Riggs did achieve his aim and did so with artistic brilliance.

The result could be tagged a melodrama or a folk play. Riggs commented further in a program note for a production of this play in Dallas in 1932:

> When people say "folk drama" to me, which they do very often, I don't know what they're talking about. What's important to me in drama is what happens between people, or between a man and his inner glowing core. I don't care whether it's happening in Texas or Connecticut. It ought to be telling something about the human heart. If it doesn't do that, there's no wisdom in it, and there's not apt to be much drama. That's my feeling, anyway.
>
> I suppose, however, there are several good reasons for my continuing to write about Oklahoma. In the first place, I was born there and I know it rather better than any other section. Perhaps I was't very wise or very seeing when I lived there. But there's something about the impact of life on young people which is more astonishing and more rememberable than things that happen afterward. This was my case, I think.
>
> Also, when I was a child there, the country and the people were very dramatic. A primitive violence was always close to the surface, always apt to break out at any moment. It was all about me. Under a sometimes casual exterior, there was a fever and a thrumming. Just by an accident of nerves, I suppose, I was always conscious of this hidden excitement.
>
> Most people think of small towns and of backwood life as drab and uneventful. It isn't true at all. They're practically exploding with life. . . .
>
> Outsiders never seem to see it. But I was born in it. It conditioned me, it was my earliest experience.

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[1]Ibid., s.v. "melodrama."

So far, I can't get away from it. I don't want to get away from it.

Then, too, the Oklahoma speech of earlier days was a rich poetry. The people had little education, so they used the imagery at hand. Things out of their lives. It was a fine and ringing speech--better speech than we have today in America. And the really stirring thing about the use of it was that they often did it self-consciously. They knew they spoke well . . . . They gloried in it a little. They sharpened it up. They enlarged their lives by using with delight the visible and known thing. A chair was not a chair, but a presence. A plough was an appendage of the hand. An old dress, handed down, was a walking demonstration of the unimportance of death. The things in their lives were touched, handled, loved, glorified in their language. If I could even approximate the imagery and the speech rhythms of my own aunts and uncles, for example, I'd be very happy.

But a complete and undeviating respect for character and speech rhythms, I am aware, is a dangerous devotion. It seems to me that too much realism gets in the way of a play. That is, too much photographic realism. Nearly all my plays, by intention, have a slight edge beyond realism. In other words, the little lying thing beyond realism makes them important to me. Perhaps that's what Art is--a subtle lie, for the sake of telling the truth. Realistic truth is not real enough, certainly not good enough. A realer truth has to be uncovered. I don't think I should like a play if at some time the drama didn't just walk right out of realism on to a more illuminating and wiser plane.

In spite of everything I've said, I haven't any theories about playwriting. Every play to me is a new problem. But there are some general things I believe about the drama.

In the first place, I believe in the symphonic nature of a play. . . . [moving] quietly toward a symphonic finish where the people are revealed and the theme known.

Second, I believe that what a dramatist is--the curious cellular synthesis that is the man--determines nearly everything about his work: the locale, the point of view, the tone, the comment it has to make, the character it has to explore, and the luminosity by which it dazzles or offends. There on the lighted boards or on the open page is the man--his dark and shambling and monstrous essence. For his mortal satisfaction, the man who is dramatist too may hope to make the revealment less dark, less monstrous, more like a radiance in which a few lambent realities may cluster. It's a decent ambition, it seems to me. And that's the reaspn I go on

writing plays, call them "folk" or whatever you will.[1]

Riggs says he intended to reveal his own essence through his plays. His diverse characters, therefore, are to be taken in a composite form to reveal his inner self, implying that there is something of a heroic character, something of a comic character, and something of a villain within him (and perhaps within every person), which he wanted to expose. But the heroic portion of his character is the strongest and thus wins; reality succeeds over irrational wishing for intangible glories. This tells, as Riggs intended, "something about the human heart."[2] Riggs may not have originated this concept, but he is one of the few to have articulated it so well.

One of the most significant points he makes is that he is writing about the local people, dialect, folkways, moods, ways of thinking, and lifestyles that he saw personally as he grew up observing the people around him in Oklahoma. While the inner core of all humanity may be the same, there are obvious regional differences in how people express their thoughts, desires, and outlooks on life. Riggs had the inside track on people from the Oklahoma Territory around 1900, and he put this information into his play. This is important not only as a historical record,

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[1]Lynn Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs program, The Little Theatre of Dallas, 7 March 1932, pp. 3, 12-13.

[2]Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, p. 3.

but also as an aid to Rodgers and Hammerstein, who were both born-and-bred New Yorkers. They may have known a great deal about humanity, but what did they know about living in the open country, working for one's livelihood outside, relating to people of a more primitive society? Even if the collaborators had been given the plot line and characters, they probably could not have imbued the production with the earthy realism that exudes in Oklahoma! It is likely that their version of the play would have been more sophisticated and worldly than the version that they adapted from the writings of this genuine Oklahoman. For example, their villain might have been more like a street-smart hood than the primitive, animalistic Jeeter of Riggs's play. Without Riggs's descriptions, many of the scenes might have been inaccurately reproduced. For example, note the detail and local color in Riggs's description of the party in scene 4, in the stage directions of Green Grow the Lilacs:

> The farm boys and the cowboys have forgotten their corn plowing, their day in the hay field, their day on the range. They have put up the mules, doused themselves at the pump, bolted a supper of fried salt pork, potatoes and gravy, and hot biscuits, and now in their store clothes and their chaps and their overalls they grin and sweat and stomp, their voices loud and harsh in the singing.[1]

How could two native New Yorkers have been able to reproduce so accurately the mood and atmosphere of the party, without this detailed description? Rodgers and Hammerstein, in their close adaptation, owe a great debt to Riggs for his

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[1]Ibid., p. 84.

local color, without which their production would no doubt have been very different, and possibly not nearly so successful as Oklahoma!

Riggs saw and interpreted the underlying poetic quality of the speech and actions of these rural people, using their unique imagery, in such a way as not to reproduce a photographic copy, but to result in an artist's portrait that says more than the surface picture could ever convey. And he did it by an organized, cleverly devised plan to achieve his ends, as a symphony (an example of absolute composition) is composed. And although the life style and plot are simple, it is not shown to be boring or monotonous, but "exploding with life."[1]

Fire is a recurring motif during Green Grow the Lilacs. Since fire is one of the most primitive sources of fear, Riggs uses it here as the prime reason for Laurey's fear of Jeeter. Fire is mentioned several times during the play: prairie fires, house fires, and haystack fires.[2] Laurey had an early fear of her house's being burned and she associated her fear of Jeeter with her fear of fire, thus explaining her fear that he might burn her house. Since Jeeter tells of a woman's being burned alive in a haystack, the audience is prepared for a catastrophe concerning fire and Jeeter in the end. Since there is a hint that Jeeter

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[1]Ibid., p. 12.

[2]Ibid., pp. 35, 38-39, 71, 129-30, 133.

was the man who burned the woman in the haystack because he could not have her, and since Laurey is another woman he cannot have, his attempt to set afire Curly and Laurey's haystack seems to be the logical fulfillment of a premonition--i.e, the audience has been prepared to accept this rash act as a logical happening in the play.

Dreams or fantasies also recur often in the play. There are Laurey's dreams of the glamorous world away from her rural farm and Jeeter's dreams about sexy women in photographs. In both cases, the fantasies are those of characters who want what they do not have. In Laurey's case, however, the dreams change, as she matures, to a more realistic view of life. But Jeeter tries to act out his dreams by grabbing Laurey at the party. Since the realization of his fantasy fails, it causes him a great deal of grief, leading him to an unhappy end.

The "theme" of a drama may be defined as its message that "is embodied in all of the details of the work."[1] By this definition, the theme of Green Grow the Lilacs is the thought that happiness results from goodness, realism, and letting nature have its own way. Obviously Curly and Laury are shown to be "good" characters, as opposed to the lack of goodness in Jeeter. Living in a dream world of fantasy about girls in pictures and always wishing to be better off,

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[1]Sylvan Barnet, Morton Berman, and William Burto, A Dictionary of Literary, Dramatic, and Cinematic Terms, 2nd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971), p. 85.

but not really improving himself, as Jeeter does, is proven to be a less successful way of living than is the life of the farmer and cowboy characters who marry, work, and face each problem openly and realistically. Practicality and heartiness are shown as cardinal virtues in this locale. Romantic love that leads to marriage is shown as the ideal way of life. Life that includes dependence on and appreciation of nature is shown to be healthy, mentally and physically. Although trials may assail virtuous people, patience, heartiness, goodness, and love win out in the end. Finally, there is wisdom through suffering: Laurey and Curly will be wiser in the future, because success did not come easily.

Patriotism

Patriotism also is mentioned in Green Grow the Lilacs. George M. Cohan used this element in his musicals early in this century with great success. Patriotism in Oklahoma! is perhaps one of the major reasons for the play's success, coming as it did during World War II. But the seminal idea of patriotism is planted in Green Grow the Lilacs as Curly tells Laurey of his plans for their lives when he gets out of jail and when Oklahoma becomes a state. He says:

> Oh, I got to learn to be a farmer, I see that! Quit a-thinkin' about dehornin' and brandin' and th'owin' thed rope, and start in to git my hands blistered a new way! Oh, things is changin' right and left! Buy up mowin' machines, cut down the prairies! Shoe yer horses, drag them plows under the sod! They gonna make a state outa this, they gonna put it in the Union! Country

> a-changin', got to change with it! Bring up a pair of boys, new stock, to keep up 'th the way things is goin' in this here crazy country! Life jis startin' in fer me now. Work to do! Now I got you to he'p me--I'll 'mount to sump'n yit![1]

The Oklahoma Territory was opened for settlement by the United States government on April 22, 1889. Pioneers from Missouri, Kansas, and other parts of North America lined up at the border, held back by federal troops, until the appointed hour. In one day's time the territory had fifty thousand new homesteaders, who staked out their claims to the new property. This, no doubt, is how Laurey's family and Curly were supposed to have come to live there. Prior to this time, the territory had been purchased from France in 1803 by the United States government and was granted to those American Indians whose land in the East had been taken from them for white settlers. Even the name of the territory, and in 1907 of the state, means "land of the red people." But many of the Indians, having become prosperous farmers and even slave owners, aided with the Confederacy during the War Between the States, and the United States government declared that this act forfeited the Indians' rights to their land.[2] Of course, there was much intermarriage between the red and white people, and several of the characters in Green Grow the Lilacs openly claim both Indian and white blood. However, it is odd that there

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[1]Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, p. 157.

[2]The World Book Encyclopedia, 1955 ed., s.v. "Oklahoma, the Sooner State."

are no pure-blood Indians in the cast of the play. Aunt Eller's argument with the posse in favor of Curly's spending the night with Laurey under his own recognizance has many allusions to the governmental status of the territory:

> AUNT ELLER (severely)
> All right, 'f you won't listen to me, I plumb warsh my hands of all of you. I thought you was a fine bunch of neighbors. Now I see you're jist a gang of fools. Trying' to take a bridegroom away from his bride! Why, the way you're aidin' with the federal marshal, you'd think us people out here lived in the United States! Why, we're territory folks--we ort to hang together. I don't mean hang--I mean stick. Whut's the United States? It's jist a furrin country to me. And you supportin' it! Jist dirty ole furriners, ever last one of you!
>
> VOICES (outside, grumbling, protesting)
> Now, Aunt Eller, we hain't furriners.
> My pappy and mammy was both borned in Indian Territory! Why I'm jist plumb full of Indian blood myself.
> Me, too! And I c'n prove it!
>
> AUNT ELLER (full of guile)
> Well, maybe you ain't furriners. I musta made a mistake. (Slyly, smiling.) Anyway, I ain't astin' you to let Curly off. That's up to them old United Statesers at the hearin'. I mean--you don't have to take Curly back tonight. Take him in the mornin' jist as well.[1]

Obviously, Aunt Eller is teasing the men when she says that the men are foreigners because they are acting as if they are from outside Oklahoma Territory. She is merely trying to build a feeling of camaraderie, and pride in that camaraderie, so that they will empathize with Curly and let him stay. But it does show that these people were well aware of the legal status of their land.

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[1]Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, p. 161.

Music in "Green Grow the Lilacs"

Rigg's major objective, as he stated it, was to convey the same mood that was created in his mind by folk songs. But he also used folk songs; the lyrics to thirteen traditional folk songs appear in the script, such as "Skip to My Lou" and "Goodbye Old Paint," but they are not integrated into the story by virtue of pertinent lyrics. There is a note in the edition used for this analysis that says, "The songs in Green Grow the Lilacs are old and traditional."[1] And it credits various collections of folk music, from which the songs were supposedly taken. However, the list is inaccurate, because all of the specified collections were located and examined at Lincoln Center Library of the Performing Arts Music Collection, and not one of the songs is where the note says it is to be found. One of the specified collections, Margaret Larkin's Singing Cowboy, was not published until after Green Grow the Lilacs opened on Broadway and thus could not have been used as a source.[2] Another discrepancy is that many of the songs listed in this note do not appear in the printed script, yet other songs do appear in the script that are not listed in the note. For example, "Home on the Range" is listed in the note as being in the play and from the Larkin collection, yet the song never appears in the script, nor is

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[1]Ibid., p. x.

[2]Margaret Larkin, ed., Singing Cowboy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931).

it in the Larkin book. It is possible, of course, that different songs were sung in the Guild production from the ones printed in the script, and this may have led to the confusion about the songs.

The note also says that certain of the songs were written by the original cast of the show, but this is also untrue of the songs printed in the script, since some version of all of the songs in the script were located in existing collections of folk songs. Apparently the note was intended to state that some new lyrics were fitted to standard, old, known tunes and used in the production, and not that totally new songs were composed for it.

Samuel French did publish a book, Cowboy Songs, Folk Songs and Ballads from "Green Grow the Lilacs" in 1932, but no copy of this publication was found.[1] The Samuel French Company archivist, Paul Gallagher, says that there is not even a copy in the company archives.[2]

This researcher spent several days locating the script's songs in collections and found many different versions of the words and melodies. For example, the first song in the play, although not given a title in the script, is a version of the traditional cowboy song, "Whoopee Ti-Yi-Yo, Git Along, Little Dogies." The earliest version

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[1]Cowboy Songs, Folk Songs and Ballads from "Green Grow the Lilacs" (New York: Samuel French, 1932).

[2]Interview with Paul Gallagher, Samuel French Co., Archives Dept., New York City, 22 May 1984.

found of this tune was an eighteenth-century Irish folk song, which had lyrics that read:

> E-E-I-O, my laddy, lie easy,
> It's my misfortune and none of your own,
> That she leaves me here weepin' and rockin' the cradle,
> And nursing a baby that's none of my own.[1]

The next version of this song was a cowboy adaptation that was printed in several collections with similar, but not identical, words to those printed in Green Grow the Lilacs. The cowboy song's words are

> As I was a-walkin' one mornin' for pleasure,
> I saw a cowpuncher a-lopin' along.
> His hat was throwed back and his spurs was a-jinglin'
> And as he approached he was singin' this song:
>
> Whoopee ti-yi-yi-yo, git along little dogies,
> For you know that Wyoming'll be your new home,
> Whoopee ti-yi-yo, git along little dogies,
> For you know that Wyoming'll be your new home.[2]

Irwin Silber, an authority on American folk songs, explains that this song was "used as a day-herding call, useful for driving the longhorns along the rough trail that led from Texas to Wyoming and beyond."[3] It is interesting to note the similarities of the original cowboy version to the version printed in Green Grow the Lilacs, which follows, but note that the last four words of the refrain are the same as the original Irish version:

> As I walked out one bright sunny morning,

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[1]Irwin Silber, ed. Songs of the Great American West (New York: MacMillan Co., 1967), pp. 173-5.

[2]Margaret B. Boni, ed., Fireside Book of Folk Songs (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1947), pp. 162-3.

[3]Silber, p. 173.

I saw a cowboy way out on the plain.
His head was throwed back and his spurs was a-jingling,
And as I passed by him, he was singing this refrain:

Ta Whoop ti aye ay, git along, you little dogies!
Way out in Wyoming shall be your bright home--
A-whooping and a-yelling a-driving those dogies,
And a-riding those broncos that are none of my own.[1]

Logical conjecture leads this researcher to conclude that the immigrants from Ireland brought the song with them and that its words were adapted to the new environment. The song may have passed through several different sets of words during this process and Riggs, growing up in Oklahoma, may have heard several different versions. Thus he may have just written down parts of several versions that he remembered. Or, since the cast included some authentic cowboys, they may have sung their own versions.

Another song in the script, "Goodbye Old Paint," has totally different words in Green Grow the Lilacs from any found in printed collections, but the words given do fit the rhythmical framework and tune of the original version. Silber explains that, "This is one of the oldest cowboy songs we know, a simple, haunting refrain and a hatful of easy-loping couplets."[2] Silber also quotes an Oklahoma native who said in 1910, "Out in my country, we do not dance 'Home Sweet Home' for the last waltz at a cowboy breakdown; instead we stop the music and all sing and dance to slow waltz time, 'Goodbye Old Paint.'"[3]

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[1]Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, pp. 3-4.

[2]Silber, p. 179. [3]Ibid.

The search for the origin of the title song was much more complicated, since it is a much older song. Alred W. Tomlyn discusses it in his collection of old Scottish songs:

> . . . the air is very ancient. It first appears in a mutilated form in Oswald's First Collection (1740), but previous to that it had been long known, being used as a reel as well as a song. In the MS. Lute-Book of Sir R. Gordon of Stralock (1627) occur the two airs 'Grene grews ye Rasses--A Daunce' and 'I Kist Her Quile Shee Blusht,' which on comparison are found to be almost the same.[1]

Several versions of this song were found in British songbooks, with various titles, from "Green Grow the Rushes-O" to "Green Grow the Laurels." One version, "Green Grow the Rashes, O!" has lyrics by Robert Burns, the eighteenth-century Scottish poet, but if Tomlyn is accurate in saying he found it in a 1627 manuscript as "Grene Grews Ye Rasses," then surely Burns only wrote a new version of the words.[2]

Several musicologists have researched variations of this song and have discussed it at great length. Some versions appear to have been meant to be sung by a man,

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[1]Alfred W. Tomlyn, ed. Gem Selection Scottish Songs (Edinburgh: Valentine and Sons, 1900), p. vii.

[2]Stephen Sedley, comp. and ed., The Seeds of Love (London: Essex Music, 1967), pp. 65, 123-4; British Minstrelsie (Edinburgh: T. C. and E. C. Jack, c.1895), pp. 52-3; Ewan MacColl, Folk Songs and Ballads of Scotland (New York: Oak Publications, 1965), p. 38; The University Song Book (London: Grant Richards, 1901), p. 146; Haig and Regina, comp., A Book of Ballads, Songs and Snatches (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), pp. 52-3; The Sky-Lark (London: Thomas Tegg, 1825), pp. 92-3.

others by a woman.[1] Silber says that the song's early Scottish lyrics were: "Green Grow the laurels . . . ./ We'll change the green laurel to the bonnet so blue." He says the Irish subsequently adapted the song, changing the last words to "the orange and blue," and finally the American cowboy version made it "the red, white and blue." Silber gives credit to Riggs for changing the flower to lilacs.[2] The line printed in the Green Grow the Lilacs script is, "And by the next meeting I hope to prove true / To change the green lilacs to the red, white and blue."[3] Riggs explains in his Glossary that changing the green lilacs to red, white and blue means joining the army.[4]

Two historians recite an old fable that the Mexicans heard the American cowboys sing "Green Grow the Lilacs" so often that they started to call all Americans "gringos."[5] But further research found contradictions to this assertion. Gringo comes from the Spanish word griego, which means Greek or foreigner, and is used in Mexican slang, usually

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[1]Tristram P. Coffin, "A Tentative Study of a Typical Folk Lyric: 'Green Grows the Laurel,'" Journal of American Folklore 65 (1952): 341-52; "Notes and Queries," Journal of American Folklore 67 (1954): 295-6.

[2]Silber, p. 49.

[3]Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, p. 24.

[4]Ibid., p. 165.

[5]Boni, pp. 174-5; Gladys Pitcher, arranger, "Green Grow the Lilacs" sheet music (New York: Edwin H. Morris, 1946), p. 2.

contemptuously, to refer to Americans or foreigners.[1]

Several musical instruments are mentioned in the script. In the description of the "front room" setting of scene 1, there is "an old organ magnificently mirrored," on which Curly accompanies himself in his first rendition of "Green Grow the Lilacs."[2] A guitar and a fiddle are mentioned as being on the porch at the beginning of the party scene, and Curly later plays a guitar to accompany himself when he sings for the festivities.[3] Two square dances take place at the party, so it seems logical to conjecture that there was some sort of musical accompaniment for these, also.[4]

The songs in Green Grow the Lilacs are incidental, in that the play would be complete without the music. However, by strictest definition, incidental music is composed specifically for the play in which it is used, and this is not true of the folk songs used in this play.[5] The play's use of songs does compare to the usage in the

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[1]Silber, pp. 49-51; A. B. Gerard, Cassell's Beyond the Dictionary in Spanish, 2nd ed. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1972), p. 83; J. Corominas, Diccionario Critico Etimologico de la Lengua Castellana (Switzerland: A. Francke, 1954), p. 783; The Oxford English Dictionary, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), p. 427.

[2]Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, pp. 3, 23.

[3]Ibid., pp. 83-84, 100.

[4]Ibid., pp. 84, 113.

[5]The Oxford Companion to the Theatre, 2nd ed., s.v. "Incidental Music," by Eric Blom.

eighteenth-century English musical form, ballad opera. Musicologist W. J. Lawrence says that this was "a play of humorous, satirical or pastoral order intermixed with simple song, the music for which was for the most part derived from popular ditties."[1] Edmund Gagey, an authority on ballad opera, points out that the songs in a ballad opera were used for the purpose of enlarging upon some thought already introduced in the play, but if omitted, there is still a play. All ballad operas relied on spoken dialogue to carry the plot line, according to Gagey, and their best elements were their clever dialogue and their characterizations, rather than plot.[2] Green Grow the Lilacs resembles the ballad opera form, not only because of the use of existing tunes, but also because Riggs did intend to convey his message through his characters with their picturesque language, instead of through his plot. However, the lyrics do not enlarge upon ideas from the play, so the resemblance is only partial.

It is clear that Green Grow the Lilacs was not intended to be classified as a "musical," and it was not found listed as such anywhere. The instrumentalists were characters in the play, performing on stage as part of the action. And the singers were not meant to sound like

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[1]W. J. Lawrence, "Early English Ballad Opera and Comic Opera," The Musical Quarterly 8 (July 1922): 398-9.

[2]Edmond Gagey, Ballad Opera (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), pp. 4, 6-9, 24.

trained singers, but merely like cowboys and other country folks when they were heard singing by Riggs in his childhood. For example, the voices are described in the script, as follows: "The voices crack on the high notes," "singing in a high thin voice," and "singing in a flat mournful voice."[1]

Conclusion

Barrett Clark comments on Riggs and the poetic quality of Green Grow the Lilacs, as follows:

> Lynn Riggs, sensitive as only a poet can be to the scenes of his childhood and attuned to the speech of his family and friends, created a small world of his own, which became in his play much more than a folk drama full of odd characters and quaint turns of speech. The artist in him managed to transmute his material, and the golden glow of his play enables us to exult in the glory of a rainwashed morning, and to feel how good it is just to be alive. . . . And so it is that a few square miles of countryside and a few imagined men and women are transformed out of their original dullness and become symbols of what is lovely and inspiring: a few miles in Oklahoma become morning sun and joy and green fields in every part of every state of the Union. . . .
>
> Riggs' position in the theatre today is that of a prominent writer of regional drama, a developer of folk themes and songs, and a poet, who . . . has demonstrated that the traditional combination of poetry and drama need not succumb before the pace and demands of modern living.[2]

And J. W. Young sums up the message of Green Grow the Lilacs when he says that through this play, "You may catch a glimpse of those fundamental qualities which are the sinews of the American way; you may find renewed faith that,

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[1]Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, p. 84.

[2]Clark, pp. ix, 88.

so long as we are vigilant, the false promises of false prophets cannot endure against the mighty concept of the Golden Rule."[1] This was the raw material from which Oklahoma! was formed.

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[1]J. W. Young, Green Grow the Lilacs program note, Little Theatre of Shreveport, Shreveport, Louisana, 15 November 1943.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THE SCRIPT OF *OKLAHOMA!*

The script of *Oklahoma!* consists of two acts, each containing three scenes, thus containing the same number of scenes as *Green Grow the Lilacs*. However, the same activities do not occur in the chronologically corresponding scenes in the two plays; thus, their structure differs. And although *Green Grow the Lilacs* does have song lyrics included in the script, those lyrics contribute nothing to furthering the plot of the play, which is not true in *Oklahoma!* The edition of the *Oklahoma!* script used for this analysis totals about 20,000 words, while that of *Green Grow the Lilacs* totals about 22,000 words. The 2,000 fewer words in the *Oklahoma!* script are explained by the simplification of the plot, by the compression of the background information on the characters into song lyrics rather than in longer dialogue segments, and by the dances and songs, which take deceptively little script space, but much more time in performance. Each play, however, takes about two and a half

hours to perform.[1]

The turn-of-the-century period and the Oklahoma Territory location are retained from the original play. There are six different sets in Oklahoma!, as opposed to five in Lilacs, and the locations vary slightly from Lilacs to Oklahoma!, as is shown in the comparison below:

Scenes in Green Grow the Lilacs	Scenes in Oklahoma!
	Act 1:
1 The "front" room of the Williams farmhouse, a June morning.	1 The front of Laurey's farmhouse.
2 Laurey's bedroom.	2 The smokehouse.
3 The smoke house.	3 A grove on Laurey's farm.
	Act 2:
4 The porch of Old Man Peck's house, that night.	1 The Skidmore ranch.
5 The hayfield, a month later.	2 Skidmore's kitchen porch.
6 The "front" room, three nights later.[2]	3 The back of Laurey's house.[3]

It is significant that four of the six scenes in Lilacs take place indoors, while only one of six scenes is indoors in Oklahoma! This parallels the switch in emphasis from the closed-in, sad feeling of the Riggs play,

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[1]Perfomance time of Oklahoma! at Equity Library Theatre, 20 September 1978, was exactly 150 minutes.

[2]Riggs, Green Grow the Lilacs, p. 1.

[3]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 4.

to the more wholesome, brighter feeling of Oklahoma!, illustrating that the life style of the characters includes spending a great deal of their time outdoors. In Oklahoma! the smokehouse scene between Jud (changed from Jeeter) and Curly is now placed between the two scenes of exposition at the beginning of the play, instead of following them, as in Lilacs. The party in Oklahoma! takes two scenes, instead of one, as in Lilacs. There is no hayfield scene in Oklahoma!, because the shivoree is shortened, almost to the point of being omitted. And the last scene of Oklahoma! contains the wedding, shivoree, Jud's death, and the couple's leaving on their honeymoon, since there is no jail or escaping fugitive, as in Lilacs.

The time that lapses during Oklahoma! is probably about the same as in Lilacs, minus the three days that Curly is in jail in Lilacs. There is a comment in the last scene of Oklahoma! that Jud left the territory three weeks ago, subsequent to the party in act 2, scenes 1 and 2. Thus it seems safe to say that the action in the first five scenes of Oklahoma! takes place on one June day, with the final scene about a month or less later.

The printed script of Oklahoma! is the blueprint for the show, and it includes the dialogue, stage directions, and lyrics to the songs. This analysis of the script will be divided into three sections: (1) an analysis of the plot, (2) an analysis of the characters, and

(3) an analysis of the lyrics to the songs. But as it is impossible to separate action from the kind of person who performs that action and from what that character may say in the lyrics to a song, there is some overlapping.

Plot Analysis

Although Oklahoma!, a melodrama, is not a tragedy, the soul of all drama is action portrayed on the stage, and Oklahoma! does have at least this much in common with tragedy. Conventionally there is first the exposition of the characters and the conflicts in which they are involved. Then the conflicts deepen as they develop with rising action. There may be several crises and climaxes along the way, but the conflict is usually resolved, following the major crisis and climax. Then there is a period of falling action, called the denouement, during which all loose ends are tied, leaving the audience feeling a sense of satisfaction in the completion of the plot. Oklahoma! follows this general outline.

The term melodrama was defined in chapter 4 of this dissertation and it was shown how Green Grow the Lilacs falls into this category. Since Oklahoma! is a close adaptation of Lilacs, Oklahoma! also falls into the category of melodrama. Again the hero saves the heroine from the villain, and good is rewarded and evil punished.

The story of Oklahoma! is similar to that of Green Grow the Lilacs. Lehman Engel said, "In musicals .

. . romance is at the center."[1] And this is certainly true in Oklahoma!, as the main story is still Curly's winning Laurey as his wife. The major changes have to do with the events surrounding Jud's death. From the 9 pages it occupies in Lilacs, the shivoree is reduced to about 1 page in Oklahoma!, and it becomes a good-natured hazing with everyone, including the newlyweds, having a good time. The fight with Jud, his death, and the ensuing legal entanglements are reduced to 4 pages in Oklahoma! from the 40 pages in Lilacs. In fact, Jud is only on the stage less than 2 pages in this final scene of the musical, and the unhappiness ends when his body is removed from the stage. This is followed by 2 pages of humor concerned with the propriety and legality of holding court immediately so that the honeymooners can catch their train, which leaves in 20 minutes. Thus it takes only 4 pages for Jud to appear, be killed, be removed, and for Curly to be declared innocent on the spot. The death of the villain in the musical is quickly forgotten as the townspeople happily give their best wishes to the departing couple. Thus, in contrast to Lilacs, the mood of Oklahoma! is generally happy throughout, and it ends in jubilation.

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[1]Lehman Engel, Words with Music (New York: MacMillan Co., 1972), p. 21.

Summary of plot

The following is an abbreviated summary of the plot:

Scene	Pages (Total)	Action
Act 1, Sc. 1	7-38 (32)	Exposition: Curly and Jud romantically pursue Laurey, who makes a date to go to the box social with Jud. Will has won the fifty dollars necessary to claim his bride, Annie, but has spent it; thus she now appears to be promised to the unwilling Ali.
Act 1, sc. 2	39-48 (10)	Development: Emphasis is on the conflict between Curly and Jud for Laurey's hand. Jud is shown to be a villain.
Act 1, sc. 3	48-51 (3)	Crisis: Emphasis is on Laurey's mental conflict over her love for Curly, but fear of Jud.
Act 2, sc. 1	51-68 (17)	Turning point: Curly and Jud each give their all to win Laurey at the box social; Curly seems to be winning. Will wins Annie from Ali.
Act 2, sc. 2	68-74 (6)	Resolution: Curly and Laurey agree to marry and Jud is sent away.
Act 2, sc. 3	75-84 (10)	Climax and denouement: Laurey and Curly are married; Jud is accidentally killed. Will and Annie are approaching marriage; Ali is married to an old girl friend of Curly's.

Discussion of plot

Rodgers and Hammerstein created a subplot in Oklahoma!; Riggs's play did not have one. The main plot and the subplot in each of the six subplots in Rodgers and Hammerstein's nine plays have a parallel romantic structure, and in four of their plays, the subplots are comic versions of the more serious romance of the main plot.

In Oklahoma! the two plots deal with a competition

between two men for one girl. The subplot is a triangular love affair involving Will and Ado Annie and their blocking character, Ali. This is the comic counterpart of the more serious triangle that exists between Curly and Laurey and their blocking character, Jud. The latter triangle is more serious, because the thwarted lover threatens bodily harm or even death to Curly and/or Laurey if he does not win. The subplot is comic, because one of the lovers is unwillingly brought into the competition, and the stupidity of the other two leads to unnecessary complications. Annie and Ali had been only minor characters in Lilacs, but Rodgers and Hammerstein developed them into a subplot, which became a triangle by adding Will Parker, who did not appear in Lilacs. Engel expresses the opinion that, "If you tried to do Oklahoma! . . . minus the subplot (Ado, Will and the Peddler) the remainder (Laurey, Curly, Judd, [sic] and thin old Aunt Eller) would not work. There would be too little substance and no relief for audience or performers."[1]

Marion Gallaway, a writer on play construction, says, "Drama does not occur because a character thinks something right or wrong; it occurs because he wants something intolerably. . . . [He] must feel passionately

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[1]Engel, Words with Music, p. 77.

even more than he must think clearly."[1] The main plot of Oklahoma! is that Curly wants to marry Laurey. Does he want it intolerably and passionately, even more than he thinks clearly? The actions he takes to achieve his goal indicate that this is true. He has rented a fancy surrey in order to take her to the box social in style. When she refuses to go with him, instead of asking another pretty young girl, he takes Laurey's aunt. He has carved his and Laurey's initials on a tree. He confronts Jud, both in the smokehouse, when Jud threatens him with his gun, and at the auction, when he must spend everything he owns to win her. This is the key action which proves that Curly wants Laurey so much that his reasoning is unclear at the moment, because he sells items that are necessary for his livelihood and safety. Putting her safety before his own, he volunteers to spend the night on her farm to protect her from Jud. Finally, he begs her to marry him, swallowing his pride in order to achieve his objective. This chain of events confirms that Curly has an intense desire to win Laurey. He gives everything he has--financially, psychologically, and even the safety of his own life--to win her as his wife.

He does not have to do much, however, to discredit the competition. Jud, the blocking character, seals his own fate just by being his own obnoxious self. In contrast,

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[1]Marion Gallaway, Constructing a Play, quoted in Edward Mabley, Dramatic Construction: An Outline of Basic Principles (New York: Chilton Book Co., 1970), p. 8.

however, the audience has been carefully encouraged to support the hero and heroine by virtue of showing their goodness, heartiness, wholesomeness--i.e., the exemplification of the American pioneers. And so the highly emotional confrontation in the scene in which Laurey finally fires Jud is relieved by the resolution into a sweet, romantic joining of the hero and heroine.

This could end the play, without telling what happened to Jud, since the audience has been conditioned to care about him only as he affects Laurey and Curly. But since Lilacs had more information about Jud's villainous past and his penchant for revenge, Hammerstein chose to finish the story by punishing the villain and rewarding the hero and heroine with freedom from future worry about him. The last scene shows the bride and groom in their ecstatic happiness, ready to leave on their honeymoon. The shivaree causes no unhappiness at all. But the villain appears, tries to grab Laurey, is pulled off by Curly and falls to his death on his knife. It is significant that Curly does not directly cause Jud's death, leaving Curly's record as a good, clean hero unblemished, as the villain falls prey to his own machinations.

The subplot also concerns a pair of lovers with a blocking character. Although Will is depicted as not very bright from the way he keeps losing his fifty dollars, he is shown to have honorable intentions toward Ado Annie: he

wants to marry her. And he also pursues her to the extent that he does not think clearly. The peddler is obviously brighter; he even schemes to get Will's money back to him twice, so that the peddler will be released from the contract to marry Annie. Ali is shown as a man who likes all women, but wants to be married to none. By the moral standards of a small American town in 1900, this could be interpreted as less than honorable. Part of the theme of the play, carried over from Green Grow the Lilacs, is that the ideal life is one in which romantic love leads to a happily married life between one man and one woman.

Oklahoma! has humor. The subplot provides most of the humor, as Ado Annie is curious about sex and apparently already experimenting, in that she has trouble saying "no," and Will has to plead with her for fidelity. There is also humor in the dramatic irony of the audience's watching with superior knowledge as Will loses his fifty dollars repeatedly and the peddler repeatedly gets it back to him, so that the peddler will not be stuck with just one girl. And there is humor in the peddler's various little schemes, such as trying to get Aunt Eller to buy the garter, buying Will's presents for fifty dollars, spending fifty-one dollars for a box supper that he obviously does not want, and bestowing his Persian Goodbye kisses.

The subplot, being the more comic of the two triangles, is used to relieve the tension created by the hero-heroine-villain triangle. There is more action in the

comic triangle early in the play when the heroic triangle is rather static, with each character in the latter group just ruminating over his or her dilemma. By the time the heroic triangle really starts moving, in act 2, scene 1, when Jud and Curly compete for Laurey's basket, the comic triangle has virtually been settled. The remainder of the play then deals with the more serious elements of the plot. This gives a variety in the rhythm of the play from a faster, comical tempo to a slower, more somber tempo as the more serious issue of the play is settled. The minor climax of Will and Annie's joining then precedes the major climax, which is the final joining of Laurey and Curly, with Jud permanently removed. The scene endings' emphases, however, are reversed. Each of the scenes in act 1 ends with an emotional crisis concerning the major triangle: (1) Laurey is crying; (2) Jud sings about getting a woman; and (3) Jud awakens Laurey from her dream. But each of the second act scenes' endings depict a progressively more erotic encounter concerning Will and Annie: (1) Will and Annie discuss fidelty; (2) there is a demonstration of an "Oklahoma hello;" and (3) Will and Annie walk on, holding hands, with straw clinging to Annie's back. This contrasts the two triangles. Laurey and Curly's love is idealistic, chaste and conventional. Annie and Will's love is primitive, promiscuous, and adventuresome. The contrast helps to balance the play, giving it more interest and symmetry.

The ending could not be neater. All the good

characters are rewarded--the comic as well as the heroic; the really evil villain is killed, and the mildly obnoxious characters are stuck with each other and on their way to reformation to "good" characters. No one is left out. Aunt Eller is left unmatched, but no indication is given in Oklahoma! that she would have it any other way. The only thing she wants is for Laurey and Curly to marry. When Eller asked Curly to take her to the party, she was not just looking for a ride; she could have ridden with Jud and Laurey. It is obvious that she has chosen Curly for her nephew-in-law and that she will surreptitiously keep him around and support his entreaties, while trying to cajole her niece into thinking more sensibly. This is shown in her hesitancy to sell Laurey's basket to Jud. She encourages Jud to drop out of the bidding before Curly even gets into it: "My, you're stubborn, Jud. Mr. Carnes is a richer man'n you." Since Curly has disappeared, she keeps hesitating to stop the bidding although people are saying, "You got enough, Aunt Eller" and "Let's git on."[1] When Curly finally bids the money from his saddle and horse, the stage directions specify that Aunt Eller is "Tickled to death" as she says, "Curly, yer crazy! But it's all fer the schoolhouse, ain't it? All fer educatin' and larnin!"[2] She does encourage him to spend all of his money, whereas

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 62.

[2]Ibid., p. 63.

she discouraged Jud from doing the same thing. But, of course, she knows that Curly will soon have Laurey's farm and money, so he can afford it. The play ends with her contentedly rocking away on the porch, because she got what she wanted--in fact, what she slightly maneuvered to happen.

The Ballet

The integration of the ballet into the story of the play is applauded by many as the key element that set this musical ahead of any others that preceded it. Many ballets had been used in musicals before this time. Some ballets had even been used as a part of the movement of the action, as in Rodgers and Hart's On Your Toes. But no previous musical had contained a ballet that continued the story of the musical's plot and even used the characters in the play as characters in the ballet. The ballet in Oklahoma! could not be moved to any other play; it carries the conflict between Curly and Jud to a critical point. Jud has already shown that he has the potential of being a being a dangerous foe, from his stories of killings, from his threatening with his gun, and from his oral threats to Curly not to pursue Laurey. Even though the ballet is ostensibly just a fantasy of Laurey's, it also serves to intensify the danger of Jud's threat to Laurey and Curly in the collective mind of the audience, heightening the suspense in this melodrama. Thus this ballet serves to further the story line, warning that tragedy may result in this new form of musical play. Coming as it does

as the last event of Act 1, it also serves to make the audience want to come back for the second act to see how every hing turns out. Furthermore, it gives a motivation for Laurey's changing her arrogant attitude toward Curly; her great fear, as shown in the ballet, is that Jud will murder Curly in a jealous rage. If she continues to be coy and to use Jud as a device to arouse Curly's jealousy to the point where Curly will declare his love to her, which is what she really wants, she may actually cause Jud to kill Curly. In preventing this, the dream ballet convinces her that she must be more serious and honest about her own feelings for Curly, which she is in the second act.

As was mentioned in the Lilacs analysis, dreams are a recurrent motif in that play. It was also mentioned earlier that Hammerstein used the word dream often in his lyrics. Rodgers had also written about dreams before. In 1920 he and Hart had written a song called "You Can't Fool Your Dreams" for Poor Little Ritz Girl, their first Broadway show, which dealt with subconscious fears and fantasies, patterned after the teachings of Sigmund Freud.[1] Most of their 1927 musical, A Connecticut Yankee, is a dream, as is most of their 1926 musical, Peggy-Anne.[2] The point is that dreams which depicted reality in fantasy form were certainly used on the

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 91.

[2]Ibid., p. 92; Green, Fact Book, pp. 52, 69.

stage before Oklahoma!. But none had used a ballet with a scenario that continued the story of the play as one character fantasized it to be, as in Oklahoma!. This ballet, in a sense, is a nonverbal extension of the plot. This same message, Laurey's fear of the possible outcome of her romantic entanglement, could have been conveyed through dialogue or song, but it was done through a ballet, thus setting a precedent for a Broadway musical.

This was not, however, the first time that a psychological ballet had been done in a Broadway show. Alan Jay Lerner claims that the first musical to dramatize the psychological process was Kurt Weill and Maxwell Anderson's Lady in the Dark in 1941.[1] But in 1939, Kern and Hammerstein wrote a psychological ballet for Very Warm for May, which Fordin describes as, "a narrated ballet entitled 'The Strange Case of Adam Standish or Psycho-Analysis Strikes Back,' in which Quiller describes his emotional states as dancers representing various parts of the brain act out what is going on in his head."[2] But neither of these ballets continued the story of the plot. These ballets could have been used in other musicals. They were intended to "stop the show" while the psyche of the character was illustrated in dance, whereas the ballet in Oklahoma! actually continues the story and thus applies

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[1]Lerner, Street, p. 42.

[2]Fordin, pp. 165-6; Quiller is a leading character in the play.

only to this play. It shows Laurey's love for Curly, but unwilling attachment to Jud. It shows what may happen if things continue as they are now going. In a sense, this ballet ends the first act with one possible solution to Laurey's problem. The audience does not find out until the second act what the true outcome of the situation will be. After experiencing such a dream, a girl in Laurey's predicament would probably be influenced as to how she subsequently behaved, because of the warning in the dream.

In 1981, this researcher interviewed the choreographer, Agnes De Mille, on the Oklahoma! dream ballet. She contends that Hammerstein had devised another scenario for this ballet which to her was ridiculous. It was a nightmarish affair, dealing with Laurey's imagining that she was in a circus, riding on the back of an elephant; it was too far-fetched and gloomy a piece with which to end act 1, in her opinion. De Mille said that she was interested in doing a ballet that was more integrated with the story of the play. It particularly interested her to try to do something with Jud's postcard girls. Thus, De Mille says, she wrote her own scenario and showed it to Rodgers, who approved it with only a mere glance at it and told her to go ahead with it. She refused to let anyone watch her create the dances, not even Rodgers and Hammerstein. She worked in the basement of the rehearsal theatre, in conjunction with the twenty dancers who were originally hired to do the show and the rehearsal pianist.

She said the choreography for Oklahoma! came very easily, just "flowed out effortlessly." She explained that she and the rehearsal accompanist merely selected the songs from the show that seemed to fit actions in her scenario. The pianist played them for background music while she choreographed the dance steps, making changes in meter, tempo, and mode, as needed to fit the steps and mood. Then the rehearsal pianist wrote down the tunes used, along with the changes in the music that they had made, before giving their score to Russell Bennett to orchestrate. She said she asked Rodgers to compose some special music to which Jud would break Curly's back in the dream, but he refused to do it, so they just used the music already composed.[1]

De Mille writes of the great contribution of a rehearsal pianist to the choreography of a musical:

> . . . of all the people who assist in the building of a choreographer's career the rehearsal accompanist is in many ways the truest collaborator. She sits in the room for the duration. She must know the music of course, but a good one knows the dance as soon as there is one established gesture and remembers all. A great accompanist will understand the dance before it is visible, and help from the start, arranging and adjusting at the moment of composition, slipping a rhythm in front of the dancers to catch their foot fall. A good one can count with the dancers, which is on the phrase and with the music, which is on the bar--quite a different matter . . . .
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> The accompanist keeps track of all cuts. And if you think this is simple just try to read a page of rehearsal music. The accompanist quiets and comforts the choreographer. She listens to the grousings of the dancers. She is disciplined and steady. She never tires. She is above all unobtrusive. She must sit

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[1]Interview with Agnes De Mille, New York City, 10 December 1981.

> passive for twenty or thirty minutes on a stretch while brains are worried. Repetition is her atmosphere, hope her function. If she gets bored, a blight settles over all. No composer that I know can fill this role; he either turns aggressive or desperate.[1]

In view of the great contribution of the rehearsal pianist, this researcher has tried for four years to identify the person who acted in this capacity for Oklahoma! Unfortunately, memories fade after forty years. The people at the Rodgers and Hammerstein office, Russell Bennett, and De Mille were quite sure that Trude Rittman was the accompanist. But a letter from Rittman states that her first show for Rodgers and Hammerstein was Carousel, in 1945.[2] Thus the identity of the rehearsal accompanist for Oklahoma!, and all the information that the person might be able to contribute, remain a mystery thus far.

De Mille did say that Lee Dixon, who played the original Will Parker, choreographed his own steps for "Kansas City." Vivian Smith was her dance captain and Marc Platt, Curly's counterpart in the ballet, was also a big help to her. Once when Therese Helburn of the Theatre Guild brought some potential backers to see the dance rehearsal, De Mille said that she became so angry that Platt had to carry her to the ladies' room and hold her head under cold

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[1]De Mille, Dance to the Piper, p. 163.

[2]Trude Rittman to Betty S. Taylor, 18 August 1981.

water to calm her down.[1]

The idea of a western ballet did not, however, originate with Oklahoma!, although it was the first musical to use one. In 1939 Rodgers had composed music for the ballet Ghost Town, to a scenario that was written by Marc Platoff, who later shortened his name to Marc Platt and danced in Oklahoma!.[2] Nor was De Mille new to choreographing western ballet, for she had both choreographed and starred in the ballet Rodeo in 1942, which Helburn, Langner, Rodgers and Hammerstein went to see before deciding to choose her to do the choreography for Oklahoma![3]

Lawrence Langner of the Theatre Guild says that it was partially his idea to do the ballet in Oklahoma!, because he liked ballet better than plays. He says that De Mille wrote him a letter asking to be considered as choreographer of Oklahoma!, which is what prompted the entire group to go to see Rodeo. Langner says, "They were enraptured with Agnes' work, and indeed I have always felt that her creation of Rodeo greatly influenced the style of the ballets of Oklahoma!"[4]

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[1]Interview, De Mille, 1981.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 194; Green, Fact Book, pp. 208, 513.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 221-3; De Mille, Dance to the Piper, p. 214.

[4]Langner, pp. 5, 371.

Rouben Mamoulian, director of the show, claims credit for the complete integration of Oklahoma! He says he stood over Rodgers and Hammerstein with a club (figuratively speaking, no doubt) encouraging them to integrate and to bridge everything together. He says,

> You must remember . . . that music, dance, and the spoken word and dramatic acting are each a vital yet separate element in theatre . . . . So you start thinking, why not combine? Why not aim for total theatre? . . . But suppose you had a dramatic scene with a rising emotion where nothing could top the spoken word except a song? Or, in dramatic action, you bring it to as big a climax as you can, which inevitably leads to a dance that lifts the whole endeavor to an even higher level. This integration of form is essential to any activity wishing to describe itself as art.[1]

It is interesting that everyone seems to want to take credit for the ballet in Oklahoma! On the television special, "Musical Comedy Tonight," when De Mille was asked who got the idea to put the ballet in Oklahoma!, she answered, "Me; I did!"[2] During the interview with the orchestrator of the music, Bennett, in 1981, however, Bennett told this researcher that De Mille always took more credit than he felt that she deserved.[3] Since the ballet was an innovative idea for Broadway musicals and was primary in both the success of the show and in making the show a prototype to be copied for many years, it is understandable that everyone wants credit for it. And too many of the

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[1]Palmer, p. 128, citing Rouben Mamoulian.

[2]Kaye, "Musical Comedy Tonight," Part I.

[3]Interview, Bennett, 1981.

creators are now deceased to clarify the issue. One can only wonder how many would have taken the blame if the ballet had caused the show to fail. But the show did not fail, and the ballet is singled out by many to be the main element in its uniqueness and its success. Lerner sums up the importance of this ballet: "Agnes De Mille's ballet at the end of the first act, in which the central characters are deftly replaced by dancers and the story continues balletically, is lyric theatre at its most original and most brilliant."[1]

The adaptation

Hammerstein said that the ideas and many of the words for his songs in Oklahoma! came directly from the Lilacs script.[2] Fordin says that Oklahoma! is a closer adaptation of the original than later shows by Rodgers and Hammerstein.[3] Having studied the two scripts side by side, this researcher can verify that much of the dialogue in the two plays is identical or almost identical. Since Oklahoma! is a close adaptation of Green Grow the Lilacs, what were the major changes? The first major difference is that special music was composed for OKlahoma!, as opposed to the folk tunes added to Lilacs. Thus the music in Oklahoma! is not

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[1]Lerner, Street, p. 43.

[2]Fordin, p. 244, citing Hammerstein.

[3]Fordin, p. 224.

incidental, but necessary to telling the story. In fact, the lyrics for the songs carry much of the information that is needed to understand the play fully. Thus Oklahoma! is not a play with music, but a musical play. There were also specially choreographed dances in Oklahoma! The characters Will Parker and Gertie Cummings were added in Oklahoma!; although they were mentioned in the dialogue in Lilacs, they never appeared. Ado Annie was changed from the small part of an ugly, dull-witted girl who is curious about boys, to the major part of a pretty, naive, but still not smart girl who is satisfying her curiosity about boys by experimenting with them. Ali's part was also magnified in the change to Oklahoma!. This was necessary to give the show more humor, and to complete the parallel triangle.

Motifs

The dream motif is present again in Oklahoma!, as it was in Lilacs, but the dialogue discussing Laurey's dreams is much shorter; her dreams are mentioned only twice in Oklahoma! She tells the peddler that she wants many things from the glamorous world outside, indicating that she dreams of the life away from the farm, as in Lilacs. And she also has a song, "Out of My Dreams," in which she says that she is through dreaming of romance and ready to experience it. This leads into her big dream, illustrated by the ballet. In Oklahoma! Curly also dreams, as he pictures Laurey riding in the fancy surrey. Jud's dreaming in Oklahoma! is the same as before--about sexy girls, but

this time he says it is time to stop dreaming and actually get one of his own. However, it is his fantasy that leads him to his demise. The "Dream Ballet" is made into a more believable dream, because Laurey actually falls asleep and is thus not just fantasizing. In a day-dream, such as Jud is experiencing, there is conscious control of the actions and participants; it is a creative thinking process, in which he has control over the outcome. But in Laurey's dream, which occurs while she is sleeping, she has little control over who appears in her dream and the actions that the individuals perform. Had her dream been a day-dream, Jud might not even have been a character in it, and she might have fantasized everything coming out as she would like it. However, it is interesting to note that even in her unconscious dream, she still consistently sees herself as an innocent, victimized heroine, with men fighting over her, dramatically throwing a kiss to her hero at the end.

The Little Wonder is a new motif in Oklahoma! It is a cylinder with a peep-hole, through which one can see pictures of scantily dressed girls. It is mentioned in three scenes and apparently developed out of Jeeter's wanting to buy a knife from the Pedler in Lilacs. It serves several purposes in Oklahoma! First, it is a humorous gadget to show that the boys like to see pictures of pretty girls from the outside world. Will obviously does not know about the hidden knife, and so it also serves the purpose of showing Will's innocence and simpleness. And to

Jud it is a death weapon, a symbol of his evil and constant need for revenge.

The script for Oklahoma! does not continue the fire motif that existed in Lilacs. There is no mention of prairie fire nor haystack fire. Laurey never mentions it in her fear of Jud, and Jud does not attempt to burn Laurey and Curly at the close. The only mention of fire in the play is in act 1, scene 2, when Jud tells the story of a hired hand who burned the house of his employers, saying that this was the safest way to get even. Thus the threat of revenge is planted, but it is not enacted with fire. The film version of Oklahoma!, however, does re-activate the scene of Jud's setting fire to a haystack with Curly and Laurey on top, which came from the Lilacs script.

There is the matter of money. One can laugh in the 1980s that Mr. Carnes would think his daughter was worth only fifty dollars, but then fifty dollars was a lot of money in 1900. It does, however, offer a great deal of humor as Will repeatedly loses and regains it, showing his stupidity and his gullibility. Contrastingly, it helps to show the peddler's superior intelligence and savoir faire.

The matter of money also comes up in that both Jud and Curly are willing to spend all they have to win Laurey's basket. The idea of the box social, instead of just a party, is new in Oklahoma! But with Hammerstein's humanitarian leaning, a charitable affair to benefit a school seems appropriate. The buying of Laurey's basket is

a device that becomes the turning point in the play, because Jud and Curly seem to feel that whoever wins the basket wins Laurey. There is also the significance of Laurey's basket's selling for two dollars more than Annie's. Aunt Eller comments when Will bids fifty dollars for Annie's basket, "Fifty dollars! Nobody ever bid fifty dollars for a lunch! Nobody ever bid ten,"[1] thus apprising the audience of the fact that this is indeed a great deal of money. When Annie's hamper goes to Ali for fifty-one dollars, then Laurey's has to go for more than that, or else she might seem less important than the female comic lead, and that might not be appropriate for the melodramatic heroine. Curly could have outbid Jud with only forty-three dollars, thus saving himself ten dollars. But Hammerstein chose to build up the bid to fifty-three dollars, because it shows that Curly cared enough for Laurey to give every cent he had, so as to prove that he deserves to win her. After all, the villain was willing to do that; should the hero do less?

The three elements that this researcher finds odd in Oklahoma! are the lack of full-blooded American Indians among the characters, the scarcity of older women in the play, and the fact that there is no serious competition for Laurey's hand in the play. Hammerstein was the champion of the down-trodden and extremely anti-racist. One would think that he would have insisted on putting some real

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 59.

Indians into the play. There are several older men in the play, but except for Aunt Eller, all the girls are in Laurey's age range. The only explanation this researcher can give for this omission is explained by this statement by Hammerstein: "The traditions of musical comedy . . . demand that not long after the rise of the curtain the audience should be treated to one of musical comedy's most attractive assets--the sight of pretty girls in pretty clothes moving about the stage, the sound of their vital young voices supporting the principals in their songs."[1] The film version, however, does have some older women mixed in with the young ones. And one can see plainly that if Laurey did not marry Curly, whom would she marry? The only characters in the play, besides Curly, who openly show their attraction to Laurey are Ali and Jud. If Laurey is as pretty, intelligent, and rich as she is portrayed to be, would other young men not also be attracted to her? This would, however, ruin the symmetry of the two triangles, so that may be why the other suitors do not appear.

Dialogue

Hammerstein retains Riggs's misspellings of words to approximate the colloquial dialect which the New Yorker might not have known, had he not had Rigg's work to act as a guide. For example, he usually drops the final "g" on words ending in "-ing." And he

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[1]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 8.

misspells other words to indicate their mispronunciation, such as "jist" for "just" and "yer" for "your." The grammar used in the dialogue is generally incorrect, as when Laurey says, "Whur'd you git sich a rig at? . . . I bet he's went and h'ard a rig over to Claremore!" and Annie says about the peddler, "They won't never be nobody like him, neither."[1] The characters also use colloquial expressions, obviously indigenous to rural Oklahoma, but not likely to have been popular in 1940s metropolitan New York. For example, Curly refers to Laurey's stubborn arrogance as he calls her a "damn she-mule," wants to know who is "a-tryin' to spark her," and describes the speed of the surrey with the fringe on the top as "hell fer leather."[2] Other references refer to the lifestyle of rural areas, as when Will marvels at being able to "walk to privies in the rain an' never wet yer feet" in the wonderful, urban Kansas City.[3] Stephen Sondheim says of Hammerstein, "His work tended to make people think of him as an unsophisticated, platitudinous hick, whereas he was a highly intelligent, strongly principled, very firm-minded, and philosophic man, which is just what his work seemed not to be."[4]

Hammerstein customarily dictated his dialogue into a

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, pp. 12, 20.

[2]Ibid., pp. 9, 11, 17.

[3]Ibid., p. 15.

[4]Palmer, p. 121, citing Sondheim.

Dictaphone machine, which was then transcribed by his secretary; he edited her copy. He acted out his scripts during revision. Ewen says, "Dialogue had to sound natural and musical to his ear before he would let it pass. Complexity had to be reduced to simplicity. It took a good deal of rewriting and refining before that wonderfully simple diction and easy turn of phrase, which were the hallmarks of Hammerstein's greatness, became apparent."[1]

Themes

The themes of Oklahoma! are similar to those of Green Grow the Lilacs, which were discussed in chapter 4, where the term theme was defined as the play's message. The main themes appear to be the ideas that love, hope, education, and nature are good, and that good will win over evil. These encompass the thoughts that Rodgers and Hammerstein meant to express to the audience, their convictions about the way life really is, or at least should be.

As in their other plays, Rodgers and Hammerstein portray romantic love as conquering all, leading to marriage, embodying the ideal way of life, and fulfilling life's needs for two people. Jud needs Laurey in a selfish and sexual way that could never gratify the idealistic, romantic love for which Laurey longs in order to fulfill her youthful dreams of romance. Only handsome, young, wholesome

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[1]Ewen, With Song, pp. 146-7.

Curly, who sells all his possessions and rents the fancy surrey, comes close to being the man of her dreams. Curly needs Laurey because he really does love her and because of her financial security--as he says, "Now I got you to he'p me--I'll 'mount to sumpin yit!"[1] The idea that love plus marriage equals personal fulfillment is symbolically connected with the idea that Oklahoma's becoming a state equals fulfillment to all the folks of Oklahoma Territory. All of the good characters want the statehood and all of the good characters want marriage, so marriage becomes a metaphor for statehood. This is a theme that is typical of Rodgers and Hammerstein, both being happily married and very patriotic.

There is also the theme that there is hope in life for individual betterment. Each character hopes that he or she will achieve his or her goal, and the chances that this will happen seem to be good. There is also a brotherhood of man shown, in which everyone works together for the good of all. The American dream of success as a reward for hard work and social pleasantry is shown as the way of life for these country folks. Hope is emodied in the happy side of life, the thought that good will conquer evil. Hope starts in the play as personal optimism in the individual characters; it then becomes a feeling of brotherhood as it spreads to the other characters, and finally it becomes the

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 71.

American dream of success in life.

The theme of the value of education is shown through the idea that there is knowledge through suffering; one must learn from the experiences in life and benefit from this knowledge in order to live successfully. This is shown as necessary and desirable. Evil, selfish desires and immorality are shown as undesireable. Thus, if the individual does not learn to have high morals, he will come to a bad end. This may be the theme of melodrama, but it is also the theme of Rodgers and Hammerstein in virtually all their plays--specifically in Oklahoma!. And it is significant that Rodgers and Hammerstein changed the ordinary party in Lilacs to a school benefit affair in Oklahoma! This device also serves to highlight and solve the competitions for Laurey and Annie in the plot, but it could have taken some other form. The fact that they chose to emphasize the importance of education is noteworthy.

The theme of the virtue of living in, working in, and enjoying nature appears throughout, from the time Curly enters at the beginning of the play singing about the beauties of nature until the bridal couple leaves on their honeymoon with the chorus reprising the same song. Five of the six scenes in the play are set in the outdoors, and in the one scene that is indoors (act 1, scene 2), much point is made about Jud's unwholesomeness in

"stayin' shet up here--a-crawlin' and festerin'!"[1] Part of Curly's moral superiority over Jud is exemplified in Curly's being more of an outdoorsman. Of the thirty music cues in the score, all but four have some mention of the natural aspects of the world in the lyrics. Interestingly, the cues that omit references to nature are the comic songs done by Will and/or Annie, as indication that Hammrstein did not mention animals, plants, stars, wind, etc. to be cute or funny, but that he took these matters seriously.

The general theme of melodrama is "good wins over evil," and this is the central theme of this melodrama. And Oklahoma! is a melodrama with ample comedy, certainly light enough fare to assure the audience that nothing really tragic is going to happen to the good characters, who do win over the evil characters.

Rodgers and Hammerstein have often been accused of being too "sweet." But they were sincere and really believed this philosophy of goodness. Hammerstein said, "There's nothing wrong with sentiment. . . . The things people are sentimental about are the fundamental things in life. I don't deny the ugly and the tragic--but somebody has to keep saying that life's pretty wonderful, too. Because it's true. I guess I just can't write anything

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 44.

without hope in it."[1] And Rodgers said, "What's wrong with 'sweetness and light'? It's been around quite a while. Even a cliche, you know, has a right to be true."[2] And since, according to playwright Edward Mabley, the themes in a play represent the playwright's point of view,[3] it can be assumed that these themes were a reflection of Rodgers and Hammerstein's own attitudes toward life. The ideas that love, hope, education, and nature are good are the judgments of the authors. They really believed that good eventually wins over evil. These values were expressed in their personal writing, their life styles, and their musical plays--especially in Oklahoma!

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Aristotle says that character is the second most important aspect of drama, after plot. It is true that the individual personages in a play are referred to as "characters." But here the reference is to the idiosyncracies that differentiate one personage from another. According to Aristotle, actions are what define the character of the individual in the play.[4] Actions

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[1]Russell Crouse, "Oscar Hammerstein: A Healing Sort of Guy," Readers' Digest, 84 (January 1964), 82, citing Hammerstein.

[2]Cleveland Amory, "Nicest Guys in Show Business," Holiday, 25 (February 1959), 91, citing Rodgers.

[3]Mabley, p. 14.

[4]Butcher, pp. 62-62.

are determined by the objectives of the characters, and all characters do have objectives. In other words, the plot and characters of a play are interdependent, because without the individuals to perform them, there can be no actions, and yet without the actions, there is no definition of these individual characters. Aristotle also said that character is determined by the morality of the person, i.e., the goodness or badness of the actions that are taken by the individual to reach his or her objective.[1] Thus, the character of an individual may first be determined by ascertaining the objective of that individual and the kind of actions that individual uses to achieve that objective.[2]

Aristotle stated that comedy portrays characters of a lower type, while tragedy portrays characters who are renowned and prosperous.[3] But, Oklahoma!, with its assertion that virtue, industry, honesty, and chastity will be rewarded while cruelty, sin and sex are punished, is a melodrama, not a tragedy.[4] And its secondary plot is pure comedy. The characters in Oklahoma! certainly are not renowned or prosperous. It is true that Laurey, Mr. Carnes and other minor

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[1]Ibid., p. 64.

[2]Colwell, pp. 6-7, 131, 149; Mabley, pp. 20-21; Roberts, p. 51.

[3]Butcher, pp 59, 76.

[4]Roberts, pp. 218-219.

characters do own land, but it is doubtful that they could be classified as wealthy. Mr. Elam is the Federal Marshal and Mr. Carnes is the local Judge, giving them some authority. However, they are not portrayed as particularly powerful men. For example, they decide to "bend" the law and declare Curly innocent on the spot, without taking him to jail. The law in Oklahoma Territory is portrayed as being rather loosely interpreted, with the laws of humanity taking precedence over the laws of the government. The characters of a melodrama can be of any social level or a mixture of levels. The characters in Oklahoma! represent two different levels of society. The three groups that constitute the upper class in this play are the farmers, ranchers, and merchants, as opposed to the lower class, made up of employees and drifters: hired hands, cowboys, and peddlers. Therefore, the characters in Oklahoma! range socially from lower class to upper middle class and, as such, are typical of melodrama and comedy.

But in a melodrama the characters must be clearly divided into the virtuous side and the evil side, with most of the characters being generally good. The hero and heroine represent the good side, and the villain may stand alone to represent evil.[1] This traditional division is maintained in Oklahoma!

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[1]Roberts, pp. 221-3.

Musical plays have generally been considered less intellectual than non-musical plays, according to Lehman Engel, particularly on the grounds that the characters do not develop during the play. Engel says, "A musical libretto . . . needs to be skeletal to reserve 'space' for singing and dancing. Libretto ideas must be so simple that the characters appear at the outset to be who and what they are."[1] In other words, a character must appear at the start as the kind of person he represents and stay that way. This is doubly convenient in Oklahoma! because characters in melodrama do not usually change either. For example, there is no time to reveal gradually that Jud is a villain. He must appear from the beginning as the evil person he is. However, this means merely that characters in a musical are not going to become someone else during the play; it does not mean that they cannot have several different facets to their personality. All characters in all plays are condensations of individuals; no play is long enough to reveal every facet of any character. And musicals must especially portray condensed, simple characters, as is required by the time limitations of a script.[2] Of course, the song lyrics and dance movements may also reveal character traits, as they often reveal the thoughts and moods of a character. Engel says, "Much of musical

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[1]Engel, Words with Music, p. 11.

[2]Gassner, Form and Idea, p. 200; Lerner, Street, p. 44.

character set-up depends not only on the quality and style of the music but even more especially on the lyrics through which the singing characters speak."[1] Thus the simplificaton of the musical's script is compensated for by the contribution of the musical elements.

Hammerstein is credited with creating more realistic characters than most other writers of musicals. For example, one reviewer said of one of his plays, "The author . . . has accomplished one thing exceptionally well; he has pictured some types that are alarmingly true to life . . ."[2] And part of the newness of the Rodgers and Hammerstein formula was that, "They treat people as if they were people and they like them and are perverting the old musical comedy to give us a different kind of picture of humanity," said critic Arthur Pollock.[3]

Colwell says that there are two elements of character in a play: morality and personality. He takes the moral aspect from Aristotle and adds the aspect of personality. Colwell defines "personality" as the idiosyncratic qualities that identify a person, such as one's personal appearance, manner of speaking, hobbies,

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[1]Engel, Words with Music, p. 94.

[2]Green, Fact Book, p. 253, citing New Haven-Courier, 22 May 1919.

[3]Arthur Pollock, "Rodgers and Hammerstein Do a Lot of Quiet Revolutionizing," The Daily Compass, 1 May 1951, p. 20.

attitudes and feelings.[1] And Oscar Brockett lists five ways of determining character: physical description, social level, psychological motivations, morality, and how the character functions in the play.[2]

Vera Roberts says that "Characters are revealed to an audience in four ways: by what they say, by what they do, by what others say about them, by what others do because of them. We might add a fifth: the appearance of the character."[3] And Colwell states that the first words a character speaks often indicate his general type and that sometimes the last words he speaks are also significant.[4] Engel says,

> Audiences need something--a person or an idea--to polarize about at the play's outset. People need to be 'grabbed' in the theatre, and much of the force with which this is accomplished will determine how the entire play will make out.
>
> The importance of introducing characters as early as possible in a musical cannot be stressed too strongly. For the audience, immediately after meeting them, begins to see things--whatever--through their eyes and to care that they get whatever it is that they want.[5]

Although probably only an unimaginative playwright would use strictly stock characters in a musical play, the characters of a musical often do fall into types that are

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[1]Colwell, pp. 10-14.

[2]Oscar Brockett, The Theatre: An Introduction (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 34.

[3]Roberts, p. 65.

[4]Colwell, pp. 152-4.

[5]Engel, Words with Music, p. 15.

immediately recognizable as traditional ones. They usually parallel the characters in melodrama, although many characters' attributes are a mixture of good and bad and therefore the characters may be more three-dimensional than strictly melodramatic characters. Engel says,

> In the best musicals, characters are recognizable human beings with whom anyone can empathize, but they will have been endowed through particularization with their own special qualities. This is especially apparent in good songs, which invest them with something uncommon. This is brought about in two ways. The music clothes them in a style or characterization that distinguishes them from all other usual people, and the particularization of lyrics confers a kind of distinction that separates any one from any other one.[1]

This particularization, by making the characters unique, thus causes the audience to take sides and care about what happens to certain characters.[2]

Roberts says that in melodrama most of the characters are on the "good" side.[3] This is true in Oklahoma!, since the only truly "bad" character is Jud. A few others are mildly obnoxious or disagreeable at times, but even they are somewhat reformed in the end.

Engel points out that at the center of most musicals is the story of a pair of young lovers, as there is in Oklahoma! He says, "From the latter part of the last century every 'musical comedy' was about young love, and in

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[1]Engel, Words with Music, p. 94.

[2]Frankel, p. 9.

[3]Roberts, p. 221.

thumbing through the reviews of the period we find that all the leading girls and boys were admirably young, pretty, and handsome. Also bear in mind that there were two leads. The use of a pair of young love birds was standard as our theatre began to grow."[1]

The original cast of Oklahoma! was made up of forty-eight performers, including the eighteen dancers and sixteen singers who were in the chorus. But some of these members of the chorus doubled for named characters in the play who have a few lines to speak. Of the nine leads, there are four female roles and five male roles. For this analysis, only these nine characters will be individually analyzed; all others will be considered to be part of the chorus, although some were also assigned specific names in the script and six of these are not listed as being among the singers and dancers.

Table 4 lists the characters in Oklahoma!, the performers who originated the parts, and the number of pages on which each character appears, according to the script. He or she may not have spoken lines on all of those pages, but according to the stage directions he or she is present on the stage for that period of time. An asterisk is placed after the name of each character who appeared in Green Grow the Lilacs, including Jud, whose name was Jeeter in Lilacs, but who is unmistakably the same character as

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[1]Engel, Words with Music, p. 13.

TABLE 4

CAST OF CHARACTERS IN
OKLAHOMA!

Character's Name	Original Performer	Total Pages on Stage
Curly McClain*	Alfred Drake	50
Laurey Williams*	Joan Roberts	47
Aunt Eller Murphy*	Betty Garde	49
Jud Fry*	Howard da Silva	24
Gertie Cummings	Jane Lawrence	22
Ado Annie Carnes*	Celeste Holm	39
Will Parker	Lee Dixon	28
Ali Hakim*	Joseph Buloff	27
Andrew Carnes	Ralph Riggs	26
Girls' Chorus of Singers, Dancers, and Actresses	Katherine Sergavia, Ellen Love, Joan McCracken, Kate Freidlich, Bambi Lynn, Elsie Arnold, Harvey Brown, Susanne Lloyd, Dorothea McFarland, Virginia Oswald, Faye Smith, Vivienne Simon, Diana Adams, Margit DeKova, Bobby Barentine, Nona Flid, Rhoda Hoffman, Billy Zay, Maria Harriton, Vivian Smith	33
Boys' Chorus of Singers, Dancers, and Actors	Barry Kelly, Edwin Clay, George Church, Paul Shiers, George S. Irving, Hayes Gordon, Herbert Rissman, Marc Platt, John Baum, Arthur Ulisse, Robert Penn, Kenneth Buffet, Jack Dunphy, Gary Fleming, Eddie Howland, Ray Harrison, Erik Kristen, Kenneth LeRoy, Owen Martin	33

SOURCE: Stanley Green, ed., Rodgers and Hammerstein Fact Book (New York: Lynn Farnol Group, 1980), pp. 511-12.

*Indicates character also appeared in Lilacs.

Jeeter. For some unexplained reason, the list of original cast members varies slightly in the printed script, the printed score, the original program, and in the Rodgers and Hammerstein Fact Book. The cast list in the latter source was used for this table.

The following is a separate analysis of each of the nine leading characters, based on the printed script, including the dialogue that the character speaks, the stage directions referring to him or her, the dialogue of other characters that refer to him or her, and the lyrics of any songs that are sung by that character. The characters are analyzed in the same order as they appear on table 4.

An attempt will be made to determine: (1) the objective of each character, what he or she does to achieve that objective, and why; (2) a physical description of each character, as well as his or her job and social standing; (3) a mental-emotional portrait of the character's intellect, personality and morality; (4) the character's function in the play.

Curly

According to the stage directions, Curly is on stage more than any other character, 50 pages, which is 64 percent of the total pages of the script. He sings two solos: "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" and "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top"; two duets: "Pore Jud," with Jud, and "People Will Say We're in Love," with Laurey; and has solo lines in two choral numbers: "The Farmer and the Cowman" and

"Oklahoma." His objective, to get Laurey to marry him, gives the play its main line of action. His pursuit of his objective is the subject of the play; the play ends when his objective is reached. He is the same heroic character that he was in Lilacs.

His determination to win Laurey is proven by the following list of ten actions that he takes chronologically in the play:

1. He asks her to go with him to the box social, although he obviously could ask a more willing girl, such as Gertie

2. He has rented a fancy surrey, leaving him no money to bid for Laurey's basket later at the party, in order to take her by a means that he thinks will please her

3. When she refuses to go with him, making a date with his chief rival, he does not then ask another young girl to accompany him, but takes Laurey's aunt instead

4. He mentions that he carved their initials on a tree, a recognized rural declaration of love

5. He asks if she would not like to change her mind and go with him to the party, instead of with Jud

6. Curly confronts Jud in the smokehouse, telling him that he intends to win Laurey, in spite of Jud's menacing attempts to dissuade him

7. At the box social, he sells everything he owns, even those items necessary for his livelihood and safety, to win the dinner with Laurey; this is the key action that shows that Curly wants Laurey so much that his reasoning is unclear for the moment

8. When Laurey expresses fear of reprisal from Jud for having fired him, Curly offers to stay on her farm that night to protect her, putting her safety before his own

9. He asks her to marry him; in this type of society, marriage for a man is usually a lifetime proposition that includes getting a companion, a mother for his children, and a helpmate in the rigorous business of everyday living; thus a proposal of marriage is a serious commitment for Curly

10. When her answer to his proposal is, "Gracious, whut'd I wanta marry you fer? . . . I cain't think of none [no reason to marry him] right now, hardly," he starts to plead desperately: "Laurey, please, ma'am--marry me. I--don't know whut I'm gonna do if you--if you don't."[1] His previous attitude of hesitating to ask her to the party while she was haughty with him has totally disappeared; groveling does not seem too high a price now, in order to reach his objective. When she finally

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 71.

agrees, he says, "I'll be the happiest man alive as soon as we're married"[1]

It is important to note that Curly had an organized campaign planned to win Laurey, from reserving the surrey in advance to buying her basket to proposing marriage. The fact that he has reserved the surrey in advance is proven by the fact that he was able to describe it in detail in his song, "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top."

Three reasons can be isolated as to why Curly wants to marry Laurey. The first reason is that he loves her. He shows his love for her in his unending pursuit of her throughout the play. When he first comes on stage, the directions state, "CURLY . . . walks over to the porch, obviously singing for the benefit of someone inside the house. . . . Curly looks wistfully up at the windows of the house . . . ."[2] The only person inside the house is his beloved, Laurey. The nearest he ever comes, in the play, to articulating his love is when he sings, after Laurey has accepted his marriage proposal, "Let people say we're in love!"[3]

Apparently Laurey and Curly have had a courtship in progress for quite some time before the June day when the

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[3]Ibid., p. 72.

play begins. Although Curly does not reminisce so far back in OKlahoma! as he did in Lilacs in discussing his having known her as a child, he does mention seeing her at the fair before she was fully grown: "I says to someone--'Who's that skinny little thing with a bang down on her forehead?'"[1] And in their duet, "People Will Say We're in Love," they mention several past experiences in their courtship, such as his collecting keepsakes from her: her rose and her glove. He also mentions to her, before the party, "It's just that everybody seems to expec' me to take you."[2]

Today is just the culmination of a chain of events. Curly has decided that the night of the big party is the ideal time to rent a fancy surrey, take his girl to the party in it, and then under the stars at the end of a perfect day, pop the question! This is the motivation for his singing, "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," as he enters. He gives her the "sales-pitch" with his song, "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top," at the end of which he says, "Nen when you was all wore out, I'd lift you onto the surrey, and jump up alongside of you-- And we'd just point the horses home."[3]

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[1]Ibid., pp. 71-72.

[2]Ibid., p. 36.

[3]Ibid., p. 12.

The second reason is that he feels the customary social pressure at his age, probably his mid-twenties, to get married and settle down. Being a practical person, he sees that as Oklahoma is to become a state, there will be denser population and less open prairie land on which to herd cattle. Farming seems to be the best occupation in the future for him. He says, "Oh, I got to learn to be a farmer, I see that! . . . Oh, things is changin' right and left! Buy up mowin' machines, cut down the prairies! . . . They gonna make a state outa this, they gonna put it in the Union! Country a-changin', got to change with it! Bring up a pair of boys, new stock, to keep up 'th the way things is goin' in this here crazy country!"[1]

The third reason is financial. Curly has no money; he has to sell all he has just to buy her basket. Laurey is financially stable, owning a profitable farm. Since he wants to be a farmer, feels a need to marry, and loves Laurey, the logical choice is to plan a campaign to marry her. The financial gain alone, however, cannot account for his choosing to pursue her to the extent that he does, since there are other girls around whose fathers own property. Gertie is obviously more available to him, and her father is a successful merchant. But Curly wants to be a farmer and, besides, he loves Laurey. And he really does plan to

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[1]Ibid., p. 71.

work on the farm. He says that when they are married he will, "Quit a-thinkin' about th'owin' the rope, and start in to git my hands blistered a new way! . . . Shoe yer horses, drag them plows under the sod!"[1] He sees marriage to Laurey as a chance for upward mobility through sharing with the woman he loves.

Curly describes himself at the beginning of the play as handsome and curly-headed; Aunt Eller agrees and calls him, "Purty as a pitcher."[2] His proclivity for action and physical prowess are probably automatic by virtue of being a cowboy by profession and the "best bronc buster in this yere territory"; obviously this kind of work requires someone of strength and energy. And his agility is proven near the beginning of the play by jumping over a fence when Laurey chases him with a fly swatter.

Among his rustic talents is the ability to shoot a gun straight, as is shown when he shoots out the knot-hole the size of a dime, as he shows Jud in the smokehouse that he is not afraid of him. He repeatedly shows his braveness by showing that Jud's bullying does not deter him. He openly tells Jud that he intends to pursue Laurey and does not hesitate to fight him when Jud grabs Laurey at the wedding. Curly is also a man who can handle horses well, as

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[1]Ibid., p. 71.

[2]Ibid., p. 9.

he brags of being a good "bronc buster," and Gertie compliments his horsemanship.

His rural life style and occupation have endowed him with a love of nature. He sings about the beauties of the morning in his opening song, "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'." In it, he enumerates the beauties he sees around him. These indications of joy in the simple, natural pleasures of life indicate a simple, not complex, natural young man, who is happy and pleasant to be around.

Curly is the employee of a rancher, being a cowboy. Jud is the employee of a farmer, being a hired hand. Both men may be at similar social levels, but Curly is at least happy in his profession, as opposed to Jud who finds his work degrading. Curly articulates the difference in their life styles: "In this country, they's two things you c'n do if you're a man. Live out of doors is one. Live in a hole is the other."[1] Jud may have to live in the smokehouse, but there is no excuse for his being a dirty person, both in body and in mind, with his dirty clothes, his fantasies about the pictures of naked women on the walls, and his story of a hired hand who burned down a farmhouse with the family in it, which he says is the correct way of getting even. Curly reacts as if he finds all of this disgusting, both in words and by opening the door to get

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[1]Ibid., p. 44.

Curly exudes healthiness of mind, as well as body, as he thoughtfully and obediently, in response to Aunt Eller's request, hitches up the wagon to go to the train station to pick up the guests for the party, plans an organized campaign to get his girl, shows his gentlemanliness by telling Laurey to keep a distance away from him when she responds positively to his kissing her at the party, and is optimistic about life. This latter trait is shown in his song about the beautiful morning: "I got a beautiful feelin'/Ev'rythin's goin' my way."[1]

There is also an expression of regard for traditional values, such as patriotism and respect for one's elders, that is impressive in this young man. This is the kind of hero that Rodgers and Hammerstein might be expected to write about. For example, he makes a date with Aunt Eller, when Laurey refuses him. And after the wedding he sings the first verse of "Oklahoma," in which he lists the beauties of the land: the sweet-smelling, waving wheat, the rain, the wind, followed by "We know we belong to the land,/And the land we belong to is grand!"[2]

Is this character then perfect--always happy, confident, and well adjusted? No, he has enough minor flaws

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[1]Ibid., p. 8.

[2]Ibid., p. 76.

to make him sound realistic. He is a bit of a braggart, a tease, and he is somewhat inarticulate and inept at romance. He brags about his prowess in the beginning when he talks to Aunt Eller, and he bristles a bit when Laurey says a bronco threw him at the fair. But this is just hubris, quite common in a hero, although in Curly's case, it is not serious enough to cause his downfall. He likes to tease Aunt Eller, as he grabs her from behind at the beginning; he teases Laurey about the existence or non-existence of the fancy surrey. Perhaps this teasing is part of his unsophisticated attempt at courting Laurey. And inarticulateness is common to all the characters, although his does seem to hamper his romantic intentions to some extent. It would seem that he might sooner be successful with Laurey, if he would just come out and explain that he loves her, has rented a fancy surrey in which to take her to the party, and would ask her to go with him. Even his marriage proposal is a bit inarticulate: "Hey, while I think of it--how--how 'bout marryin' me?"[1] His inability to express himself directly, reinforced by Laurey's hesitancy, delays the mating and thus creates the play, but it is not serious enough to prevent his reaching his objective.

Curly is probably not very well educated. He is not, however, stupid. He is bright enough to choose a wife

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[1]Ibid., p. 71.

who owns a farm, to plan a campaign to win her, and to outsmart his competition. Taking Aunt Eller to the party is a stroke of genius. It shows that he is a polite, respectful gentleman, is interested in no other girl than Laurey, and is smart enough to cater to the one person who has influence over Laurey. The duet with Jud, "Pore Jud," shows, more than anything else, how much brighter Curly is than Jud. To be able to catch up a man in the idea of killing himself in order to have a nice funeral is the definitive sign of stupidity on the part of the one being caught up, as well as a sign of intelligence on the part of the one selling this bill of goods.

The first impression that the audience gets of Curly is from his rendition of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'." The stage directions state, "Like the voice of the morning, a song comes from somewhere, growing louder as the young singer comes nearer."[1] Engel says that in a musical the audience is conditioned to sympathize with the first characters introduced: "We hang on to what we meet first unless something more interesting and purposeful is subsequently introduced."[2] Immediately upon the rise of the curtain, the audience knows that this is a healthy, clean, nature-loving, happy young man who is optimistic

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[1]Ibid., p. 7.

[2] Engel, Words with Music, p. 16.

about life, as he walks on singing to the contented Aunt Eller. His last words are also interesting. They are, as he and Laurey come out of the house to leave on their honeymoon, "Here we come."[1] But the implication could also be, "Here we come, World. And here Oklahoma comes, too." Again, it is optimistic, happy and natural, and leaves the audience with a favorable impression of Curly.

Curly is the hero of this melodrama, the protagonist. He fulfills the description of the usual melodramatic hero given by Roberts: "a handsome young man of action and courage, eternally devoted to his sweetheart or his wife, with miraculous physical prowess . . . as he attempts to foil the villain and rescue the heroine."[2] He is unmistakably a "good" character, who saves the heroine and effects the downfall of the villain. He is masculine, strong, brave, rustic, patriotic, intelligent, optimistic, and he loves Laurey and the land. He epitomizes the hope of Oklahoma, and thus of the United States. He sums up his future in "Oklahoma," which was originally meant to be a solo for him to sing, showing how ecstatic he is about his and Oklahoma's future.[3] He addresses the territory and

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 84.

[2]Roberts, p. 223.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 225.

says,

> Oklahoma,
> Every night my honey lamb and I
> Sit alone and talk
> And watch a hawk
> Makin' lazy circles in the sky.
> . . . . . .
> We're only sayin',
> "You're doin' fine, Oklahoma!
> Oklahoma, O. K.!"[1]

Laurey

Laurey is on the stage for 47 pages (3 fewer than Curly, 2 fewer than Eller, but 8 more than the next highest, Annie), meaning that the audience sees her for about 60 percent of the play's running time. Her songs are "Many a New Day" and "Out of my Dreams," both sung with the girls' chorus. She also sings the duet with Curly, "People Will Say We're in Love," has solo lines in "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top" and "Oklahoma," and sings a solo reprise of one refrain of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'."

Aristotle defined a heroic character as being morally good, but not perfect. He or she is allowed to have a flaw or two, usually excessive pride.[2] Although in classic tragedy this flaw may bring about a character's downfall, in melodrama it is likely only to slow down his or her progress. In Laurey's case, the latter is true. There is no question that Laurey has chosen Curly for her future

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 76.

[2]Colwell, pp. 10-11, citing Aristotle.

husband and that her objective is the same as his: marriage. But she has a great deal of pride that will not allow her to be an easy conquest. Her obstruction to the progress toward the marriage is not sufficient for her to replace the villain as a blocking character. But Laurey and Curly are certainly not equally working toward the marriage, with only Jud's preventing their success; Laurey's hesitancy is also blocking progress. This puts the burden of reaching the goal clearly on the hero's shoulders, and Curly rises to the demand, foils the villain, overcomes her negativity, and accomplishes the goal for both himself and Laurey.

There are several actions and lines that confirm the fact that Laurey loves Curly. The earliest indication that she verbalizes is in her duet with Curly. As they agree that they do not want people gossiping about them, she tells him, "Your sighs are so like mine,/Your eyes mustn't glow like mine--," indicating that their feelings are mutual.[1] In the same song, she also calls him "Sweetheart," and Curly's lines reveal that she has praised his charm, stood in the rain with him, held hands with him, and baked his favorite pie for him. A few pages later she sings "Out of my dreams and into your arms I long to fly."[2] She sings that she would like to stop dreaming about him and to

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 37.

[2]Ibid., p. 49.

enter a dream world with him. The girls with her in this scene tell her that they have known for some time that she loves Curly. At the party, as Jud appears to be winning her basket, the stage directions say that "LAUREY looks straight ahead of her, grimly," but when Curly begins to win the basket, "LAUREY'S eyes are shining now and her shoulders are straighter," indicating her pleasure at the prospect of sharing dinner with Curly and her displeasure at the prospect of sharing it with Jud.[1] At the time of the marriage proposal, her pride takes over again, as she again plays hard-to-get for a short time, but she does accept.

While these actions indicate Laurey's love for Curly, there is equal proof that her pride was blocking their romance. The first evidence of her pride is at her entrance when she glances at Curly and says, "Is this all that's come a-callin' and it a'ready ten o'clock of a Sattiddy mornin'?" This must be deflating to a young man who was so eager to see his girl that he was happily singing about the occasion. And then she wounds his ego further by saying that his singing, which was partially for her benefit, sounds like a "bullfrog in a pond."[2] She continues to ridicule him by responding to his description of the fancy surrey with, "Spent all his money h'arin' a rig

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[1]Ibid., pp. 61, 63.

[2]Ibid., p. 9.

and now ain't got nobody to ride in it!"[1] Poor Curly must have loved her a lot to have put up with all of this arrogance. He does comment, "I'm a good mind not to ast you to the Box Social," to which she replies, "If you did ast me, I wouldn't go with you."[2] Perhaps the greatest sign of her arrogance is in her song, "Many a New Day," in which she declares that she would never cry over a man:

> Never gonna think that the man I lose
> Is the only man among men.
> I'll snap my fingers to show I don't care.
> I'll buy me a brand-new dress to wear.
> I'll scrub my neck and I'll brush my hair,
> And start all over again.[3]

The next question that arises is, what makes her so snippy with Curly? First, she was an only child, and since her parents' deaths, she has been Aunt Eller's only charge. It appears that she has never had to compete for attention at home. Curly once refers to her as "the belle of Claremore," and by definition this implies that she is the prettiest and most popular girl around.[4] Although they never appear in the play, Eller does mention two other suitors, a rich farmer and a doctor. Even the fact that Curly thinks it is necessary to rent the fancy surrey to please

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[1]Ibid., p. 12.

[2]Ibid., p. 10.

[3]Ibid., p. 29.

[4]Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language, s.v. "belle."

her is an indication that she expects special treatment. After Jud has been killed, she expresses incredulity that something unpleasant like this could happen to someone like her on her wedding day: "I don't see why this had to happen, when everythin' was so fine."[1]

Secondly, she is relatively rich; Aunt Eller may be her guardian, but Laurey is eighteen years old and that probably means the farm now belongs to her. Her social standing is far above Curly's. She is a landowner, while he is only an employee of a rancher. Her farm is apparently profitable, because she has hired hands and it is mentioned that the crops for this year are already sold. She apparently does not need to marry someone for his money; thus she can marry someone for love, and she loves Curly. It is just that her spoiled nature makes her hesitant to accept Curly, a person of a lower social level, unless he grovels a bit. So she is arrogant until he pleads to marry her. That was what she wanted, so she accepts.

Another obstruction here is that she is a virgin, and all melodramatic heroines are busy protecting their virginity, according to Roberts.[2] This causes her to deny her attraction to men, when Annie tells her, "I like it so much when a feller talks purty to me I git all

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 81.

[2]Roberts, p. 222.

shaky from horn to hoof! Don't you?" Laurey replies, "Can't think whut yer talkin' about."[1] She is not so naive about sex as Annie is, because she is smarter than Annie. She tries to explain to Annie that peddlers have a different code of ethics. But when she discovers that she likes hugging and kissing with Curly at the party, he has to push her away. She finds out that she wants to stop guarding her virginity and mate with Curly; he proposes and they marry a few weeks later.

She also suffers from immaturity. In Green Grow the Lilacs Laurey matured during the play, from a little girl to a woman. The development in Oklahoma! is not so extreme. Although she is on the verge of womanhood in the beginning of the play, she still has much of a child inside her. She is the one who was gullible enough to buy the Elixir of Egypt from Ali. And she is still Aunt Eller's baby in times of crises. She begs Aunt Eller to go to the party with her and Jud. When Jud is killed, Aunt Eller is the one who hugs Laurey, comforts her, and says, "'At's all right, Laurey baby. If you cain't fergit, jist don't try to, honey."[2]

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 20.

[2]Ibid., p. 81.

The endings of two of the scenes in the first act in which Laurey appears show her to be very sad. At the end of the first one, Curly has just asked if she could not change her mind and go to the party with him; she says "no" and he leaves. Aunt Eller enters and asks her if she would like to borrow her hanky, but Laurey just chokes up and says that she does not need it. At the end of the third scene, she has just experienced her dream, in ballet form, and Jud awakens her to leave for the party, which she does, sadly. These endings show that she is not happy with the immature little girl that she has been.

Laurey even gets a taste of what it would be like to lose Curly when Gertie starts pursuing him in front of her. This is when "LAUREY takes an involuntary step forward, then stops, frustrated, furious."[1] As their competition grows, Laurey and Gertie almost get into a fight over who has the lightest gooseberry tarts, showing both girls' immaturity.

Sometimes, however, her maternal instinct is shown, indicating her approaching maturity. For example, she even acted as Jud's nurse last winter when he was sick. And sometimes she takes the mother role with Annie and gives advice about Will and the peddler.

There is a struggle going on inside of Laurey to

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[1]Ibid., p. 29.

mature. She has been living her mature life in her dreams, but now she longs to stop dreaming and break into the real, mature world that she thinks will be like the dream world she has imagined. Although she has made the date with Jud and is afraid not to go through with it, she tries to stay away from him as much as possible. Although she denies it, Jud knows that she does not want to be alone with him. He says, "You didn't want to be with me by yerself--not a minnit more'n you had to. . . . Mornin's you stay hid in yer room all the time. Nights you set in the front room, and won't git outa Aunt Eller's sight."[1] And when she dreams that Jud may kill Curly if she does not stop using Jud as a tool to make Curly jealous, she realizes that the time has arrived to become realistic.

At the party, during the auction, she is mature enough to urge Curly not to sell all he owns for her, showing that she is finally turning the corner to maturity. Surely his willingness to give his all for her must have fed her ego, but she sensibly says, "Don't sell Dun [his horse], Curly, it ain't worth it," and "Curly, please don't sell your gun."[2] The final sign that she is maturing is that she learns to stop teasing Curly after accepting his marriage proposal; she agrees that he was not thrown by the bronco at

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[1]Ibid., p. 68.

[2]Ibid., pp. 63-64.

the fair; he jumped off. If this event had been mentioned in the first act, she would have teased him unmercifully about it. But it comes in the second act and her reaction shows that she has subdued her own ego to benefit his, a sign of maturity. However, even after she has supposedly matured and married Curly, she is chagrined that Jud spoils her perfect wedding day. She is not upset that Jud is dead, but that he marred her special day--revealing a vestige of the spoiled child remaining.

Thus again, as in Lilacs, Laurey is the only character who develops much during the play. In Lilacs she even had to ask Aunt Eller's permission to accept Curly's marriage proposal. But her maturation in Oklahoma!, although meager, is necessary for her to reach her objective: to marry Curly. It also gives her a more complex character than the others, as was true in Lilacs.

There are three references in Oklahoma! that describe Laurey physically. There is Curly's reference to her as "the belle of Claremore" and Jud describes her "soft arms" and "long yeller hair" in his solo.[1] Finally, Ali Hakim comments that she has grown up since he last saw her into "a great big beautiful lady!"[2]

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[1]Ibid., p. 47.

[2]Ibid., p. 23.

The first lines Laurey has at the beginning of the play are her reprise of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'." This reprise could have been planted for the purpose of preventing the audience's getting an unfavorable first impression of her, because her first spoken words are her smart-aleck remarks putting Curly down. Her last words occur when Judge Carnes hesitates to declare Curly "not guilty," so that they can leave on their honeymoon. She says "Well, then say it!" to Judge Carnes.[1] This indicates that she is now a practical married woman and she is eager to start living her mature life.

Northrop Frye sees comedy in social terms. Characters are blocked by rules of society that prevent these characters from reaching their goals. In the end a new society is formed with new rules as the characters reach their goals by breaking the old rules, and it all ends in a celebration.[2] Frye's theory applies somewhat to Laurey, who is obeying the rules of her strict upbringing by protecting her virginity and, therefore, playing hard-to-get. Her counterpart in the comic triangle is the opposite, being somewhat promiscuous and thus easy-to-get. Frightened of Jud, Laurey ignores the rules of proper

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[1]Ibid., pp. 81-82.

[2]Northrop Frye, "Rhetorical Criticism: Theory of Genres" from his Anatomy of Criticism, in European Theories of the Drama, p. 533.

behavior for a young lady and runs to Curly for protection. Thus, only by breaking the established rules does she realize her true love, which allows her to reach her goal of mating with Curly and a new society is formed. And the wedding celebration ends the play.

Summing up her character, Engel says, "Laurey (Oklahoma!) is any nice clean rural American girl of some means."[1] She is the heroine of this melodrama, who is besieged by the villain and saved by the hero. Someone might choose to make her a dual protagonist with Curly, since their objective is the same: to marry each other. But her actions do not always lead toward her objective. Since she is a multi-faceted character who develops somewhat during the play, she has an obstruction within herself that acts antagonistically to prevent her from clearly pursuing her goal. Without this inner conflict in Laurey, there would be a very different, and less complex, play. Her development goes a step beyond pure melodrama and gives the play more realism and depth.

Aunt Eller

Except for the hero, Aunt Eller is on the stage more than any other character: 49 pages, or 63 percent of the entire playing time. In a sense, she seems to direct the entire plot and its outcome. She sings no solo song, but

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[1]Engel, Words with Music, p. 94.

has solo lines in "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top," "Kansas City," "Oklahoma," and "The Farmer and the Cowman;" in the latter, she has two verses by herself. She is very similar to the same character in Lilacs, except no background information is given on her in Oklahoma!

Her objective in the play is to gain nothing for herself, but to see that Laurey is happy in life, which she sees as marriage to Curly, and this will make Eller happy, too. Her motivation is simply that she has already lived much of her own life and now she just wants to see to it that her surrogate child has a happy life. She is a matriarchal figure to almost everyone in the play, including Curly. She tells him he is handsome and even saves his life, when Jud tries to stab him with the Little Wonder at the party. Everyone calls her "Aunt Eller," even the older men, and it seems to be a title of respect and honor.

Throughout most of the first four scenes, she is a catalyst in getting Curly and Laurey together. When Curly starts to tell about the fancy surrey, "AUNT ELLER is the one who falls like a ton of bricks immediately and helps CURLY try to sell it to LAUREY."[1] She tells Laurey, "Y'd shore feel like a queen settin' up in that carriage!"[2] Twice she tells Curly that Laurey likes him;

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 10.

[2]Ibid., p. 11.

this is probably necessary, because from the way Laurey acts around him in the beginning, he could think she hated him, get discouraged, and pursue another girl. When Laurey makes a date with Jud and wants Eller along for protection, Eller says she is going with Curly: "That's the way you wanted it, ain't it?"[1] This is Eller's practical way of warning Laurey that someone else will take Curly away from her if she does not start being nice to him. At the party when Curly bids all he has for Laurey's basket, Eller encourages him to do so, because she just wants to see her niece and him mated, and this appears to be a part of the procedure, expensive though it is.

Physically, she is described as she was in Lilacs, "a buxom hearty woman about fifty . . . looking out over the meadow . . . a contented look on her face."[2] This "contented" look of hers is described several times during the play. The first scene and the last scene both end with her sitting, rocking contentedly on the porch. This helps to identify Eller as the pillar of wisdom and security that she fulfills in the play.

She is not, however, a sedentary figure. She dances twice in the play, once with Will on his return from Kansas City and then with Curly at the party. And she

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[1]Ibid., p. 18.

[2]Ibid., p. 7.

is churning at the opening of the play, showing that she does help with the farm work. She even makes a speech at the end about the importance of being hearty in order to live a full life.

Socially, Eller is at the same level as Laurey, a farm owner, because Laurey was only thirteen years old when her father died, and left her the farm. Eller has been the head of the household since then. When Laurey has agreed to go to the party with Jud, Jud reports to Aunt Eller that this prohibits his cleaning the henhouse today, as planned, showing that she is the boss. She is well respected by everyone throughout the play. For example, when someone asks at the party who the auctioneer will be, the crowd immediately chooses Aunt Eller. To her mild protestation, they say, "No, Aunt Eller, yore the best," and "Ain't any ole men auctioneers as good as you."[1]

She is a symbol of the traditional, hearty, moral pioneer. The morals that she represents are the norm in the community. She says a man should be the auctioneer, instead of a woman. She says Jud runs the farm, because two women could not do it. These indicate her belief in the tradition that men should be the leaders. When Will wants to show his Little Wonder to the boys, he asks Aunt Eller to excuse him, because she is too much of a lady to see the

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[1]Ibid., p. 55.

naughty pictures. But being the surrogate mother of the boys and definitely not to be left out of anything, she grabs it and looks at the pictures herself. After seeing the pictures, however, she says that the girl in the picture should be ashamed! Finally, she threatens to tell Ado Annie that Will is looking at naughty pictures. But it is all in fun and she laughs. Eller epitomizes the Territory custom of bending the law to meet the needs of humanity. This is shown in the last scene in which she insists that they declare Curly innocent on the spot and say that they did it in court, so that the couple can leave on their honeymoon as planned.

Eller is a strong figure. She is influential in the community. She is not intimidated by Jud, as Laurey is. She also freely tells off the peddler when he has sold her a defective egg beater. He calls her "Aunt Eller," and she says, "I ain't yer Aunt Eller! Don't you call me Aunt Eller, you little wart. I'm mad at you."[1] She forbids his calling her "Aunt Eller," because that is what the people she likes call her, and right now she does not like Ali. Later, however, she forgives him and takes him inside to feed him.

Eller is a practical, modest, peaceful, happy person. At the auction, her practicality is shown as she encourages Jud to drop out of the bidding, because Mr.

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[1]Ibid., p. 23.

Carnes can afford to lose his money more than Jud can. Her modesty is shown when Laurey says that she wants to be just like Aunt Eller, and Eller replies, "Fiddlesticks! Scrawny and old? You couldn't h'ar me to be the way I am!"[1] Her peacefulness is shown not only in her sitting contentedly on the porch in the rocking chair, but also by her being a peacemaker. She stops a fight between Laurey and Gertie at the farm and between the farmers and the ranchers at the party. She pokes fun at Curly and Jud after they have been shooting their guns in the smokehouse, in an attempt to lighten the situation. She has a good sense of humor, of which many examples could be cited. One of the best occurs when Laurey is jealously demeaning Gertie's looks by saying Gertie looks old; Eller comments, amused with Laurey, "Yeah, and she says she's only eighteen. I betcha she's nineteen."[2] And perhaps the best example happens in the last scene when Cord Elam keeps saying he feels funny about holding Curly's hearing out of court. Aunt Eller tells him that he really will feel funny when she tells his wife that he is carrying on with another woman. He protests that he is not carrying on with another woman. She says, "Mebbe not, but you'll shore feel funny when I

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[1]Ibid., p. 81.

[2]Ibid., p. 36.

tell yer wife you air."[1]

Eller is probably not an educated woman, but her wisdom surpasses formal training. She is a natural philosopher, who sees life through the eyes of experience, and sees hope for humanity and Oklahoma. Her line in "Oklahoma" is, "They couldn't pick a better time to start in life!"[2] She means that Laurey and Curly are ready and Oklahoma is ready and that the couple and the land together will prosper. She expresses the value of confidence in one's personal worth in "The Farmer and the Cowman":

> I'd like to teach you all a little sayin'--
> And learn these words by heart the way you should:
> "I don't say I'm no better than anybody else,
> But I'll be damned if I ain't just as good!"[3]

Aunt Eller is, of course, a confidante for Laurey, as well as for Curly. And she serves as a sort of spokesperson for the author, much as the Greek chorus did in classic tragedy. Her level-headedness, in constantly watching the proceedings, commenting on the action, advising, and consoling, speaks for the author. Her speech at the end about equanimity and heartiness sums up Hammerstein's (and in Lilacs, Riggs's) philosophy. Thus, Aunt Eller serves a more important function in the play than just being a confidante.

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[1]Ibid., p. 83.

[2]Ibid., p. 75.

[3]Ibid., p. 54.

It is significant that the first thing that the audience sees when the curtain goes up at the beginning of the play is Aunt Eller sitting with "a contented look on her face."[1] This sets the tone for the play, one of tranquility and contentedness in the natural things of life. When Curly shouts in her ear from behind, her first words in the play are "Skeer me to death! Whut're you doin' around here?"[2] This shows that she and Curly are accustomed to teasing each other, and it introduces the main action of the first scene: the purpose of Curly's visit. Her last words are, "Why, Ado Annie, where on earth you been?," when Annie and Will appear with the wisps of straw on Annie's back.[3] This hints that she may have taken Will and Annie's mating as her next project. This is reinforced by the fact that Mr. Carnes has just joined her on the porch. One might wonder why Hammerstein, with his penchant for tying up all loose ends and marrying everybody off, would not have made Carnes a widower and have left the impression that maybe Eller and Carnes might marry after the play is over. But that might have been just too neat!

Aunt Eller has a multiplicity of functions in Oklahoma! She is a matriarch, a philosopher, a confidante, a catalyst, a chorus figure, and the only older

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[1]Ibid., p. 7.

[2]Ibid., p. 8.

[3]Ibid., p. 84.

woman in the play. Obviously a community would have a large number of older women in it, not just young girls. But Broadway audiences perhaps would rather see pretty young girls than middle-aged women, and Rodgers and Hammerstein wanted the play to succeed. They had already broken convention by having the chorus girls not appear until well into the first act, and then in long dresses. Adding some older women, too, may have just been too much of a concession to realism, at the expense of popular demand, than they were willing to give.

Her philosophy, and thus that also of Rodgers and Hammerstein and Riggs, is contained in her speech to Laurey on how to succeed in life: "Oh, lots of things happens to folks. Sickness, er bein' pore and hungry even--bein' old and afeared to die. That's the way it is--cradle to grave. And you can stand it. They's one way. You gotta be hearty, you gotta be. You cain't deserve the sweet and tender things in life less'n you're tough."[1]

Jud

Jud Fry, Laurey and Eller's hired hand, appears on 26 pages of the script, 33 percent of the play. This is approximately half as much as Curly is on stage. This fact helps to account partially for the audience's predominant concern for Curly's welfare, over Jud's. Additionally, Jud

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[1]Ibid., p. 81.

is always described as "scowling"; it is easier to like someone who is happy and optimistic, as Curly is, than it is to like someone who is always scowling. Jud's solo is "Lonely Room," and he has one duet with Curly, "Pore Jud." Jud is still the villain as he was in Lilacs, but much less dialogue is spent on his stories of revenge and Laurey also discusses her fear of him less. The idea seems to be to lighten the emphasis on this unhappy part of the play, to make it less serious and more optimistic.

This researcher asked several people who were connected with Rodgers and Hammerstein why Jeeter Fry in Lilacs became Jud Fry in Oklahoma! The only response, other than, "I don't know," came from Stanley Green, who said that he assumes that it was because of the phenomenally successful Broadway play Tobacco Road (1933-1941), which was still fresh in the minds of playgoers in 1943; its leading character's name was Jeeter Lester. To avoid confusion between Jeeter Lester and Jeeter Fry, Green believes that Oklahoma!'s villain was named Jud.[1]

Jud's objective is the same as Curly's: to marry Laurey. But each of these men see marriage to her from a different viewpoint. Curly sees Laurey as a sweet, young, innocent virgin, with whom he wants to marry, love, have children, run a farm, and live a clean, healthy, contented

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[1]Interview, Green, 1984.

existence. He describes their future life together:

> Oklahoma,
> Every night my honey lamb and I
> Sit alone and talk
> And watch a hawk
> Makin' lazy circles in the sky.[1]

But Jud sees Laurey as a sex object. The only indication that is given of his relationship with women is his pictures of half-naked women; he looks at them and fantasizes. He sings about Laurey:

> And the girl that I want
> Ain't afraid of my arms,
> And her own soft arms keep me warm.
> And her long, yeller hair
> Falls across my face
> Jist like the rain in a storm![2]

Jud describes Laurey as someone who will cover him with her arms and hair, feeling like the rain on his face. This implies that he sees her as lying on top of him, since he imagines her hair falling on his face, as opposed to Curly's image of Laurey beside him. Laurey is Jud's employer. She is the one who has the higher social position, of which he is jealous. He describes his former employers as "lousy they was to me. . . . Always makin' out they was better. Treatin' me like dirt."[3] Jud longs for social respectability and for sex with a real woman. He sees Laurey as the fulfillment of these longings. He

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 76.

[2]Ibid., pp. 47-48.

[3]Ibid., p. 43.

declares his intention:

> I ain't gonna dream 'bout her arms no more!
> I ain't gonna leave her alone!
> Goin' outside,
> Git myself a bride,
> Git me a womern to call my own.[1]

He does not envision blistering his hands and working on the farm, as Curly does. He sees farm chores as dirty and demeaning. When he grabs Laurey at the party and she pushes him away, he says, "I ain't good enough, am I? I'm a h'ard hand, got dirt on my hands, pigalop. Ain't fitten to tetch you. You're better, so much better. Yeah, we'll see who's better--Miss Laurey."[2] Winning Laurey and her farm equals the answer to everything he wants. Owning property means everything, and to him, even Laurey is property. She represents owning something very rich and pleasurable. And if he cannot fulfill these needs, he will get revenge. He tells Curly, "If it ever come to gittin' even with anybody, I'd know how to do it."[3] And he goes on to describe the incident of the hired hand's burning down a farm, killing the whole family in the fire, and comments "It tuck him weeks to git all the kerosene--buying it at different times . . . ."[4]

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[1]Ibid., p. 48.

[2]Ibid., p. 69.

[3]Ibid., p. 43.

[4]Ibid.

Jud says someone else did this and he is just relating the story, but how did he know in detail how it was done, how long it took to accumulate the kerosene, if he were not the guilty party himself? And it was a premeditated murder, proven by the slow accumulation of the kerosene. Was it Jud who did it to get even with those former employers who treated him so demeaningly?

Aunt Eller reports to Curly that Jud is interested in Laurey: "Men of course there's someone nearer home that's got her on his mind most of the time, till he don't know a plow from a thrashin' machine."[1] Observant, discerning Aunt Eller knows that Jud at least dreams about Laurey. But Eller is on Curly's side; she does not want Jud for a nephew-in-law. She is just trying to build a fire under Curly to propose marriage before complications set in. And she is right; Jud does instigate complications and she is too late in issuing her warning. But she is the only one in the play who has anything good to say about Jud: "He's the best hired hand I ever had. Just about runs the farm by hisself. Well, two women couldn't do it, you orta know that."[2] She even lets Jud call her "Aunt Eller." Thus wise old Aunt Eller sees Jud as a valuable employee, whom she does not want to offend. But she knows that he could pose a problem in Curly's campaign to marry Laurey.

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[1]Ibid., p. 17.

[1]Ibid.

Laurey, on the other hand, sees him as an intimidating, frightening, dirty pervert. She says that she has to go to the party with him because,

> He'd do sumpin turrible. He makes me shivver ever' time he gits clost to me. . . . Ever go down to that ole smokehouse where he's at? . . . Did you see them pitchers he's got tacked onto the walls? . . . Sumpin wrong inside him, Aunt Eller. I hook my door at night and fasten my winders agin' it. Agin' it--and the sound of feet a-walkin' up and down out there under that tree outside my room. . . . Mornin's he comes to his breakfast and looks at me out from under his eyebrows like sumpin back in the bresh som'eres.[1]

And since the dream ballet is a fantasy inside Laurey's mind, it gives a clear picture of how she expects Jud will act. In it she sees Curly as her true love and their happy marriage ceremony. Then Jud interferes and takes her away, with Curly unable to stop him. When Curly tries to rescue her, Jud fights him and wins. Only by giving herself to Jud is she able to save Curly's life in her dream. Being an immature, impressionable young girl, Laurey is easily intimidated by the unknown danger that she senses in Jud. She sets up the competitive situation, due to her immature need for attention and adoration, but then realistically sees that she may have gone too far. At the auction, however, she sees that Curly does intend to pursue her with all the money and strength at his disposal. Apparently this emboldens her to face Jud and tell him off, when he grabs her later at the party. Jud does not know how

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[1]Ibid., pp. 18-19.

to court in a gentlemanly way. He just grabs. But she is now confident that Curly will come to her rescue; in fact, she perhaps even likes having created the opportunity for him to come to her aid, because she is now ready to stop the arrogance and get down to marrying. She has been wanting to be rid of Jud, so she tells him:

> Air you making threats to me? Air you standing there tryin' to tell me 'f I don't 'low you to slobber over me like a hog, why, you're gonna do sumpin 'bout it? Why, you're nothin' but a mangy dog and somebody orta shoot you. You think so much about being a h'ard hand. Well, I'll just tell you sumpin that'll reat yer brain, Mr. Jud. You ain't a h'ard hand fer me no more. You c'n just pack up yer duds and scoot. Oh, and I even got better idya'n that. You ain't to come on the place again, you hear me? I'll send yer stuff any place you say, but don't you's much 's set foot inside the pasture gate or I'll sic the dogs onto you![1]

Laurey sees Jud as a despicable person, but she uses him to get Curly. Then she needs the hero to reassure her that he really will protect her from the possible consequences of her actions.

Curly never seems to be intimidated by Jud. He describes Jud as, "That bullet-colored, growly man" and marvels that "Laurey'd take up 'th a man like that!"[2] Curly tells Jud what he thinks of him:

> You know somebody orta tell Laurey whut kind of a man you air. And fer that matter, somebody orta tell <u>you</u> onct about yerself. . . . A feller wouldn't feel very

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[1]Ibid., p. 69.

[2]Ibid., p. 17.

> safe in here with you . . . 'f he didn't know you. (Acidly) But I know you, Jud. (CURLY looks him straight in the eye). . . . I've set by my horse in the brush som'eres and heared a rattlesnake many a time. Rattle, rattle, rattle!--he'd go, skeered to death. Somebody comin' close to his hole! Somebody gonna step on him! Git his old fangs ready, full of pizen! Curl up and wait!--Long's you live in a hole, you're skeered, you got to have pertection. You c'n have muscles, oh, like arn--and still be as weak as a empty bladder--less'n you got things to barb yer hide with. (Suddenly, harshly, directly to JUD) How'd you git to be the way you air, anyway--settin' here in this filthy hole--and thinkin' the way you're thinkin'? Why don't you do sumpin healthy onct in a while, 'stid of stayin' shet up here--a-crawlin' and festerin'![1]

Curly's impression of Jud is that Jud is merely putting up a facade of being dangerous. Curly sees Jud as covering up a low self-image by trying to intimidate everyone to keep away from him, so that no one will know how worthless he is. Curly even admonishes Jud to clean up his life, to come out into the fresh air and stop being so defensive all the time. This analysis of Jud's character is quite an interesting profile of Jud, to be coming from an unschooled cowboy. It is, in a sense, a power play, Curly's attempt to show his superiority over Jud.

Jud's immediate response is a defensive act: "He seizes a gun in a kind of reflex, a kind of desperate frenzy, and pulls the trigger. Luckily the gun is pointed toward the ceiling."[2] Later he agrees with

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[1]Ibid., p. 44.

[2]Ibid.

Curly's analysis, proving that Curly won the power play. After he is alone again, Jud says, thinking out loud, "Whut am I doin' shet up here--like that feller says--a-crawlin' and a-festerin'? Whut am I doin' in this lousy smokehouse?"[1] However, Jud does not, unfortunately, clean up his life, as Curly suggested that he should do. Jud sees the answer to his problem to be marrying Laurey. This will give him the sex, as well as the protection, by virtue of the authority to dominate, that he feels he needs. So when he goes to the party that night with Laurey, he is as ready as Curly is to win Laurey--at all costs. He correctly figures that his little bundle of cash is more than Curly has, but he did not figure on Curly's selling all his possessions, too, for added bidding power. Jud makes a speech at the auction:

> You jist put up everythin' y'got in the world, didn't yer? Cain't bid the clothes off yer back, cuz they ain't worth nuthin'. Cain't bid yer gun cuz you need that. (Slowly) Yes, sir. You need that bad. (Looking at AUNT ELLER) So, Aunt Eller, I'm jist as reckless as Curly McLain, I guess. Jist as good at gittin' whut I want. Goin' to bid all I got in the world--all I saved fer two years, doin' farm work. All fer Laurey. Here it is! Forty-two dollars and thirty-one cents.[2]

Since Laurey has already decided on Curly anyway, and was only using Jud to make Curly jealous, Jud's attempts at courtship are a waste of time. He is a doomed man, doomed

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[1]Ibid., p. 47.

[2]Ibid., p. 63.

by his low self-esteem, his low intelligence, his exaggerated fears, his lack of sophistication, his abrasive personality, his uncleanliness, his unrealistic expectations, and his past.

His actions toward his goal include asking Laurey to go to the party with him, trying to scare Curly with his gun and with words, trying to outbid Curly for Laurey's basket, and even trying to stab Curly twice--once with the Little Wonder at the party and once again after the wedding.

His condition is somewhat pitiable. It is not his fault to have been born both stupid and of a low social class. He lives and works, more or less, as his employers expect him to, a dullard who gets dirty and lives in the smokehouse. Perhaps his past employers have been mean to him. Perhaps his defense mechanisms have been learned in an attempt to survive in a hostile environment. He has had few real pleasures in his life. His most pleasant memory is of Laurey's bringing him hot soup in the smokehouse when he was sick and putting her hand on his head to see if he had a fever. He asks Laurey if she remembers doing this. He says, "Bet you don't remember as much as me. I remember eve'ything you ever done--every word you ever said. Cain't think of nuthin' else. . . . See? . . . See how it is?"[1] His one solo is a song describing his pitiable

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[1]Ibid., p. 69.

condition:

> The floor creaks,
> The door squeaks,
> There's a fieldmouse a-nibblin' on a broom,
> And I set by myself
> Like a cobweb on a shelf,
> By myself in a lonely room.
>
> But when there's a moon in my winder
> And it slants down a beam 'crost my bed,
> Then the shadder of a tree starts a-dancin' on the wall
> And a dream starts a-dancin' in my head.
> And all the things that I wish fer
> Turn out like I want them to be,
> And I'm better'n that Smart Aleck cowhand
> Who thinks he is better'n me![1]

This gives an insight into why he fantasizes. He is a lonely man, who has little material wealth. Left alone in his meager quarters, he imagines his life as he would like it to be. He imagines that he is better than Curly and that Laurey is his woman. This song does not excuse him for being the way he is, but it does help in understanding his condition. Deems Taylor says that Jud is an unconventional villain: "He is flesh and blood; he is evil and pitiable. He serves to add realism to the entertainment."[2] Engel says, "In the musical, this one song brings him alive and, without depriving us of the fear which we have of him, Jud is understood and even empathized with."[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 47.

[2]Taylor, p. 172.

[3]Engel, Words with Music, p. 104.

Ideally, Jud should clean himself up, physically and mentally. He should probably start thinking more pleasant thoughts, smile, and pursue some hired girl. But he is suffering from a mental myopia that allows him to see only Laurey as his salvation. Ali Hakim even offers to give him Ado Annie, since Ali does not want her, but Jud says he does not want Annie. He wants an unreachable, for him, objective, and this seals his fate.

Psychiatrist Victor Rosen has written a book that analyzes characters in literature. Many of the things he says about obsessive-compulsive characters apply to Jud:

> Obsessive-compulsive individuals are constantly engaged in relationships of varying degrees of intensity in which their roles as victims or aggressors are successfully obscured . . . . The device of comic caricature when successful allows the aggressor to insult his victim without malice and the victim to feel some pride in being insulted. The capacity for comic caricature may be a way station in which sadomasochistic needs are minimized. A disturbance of the sense of the comic may produce obsessive-compulsive symptoms through changes in the defensive equilibrium . . . .[1]

With Jud's obsession for respectability, his stupidity, and his proclivity for dreaming, Curly is able to show Jud to be a simpleton in the song, "Pore Jud." Jud longs to be respected so much that he gets caught up in fantasizing his own funeral, for the sake of being able to imagine himself dressed up nicely, laid out in a coffin in the parlor of the

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[1]Victor Rosen, M. D., Style, Character and Language, ed. by Samuel Atkin, M. D., and Milton E. Jucovy, M. D. (New York: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1977), p. 329.

big house, with people coming to pay their last respects. He imagines that people would regret not having been nicer to him and would remember him with great affection. This is another indication of his low self-esteem. But he has no intention of backing out of life by killing himself, as Curly suggests. He intends to get the woman he desires and all the respectability that will come with this conquest.

The ending, unfortunately for Jud, is that he loses the competition for Laurey to the heroic Curly, who had already been chosen by both Aunt Eller and Laurey as the best mate for her. But Jud has trouble accepting defeat, without getting revenge. He buys the Little Wonder, with the intent of using it on Curly, and he almost does. Then when he totally loses everything: his girl and his job, his only sense of security, he comes to the wedding and tries to get even, to kill Curly. Since this play is a melodrama-comedy, the hero is not allowed to die, and the villain must be punished. Since Jud has refused to reform, the only suitable end left for him in the play is death, and appropriately, death at his own hand.

Hammerstein affirms that Jud was the problem character in turning Lilacs into a musical:

> Jud Fry worried us. A sulky farmhand, a "bullet-colored, growly man," a collecter of dirty pictures, he frightened Laurey by walking in the shadow of a tree beneath her window every night. He was heavy fare for a musical play. Yet his elimination was not to be considered because the drama he provided was the element that prevented this light lyric idyl from being so lyric

> and so idyllic that a modern theater audience might have been made sleepy, if not nauseous, by it. It was quite obvious that Jud was the bass fiddle that gave body to the orchestration of the story. The question was how to make him acceptable, not too much a deep-eyed villain, a scene-chewer, an unmotivated purveyor of arbitrary evil. . . . So we solved the problem with two songs, "Pore Jud" and "Lonely Room." . . .
>
> In "Pore Jud" . . . . he becomes then, for a while, not just wicked, but a comic figure flattered by the attentions he has never received while alive. The audience begins to feel some sympathy for him, some understanding of him as a man.
>
> In the second song, "Lonely Room," he paints a savage picture of his solitary life, his hatred of Curly and his mad desire for Laurey. This is a self-analysis, but it is emotional, and not cerebral. No dialogue could do this dramatic job as vividly and quickly as does the song.[1]

Thus, Hammerstein made the villain in his version of Green Grow the Lilacs more pitiable. This and the addition of a comic subplot lightened the melodrama and made Oklahoma! less dark and more interesting than the play from which it was adapted.

The first impression that the audience gets of Jud when he walks on the stage in scene 1 is of a "burly, scowling man" who responds to Curly's "Hello, Jud," with "Hello, yourself."[2] Immediately he is shown to be an unhappy, rude man. His last words, when he arrives after the wedding, are

> Weddin' party still goin' on? Glad I ain't too late. Got a present fer the groom. But first I wants kiss the bride. (He grabs LAUREY. CURLY pulls him off) An'

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[1]Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 18-19.

[2]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 17.

> here's my present fer you! (He socks CURLY. The fight starts, with the crowd moving around the two men. JUD pulls out a knife and goes for CURLY. CURLY grabs his arm and succeeds in throwing him. JUD falls on his knife, groans and lies still. The crowd surges toward his motionless body).[1]

The last impression then is one that this obdurate man comes to the wedding, bearing gifts of rudeness and evil and thus succumbs to his well deserved doom.

Jud functions as the villain, a blocking character between the hero and his objective, and a pawn whom the heroine uses to get her objective. He is pitiable because, in spite of his negative character, he cannot change. His life is one of dreaming of a better life, but never really doing anything to deserve it. He sums up his life's philosophy when he says to Laurey's firing him: "Said yer say! Brought it on yerself. (In a voice harsh with an inner frenzy) Cain't he'p it. Cain't never rest. told you the way it was. You wouldn't listen--"[2] He has apparently repeatedly gotten revenge for his many disappointments in life. When Jud's failure becomes inevitable, his need for vengeance seals his doom.

Gertie

Gertie was mentioned in Green Grow the Lilacs, but did not appear in that play. Hammerstein added her in Oklahoma! She appears on 22 pages, 28 percent of the

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[1]Ibid., p. 69.

[2]Ibid., pp. 79-80.

play. She has no songs nor solo lines. Thus Gertie is a small principal character, who serves a purpose in the plot of the play.

Gertie's objective is to marry Curly. She does not play coy, as Laurey does. She obviously wants a man; in fact, she appears to be "boy crazy." She has apparently looked around and decided that Curly is the best available, for she pursues him relentlessly, in spite of the fact that she knows that Curly and Laurey are seeing each other quite seriously. In fact, she wants a man so badly that when Curly proves to be unavailable, she immediatly finds another one, Ali, although she is able to nab him only by means of a shotgun wedding.

Laurey is jealous of Gertie. She teases Curly about Gertie at the beginning when Laurey is playing hard-to-get: "You better eat that ole Cummin's girl you've tuck sich a shine to, over acrost the river," which is identical to the only mention Gertie received in Lilacs.[1] Laurey is obviously trying, again, to get Curly to declare his love for her. Laurey continues to show her jealousy of Gertie throughout the first scene. When Gertie first comes onstage and dances with Curly, "LAUREY . . . looks across at CURLY and GERTIE and boils over."[2] Although Laurey and Gertie are also obviously in competition when they argue

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[1]Ibid., p. 10.

[2]Ibid., p. 28.

over who has baked the lightest gooseberry tarts, their greatest competition is over Curly.

Gertie flaunts her attraction to Curly in Laurey's face. As Curly leaves to take the horses for a drink, Gertie says, "C'n I come, too? Jist love to watch the way you handle horses."[1] And Curly and Gertie walk off arm-in-arm, leaving Laurey infuriated. This causes Laurey to sing her song, "Many a New Day," which states how little she cares if she loses a man. And again when Gertie is going into the farmhouse, Gertie asks, "You comin' inside 'th me, Curly?," and adds, "And don't fergit when the auction starts tonight, mine's the biggest hamper."[2]

Apparently Curly and Gertie have been together before this day, because Laurey petulantly teases him about her, and Gertie does mention that she is aware of Curly's adeptness at handling horses. But Curly has already made up his mind that he wants Laurey, not Gertie, so Gertie just serves to assure the audience that Curly is a popular, desirable man in the community; he could have another girl if Laurey does not want him.

No physical description of Gertie is given, but in the last scene, Will wants to kiss her, so she is probably not ugly. Annie, in fact, gets quite jealous of Gertie at this point and starts a fight with her. The only specific

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[1]Ibid., p. 29.

[2]Ibid., p. 35.

quirk of Gertie's that is mentioned is her loud, obnoxious laughter. The laughter appears to be a sign of insecurity in that each time she makes a seductive pass at Curly, she laughs, indicating insecurity in letting him know of her interest in him. If she did something wrong, her laughter could be interpreted as indicating that she was only joking. Thus her laughter must be a safety valve for her. But it must be quite annoying, because after four days of being married to her, Ali says that "Four days of that laugh should count like a golden wedding."[1]

She is the daughter of a merchant in a nearby town. This indicates that Gertie has had a more urban upbringing than the farm and ranch girls. It also puts her in the upper social class with the ranch and farm girls. Being brought up in a town, she may have had more education than the country girls and she does show a little more sophistication. For example, she laughs at Laurey for having bought the Elixir of Egypt. She no doubt knows what smelling salts are; her father probably sells them.

The only indication of Gertie's morality is that she has no qualms about taking away another girl's boy friend--and right in front of her, too. Curly has already said that everyone expects that he will be taking Laurey to the party, indicating that they have an

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[1]Ibid., p. 78.

established relationship. For a girl to flirt blatantly with another girl's boy friend, to the extent that Gertie does, certainly is in defiance of social custom, especially for small-town folks.

Gertie is an extremely aggressive girl, even to the point of being a show-off. Her pursuit of Curly, her laughter, and her display of her wedding ring in the last scene, all mark her as a person who likes to be noticed. She is, however, no match for the country girls in physical stamina, because she runs from Annie, when Annie starts to fight her over Will's kissing her in the last scene. She is also a bossy woman, because she says, "I decided he [Ali Hakim] orta settle down in Bushyhead and run Papa's store."[1] Ali reports that he married Gertie only because her father threatened him with his shotgun: "I thought it would be better to be alive. Now I ain't so sure."[2] Also, when Annie starts to fight her and Will tries to intervene to "stop Ado Annie from killin' yer wife," Ali says, "Mind yer own business," indicating that maybe he would not mind mind being widowed.[3] At least Ali and Will are able to erase their prior competitive hard feelings and end up friends.

The audience's first impression of Gertie is that

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 79.

she is after Curly. They dance on together and her first line is asking to go with Curly to water the horses. Her last line is that she has decided that Ali will take over Daddy's store. This latter pronouncement may not be such a bad idea, but she made the decision, not Ali. So this leaves the audience with the impression that she is a bossy woman who was after Curly, who proved to be unavailable, so she just grabbed another one for herself: Ali, who had little choice in the matter.

Gertie serves to show that Curly has another choice, but chooses Laurey, proving his love for her. She also helps to discourage Laurey's playing hard-to-get, because Gertie wants Curly if Laurey does not. And perhaps most important, Gertie offers a relatively innocuous way to dispose of Ali in the end, since he is the only one of the young, marriageable principals left unmated. And finally, she acts as a bridge between the two plots: the melodrama and the comedy, in that she serves a function in each of them. Therefore, although hers is a small part, she serves some important functions in the play.

Ado Annie

Ado Annie appears on 39 pages of the script of Oklahoma!, which is exactly 50 percent of the play. She sings one solo; "I Cain't Say No"; one duet, "All er Nothin'," with Will; and one solo line in "The Farmer and the Cowman." Annie appeared in Lilacs, but her part

was small. Acting only as an occasional confidante of Laurey's for comic relief, she was described as stupid and ugly. In Oklahoma! her part is amplified, and she is considerably prettier, but no brighter.

Annie's objective is marriage-sex-boys, and not necessarily in that order. In Lilacs Annie was shown to be just discovering sex and quite curious about it. In Oklahoma! she has apparently gone a little further with her curiosity. She openly admits that she cannot say "no" to a boy. Her two major innamorati are Will and Ali, but she has no definite preference between them. When Laurey asks her which one she likes the best, she just says, "Whutever one I'm with."[1] And when Will asks her if she is going to continue thinking about Ali after she is married to Will, she says, "'Course not. Never think of no one less'n he's with me."[2] She is convinced that both of them want to marry her. When Ali says he wants to take her to Claremore, Annie assumes that, because that means an overnight stay at the hotel, he automatically wants to marry her. She says, "You do want to marry me, don't you?"[3] And before Ali can explain his intentions, they are interrupted and Annie retains the impression that marriage is his intent. However, Annie's father has promised her to

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[1]Ibid., p. 20.

[2]Ibid., p. 74.

[3]Ibid., p. 26.

the cowboy, Will Parker, if he can ever get fifty dollars together at one time. And Will has just won fifty dollars at the fair, so Mr. Carnes says, "I cain't go back on my word."[1] When she tells her father about her and Ali's romantic encounter the previous night beside a haystack in the moonlight, her father insists that, "In this part of the country that better be a proposal of marriage," and Annie agrees, "That's what I thought."[2] So she is alternately promised to Will and to Ali, and she rather enjoys the excitement of this variety.

Annie seems to be motivated by an overactive libido. Since Annie is not very cerebrally oriented, she is motivated by her physical drives. She tells Laurey, "Now, Laurey, you know they didn't nobody pay me no mind up to this year, count of I was scrawny and flat as a beanpole. Nen I kind of rounded up a little and now the boys act diff'rent to me."[3] She has discovered the first thing in life that she can be successful with and she is happy to experience this success. She says, "I like it. I like it so much when a feller talks purty to me I git all shaky from horn to hoof!"[4]

It cannot be ascertained exactly how far her

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[1]Ibid., p. 31.

[2]Ibid., p. 32.

[3]Ibid., p. 20.

[4]Ibid.

experience has progressed yet, but her virginity is questionable. Will complains to her that the gossips say that she was unfaithful to him while he was at the fair:

> I heared how you was kickin' up some capers
> When I was off in Kansas City, Mo.
> I heared some things you couldn't print in papers
> From fellers who been talkin' like they know![1]

And Annie defends herself:

> Foot!
> I only did the kind of things I orta--aorta
> To you I was as faithful as c'n be--fer me.
> Them stories 'bout the way I lost my bloomers--Rumors!
> A lot o' tempest in a pot o' tea![2]

It does appear that she is sexually experimenting, with various partners, and she does like it. In fact, she indicates her need for men when another girl comments that there are times when women have no need for men, but Annie says, "Yeow, but who wants to be dead?"[3]

She knows where babies come from; she mentions to Will that they may have a child after they marry and promises him that it will look like him. Farm girls witness mating of the animals and birth of offspring, so these aspects of reproduction require little explanation to them. But Annie has discovered how much fun sex can be and is eager to experience the fun of it, so much so that she is neglecting the possible implications of sex before

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[1]Ibid., p. 66.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 77.

marriage--e.g., a bad reputation or illegitimate children, which could be especially disgraceful in a small town in 1900.

Annie says and does many things to corroborate her need for sex, but her major declaration that she cannot resist boys is in her solo, "I Can't Say No." She says, for example, "I always say, come one, le's go--/Just when I orta say nix!"[1] In addition, she says she cannot resist a boy's sexual overture:

> I can't resist a Romeo
> In a sombrero and chaps.
> Soon as I sit on their laps
> Somethin' inside of me snaps
> I can't say no![2]

As she sums it up, "I think of thet ol' golden rule,/ And do fer him whut he would do fer me!"[3] This latter reference, however, does indicate that she has had moral training, since she refers to the Golden Rule, which is from the Bible. Furthermore, she says, "It ain't so much a question of not knowin' whut to do,/I knowed whut's right and wrong since I been ten."[4]

She repeatedly mentions that she likes kissing. In her solo, she sings, "Kissin's my favorite food."[5] And

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[1]Ibid., p. 21.

[2]Ibid., p. 22.

[3]Ibid., p. 21.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., p. 22.

then she says, "As soon as someone kisses me/I somehow sorta wanta kiss him back."[1] There is also the big fuss that she makes over the "Persian Goodbye" and the "Oklahoma Hello." In fact, she likes Ali's Persian Goodbye kiss so much that she requests that Will give her one occasionally, even if they are not saying goodbye. And when he introduces her to the Oklahoma Hello, "she looks up, supreme contentment in her voice."[2] It is possible, however, that her experience is limited to nothing more than just kissing. Her idea of a wild, sexy evening may be merely one spent kissing. A definite conclusion cannot be made on the extent of her promiscuity. But judging from Hammerstein's own reputation for being prudish, it is possible that she is still a virgin.[3]

That Annie's drive is not motivated by love, as Curly and Laurey's are, is substantiated by her discussion of Will with Ali, after she is finally engaged to Will. She is hesitant to call her affection for Will "love":

> PEDDLER . . . . That's the man for you--Will Parker.
>
> ADO ANNIE Oh . . . yeh . . . well, I like Will a lot.
>
> PEDDLER He is a fine fellow. . . .
>
> ADO ANNIE I love him, all right, I guess.[4]

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[1]Ibid., p. 21.

[2]Ibid., p. 74.

[3]Fordin, p. 251.

[4]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 73.

This is why she can move her affections back and forth so readily between Will and Ali. She is easily swayed from one man to the other by sweet talk. The first time she changes from Will to Ali, she says, "Now that ole Will has to come home and first thing you know he'll start talkin' purty to me and changin' my mind back!"[1] Apparently there is some special excitement in being engaged to the peddler, over just a local cowboy. Her attachment to Ali lingers, even after she is officially engaged to Will, because at Ali's subsequent leaving, she says, "Wisht I was goin'..nen you wouldn't be so lonely."[2] Yet she puts down cowboys' loneliness in her line in "The Farmer and the Cowman," when she says that she feels sorry for the pony that has to be alone with a cowboy on the range. Although she is attracted to the excitement of being married to a peddler, more than anything else she just wants to be married, so that she can experience all the sex she wants.

Physically, Annie describes herself as having "rounded up." There is also Will's comment that she is "the sweetest little hundred-and-ten pounds of sugar in the territory."[3] But with two men, at least, interested in her, and other boys acting differently to her these days, it can be assumed that she is not ugly. While some of the

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[1]Ibid., p. 22.

[2]Ibid., 73.

[3]Ibid., p. 26.

interest in her may be because of her promiscuity, at least Will is actually in love with her, and other men apparently do not find her repulsive. Rodgers says in his autobiography, "We made her a more physically attractive girl."[1]

Being the daughter of a farmer, who is also the local judge, Annie is among the local upper class. And her father demands respect for her, although he has to use his gun to get it from Ali. But even her father doubts her innocence; when he hears that Will has the fifty dollars required to claim Annie as his bride, Carnes tells his daughter, "I advise you to git that money off'n him before he loses it all. Put it in yer stockin' er inside yer corset where he cain't git at it . . . or can he?"[2] The only hobby she has is the pursuit of boys, but she can cook and is a good fighter. Aunt Eller encourages the men to bid for her box lunch at the party because she says Annie can make a good one. However, one of the boys says her sweet potato pie gave him a bellyache last year. She mentions her wrestling ability in her solo, and when she attacks Gertie in the last scene, Gertie easily finds herself outmatched and runs away. Annie's heartiness and lack of frailty are further supported by the fact that she says, "I cain't be

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 218.

[2]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 31.

prissy and quaint--/I ain't the type thet c'n faint . . ."[1] She also exudes strength in her refusal to be dominated by Will. She says, "With you it's all er nuthin'--/All fer you and nuthin' fer me!," and she goes on to explain that if he goes out without her, she will go out without him.

Among her weaknesses, however, are her gullibility, her naivety, and her lack of self-discipline. She admits to being susceptible to flattery. She easily falls prey to the peddler's fast talk. And she just cannot say "no" to the boys. Part of this is plain stupidity about what they want and the possible consequences, and part of this is that she wants to please both the boys and herself. She says, "I hate to disserpoint a beau/ When he is payin' call,"[2] and she asks Laurey, "Don't you feel kind of sorry fer a feller when he looks like he wants to kiss you?"[3] Obviously, Annie wants to be socially pleasant and agreeable, and besides, she likes kissing, too! Annie has a short memory and when she is with a boy and the petting is becoming fun, she admits that "I fergit!"[4] As to her lack of self-discipline, she says,

> Though I c'n feel the undertow,
> I never make a complaint

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[1]Ibid., p. 21.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 20.

[4]Ibid., p. 21.

Till it's too late fer restraint,
Then when I want to I cain't.[1]

One thing about Annie is that she never keeps secrets. She openly carries on two love affairs at once and is extremely excited to tell all the other girls when she becomes engaged to the peddler: "Mrs. Ali Hakim . . . the Peddler's bride. Wait till I tell the girls."[2] Her lack of ability in keeping secrets is further shown when at the auction she shouts out whose basket is whose, when that information is supposed to be a secret. Annie appears to be just one of those people who is always outspokenly honest--even if the words would be better unsaid. She simply is not bright enough to decide what might better be discreetly unmentioned, as in her description of her own libido problem.

Her first words when she comes on the stage are her greetings to Laurey and Aunt Eller, showing her friendliness and happiness, which are two of her positive traits throughout the play. Her last words are a feeble excuse for why she and Will have been offstage, collecting straw on her back: "Will and me had a misunderstandin'. But he explained it fine," as she comes on with mussed hair and a contented look on her face, holding Will's hand.[3] Luckily their wedding date is less than two months away; it seems that her

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[1]Ibid., p. 22.

[2]Ibid., p. 33.

[3]Ibid., p. 84.

will power may now have totally disappeared!

Annie functions in the comedy subplot of the play as the leading lady. But her friendship with Laurey bridges the melodrama and the comedy together. Her type of character if usually known as a soubrette, a flirtatious, frivolous young girl in a play.[1] This makes her a good contrast to Laurey, who is a smarter, less firtatious, more secretive virgin, much more concerned about propriety.

Annie expresses her uniqueness when she says, "Other girls are coy and hard to catch/But other girls ain't havin' any fun!"[2]

Will

Will Parker appears on 31 pages of the script, which is 39 percent of the play. He sings one solo, "Kansas City," one duet with Ado Annie, "All Er Nuthin'," and has solo lines in the reprise of "I Cain't Say No" and in "The Farmer and the Cowman."

His objective is to win Ado Annie. This goal is such an overwhelming drive for him that he is blinded to the elements that block his progress: (1) Annie's promiscuity and interest in all boys, (2) Annie's father, who insists that his daughter must have a husband who has at least fifty dollars in cash, (3) Ali Hakim, who is interested in Annie,

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[1]Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language, s.v. "soubrette."

[2]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 22.

but is unwillingly made into a marital competitor for her, and (4) Will's own stupidity. In spite of these obstructions, Will goes to the Kansas City Fair to win the fifty dollars required by Mr. Carnes. Unfortunately, out of love for Annie, he spends the whole bundle on presents for his beloved before he arrives home to claim her. Then when he regains the money by the peddler's buying the presents from him, he proudly bids it all on Annie's basket at the box social. Each action proclaims his love for Annie strongly, but it reveals that he is not thinking clearly. Will is just so much in love with Annie that he wants to give everything he has for her; he does not stop to think that by this giving he is relinquishing his claim on her.

When he returns from Kansas City, his first thought is to go in search of Annie. Although he is brought to Aunt Eller as a conquering hero after winning at the fair, he quickly greets Aunt Eller and then says, "Cain't stay but a minnit, Aunt Eller. Got to git over to Ado Annie. Don't you remember, her paw said 'f I ever was worth fifty dollars I could have her?"[1] More important to him than savoring the adulation from winning the steer-roping contest, which is clearly being showered upon him at the moment, is his desire to claim his bride. When he finds Annie, he calls her his "honey-bunch" and tells her, "Oh, Ado Annie, honey,

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[1]Ibid., p. 14.

y'ain't been off my mind since I left."[1] He also tells her that although he saw many beautiful girls in Kansas City, he did not look at them lovingly, as he looks at her.

Not only do his actions and words with Annie reveal his love for her, he also tells Ali Hakim about his feelings for Annie several times. When he is first introduced to Ali, Will's first sentence proudly proclaims that he is going to marry Annie. When Ali unwillingly becomes engaged to Annie, and thus has taken her away from Will, Will calls Ali a rat and threatens to drown him if Ali does not love her as much as he does. Furthermore, Will says that Ali had better "worship the ground she walks on, like I do."[2]

The reason for Will's overpowering drive to have Annie for his wife is that he loves her very much. It is true that Annie is the daughter of a farmer and judge and may, therefore, have some money. But there is no mention of Will's anticipation of taking over the farm after he marries Annie. In fact, his only comment about the farmers is that they are ruining the West by building fences across the cattle ranges. The fact that Carnes was willing to let Annie marry the peddler and leave home with him tends to indicate that Carnes has other plans for the disposition of his farm; he may, in fact, have other children who plan to run the farm. Will is also motivated by his libido, as

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[1]Ibid., p. 27.

[2]Ibid., p. 56.

Annie is, but unlike Annie, he has only one object of his affection, and that is Ado Annie.

Will is quite jealous of Annie, and probably with good cause, considering the local gossip about her promiscuity. He makes it quite clear to Annie that if she has a baby, it had better be his child. And his entire duet with Annie after they are engaged is a plea for her fidelity. Ali is the particular target of his jealousy, because Annie keeps flitting back and forth between the two men. Will shows great jealousy when the peddler gives Annie his Persian Goodbye kiss. When he finds out that the peddler and Gertie have married, however, he says he is "Mighty glad to hear that, peddler man."[1]

Luckily, Will seems to like kissing as much as Annie does. He says that her "lips're like cherries" and that kissing is nothing to him, unless it is with Annie. He asks her to feel his heart:

> Cain't you feel my heart palpatin' an' bumpin',
> A-waitin' fer sumpin,
> Sumpin nice from you?
> I gotta git a kiss an' it's gotta be quick
> Er I'll jump in a crick an' die![2]

Although he is obviously exaggerating when he threatens suicide if he does not get his kiss, this does indicate that his love for Annie tends to cloud his clear thinking.

Will was mentioned in Green Grow the Lilacs,

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[1]Ibid., p. 78.

[2]Ibid., p. 28.

when Curly commented to Jud, "You know Will Parker? . . . Ole man Parker's boy up here by Claremore? He can shore spin a rope. Chews gum when he spins it."[1] Since Rodgers and Hammerstein decided to create the parallel love triangle in Oklahoma!, they took this character who never appeared in Lilacs other than this mention, and developed him into the comic counterpart of Curly. No further information is given about the father in Lilacs, other than this mention, but it seems likely that Will is not from a very rich family, because Will has to win a contest to get fifty dollars. The father is not mentioned at all in Oklahoma!, and the only information about Will in this latter play is that he is a cowboy, talented with a rope, and passionately in love with Ado Annie. Socially, however, Will appears to be marrying into a family with more money than he has, although this does not seem to have any bearing on his love for Annie.

The only physical description of Will is given by Ali: "Strong like an ox. Young and handsome."[2] He is also quite agile and well coordinated since he is able to demonstrate the latest dance fads that he observed in Kansas City and is renowned for his rope tricks. It is amusing, however, when he gets between Annie and Gertie as they fight over him in the last scene, that he "is

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[1]Riggs, p. 62.

[2]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 73.

beaten off by both of them."[1] But Will pursues the girls offstage to try to stop the fight until he is stopped by Ali. Although part of his problem may just be that he is too much of a gentleman to be rough with the girls, it is amusing that a young man who is "strong like an ox" could be beaten by two girls.

Will is shown to be quite an honest man, as he protests to the peddler, who has offered him eight dollars for his hot water bottle, "Eight dollars? That wouldn't be honest. I only paid three-fifty."[2] He says he did not "carry on" in Kansas City and tells Ado Annie what a moral life he is living for her:

> I go and sow my last wild oat!
> I cut out all shenanigans!
> I save my money--don't gamble or drink
> In the back room down at Flannigan's!
> I give up lotsa other things
> A gentleman never mentions--[3]

This paints a picture of a highly moral young man, who is also quite naive. For example, he tells how he saw for the first time in Kansas City a telephone, radiators, indoor privies, and seven-story buildings. He shows his innocence when he tries to sell the peddler his Little Wonder and says that "It's just a girl in pink tights," being totally unaware of its hidden weapon.[4] And although any healthy

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[1]Ibid., p. 78.

[2]Ibid., p. 56.

[3]Ibid., p. 66.

[4]Ibid., p. 57.

young man would probably enjoy seeing pictures of girls in scanty costumes, he is quite embarrassed when Aunt Eller grabs the Little Wonder and sees the pictures, threatening to tell Ado Annie about them. However, he does describe with fascination the girl at the "burleeque" in Kansas City, who was "fat and pink and pretty" and peeled off her costume to prove that "ev'rythin' she had was absolutely real!"[1]

Will is a polite person, gladly hitching up the surrey for Curly and Laurey to leave on their honeymoon, when asked to do so. He says "'Scuse us" to Aunt Eller and tries to stop the fight between Gertie and Annie, showing his respect for ladies. He is apparently well liked, especially by Aunt Eller. The stage directions state upon his entrance, "WILL <u>is apparently a favorite with</u> AUNT ELLER." And Aunt Eller grins at him when she tells him that he can keep his fifty dollars if he stops bidding after the peddler has raised the bid to fifty-one, showing her pleasure that he has finally come to his senses. He is faithful to Ado Annie, forgiving and tolerant of her digressions, and generally a pleasant, likable person.

Unfortunately, he exhibits perhaps the lowest intellect of anyone in the play. When he is first told that if he bought presents with his fifty dollars, he no longer has the required money, he retorts, "Whut I got is worth

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[1]Ibid., pp. 15-16.

more'n the cash. Feller who sold me the stuff told me!"[1] Not only does he keep losing his fifty dollars, the amount that is an absolute necessity in achieving his goal, he even has to count the money on his fingers when he is selling his gifts to the peddler to see how much he has accumulated so far. And were it not for the peddler's frantic warning signals, Will would have outbid Ali for the lunch basket and have lost the money again. Even the stage directions refer to his stupidity when Ali is scheming to get Will's fifty dollars back by buying his presents from him: "He looks craftily at WILL out of the corner of his eye and watches the idea percolate through WILL'S thick head."[2] Ironically, poor naive Will comments that his selling his gifts to the peddler will convince Carnes that Will is smarter than Ali!

Will's first words, as he is pushed ahead of his proud friends toward Aunt Eller, are "Hi, Aunt Eller."[3] This only shows that he is a popular young man who is especially friendly with Aunt Eller. But he quickly goes on to tell her that he is eager to claim Ado Annie, thus introducing the major comic plot element: his pursuit of Annie and the elusive fifty dollars. His last words are in response to Ali's question of why he is interfering in

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[1]Ibid., p. 27.

[2]Ibid., p. 58.

[3]Ibid., p. 14.

Gertie and Annie's fight: "I'm goin' to stop Ado Annie from killin' yer wife," revealing his peaceful nature.[1] But he is seen again at the end as he and his beloved Annie enter, "holding hands soulfully," leaving the final impression that he at last has achieved his objective.[2]

Will's simple character can be summed up in his declaration of fidelity to his one woman:

> With me it's all er nuthin'!
> Is it all er nuthin' with you?
> It cain't be "in between"
> It cain't be "now and then"
> No half-and-half romance will do!
> I'm a one-woman man,
> Home-lovin' type,
> All complete with slippers and pipe.
> Take me like I am er leave me be![3]

Ali Hakim

The peddler, Ali Hakim, appears on 27 pages of the script, about 34 percent of the play. He is the only character whose name remains a mystery to the reader of the script until he is introduced in the dialogue, because each time he is to speak, the script merely specifies "PEDDLER." This lends to his different, foreign, contrasting nature, compared to all the local country folks. He has one song, "It's a Scandal, It's a Outrage," which he sings with the boys' chorus. Ali's melody in this song, however, is marked with x's, instead of notes, to indicate that the words are

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[1]Ibid., p. 79.

[2]Ibid., p. 84.

[3]Ibid., p. 66.

to be spoken in rhythm to the music, although there is a melody written to be played in the accompaniment. Joseph Buloff, who played the original Ali for almost four years of the original run, was asked by this researcher why his song is traditionally spoken, instead of sung. His answer was simply, "I couldn't sing it."[1] And although many of the performers doing the role subsequently sing very well, they always follow the tradition of speaking Ali's song, rather than singing it. Buloff also confirmed, during the interview with this researcher, that there were many changes in the show while it was in out-of-town tryouts, improving the show until it became the superior show it is.[2]

In Knives from Syria the Pedler is a more important and more villainous character than he is in Lilacs or Oklahoma! As the title indicates, he was from Syria in the first play, and again in Lilacs. In Oklahoma! Hammerstein has him coming from Persia, and no definite reason for this change can be ascertained. Both are countries in the Middle East, so the change is not extreme. In an interview with this researcher, Dorothy Hammerstein conjectured that her husband might have chosen "Persian" over "Syrian" because he thought it sounded better, since he always placed great importance on the sound

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[1]Joseph Buloff, interview, New York City, 14 July 1979.

[2]Ibid.

on the words he used in his plays.[1]

It is curious that Hammerstein has Ali referring to himself as Persian, whereas native Iranians have rarely used that term to refer to themselves, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica. Dr. Kasa Sadri, New York dermatologist from Iran, told this researcher that native Iranians occasionally call themselves Persian, only because it is a term still commonly used by outsiders. Persian is the name of the gulf that is located on Iran's southern border. In 1935 Iran issued an official request that other governments call the country Iran and the natives Iranians, which has now become prevalent everywhere. Iran has always been an area that linked the East and West cultures. The nineteenth century, the century in which Ali would have been born and left his native country, was a period of modernization and Westernization for Iran. In the latter half of this century, Iran got its first college, newspaper, postal system, telegraph, and roads for wheeled traffic. And in the 1870s and 1880s Iran's ruler travelled to Europe three times, a new precedent in international relations for Iran.[2] This new familiarity with and adoption of Western ways would have been a likely influence on a young man like Ali to leave his native country and to travel to America.

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[1]Interview with Dorothy Hammerstein, New York City, 10 April 1985.

[2]Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "Persia"; Interview with Dr. Kasa Sadri, New York City, 9 April 1985.

The Pedler in Knives is said to be about fifteen years older than Rhodie, the Laurey character in that play, who is said to be about eighteen. That makes the Pedler about thirty-three years old, and that seems to be about the right age for the character in Oklahoma!

The peddler in all three plays is a travelling salesman. He describes himself in Oklahoma! as a "lonely gypsy" on the "open road."[1] He tells Mr. Carnes about his lifestyle: "I'm no good. I'm a peddler. A peddler travels up and down and all around . . . ."[2] Apparently he means "no good" by the local standards of farmers who live and farm on one piece of ground. In contrast, Ali expresses great joy in his freedom to travel around:

> . . . I am free like a breeze,
> Free like a bird in the woodland wild,
> Free like a gypsy, free like a child,
> I'm unattached![3]

Ali's objective in the plot is to chase girls without permanently keeping them. He likes to be free, to travel, to make money, and to make love. But he does not want to get married and settle down. He is probably the best lover in the play, as he makes very romantic passes at the girls, easily swaying many of the naive country girls by his superior technique. Annie tells her father that Ali told her that "I was like a Persian kitten, cuz they was the

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 72.

[2]Ibid., p. 32.

[3]Ibid., p. 34.

cats with the soft round tails."[1] And Ali also told her that he would like to ride with her to the "end of the world," or at least "as far as--say--Claremore--to the hotel. . . . In front of the hotel is a veranda--inside is a lobby--upstairs--upstairs might be Paradise."[2]

As soon as he sees Laurey, "He rushes over and, to LAUREY'S alarm, kisses her hand," and says, "My, oh, my! Miss Laurey! Jippity crickets, how high you have growed up! Last time I come through here, you was tiny like a shrimp, with freckles. Now look at you--a great big beautiful lady!"[3] Laurey spurns his advances, because she is only interested in Curly, so he immediately makes a pass at Aunt Eller. She is fussing about the defective egg beater, but he says he will give her a present, which turns out to be a silk garter. He wants to put it on her himself, but she kicks him over, saying, "Did you have any idy I was goin' ter let you slide that garter up my limb?," and he replies, "Funny woman. Would be much worse if I tried to take your garters off."[4]

Ali apparently flirts with all females, but is not always successful. This does not matter to him, however, because he wants no permanent commitment. And when he is cornered into an engagement to Annie by her father with his gun, he has to figure out how to get himself out of that

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[1]Ibid., p. 32. [2]Ibid., p. 26.

[3]Ibid., p. 23. [4]Ibid., p. 24.

bind. First he speaks his song, which the stage directions describe as follows: "Throughout this entire number, the PEDDLER must be burning, and he transmits his indignation to the men who sing in a spirit of angry protests, by the time the refrain is reached."[1] In the words of the song he describes himself as being "Trapped! . . ./ Tricked!" and later he complains, "If you make one mistake when the moon is bright,/Then they tie you to a contract, so you'll make it ev'ry night!"[2] And he tells his objection to marriage:

> You're a mess, and in less than a year, by heck!
> There's a baby on your shoulder making bubbles on your neck! . . .
> A rooster in a chickencoop is better off'n men.
> He ain't the special property to just one hen![3]

And the young male chorus agrees that this constitutes a scandal and an outrage, but they meekly cower as the girls come onstage and lead them off. This illustrates that the peddler likes his freedom and intends to keep it, while the local boys just caught a little of his contagious enthusiasm for it, but dutifully give up the idea when confronted by their future mates.

When he finds Jud lamenting over his lonely condition, wanting a real woman of his own, Ali says to him,

> Why? Look at you? You're a man what is free to come and go as you please. You got a nice cozy little place. . . . Private. Nobody to bother you. Artistic pictures. They don't talk back to you. . . . All

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[1]Ibid., p. 33.

[2]Ibid., p. 34.

[3]Ibid., p. 35.

> right. You're tired of them. So throw 'em away and buy some new ones. . . . You get tired of a woman and what can you do? Nothing! Just keep getting tireder and tireder! [1]

Ali continues to try to get rid of Annie. He offers her to Jud, who does not want her. When Will loses his right to Annie by spending his money on presents, Ali spends fifty dollars to buy them from him, in order to restore Will's right to her. Then when Will stupidly bids the fifty dollars on Annie's basket, Ali spends fifty-one dollars to outbid him again. Considering the value of $101 in 1900, Ali shows his aversion against marriage in rather steep monetary terms. However, he shows that he does have genuine affection for Annie, by reassuring her that Will would make the better husband for her and that he is glad that she will be happy.

In Lilacs Ali is described as "a little wiry, swarthy Syrian, neatly dressed, and with a red bandanna around his neck. He is very acquisitive, very cunning."[2] In Oklahoma! there is less description of him, but the stage directions state that he enters with a bulging suitcase and beady eyes. Aunt Eller refers to him as a "little wart" and as the "ole peddler."[3] Although no description of his speech appears in Oklahoma!, the stage directions in Lilacs say, "His speech is some blurred

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[1]Ibid., p. 47.

[2]Riggs, p. 47.

[3]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 19.

European tongue with Middle Western variations, from dealing almost entirely with farmers."[1] Ali alters many of the common English expressions, to make them sound different from the farm diction. For example, he never omits final g's on words ending in "ing," as the farmers and ranchers do, but he often uses the wrong verb tenses and often omits the subject of his sentences, as well as articles before nouns, such as, "Belonged to Pharaoh's daughter."[2] However, he uses many uneducated expressions that he has picked up from the locals, such as "ain't," and mispronounces the slang he hears, such as "Jippity crickets" and "cracker-jake."[3]

Although Ali is a travelling salesman, which probably classifies him socially on a lower level than merchants, farmers and ranchers, he apparently is not so poor as the farm hands and cowboys. He is able to come up with $101 immediately at the party, whereas Curly had to sell all he had to produce $53, Jud had less than $50, and Will had to go to the fair to win his $50.

Ali sells mostly fancy ladies' underwear, art postcards for men from Paris, and household items, such as Eller's egg beater. He repeats several times that he does not handle weapons, such as the knife Jud wants to buy and the Little Wonder that Will has.

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[1]Riggs, p. 47.

[2]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 25.

[3]Ibid., pp. 23, 56.

In spite of the bad reputation that peddlers obviously have in the Territory, based on the things people say about Ali, he seems to be an honest and decent man. He wants to make up for Eller's defective egg beater and is appalled when Jud explains that he wants a Little Wonder to stab someone who is looking at the pictures inside; Ali responds, "A good joke to play on a friend . . . I--er--don't handle things like that. Too dangerous."[1]

Ali apparently has a deep fear of all weapons. When Mr. Carnes meets Ali for the first time, he tells Ali, "Well, shet your face, er I'll fill yer behind so full of buckshot, you'll be walkin' around like a duck the rest of yer life," and this makes Ali very docile when Carnes announces that Ali is engaged to Annie. When Ali tries to deny his intentions to marry Annie, and Carnes asks if Ali is calling Annie a liar, Ali responds, "No. I'm just making it clear what a liar I am if she's telling the truth."[2]

Ali avoids a fight again when Will threatens to throw him in the river. Ali agrees to every bad thing Will has to say about him. Will says, "I don't know what to call you. You ain't purty enough fer a skunk. You ain't skinny enough fer a snake. You're too little to be a man, and too big to be a mouse. I reckon you're a rat," to which Ali

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[1]Ibid., p. 46.

[2]Ibid., p. 32.

responds, "That's logical."[1] And again when Will discovers Ali giving Ado Annie a Persian Goodbye kiss, Ali's fast talking saves him by complimenting Will: "I am glad you will marry such a wonderful man as this Will Parker. You deserve a fine man and you got one."[2]

His glib tongue helps him to sell his merchandise. When he makes the sales pitch on the smelling salts to Laurey, he says it is precious stuff, a secret formula that belonged to a Pharaoh's daughter. As phony as this sounds, it did help him to succeed in making the sale.

Generally, the peddler is just a pleasant, peaceful person who does not want any trouble. He always tries to be agreeable. When Annie announces that she must marry Will, she tells Ali not to hide his feelings:

> ADO ANNIE I'd ruther have you come right out and say yer heart is busted in two.
>
> PEDDLER Are you positive you got to marry Will?
>
> ADO ANNIE Shore's shootin'.
>
> PEDDLER And there is no chance for you to change your mind?
>
> ADO ANNIE No chance.
>
> PEDDLER (<u>As if granting a small favor</u>) All right, then, my heart is busted in two.[3]

And when he reimburses Will's fifty dollars by buying his gifts, and Will announces that this will show that Will is

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[1]Ibid., p. 55.

[2]Ibid., p. 73.

[3]Ibid., pp. 30-31.

smarter than Ali, Ali is very agreeable and says, "Say, young feller, you certainly bunkoed me!"[1]

Ali is shown to be perhaps the most intelligent character in the play. He is well travelled and experienced. He speaks at least two languages. He outsmarts Will to get Annie back to him. He knows well the value of money and is good in mathematics, as he bargains with his customers on sales.

Ali has already been discussed quite a bit by the women before he enters. It has been established he is a travelling salesman who sells defective merchandise and a lothario with a different set of morals from the local folk. When he enters, his first words are, "All right! All right! If the egg-beater don't work I give you something just as good!"[2] This declaration adds the fact that he will replace his defective merchandise. His next line is his pass at Laurey, confirming his quixotism. His last line tells Will to mind his own business when Will is trying to stop Annie from killing Gertie. This leaves the lasting impression that he is unhappy to be married, valuing his freedom above all else.

Ali lends excitement to the somewhat dull country folk in the play. He contrasts with them. Roberts points out that comic characters are frequently abnormal outcasts

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[1]Ibid., p. 58.

[2]Ibid., p. 23.

of society, and as such function as blocking characters to the normal characters' movements toward their objectives. Certainly Ali is not like the rest of the characters in the play. He is somewhat an outcast in the beginning, but by the end of the play, he has been assimilated, both by marrying one of the local girls and by just proving himself to be a pleasant person who means no harm.

Although Ali is the comic counterpart of Jud in the parallel plots, Ali is not a villain. He blocks Annie and Will's marriage for a while, but their stupidity could have done that with no help from him. The audience is not even conditioned to dislike him. He is just shown to be less honorable than Will, since he probably would not make the same loving, faithful husband that Will will make, and the homespun quality of the play tells the audience that a traditional marriage is the ideal. However, since he has married one of the local girls in the end and is to become a local merchant, he may later become "one of the boys" with local habits and mores. But then he also may leave Gertie and her store, and return to the open road.

Other than his blocking function, he also serves as comic relief. Will and Annie are so dumb that their love affair could become rather tedious without his added scheming to stay single. When he ends up married to Gertie with her obnoxious laughter, the audience can only think

that they deserve each other. In fact, a portent of Ali's undoing by means of a shotgun wedding occurs in Ali's song as he says in act 1,

> I'm minding my own business like I oughter,
> Ain't meaning any harm to anyone.
> I'm talking to a certain farmer's daughter--
> Then I'm looking in the muzzle of a gun![1]

Mr. Carnes

Andrew Carnes, Ado Annie's father, appears on 26 pages of the script of Oklahoma!, 33 percent of the total. He sings no solo song, but he sings seventeen solo lines in "The Farmer and the Cowman." He did not appear in Lilacs, but since Annie's part is amplified in Oklahoma!, it seems logical that her father might be introduced.

Carnes's objective in the play, as a traditional, protective father, is to see to it that his daughter is happily married to a man who is financially stable. He constantly demands respect for his promiscuous daughter and upholds the old-fashioned traditions of the community. In his position as the local judge, his job is also to uphold the laws of the land and to see to it that life goes on in an orderly, safe manner for the inhabitants of Oklahoma Territory. He seems to be motivated by a deep love for his duaghter and by a strong belief that a happy life is maintained by adherence to the local traditions.

In finding a husband for Annie, he has refused to

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[1]Ibid., p. 34.

allow her to marry a man with less than fifty dollars in cash. Will is obviously in love with Annie, but Carnes insists that Will get fifty dollars in cash before he gives his permission for them to marry, probably thinking that Will would never have fifty dollars in his life. When he is told that Will has won the fifty dollars at the fair, he says, "Too bad. Still and all I cain't go back on my word."[1] And he immediately tells Annie to take the fifty dollars from Will and hide it, because he has very little faith in Will's ability to retain money. This shows that he is not delighted with Will as a prospective son-in-law, but his major objective is that Annie will be happy. If Will makes her happy, then this pleases him.

Carnes does suspect that his daughter is promiscuous, because he tells Annie to put the money in her stocking or corset, but then he asks her if Will can get the money while it is hidden there. He loves his daughter, referring to her as his "little rosebud."[2] And why would he be so careful in seeing to it that her husband has some money, if he did not care very much about her welfare?

That he does not particularly like Will as his daughter's husband is confirmed by the way he is quickly turned against Will and gives his permission for her to marry Ali, when he learns that Will has already spent the

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[1]Ibid., p. 31.

[2]Ibid., p. 33.

fifty dollars. And in spite of Ali's protests that he would not make a good husband, Carnes insists that they are engaged and that Ali had better take good care of his daughter and not back out of the agreement. With Ali's innate fear of weapons, Carnes has little trouble convincing Ali that he means business, while brandishing his gun at him. And at the auction, Carnes prods the peddler with a gun to raise the bid for Annie's hamper, even when no one is bidding against him.

Carnes is described physically in the stage directions as "a scrappy little man."[1] Being the father of a grown, marriageable daughter, Carnes is probably at least in his forties. And he apparently uses his guns to compensate for lack of physical size. He apparently owns his own farm, so he would be part of the upper classes that are represented in the play. And having been appointed the local judge, he must have been respected by his neighbors.

He describes the farmer in "The Farmer and the Cowman," saying that "The farmer is a good and thrifty citizen."[2] He also emphasizes the sobriety of farmers, and at Laurey and Curly's wedding he says that he is not having anything to drink with the other men, because he wants to be alert if Jud should return and cause trouble.

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[1]Ibid., p. 31.

[2]Ibid., p. 52.

This indicates a sensible, conservative man, who wants to uphold the law and keep the peace. His peaceful nature is also shown in "The Farmer and the Cowman" when he sings repeatedly that "The farmer and the cowman should be friends."[1] And in spite of his upholding law and order, he agrees to bend the law, so that Laurey and Curly can leave on their honeymoon on schedule, indicating that he typifies the Territory habit of tempering justice with humanity. When the Federal Marshall protests that Curly's hearing has to take place in court, Carnes says, "Oh, shet yer trap. We can give the boy a fair trial without lockin' him up on his weddin' night!"[2] And then he coaches Curly to give the right testimony, so that he can officially declare him to be innocent in a hurry.

One of Carnes's prominent traits is his trustworthiness. When he thinks Will has the fifty dollars, he says he cannot go back on his word. And when he says Ali and Annie may marry, he warns Ali, "Just try to change my mind and see whut happens to you."[3] And Annie confirms, "He won't change neither. Onct he gives his word that you c'n have me, why you got me."[4]

Carnes's other character traits include that he is

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[1]Ibid., p. 51.

[2]Ibid., p. 82.

[3]Ibid., p. 33.

[4]Ibid.

old-fashioned, domineering, stubborn, and suspicious. He thinks the father should approve of the man his daughter marries, and when the women discourage the men from giving Laurey and Curly a shivoree, he says, "Aw, it's a good old custom. Never hurt anybody."[1] He does not trust the cowboys around his women as he warns the farmers to welcome the cowboy into their houses, "But be shore that you lock up yer wife and daughter."[2] And he earlier suspected that Will might be able to retrieve his fifty dollars hidden in his daughter's underwear.

On the whole, Carnes is an honest, fair, respectable, reliable person, who is slightly irascible, when annoyed. Since he is a small man, he cannot threaten without the aid of a gun, but this does not diminish his effectiveness. He is a loving father who wants happiness for his daughter, and he demands respect for her, although he is suspicious of her purity.

His first words as he enters with a shotgun are a response to Annie's question as to what he has been shooting. He says, "Rabbits. That true whut I hear about Will Parker gittin' fifty dollars?," immediately getting into the middle of the comic plot. His last words occur at the end of Curly's hearing, when he insists that he must declare the verdict. Everyone objects that Curly's

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[1]Ibid., p. 53.

[2]Ibid.

innocence is already understood, but he insists that he must say it to make it official, again indicating his conservative, traditional stance. But when he opens his mouth to speak, the crowd drowns him out as they yell, "Not guilty," and the wedding party continues the celebration, while "CARNES is left downstage without a court."[1]

Carnes functions in the play as a blocking character in the comic subplot, obstructing the joining of Will and Annie. As such, he is a senex character, in that he is an angry father who obstructs the young lovers' joining.[2] Mabley points out that there may be several obstacles in a play and this does not disturb its unity.[3] In the comedy subplot of Oklahoma! there are several, including Mr. Carnes's insistence that Will have fifty dollars before he can marry Annie, and the multiplicity of obstacles just adds more humor to the story.

Conclusion on characters

Oklahoma! is peopled by farmers, ranchers, their respective employees and offsprings, plus representatives of the mercantile trade. There are two romantic plots, and each has its hero and heroine who are happily joined

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[1]Ibid., p. 83.

[2]Colwell, p. 14.

[3]Mabry, p. 12.

at the end of the play. Each couple is temporarily blocked by several obstructions, including obstructing characters, but there is only one villain, and he blocks the couple in the main melodrama. But even his villainy is made less serious and gloomy by his being made more pitiable and by overwhelming the play with humor in both the melodramatic main plot and the comic subplot.

The characters are generally earthy and simple, as is typical to an idyllic play. Some characters function in both the melodramatic main plot and comic subplot; but most are generally virtuous and likeable and succeed in having the audience on their sides.

Most characters are identical or similar to those characters created by Riggs in Green Grow the Lilacs, and the three new characters are based on characters that are mentioned in Lilacs or related to the characters in that play, allowing the new characters to be easily integrated into the plot of Oklahoma!

The characters all serve a function in the plot. None are added merely for comic relief nor for their ability to add a specialty number to the play. This was a new idea in musicals of the 1940s, and it has caused writers of subsequent musicals to use less stereotypical characters and to integrate characters more into the plots of their plays.

ANALYSIS OF THE LYRICS

The point of view from which the audience sees Oklahoma! is not merely that of a witness to the events surrounding the parallel progress of two love affairs into marriage, as well as the movement of a somewhat primitive and disorganized Territory toward statehood, but also a look into the minds of some of its characters. The dialogue may be the main conveyer of the story, but some of the songs and dances give a better insight into the inner workings of the characters' minds. The "Dream Ballet," for example, takes place entirely in Laurey's mind, but it allows the audience to know what kind of feelings she is experiencing about her romantic problem. This is also true of several of the songs in the show. Thus, the lyrics of the songs play an important part in conveying the full dramatic experience.

Hammerstein closely adapted most of the dialogue for Oklahoma! from Riggs's dialogue in Green Grow the Lilacs. But one of Riggs's greatest talents was his ability to write vivid poetic descriptions of the scenery, the events, and the people that he remembered from Oklahoma in his stage directions, which are often as interesting to read as the dialogue. Hammerstein was able to take Riggs's stage directions and dialogue, including some of the dialogue he did not use, add his own ideas and talent, and translate it all into lyrics for the songs for Oklahoma! Hammerstein considered himself primarily a lyricist and this, therefore, was the part of the adaptation

that he most enjoyed doing.[1] In 1945 when Rodgers and Hammerstein were producing Annie Get Your Gun, they hired Irving Berlin to write the songs to the libretto by Herbert and Dorothy Fields. After Berlin had written a few of the songs, he came to Rodgers and Hammerstein and said that he thought he should take a cut in his royalties for the show, because so many of his ideas for lyrics were coming from the Fields's libretto. But Hammerstein countered with, "Where do you think the songs for Oklahoma! came from?," thus admitting his use of Riggs's ideas in his lyrics.[2]

Wilder refers to Hammerstein's lyrics as "almost too comfortable armchair philosophy . . . ."[3] Ewen says Hammerstein used "the simplest possible vocabulary, and phrases that belong to everyday speech; he is partial to dialect and colloquialisms; his imagery is drawn from subjects indigenous to the play; he does not like unusual techniques. His verses are so direct and simple that at times they appear almost threadbare, yet they manage to retain the lyric quality of poetry."[4] Ewen points out that Hammerstein was afraid, when he first collaborated with Rodgers, that his lyrics would not be as witty, sophisticated, and pyrotechnical as Hart's had been, and

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[1]Fordin, p. 345.

[2]Ibid., p. 244.

[3]Wilder, p. 164.

[4]Ewen, Richard Rodgers, p. 212.

that he would suffer from unfavorable comparison to Rodgers's former lyricist. But after Oklahoma! was such an unqualified hit, he became more secure with his own style of lyrics.[1] However, Hammerstein said of Hart, "If it hadn't been for Larry Hart . . . none of us would have felt free to write colloquial lyrics. He took the way people talk and put it into lyrics. That doesn't mean much, but in the early twenties, nobody had ever done it."[2]

Sondheim, Hammerstein's student, reports:

> Oscar stressed the opening of a show: the first lyric the audience hears, the first song, is what makes or breaks a show. . . . Everything should develop, every word should count; nothing should be reiterated or repeated unless you're doing it for effect. . . . Don't imitate other people's emotions. Speak your own. . . . If you write what you believe, you'll be ninety percent ahead of all other songwriters. . . . The thought counts more than the rhyme.[3]

Hammerstein also said, "The job of the poet is to find the right word in the right place, the word with the exact meaning and the highest quality of beauty or power. The lyric writer must find this word too, but it must also be a word that is clear when sung and not too difficult for the singer to sing on that note which he hits when he sings it."[4] Most of all, Taylor emphasizes, Hammerstein wrote slowly, changing much of his material repeatedly, until it

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[1]Ibid., p. 213.

[2]Palmer, p. 130, citing Hammerstein.

[3]Fordin, pp. 240-41, citing Sondheim.

[4]Engel, Words with Music, p. 95, citing Hammerstein.

suited him.[1] Since he wrote both the libretto and the lyrics, the language of the songs is the same as the language of the book, which might not be true if they were written by two different writers.

Frankel says that the significance of songs in a musical is that they can both expand and compress at the same time. A song compresses many details about a character into a small set of lyrics; yet with the addition of the musical energy, the significance of the information is concurrently expanded. He says, "The book for a musical needs actions high enough to break into songs. . . . Musical energy also breaks out into physical energy. . . . All musicals move: next to circus, musicals are the most physical kind of theatre. . . . The biggest effect of every good musical is its lift."[2]

One of the most complimented elements of Oklahoma! is its integration of the songs into the script. Engel points out that the music, lyrics, dialogue, and dance are all equal in importance, and yet interdependent. He says:

> It [the music] is integrated so as to share an equal importance with the other principal elements. When it is sung, the music (with lyrics) can become functional as a plot element, an emotional heightener (for both humor and pathos), and a foundation for dancing. A well-made integrated musical show cannot be performed without music, whereas it is barely conceivable that a play with music might.[3]

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[1]Taylor, p. 222.

[2]Frankel, p. 8.

[3]Engel, Words with Music, p. 19.

Green gives three functions of songs in a musical: setting mood, revealing character, and advancing the story. He adds, "Sometimes a song can do all three, but if it accomplishes just one of these functions, it is usually considered to be integrated."[1] Mamoulian takes credit for part of the integration of the numbers, in that he says Rodgers wanted the singers to come to the front of the stage and sing directly to the audience, as was customary at the time. But Mamoulian says that he asked Hammerstein to "make the dialogue rhythmic and rhyming . . . . When the emotions are ready, then we'll go into a song."[2] Mamoulian says further that he made sure that there were no specialty numbers and no usual chorus line of scantily clad girls. He says everyone hated him during the rehearsals and tryouts and tried to get him to re-stage the show in New Haven, but he promised never to direct again if his innovative ideas proved wrong. He says his contract to do the show included a phrase that stated he could stage it the way he wanted to and so he intended to do just that.[3] There are, of course, degrees of integration, and opinions vary as to what constitutes total integration in a musical. The final test as to how much a song is integrated into the plot, as defined by Leonard Bernstein, is whether or not the

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[1]Green, Story, p. 43.

[2]Palmer, p. 127, citing Mamoulian.

[3]Ibid., pp. 127-8.

song could function just as well if another character sang it, or if it were moved to another show.[1] If the song could be sung by any character in any show, then it is not really integrated. Laurey could not sing Ado Annie's song, nor could Curly sing Jud's song. However, it should be noted that one song, Will's "Kansas City," is considered by some, including De Mille, to be a specialty number, because it is less integrated than the other songs in the show.[2]

Before beginning to write any of the script of Oklahoma!, Rodgers and Hammerstein drew up the blueprint of the show detailing what parts of the story would be told in dialogue and what parts in song. They decided the subject matter of each song, where each would be placed in relation to the story line, and how each would function, prior to any writing.[3] Fordin says,

> Both Dick and Oscar felt that their way of collaborating produced songs that were better integrated in terms of character and plot and represented a natural fusion of words and music. The songs sprang directly from the moods and situations of the play. The closer union of words and music was made possible by the collaborators' extensive discussions of the exact kind of song needed and also by Oscar's thorough understanding of music.[4]

Although the lyrics constitute the concrete message

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[1]Leonard, Bernstein, The Joy of Music, p. 164; Engel, Words with Music, p. 121.

[2]Interview, De Mille, 1981.

[3]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 19.

[4]Fordin, p. 191.

of a song, these must be set to music that enhances the meaning of the lyrics and helps to portray the character who is singing them. If the song is to be effective in achieving this purpose, both the lyrics and the music of a song must convey the same message. Engel explains the individual roles of lyrics and music in the theatre:

> Although music can do many things, one of the things it cannot do is impart a specific idea. In the most general sense it can connote pleasure, suggest sensuality, be impish, sad, martial, funereal, triumphant, and can impart other general qualities. It cannot, in the theatre, pinpoint a character, be specific about the emotions of love, hate, fear. It cannot tell a story, create laughter or tears. . . .
>
> The lyric is the element that, combined with the music, can define the singer of a song, tell us exactly where it is that we are going, what we are thinking and feeling.[1]

Thus, in Engel's opinion, "Music alone may suggest, but because such suggestions rely on personal background and experience, music cannot define."[2] Therefore, the music to the songs will be omitted from this analysis, but will be covered in the next chapter.

The following section will be a discussion of the lyrics of the thirteen songs that make up the score for Oklahoma! Only the words of the songs will be analyzed here: the poetic form that they take, the meter, the rhyme scheme, the content and organization of the message, and the

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[1]Lehman Engel, The Making of a Musical (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1977), p. 30.

[2]Engel, Words with Music, p. 115.

function of each song in the play. These lyrics are obviously not just "sung poems," because they were created from their inception to be sung, and as a part of a larger presentation. However, the resemblance between the construction of lyrics and of poetry is inescapable and this analysis therefore uses poetic terminology, where applicable, to simplify the technical discussion of structural aspects.

"Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'"

In the three weeks Hammerstein spent writing the lyrics for "Oh, What A Beautiful Mornin'," he spent days debating whether to say the corn was as high as a cow pony's or an elephant's eye, and whether the first two lines of the refrain should or should not begin with "Oh." "Elephant" won out over the more southwestern term "cow pony" because he found that "elephant" sounded better when sung and it proved to be the more accurate height when he actually measured the height of corn in his neighbor's cornfield. Hammerstein wrote, "'Cow pony' was more indigenous to the western background, but I had reservations about it even before I gauged the height of the corn. It reads better than it sounds."[1] Whether or not Curly could ever have seen an elephant is questionable, but it is reasonable to suppose that an elephant in a travelling circus might have been seen occasionally in

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[1]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 10.

Oklahoma Territory prior to 1900. The first circuses came to America in the 1790s, and the first record of an elephant in the American circus was in 1797.[1] Besides, the Lilacs script says Curly was born in Kansas, and Kansas became a state in 1861.[2] Thus Kansas may have been more culturally advanced than Oklahoma Territory and Curly could have seen an elephant in a circus in his childhood in Kansas. The end result is that Hammerstein exercised his poetic liberty and produced a lyric that Fordin describes as follows: "Simple and direct, with imagery drawn from the natural setting of the play, the vocabulary and phrases are true to the everyday speech of the character, yet lyrical and expressive."[3]

Rodgers commented on how he felt after first having read the lyrics: "I was a little sick with joy because it was so lovely and so right . . . . When you're given words like that you get something to say musically. You'd really have to be made of cement not to spark to that."[4] Rodgers set the lyrics to music in only ten minutes and Fordin observes that this music has a simple,

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[1]The World Book Encyclopedia, s.v. "Circus."

[2]Rigg, p. 64; Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "Kansas."

[3]Fordin, p. 188.

[4]Ibid., p. 189, citing Rodgers.

sweet charm and poetic lyricism that was not prevalent in Rodgers's compositions with Hart. Thus this first song that Rodgers composed with Hammerstein for the Broadway stage was probably influenced more by the lyrics than any of his previous songs, since Hart usually added the lyrics to the music after Rodgers had composed it, and this fact probably accounts for the slight difference in Rodgers's music that took place as he changed lyricists.[1]

"Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" is the first song that is sung in Oklahoma! As the curtain rises, Curly is heard singing offstage; then he enters, continuing the song. It precedes any dialogue or action, other than Aunt Eller's churning. And as Hammerstein taught Sondheim, the first song in a show is of utmost importance.[2] The lyrics extoll the beauties of nature, the kind of beautiful, happy day it is, and set an atmosphere of simplicity and congeniality. But they also tell the audience what kind of person Curly is, because he is the one who is expressing these observations. The lyrics imply that here is a happy, natural, unsophisticated young man who appreciates the simple, natural things in life. They reveal him to be sensitive and somewhat primitively poetic. Rigg's description of the opening scene, from which Hammerstein

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[1]Fordin, pp. 187-188.

[2]Ibid., p. 240, citing Sondheim.

derived his lyrics, is as follows:

> It is a radiant summer morning several years ago, the kind of morning which, enveloping the shapes of earth--men, cattle in a meadow, blades of the young corn, streams--makes them seem to exist now for the first time, their images giving off a visible golden emanation that is partly true and partly a trick of imagination, focusing to keep alive a loveliness that may pass away.[1]

Hammerstein said that this song

> creates an atmosphere of relaxation and peace and tenderness. It introduces the light-hearted young man who is the center of the story. My indebtedness to Mr. Riggs' description is obvious. The cattle and the corn and the golden haze on the meadow are all there. I added some observations of my own based on my experience with beautiful mornings, and I brought the words down to the more primitive level of Curly's character. He is, after all, just a cowboy, not a playwright.[2]

The form of the lyrics of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" is three stanzas plus a repeated refrain. The lines are primarily dactylic trimeter. The rhyme is simple: the stanza is aabb; the refrain is abab. The lyrics of this song resemble a lyric poem, i.e., one of self-expression, on the subject of the beauties of nature. Colwell describes a lyric poem thus: "Lyric poems are songlike. . . . It [the lyric poem] should be thought of as sung by one person, as the expression of one person's attitude and beliefs . . . . The poem is overheard . . . ."[3] Curly is basically just thinking out loud about what he sees and how he feels today,

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[1]Riggs, p. 3.

[2]Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 9-10.

[3]Colwell, pp. 169-70.

although he is being overheard by Aunt Eller and Laurey. As he enters singing, the stage directions read: "CURLY opens the gate and walks over to the porch, obviously singing for benefit of someone inside the house."[1] That "someone" later proves to be Laurey, although Curly says to Aunt Eller, "Come a-singin' to you."[2]

Lehman Engel points out that "Lyric images . . . should always be organized. . . . One image leads logically to another."[3] The three stanzas of this song are organized into three observations of the beauties of nature, with the respective subjects: (1) vegetation, (2) animals, and (3) sounds of nature. The stanzas, in effect, discuss the conditions which contribute to the conclusions reached in the refrain. Thus the stanzas are introductory, giving background information to substantiate Curly's conclusions in the refrain that this will be a beautiful and lucky day for him. As is later learned in the script, he no doubt was looking forward to taking Laurey to the Box Social that evening and then proposing marriage to her, the anticipation of which made him very happy. And this happiness is expressed in this opening song.

The first two lines of each four-line stanza are

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 7.

[2]Ibid., p. 8.

[3] Engel, The Making, p. 44.

identical to each other and make some general observation. Then the last two lines give examples of that phenomenon. For example, stanza 1 begins with the statement: "There's a bright, golden haze on the meadow," which is repeated, indicating that the sun, shining on the morning moisture near the ground, renders it golden in color. Then Curly observes the corn as an example of what is growing up out of and adding color to that beautiful golden haze.[1]

Stanza 2 begins with the comment that "All the cattle are standin' like statues," to be followed by an observation that the animals do not turn their heads to take note of his passing, although one did wink, consituting an example of the stationary stance of the animals. Hammerstein recounted how this vision occurred to him:

> This picture had come into my brain several years before I wrote the song, and it had stayed there quietly waiting to be used. When I came to the second verse of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" I remembered it. I remembered sitting on a porch in Pennsylvania one summer's day, watching a herd of cows standing on a hillside about half a mile away. It was very hot and there was no motion in the world. I suddenly found myself doing what I had never done before and have never done since. I was thinking up lines for a poem to describe what I saw. It was not to be used in a play, not to be set to music. I got this far with it:
>
> The breeze steps aside
> To let the day pass.
> The cows on the hill
> Are as still as the grass.
>
> I never wrote the lines on paper, nor did I ever do any work to polish them, nor did I extend the poem any further. Perhaps I was called to the phone, or perhaps

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 7.

> I was infected with the laziness of an inactive landscape. But those cows on the hill "as still as the grass" were crystallized in my memory by the words I had quite idly and casually composed, and up they came several years later to inspire me when I needed them.[1]

Stanza 3 begins with a comparison of the sounds of nature to the sound of music. This is followed by the example of how the wind blows through the trees, making the rustling of the weeping willow sound like laughter.[2] These natural sounds are musical sounds to Curly.

In the four-line refrain, each line elaborates the message of the previous one, beginning with a declaration that it is a beautiful morning, which is extended in line 2 to include the whole day; then lines 3 and 4 imply that this kind of beautiful day gives Curly a hunch that everything will go well for him today.[3]

Frankel discusses the significance of the title of a song: "The title is the focus of the song," and he says that the subject of the song should be "crystal clear, in the title . . . ."[4] Certainly this song's title does describe its subject. Frankel also emphasizes the importance of the placement and repetition of the title or its close equivalent, i.e., a slightly reworded version of

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[1]Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 10-11.

[2]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 7.

[3]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[4]Frankel, p. 138.

the title, in the lyrics of a song.[1] "Oh, what a beautiful mornin'" is the first line in each of the three repetitions of the refrain, followed by an equivalent in the second line. This placement plus the final repetition of the equivalent in a coda at the end of the song means that the title or its equivalent is heard seven times throughout Curly's initial rendition. This helps to make the song recognizable and reminds the audience of the happy mood and the wholesome character's simplistic joy over the beauties of nature, when the song is repeated four times during the show.

Hammerstein expressed these happy thoughts in a poetic, Western American Speech to indicate Curly's uneducated, simple, but sensitive, nature. For example, Curly's pronunciation is indicated as omitting the final g's on all "ing" endings, as in "mornin'," "climbin'" and "feelin'." And Curly also uses the article "a" before words beginning with vowels when "an" would be correct in such phrases as "a ol' weepin' willer." Curly is also shown as having trouble with correct verb forms, such as in saying, "I got a beautiful feelin'," instead of "I have," and "The breeze is so busy, it don't miss a tree," instead of "it doesn't."[2] Curly's sensitivity is expressed in such poetic devices as the personification of the willow

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[1]Ibid., pp. 138-43.

[2]Rodgers, Six Plays, pp. 7-8.

tree, which he says is laughing at him; the simile expressed in the cattle's standing like statues; and the hyperbole of the corn's capability of climbing all the way up to the sky.

Colwell explains that "Words are units of sound, and also units of meaning. As units of sound, . . . they have two aspects: the sound itself, which is purely physical; and the mood the sound may express in context, which is psychic. As units of meaning words also have two aspects: the message they communicate, and the mood they express."[1] Hammerstein considered the physical sound of the words, as evidenced by his choice of "elephant" over "cow pony." As for mood, each stanza, by the use of such words as haze, meadow, sky, cattle, and breeze, establishes the pastoral simplicity of rural happiness that Curly felt in his observation of the peacefulness and beauty of nature. The message expressed in the song is that Curly is happy, confident, and content on this important day as he sings, "I got a beautiful feelin'/Ev'rythin's goin' my way."[2] The message and the mood which are conveyed are interwoven with the delineation of Curly's character in the lyrics of this song to start the show as its writers intended. And the song is repeated at Laurey's entrance and again at the chorus's entrance to indicate that these other characters

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[1]Colwell, p. 173.

[2]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 8.

are also happy and optimistic on this day. The music for the song is also heard as part of the "Dream Ballet." The fourth and last reprise of the song is the chorus's rendition as Laurey and Curly leave on their honeymoon and everyone sings that all is well as the curtain falls.

Theatre songs should have a topic and a function in the show, according to Engel.[1] These must be expressed in the lyrics of the song. In "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" the topic is the beauty of nature on a beautiful day that tends to make one feel good. As for its function, this song does not start the plot's moving forward. It sets the opening mood of bucolic happiness, peacefulness and naturalness. But its singer is depicted as personifying this rural, natural happiness, because the observations in the song's lyrics are articulated by him and they show what kind of person he is by showing what is occupying his mind. This song then serves the dual function of setting the mood and characterizing Curly. But the mood for the play is also shown by the visual rural setting and costumes, whereas Curly does nothing visually to tell the audience what a nice person he is. This must be derived from the lyrics of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'." Hammerstein's genius is revealed in that he is able to establish Curly's wholesomeness with this innocuous testimonial to nature, rather than actually putting in specific words that say he is wholesome. That

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[1]Engel, The Making, p. 32.

is, instead of having Curly vocalize in the song about how he loves nature and is a clean, healthy, all-American boy, the lyrics of this song allow the audience to draw these conclusions from hearing Curly verbalilze how the sights of a beautiful morning look through his eyes. It is important to the plot that Curly be established early in the play as the hero, so that Jud will contrast as the villain, and that Will and Ali will be recognized as comic characters. By omitting this song from the beginning of the show and starting with the dialogue which follows it, the mood might still be simple, peaceful, bucolic and happy, but Curly would not yet be established as the hero, because his spoken dialogue begins with his bragging about himself and then his bickering with Laurey, which could therefore mislead the audience into thinking that he is an unpleasant person. Since the song has already established him as a wholesome, pleasant young man before the dialogue, the audience can thus be amused at his ineffectual attempts at bolstering his ego and courting Laurey, instead of thinking he is a quarrelsome braggart. Engel compares this song to a soliloquy:

> Sometimes characters are made clear in the songs they sing just as Shakespeare clarifies them in their soliloquies. Take Oklahoma!, for example. The lyrics of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" give us a clear picture of Curly and one we must believe instantly. He is a clean-cut young man who exults in nature and in the well-being of his crops in particular. The music serves to make him even more likable.[1]

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[1]Engel, Words with Music, pp. 14-15.

Thus the function of the song is primarily to characterize Curly, although it also reinforces Oklahoma!'s qualification as a musical play, by Frankel's definition, in that without this song, there would be a "hole" or misunderstanding in the play.[1] In other words, this song is dramatically necessary at this point to set the mood and to identify the hero in order for the play to proceed as intended.

Rodgers and Hammerstein planned this show so that "The songs sprang directly from the moods and situations of the play," according to Fordin.[2] Rodgers wrote of this opening number, "We did more than set a mood; we were, in effect, warning the audience, 'Watch out! This is a different kind of musical.' Everything in the production was made to conform to the simple open-air spirit of the story; this was essential, and certainly a rarity in the musical theatre."[3] Brooks Atkinson wrote of this song,

> Within ten minutes, a Broadway audience was transported out of the ugly realities of wartime into a warm, languorous, shining time and place where the only problems were simple and wholesome, and the people uncomplicated and joyous. The opening song seemed like a distillation of something that had been hovering in the air since life began on earth . . . .
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> After a verse like that, sung to a buoyant melody, the banalities of the old musical stage became intolerable.[4]

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[1]Frankel, p. 2.

[2]Fordin, p. 191.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 218.

[4]Atkinson, Broadway, p. 337.

"The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top"

Rodgers and Hammerstein had already broken tradition with their opening number, and their second song continued to break tradition. Customarily a big choral number opened a show, or else one followed soon thereafter.[1] Since the opening number had been a quiet, reflective solo, tradition would have dictated a rousing choral number to follow that. But Rodgers and Hammerstein continued to tell the story in the same simple way that Riggs had told the story in Lilacs. In Oklahoma! after Curly has sung "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," the mood has thus far been calm, depicting peacefulness and consonance. Then the mood changes as Laurey enters and insults Curly's singing voice. A mood of tension is begun as they argue. Curly says, "I'm a good mind not to ast you to the Box Social."[2] And then instead of directly asking her to go to the party with him, he just starts to describe a wonderful surrey that, if he were to take her, they might go in. It changes the topic from the natural beauty of the day in the first song to the man-made beauty of the "shiny little surrey with the fringe on the top."[3] It is intended to attract the spoiled little girl in Laurey to the idea of going to the party with Curly in the fancy surrey, so that she will be eager to

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[1]Fordin, p. 187.

[2]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 10.

[3]Ibid., p. 18..

agree to go with him. Since Laurey enters in a bad temper, Curly's job is to sweeten her disposition and sell her on the idea of going with him tonight. He attempts to do this with this happy song. It is primarily another solo for Curly, although Aunt Eller and Laurey each have one line in the song. The description of the surrey came directly from Curly's dialogue in the Lilacs script:

> A bran' new surrey with fringe on the top four inches long--and yeller! And two white horses a-rarin' and faunchin' to go! You'd shore ride like a queen settin' up in that carriage! Feel like you had a gold crown set on yer head, 'th diamonds in it big as goose eggs. . . . And this yere rig has got four fine side-curtains, case of a rain. And isinglass winders to look out of! And a red and green lamp set on the dashboard, winkin' like a lightnin' bug! . . . Don't you wish they was sich a rig, though? Nen you could go to the party and do a hoe-down till mornin' 'f you was a mind to. Nen drive home 'th the sun a-peekin' at you over the ridge, purty and fine.[1]

In Oklahoma! this dialogue is put into the song, "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top."

In order to accomplish Curly's task, this song has to be not only a happy song, in order to change Laurey's foul mood, but also a sort of "sales pitch" to convince her that going with him this evening would be a very happy and special event. The song that was written grows out of the situation, characters and mood at this point. Hammerstein's genius shines brightly as he words this song to accomplish its purposes, without ever directly stating its intention.

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[1]Riggs, pp. 14-15.

Engel states,

> Each song must say what only this specific character can say, not just loosely what <u>any</u> character (for example) in love might say. It is the duty of the lyricist to find material in this particular character in this particular play in this particular scene which has not been said again and again by every character in every previous play. This requires genuine creativity, thought, patience, and invention.[1]

Engel also points out that each song must be somewhat different from the one that preceded it: "The composer of a musical show must construct it with care so that songs of similar mood and tempo do not, if at all possible, follow one another."[2] Thus Rodgers and Hammerstein had to create a song that could only be sung by Curly, at this point in the plot, that would sell the idea to Laurey, while she is in her present mood, that is different from other songs in other plays, and that is different from "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'."

"The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top" does all of this. And it is reprised by Curly as he leaves, and the music is used as part of the "Dream Ballet." But since its main purpose is to invite Laurey to go to the party with Curly, its repeated use is not feasible.

The song consists of two stanzas and three refrains, each with different words. The first stanza introduces the subject of going to the party in the surrey. Prior to this

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[1]Engel, <u>Words with Music</u>, pp. 121-2.

[2]Engel, <u>The Making</u>, p. 22.

song, there have been no tender words between Curly and Laurey. But this stanza begins, "When I take you out tonight with me,/Honey, here's the way it's goin' to be," calling her "honey" and affirming the fact that he does intend to take her to the party.[1]

The first refrain describes the surrey, taken from Rigg's dialogue. The descriptive lines in the song are as follows:

> Watch that fringe and see how it flutters
> . . . . . .
> The wheels are yeller, the upholstery's brown,
> The dashboard's genuine leather,
> With isinglass curtains y'c'n roll right down
> . . . . . .
> Two bright side-lights, winkin' and blinkin',
> . . . . . .[2]

In this refrain Curly also tries to appeal to Laurey's arrogance by telling her that "Nosey-pokes'll peek through their shutters and their eyes will pop!" and that there "Ain't no finer rig."[3]

The second stanza consists of questions from Eller and Laurey about the surrey and answers from Curly confirming that the fringe is real silk and that the horses are indeed white. Then the second refrain describes the ride to the party in this elegant surrey. Curly reverts to his love of nature and describes all the beautiful sights

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 10.

[2]Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[3]Ibid.

that they will see while riding in the surrey. He discusses the cats, dogs, birds, frogs, toads, cows, the wind and the river. This recurrent animal and nature imagery used by Curly establishes a communication between him and Laurey that is built on a shared background of living in a rural setting. It also universalizes the characters by communicating in terms that are commonly identified as natural and wholesome symbols to all the peoples of the world. This refrain ends with "Don't you wisht y'd go on forever?," implying that the ride is going to be so wonderful that Laurey will never want it to stop.[1]

Before the third refrain, the music to the stanza is played again as background to dialogue between the three characters. For some reason Hammerstein did not translate this dialogue into a third verse, but it gives the feeling of a third stanza, since the music is played in the background. The content of this dialogue is whether or not Laurey and Curly have a date, whether or not there is such a surrey, ending with Curly's teasing that the surrey was just a fantasy. But this leads into the third refrain after his exhortation to Laurey: "Don't you wisht they <u>was</u> sich a rig, though? . . . Nen when you was all wore out, I'd lift you onto the surrey, and jump up alongside of you-- And we'd jist point the horses home. . . . I can jist pitcher

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[1]Ibid., p. 11.

the whole thing."[1] Then Curly describes the ride home in the surrey:

> I can see the stars gittin' blurry
> When we ride back home in the surrey,
> Ridin' slowly home in the surrey with the fringe on top.
> I can feel the day gittin' older,
> Feel a sleepy head near my shoulder,
> Noddin', droopin' close to my shoulder till it falls, kerplop!
> The sun is swimmin' on the rim of a hill,
> The moon is takin' a header,
> And just as I'm thinkin' all the earth is still,
> A lark'll wake up in the medder. . . .
> Hush! You bird, my baby's a-sleepin'--
> Maybe got a dream worth a-keepin'
> Whoa! You team, and just keep a-creepin' at a slow clip-clop.
> Don't you hurry with the surrey with the fringe on the top.[2]

Again, there is the nature imagery. This is the epitome of a poetic, bucolic, aesthetic appeal to sell the idea to Laurey. Following this last refrain, the stage directions state, "There is silence and contentment, but only for a brief moment. LAUREY starts slowly to emerge from the enchantment of his description," showing that the song did, at least temporarily, have its intended effect.[3]

The stanzas are set in trochaic pentameter and the refrains are mainly trochaic tetrameter. It resembles a narrative poem, in that Curly is telling a story to two listeners, using a poetic medium. The rhyme scheme in the

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[1]Ibid., p. 12.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 13.

four-lined stanzas is aaba. The refrains are each fourteen lines long and the rhyme scheme is a little more complicated with aabccbdfdfggbb. There is also an interior rhyme in the sixth and thirteenth line of each refrain, and many of the rhymes are double, such as rhyming "flutters" with "shutters" and "blinkin'" with "thinkin'."[1] According to Colwell, comic poetry often uses unexpected sounds, rather than more esoteric poetic devices, and this may explain why Hammerstein used a more intricate rhyme scheme on this song's lyrics than he did on the first one.[2] This song is more comic than "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" because he was thinking out loud in "Mornin'," but was entertaining two listeners in "Surrey." It is reasonable that Curly would use more rhymes and humor in a song meant to entertain listeners than he would use when he is singing mainly for his own pleasure.

Hammerstein also uses several examples of alliteration in this song, again playing with unexpected sounds, such as "fly in a flurry," "dogs'll dance," and "river will ripple."[3] And there are several examples of assonance, such as "slickest gig," "bright side-lights," and "close to my shoulder."[4] Curly's speech continues to

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[1]Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[2]Colwell, p. 201.

[3]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 11.

[4]Ibid., pp. 10-12.

include incorrect grammar and pronunciation and he also uses a great deal of hyperbole. Curly is a braggart and in his attempt to sell Laurey on this idea, he uses many exaggerations. For example, he says that the neighbors will be so impressed when they see the surrey that their "eyes will pop" and that the surrey will go so fast that "All the world'll fly in a flurry."[1] And he uses ten different instances of personification in the song, from lights that wink, and dogs that dance, to the sun that swims on the rim of the hill.

The message of this song is organized to intensify the appeal of the ride in the surrey in each succeeding refrain. Curly has spent his last money on this rental, and he wants Laurey to be appropriately impressed with it. So his pitch starts with a description of the surrey and what will be seen by others as they pass by in it. Then there is a description of what Laurey and Curly will see from their point of view in the surrey, and the ending is a description of how relaxed and pleasant she will feel in it if she agrees to go with him in the surrey.

The title of the song or its equivalent occurs twice in each refrain, totalling six repetitions during the song. The mood of the song begins with excitement to match Laurey's tense mood, but Curly leads her to a calmer mood as he ends with a description of her falling asleep in the last refrain. So the mood of the song shifts from excitement to

calmness.

This song functions in the play as a part of the plot movement. The entire subject of the first act is the controversy surrounding who is taking Laurey to the party. This song contains Curly's invitation, since he never asks her to go with him in the dialogue. Thus it introduces the subject of the first act, which leads to the conflict between the hero and the villain, the central issue in the melodrama. The song then is necessary in order to understand the play. If it were removed, the controversy between Jud and Curly would not make much sense for a while. The song also continues to characterize Curly, by continuing to show his love of nature, his love for Laurey, his gentlemanliness, his inclination to teasing, and his desire to get her in an agreeable mood, so that he can propose marriage to her. It also shows his intelligence, in that Curly is able to circumlocute her rude comments to him and get her interested in going to the party with him by means of a contrivance, intended to appeal to her pride. The song also continues to contribute to the mood of the play, by calming down Laurey from her ill-tempered, tense mood to a calmer mood, lured by Curly's descriptions of nature and a ride in the open air with him. Therefore, this song is one of the best integrated songs in the show, since it serves to forward the plot, characterize, and set mood. But its major function is to move the plot forward.

Curly's character is already established and Laurey's mood only changes temporarily, but Curly was not articulate enough to invite Laurey to go to the party with him, except by means of this song. Thus it helps to prove Hammerstein's assertion that he and Rodgers could "write words and music best when they are required by a situation or a characterization in a story."[1] Furthermore, "Surrey" fulfills Frankel's definition of a show song, because it is "a heightened action springing from a dramatic context, and as a result reveals character, develops situation, forwards plot."[2]

Rodgers wrote that "Oscar was so moved by this song that just listening to it made him cry. He once explained that he never cried at sadness in the theatre, only at naive happiness, and the idea of two boneheaded young people looking forward to nothing more than a ride in a surrey struck an emotional chord that affected him deeply."[3]

"Kansas City"

After Curly leaves, Will Parker and a group of cowboys enter, telling of Will's having won the steer roping contest at the fair. Aunt Eller says to Will, "Bet you

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[1]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 14.

[2]Frankel, p. 81.

[3]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 219.

carried on plenty in Kansas City," and he answers, "I wouldn't call it carryin' on. But I shore did see some things I never see before."[1] Then he relates what he saw in Kansas City in this song. The song is never reprised, although some of the music is heard during the "Dream Ballet."

"Kansas City" is a comic song, revealing Will's naivety in discovering a more modern, advanced society in the big city. There are one stanza and two refrains, both set to the same music, and the music to the refrain is played again at the end to accompany a dance by Will. Aunt Eller sings one line, and the boys' chorus joins on the last line of each refrain.

The stanza consists of eight lines with the rhyme scheme ababcded. The eleven-lined refrain's rhyme scheme is abcbabddddbb. And there are a few double rhymes, such as "Frid'y" with "idy," and "City" with "pretty." All lines are trochaic pentameter.

The title is heard four times in the song, once using the simile, "Ev'rythin's like a dream in Kansas City."[2] One personification occurs when he says that a seven-story skyscraper is "About as high as a buildin' orta grow."[3] But poetic devices are not frequent in this

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 15.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

narrative, thus showing Will to be a less aesthetic person than Curly. Will just lists, in an increasingly humorous fashion, the modern inventions he saw in the city, including gas buggies, telephones, radiators, indoor privies, and burlesque shows. Since there is humor in the mere dramatic irony of Will's discovering these now common items for the first time, apparently Hammerstein saw no need to dress up the versification with clever poetic devices. Will's naive descriptions are humorous enough to suffice, and they grow in humor from the mundane phenomena of cars and telephones to the more risque toilets and strippers. Even the use of such archaic terminology as "gas buggies" and "privies" would be humorous to a modern audience. And during the dance sequence which follows the song, Will demonstrates the newest dance sensations he found being done in Kansas City: the two-step and ragtime, adding physical energy to the existing excitement of the humorous words.

De Mille called this number a specialty, perhaps on the ground that she did not choreograph it, and therefore she did not consider it to be a part of the main body of the show. It is the song least integrated into the plot. It does not forward the story. The mood was already happy before the song began, and it is still happy when the song ends. So its only contribution to the show is that it helps to reveal Will and the other characters' simplicity and lack of worldliness. However, this point is revealed with the

dialogue, so it only reinforces this issue. The song could be omitted from the show without changing the plot, characters or mood, so its integration is minimal. But it does add humor, liveliness, and happiness, and therefore the show is better with it than without it.

"I Cain't Say No"

As soon as Ado Annie enters the first time, she and Laurey begin to discuss boys, Annie's favorite subject. Laurey takes the more sensible role and says, "Well, you just can't go around kissin' every man that sets you! Didn't anybody ever tell you that?," which leads right into Annie's solo, "I Cain't Say No."[1] An encore for the song follows immediately after the original rendition, but it is given a separate cue number, perhaps on the assumption that it could be omitted if there were insufficient applause to merit it, although that event seems unlikely. When Will and Annie talk a few pages later, he sings one stanza of the song to her, when he is begging for a kiss. And the music is used in the "Dream Ballet" when Jud's postcard girls dance.

Having this comic song following "Kansas City" means that two comic songs are performed consecutively in this musical. As Engel has pointed out, the usual procedure is to try to vary the kinds of songs that follow one another.[2]

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 21.

[2]Engel, The Making, p. 22.

However, these two songs characterize the two comic leads and thus serve almost the same purpose, adding humor and liveliness to the show. Thus they could almost be a continuation of one song. But Will's song is a narrative of things that have happened, ending with a dance, while Annie's song merely pours out her own inner feelings. This gives variety, while there is also unity in these two comic songs. Therefore, they can follow each other without becoming tedious.

The form of this comic song is unusual. It has an introductory section of six lines, followed by a refrain of thirteen lines. Then there is an interlude section of ten lines, constituting a musical bridge to another refrain of thirteen lines. Immediately thereafter comes the encore, consisting of another refrain, with different words, of thirteen lines. The meter and beat are also inconsistent. The introduction is basically iambic pentameter, and the refrains are mainly iambic, too, but the number of feet per line in the refrains range from two to five. The interlude is dactylic with a variation in the number of feet per line from two to four. The rhyme scheme is somewhat irregular, too, but it is consistent for all three refrains. The introduction's rhyme scheme is ababcc. The three refrain's rhyme patterns are ababcdedafffa. And the interlude is aabccbdefe. This all adds up to a rather unconventionally constructed song, but then it is intended to be sung by a rather unconventional young lady, so maybe this unusual

construction was planned intentionally by Hammerstein.

True to Ado Annie's character, her song is very direct. Annie is not inclined to be poetic, nor to hint at what she means. She blatantly speaks out the facts. She says, "I cain't be prissy and quaint--/I ain't the type that c'n faint--."[1] After introducing the subject of her promiscuity, she gives examples of encounters with the boys who treat her differently now that she has "kind of rounded up a little."[2] After describing each encounter, she explains that although she knows what her correct reaction should be in each case, she just cannot resist the boys. Each refrain begins and ends with the title or its equivalent, totalling six repetitions, including the encore refrain, and the title does give the subject of the song.

One of the few poetic devices in the lyrics is the simile that she says the boys use on her, when they tell her that her "lips're like cherries/Er roses, er berries?"[1] There are also a few examples of alliteration, such as "feller gits flirty," "resist a romeo," and "favorite food."[2] But Annie's poetic nature is not shown to be a prevalent characteristic in her lyrics, as it was not in her boy friend Will's song.

The song functions in the play to characterize Ado Annie. She has only been on the stage for the space of

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 21.

[2]Ibid., p. 20.

one page of dialogue when she sings this song. It immediately reveals all that the audience needs to know to understand her problem and the conflict that arises between suitors for her. After hearing this song, the audience has no question in perceiving her goals and her difficulty in choosing between Will and Ali. The song does nothing to further the plot and does not affect mood. It merely defines Annie's personality, which is necessary at this point in order to understand the comic plot that evolves concerning her romantic life.

Engel sums up the significance of this song when he says, "Ado Annie in 'I Cain't Say No' makes it quite clear that she is an impossible though thoroughly likable flirt."[3]

"Many a New Day"

Annie has just sung about how she cannot resist a boy. This next song says that Laurey can, does, and will resist boys. It contrasts the two heroines, so that there is no question as to the different personalities of the two girls. It is not a comic song; it is also not a love ballad nor a sad song. It is a special kind of song that characterizes Laurey's independence, arrogance, and pride, which lead to her going to the party with Jud,

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 21.

[2]Ibid., p. 22.

[3]Engel, Words with Music, p. 15.

thereby creating the main conflict of the play.

As soon as the chorus enters, Gertie starts flirting with Curly. One of the girls says to Laurey, "Looks like Curly's tuck up with that Cummin's girl," and Laurey answers, "Whut'd I keer about that?"[1] This leads into the initial presentation of "Many a New Day." The music is repeated later to cover a scene change, and it is also heard as part of the overtures for both acts 1 and 2.

The song consists of one stanza and two refrains. It is a solo for Laurey, although the girls' chorus joins her on one line of the last refrain. This is followed by a dance by the girls' chorus, done to the music of the song, and then the girls' chorus sings the last refrain again as a choral number.

The stanza consists of ten lines in anapestic tetrameter, with the rhyme scheme ababcdeeed. The two refrains vary slightly, with twelve lines in the first and the twelve plus two extra lines in a rhymed couplet added to the end of the second. The refrain is a mixture of dactyl and trochaic meters, with some lines tetrameter and some trimeter. The rhyme scheme for the first five lines of each refrain is ababc. But the rhyme scheme subsequently varies, with an adadadc scheme for the first refrain, and a bbbbbbd, plus the ee couplet, for the second.

Hammerstein used more intricate poetic devices in

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 29.

this song than he did in the prior two numbers. There are many double rhymes, such as "find me" with "behind me," and "bygone" with "July gone," and even a triple rhyme of "consoled me" with "someone doled me."[1] Some of the alliteration includes "day will dawn," "guy gone," and "sun will set," and some of the assonance includes "blue moon" and "sweet as he."[2] As for Laurey's use of language, she uses only five colloquial pronunciations in the whole song, including "fresh," "women," and "wonderin'."[3] Perhaps it was considered to be in keeping with Laurey's arrogance that her diction should be slightly more correct than the other characters'.

The topic of this song is female independence. The stanza first unflatteringly describes a woman who depends on a man; then Laurey describes herself in more complimentary fashion, because she does not depend on a man. The song satirizes the "blubbering woman" whose man went away, and tells how Laurey, under those circumstances, would just get dressed up and begin again, unperturbed. The refrain declares Laurey's independence from men in even stronger words. She says there will always be another man along, and that a girl should never look back at one who left. Of course, Laurey is financially independent, since she owns

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 30.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., pp. 29-30.

her own farm. This fact might influence her declaration of her independence from men.

This song is an early hymn for women's liberation. The title, "Many a New Day," does not describe the subject of the song, but it is repeated five times in the first refrain and six times in the second refrain. Counting the girls' choral repetition, this means that the title will be heard seventeen times and so should be easily remembered.

The function of the song in the play is to characterize Laurey. It is a strong, yet feminine song, to expose her arrogance and independence. It shows the audience why she is so obdurate with Curly and thus helps them to understand why she causes the conflict that arises. Without this song, Laurey might first appear to be just a girl with a hateful personality. The song tells why she is not an easy catch for Curly, and makes her a more likable person. She is not just hateful, she is exercising her independence, a characteristic in women that was in its early stages in 1943. The song also serves to contrast Laurey with the comic heroine. While it does not forward the plot, it builds a base on which the plot can develop and defines the melodramatic heroine's motivation.

"It's a Scandal! It's a Outrage!"

One of the three numbers that is sung only once and then never heard again in the show is Ali's "It's a Scandal! It's a Outrage!" It characterizes Ali and tells what to expect of him concerning marriage. The song reveals that he

is constantly having to escape from being caught in the bonds of matrimony, which he speaks-sings immediately after Mr. Carnes has insisted that the Peddler has proposed marriage to his daughter. Ali is joined in this protest against marriage by the male chorus and the song becomes a sort of statement of the male sex on that subject. It is significant that this masculine proclamation is placed to follow immediately after the women's liberation number, in which Laurey and the girls have proclaimed their freedom from dependence on men.

The song has an unusal beginning. The stage directions, before it begins, read:

> (. . . . ALI leans against the porch post as the music starts. Then he starts to pace up and down, thinking hard, his head bowed, his hands behind his back. The orchestra starts a vamp that continues under the melody. Some men enter and watch him curiously, but he is unmindful of them until they start to sing. Throughout this entire number, the PEDDLER must be burning, and he transmits his indignation to the men who sing in a spirit of angry protests, by the time the refrain is reached)[1]

The Peddler first just says words, "Trapped! . . . Tricked! . . . Hoodblinked! . . . Hambushed! . . . ," describing how he feels, in his own unique version of English.[2] Then the boys sing, asking him what the problem is, to which he responds with a description of his previously happy, free lifestyle. There is one stanza, plus two refrains, and the refrain's music is repeated once more at the end, because

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 33.

[2]Ibid.

the girls enter unseen during the second refrain, sing the last line of it, and then lead the boys off to the third repetition of the refrain.

The twenty-two-lined stanza is a mixture of trochee and dactylic tetrameter. The twelve-lined refrains are basically anapestic trimeter, but there are many exceptional feet and lines. The rhyme scheme for the first eight lines of the stanza when the boys are questioning Ali has no discernable pattern, but subsequently it is abbcaddefgfggg, and both of the refrains use abccabddaefe. There is an interior rhyme that recurs regularly in the third line of each refrain.

There are only two instances of alliteration in the entire song, "make one mistake" and "lie like."[1] Poetic devices are scarce in this song, indicating Ali's unliterary inclination. The language used is similar to Ali's speech, containing grammatical errors and mispronunciations based on his late learning of English and also on his copying of the local folks' poor speech habits.

The title is repeated at the beginning, middle and end of each refrain, totalling six repetitions during the performance of the song. The title does represent the content of the message, although it does not tell <u>what</u> is a scandal and an outrage.

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[1]Ibid., p. 34.

The content of the refrains is organized in Ali's giving examples of two situations in each refrain whereby a man can be tricked into an unwanted marriage. Each one is recited in a humorous way, followed by the boys' chorus's repetition that "It's a scandal, It's a outrage!"[1]

This is another comic song, and it functions to confirm Ali's characterization as a misogamist. Ali has only been onstage a short time; although all of his scenes carry a subliminal message of his love of his freedom, this song makes the clear proclamation that he is interested in girls, but not in marriage. It also serves to contrast his freedom with that of the local boys, who temporarily adopt his philosophy, but quickly give it up when the girls appear. While it may sound like fun to be free to travel and chase girls without being caught, as Ali does, the farm and ranch boys know that their lifestyle prescribes that they marry and settle down soon. Hammerstein uses a play on words to indicate the boys' insincerity in declaring their independence from the girls. The last line the boys sing is, "We gotta start a revolution," and immediately thereafter the girls grab the boys and lead them off, saying, "All right, boys! Revolve!"[2] The song does not move the plot nor set mood, but it defines Ali's personality, which is necessary at this point, in order to

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[1]Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[2]Ibid., p. 35.

appreciate the humor of his predicament of being forced into an engagement with Annie and then into a marriage with Gertie. And it is a rebuttal to Laurey's "Many a New Day."

It is interesting that this song was omitted from the film version of Oklahoma!, even though the part was played by Eddie Albert, who had a long history of singing in musicals, both on Broadway and in films.[1] One can only assume that the writers found this song less important in telling the story than other songs, and perhaps that Ali's character is sufficiently drawn without his song. But it adds humor, characterizes Ali, and contrasts with the previous song in the show, and therefore seems to be well integrated into the musical.

"People Will Say We're in Love"

Rodgers wrote of his early experiences in the theatre that taught him lessons leading to his later successes. For example, here is what he said he learned about love duets:

> One of the many useful experiences I had while working on Dearest Enemy [1925] was that I became aware of the multiple possibilities there are to vary that most essential of all musical expressions, the love duet. The romantic leads in any musical need a theme or motif, something that's "their" song, which is a universally accepted part of the genre. But such a song must express more than romantic attachment. First of all, it should be written in a fresh, unhackneyed way, both musically and lyrically, and it should be able to fit different situations. . . . Repetition should be used . . . to make the relationship between the leading

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[1]Green, Fact Book, p. 529.

characters more meaningful through music.[1]

When Rodgers and Hammerstein were planning the numbers for Oklahoma!, Rodgers played a melody for Hammerstein that he had composed during his collaboration with Hart that was never used in a show, but he thought it might well suit the needs of the lovers' duet. This was the only music that he composed for the show, before he had words in front of him to set to music.[2] Hammerstein liked the music, too, but approached the lyrics to it carefully. He wrote:

> The problem for a duet for the lovers in Oklahoma! seemed insurmountable. While it is obvious almost from the rise of the curtain that Curly and Laurey are in love with each other, there is also a violent antagonism between them, caused mainly by Laurey's youthful shyness, which she disguises by pretending not to care for Curly. This does not go down very well with him, and he fights back. Since this mood was to dominate their scenes down into the second act, it seemed impossible for us to write a song that said "I love you," and remain consistent with the attitude they had adopted toward each other. After talking this over for a long time, Dick and I hit upon the idea of having the lovers warn each other against any show of tenderness lest other people think they were in love. Of course, while they say all those things, they are obliquely confessing their mutual affection. Hence the title, "People Will Say We're in Love."[3]

Rodgers says that he and Hart had written a song similar to this, called "This Can't Be Love" (Jumbo, 1935). And Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote another love song of this type, called "If I Loved You," in Carousel, 1945.[4]

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 72.

[2]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 13; Wilder, p. 218.

[3]Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 14-15.

[4]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 218-19.

At the end of the first scene, Curly comes to speak to Laurey again about going to the party with him. Rather than inviting her directly, he just asks if she is really going with Jud. Laurey says "yes." Curly says that everyone expected that Curly would take her, indicating that their relationship has been a long standing one before the beginning of the play. Laurey says, "Then, mebbe it's just as well you ain't. We don't want people talkin' 'bout us, do we?"[1] They discuss what people are saying about them, and Curly ends with, "Cain't imagine how these ugly rumors start."[2] This leads into the song's first sung presentation. However, it was previously heard as a part of the "Overture," and it is used subsequently in the overture to the second act, three times during scene changes, and at the end of the "Dream Ballet." In the second act, when Curly and Laurey have agreed to get married, they sing the last nine lines of the refrain, rewording it as, "Let people say we're in love!"[3] Originally, there was another song for this spot, "Boys and Girls Like You and Me," but this one was dropped during tryouts, and the reprise was used instead.[4] And it is the last song that is heard, sung by

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 36.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 72.

[4]Wilder, p. 218; Fordin, p. 199; "Boys and Girls Like You and Me" was later added to a revised version of their television musical, Cinderella.

the chorus, as the curtain falls. This means that this song is repeated eight times, besides its initial singing, giving it the most repetitions of any song in Oklahoma!

The song consists of two stanzas and two refrains, each with different words, and the reprised refrain section has still another set of words. Laurey and Curly alternate singing lines in the first stanza, and Laurey sings the first refrain by herself. Curly sings the second stanza and second refrain alone. The reprised nine lines are sung first alternately by each and then ending together.

The stanzas mix dactyl and trochaic hexameter, while the refrains are in iambic trimeter. Each four-line stanza has the simple rhyme scheme of aabb, and the twelve-lined refrains use abbcaddcecec. In discussing the rhymes in this song, Rodgers says, "There are, after all, only so many rhymes for the word 'love,' and when Oscar decided to call the duet 'People Will Say We're in Love,' he was determined to avoid using any of the more obvious ones. After spending days thinking about this one rhyme, he called me up exultantly to announce that he'd solved the problem."[1] Hammerstein finally figured out how to use a word, unusual for a love song, that rhymed with "love," and that word was "glove." Fordin tells how he arrived at this word: "Once they had settled on the idea Oscar started to jot down some don'ts: Don't look proud when I rope a steer, bake a cake;

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 219.

don't wax poetical; don't tie my ties for me, don't tell pretty lies for me; don't buy a hat for me, don't turn democrat for me."[1] And finally he arrived at the line, "Don't start collecting things--/Give me my rose and my glove."[2]

The first stanza begins with Laurey and Curly's questioning why people are gossiping about them. Then Laurey says that she will give Curly a list of "don'ts" to stop the chatter. In the first refrain she gives her list to him, ending with "Sweetheart, they're suspecting things--/People will say we're in love!"[3] This refrain gives the first indication of affection from Laurey, admitting that they both sigh at each other, their eyes glow, and she calls him "sweetheart."

In the second stanza Curly reveals some things that she has done that indicate her fondness for him, such as baking his favorite pie and asking him to carve their initials on a tree. Then in the second refrain he lists some "dont's" for Laurey, again telling of past expressions of love that they have shared, such as standing in the rain, holding hands, and dancing all night. But he ends by telling her why she should not do these things: "They'll see

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[1]Fordin, p. 193.

[2]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 37.

[3]Ibid.

it's all right with me,/People will say we're in love!"[1] Thus, although this song is supposed to be saying that they do not want other people to think that they are in love, it is really saying that they are very much in love.

Immediately after they sing the song this first time, the music continues as Curly again asks Laurey if she is going to the party with Jud, and she again says that she is. He becomes angry and storms off to talk to Jud. Laurey cries and tries to sing part of her refrain again, but chokes up and runs offstage.

Although this first rendition shows their love, the reprise of this song after they are committed to marriage is the first time they sing happily together directly and openly about their love. These words are universally appealing as a song for lovers, with the mention of starlight, the traditional romantic lighting to lovers all over the world:

> Let people say we're in love!
> Who keers whut happens now!
> Jist keep your hand in mine.
> Your hand feels so grand in mine--
> Let people say we're in love!
> Starlight looks well on us,
> Let the stars beam from above,
> Who cares if they tell on us?
> Let people say we're in love![2]

Being a duet with most lines sung by one to the other, this song is a sung dialogue. Therefore, the words

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[1]Ibid., p. 38.

[2]Ibid., p. 72.

and poetic devices that are used have to be suitable to both Laurey and Curly. The last two lines of each stanza contain interior rhymes in the same places, but Curly has an extra interior rhyme in the first line of his stanza that he sings alone. The refrains, each sung by a different singer, contain a triple rhyme in the second and third lines, the sixth and seventh lines, and in the ninth and eleventh. These triple rhymes recur in the corresponding lines in the reprise. But Laurey has nine lines containing examples of alliteration, while Curly has only six in his. So both of the singers have about the same number of poetic devices in their respective assigned lines.

The title occurs three times in each refrain, and a total of eleven times during the entire play. The topic of the song is that they are trying to keep people from saying that they are in love, and this is in the title. But the underlying revelation of the song is that they are in love and are not able to articulate it, and this could be one interpretation of the title, especially in its equivalent in the reprise, "Let people say we're in love!"[1]

Other than one missing g on the end of the word "grantin'," there is no colloquial pronunciation in the first presentation of this song. It occurs in Curly's section, and in fact, Laurey pronounces the g on the end of

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[1]Ibid., p. 72.

"suspecting," so she is shown to have the superior command of English. However, in the reprise each of them mispronounces one word. It is significant, however, that in the reprise Curly says "keers," yet when they sing together, the word is "cares."

The mood of this song is romantic, as the function of the song is to express the love they feel for each other that they were unable to articulate in speech. It does not advance the plot, because the fact that they loved each other was already obvious and they still are not going to the party together after the song. It does affect the general mood of the play, but only temporarily, until Laurey reiterates her intention of going to the party with Jud. But the song shows again that Curly's singing has the power to change Laurey's mood, as he was able to do with "Surrey." It reveals these young lovers to be rather poetic and to be affected aesthetically by each other's presence. They seem to be nicer people together than either was alone; they bring out the best in each other. Thus the main function of this song in the play is to characterize Curly and Laurey, because more is known about each of them and their relationship to each other after it is over.

"Poor Jud Is Daid"

When Curly goes to visit Jud in the smokehouse, in the second scene, Curly looks around and comments on the things he sees:

CURLY . . . That's a good-lookin' rope you got there. .

. . 'S a good strong hook you got there. You could hang yerself on that, Jud.

JUD I could whut?

CURLY (Cheerfully) Hang yerself. It ud be as easy as fallin' off a log! Fact is, you could stand on a log--er a cheer if you'd rather--right about here--see? And put this here around yer neck. Tie that good up there first, of course. Then all you'd have to do would be to fall off the log--er the cheer, whichever you'd ruther fall off of. In five minutes, or less, with good luck, you'd be daid as a doornail.

JUD Whut'd you mean by that?

CURLY Nen folks ud come to yer funril and sing sad songs.

JUD (Disdainfully) Yamnh!

CURLY They would. You never know how many people like you till you're daid. Y'd prob'ly be laid out in the parlor. Y'd be all diked out in yer best suit with yer hair combed down slick, and a high starched collar.

JUD (Beginning to get interested) Would they be any flowers, d'you think?

CURLY Shore would, and palms, too--all around yer cawfin. Nen folks ud stand around you and the men ud bare their heads and the womern ud sniffle softly. Some'd prob'ly faint--ones that had tuck a shine to you when you wuz alive.

JUD Whut womern have tuck a shine to me?

CURLY Lots of womern. On'y they don't never come right out and show you how they feel less'n you die first.

JUD (Thoughtfully) I guess that's so.

CURLY They'd shore sing loud though when the singin' started--sing like their hearts ud break! (He starts to sing very earnestly and solemnly, improvising the sort of thing he thinks might be sung)[1]

And the improvisation that Curly sings becomes "Pore Jud." The melody was first heard in the "Overture," and it is used again in the "Dream Ballet" as a motif to identify Jud.

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[1]Ibid., pp. 40-41.

Hammerstein says that Jud lives in the smokehouse, where he nurses his neuroses. But Hammerstein says that this song changes the audience's attitude toward him: "He becomes then, for a while, not just wicked, but a comic figure flattered by the attentions he might receive if he were dead. He becomes also a pathetic figure, pathetically lonely for attentions he has never received while alive. The audience begins to feel some sympathy for him, some understanding of him as a man."[1] Jud hears the song as an example of what might be said or sung at his funeral. It is satire; it treats the bad as good. Colwell says this is also called mock-heroic poetry; the words sound like praise, but the meaning is the opposite.[2]

The song is slightly unusual, in that some of it is sung, some is chanted, and some is spoken. It is five verses of six lines each, with an interlude between verses 2 and 3. The meter is iambic, and the feet are a mixture of trimeter and pentameter. The rhyme scheme is aabccb.

The title does describe the topic, which is how pitiably poor Jud has been mistreated, at least in his eyes. The title occurs in the first two lines of verses 1, 2, and 3, and in the first line only in verses 4 and 5, but there is a coda which repeats the title twice more, meaning that the title is heard ten times during the song.

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[1]Hammerstein, Lyrics, pp. 64, 19.

[2]Colwell, p. 56.

The first, second, and third verses are sung by Curly, but Jud begins to become so interested by the time the second verse begins that he starts repeating information that impresses him, by singing it between Curly's lines. Jud even takes his hat off in reverence to the scene Curly is creating in Jud's mind. During the interlude between verses 2 and 3, Curly imitates, in a chant to musical accompaniment, what the preacher would probably say at the funeral. By the time the fourth verse begins, the stage directions indicate, "(JUD is too emotionally exalted by the spirit of CURLY'S singing to be analytical. He now takes up a refrain of his own)."[1] So the fourth verse is sung by Jud, and Curly continues Jud's practice of repeating special words at the ends of lines, except Curly's repetitions turn out to be insulting to Jud:

JUD
Pore Jud is daid,
A candle lights his haid,
He's layin' in a cawfin made of wood.

CURLY Wood.

JUD
And folks are feelin' sad
Cuz they useter treat him bad,
And now they know their friend has gone fer good.

CURLY (Softly) Good.[2]

Then Curly and Jud together sing the last verse and coda.

After the song is over, Jud is very moved at first,

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 42.

[2]Ibid.

but soon returns to his same obnoxious personality: "(JUD breaks down, weeps, and sits at the table, burying his head in his arms)."[1] But only seconds later he resumes polishing his gun and tells Curly that maybe Curly will die before Jud does. Thus Curly again shows his talent, as he did with Laurey, to enthrall a person with the mood of a song, although the mood is again short-lived.

This song is simply worded, perhaps intentionally, in order to appeal to Jud's innate simple-mindedness; Curly brings the wording of the song down to Jud's level. There are few poetic devices in this song, because it attracts interest from the satire and needs no further help. Although on the surface this song is a sad song, its real intent is undoubtedly humor; it makes fun of Jud--his uncleanliness, his body odor, his dishonesty, and his unpopularity. For example, in the interlude between verses 2 and 3, as Curly impersonates the preacher at Jud's funeral, he comments that "People useter think he was a mean, ugly feller. . . . And they called him a dirty skunk and a ornery pig-stealer."[2] A little later Curly says, "He loved the mice and the vermin in the barn, and he treated the rats like equals--which was right."[3] Curly also comments on Jud's dirty shirts, dirty fingernails, and

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[1]Ibid., p. 43.

[2]Ibid., p. 41.

[3]Ibid., p. 42.

even says,

> The daisies in the dell
> Will give out a diff'runt smell
> Becuz pore Jud is underneath the ground.[1]

This song functions to characterize both Curly and Jud. It shows Jud's lack of intelligence and low self-esteem, to be able to be so overcome by it, and Curly's intelligence that is required to accomplish this feat. It contrasts the two men, showing Curly to be the smarter. It again shows Curly's ability to sway people's moods by singing to them. It is a humorous song, but not a comic song. It does not move the plot in any way, but it does temporarily change the mood from one of hostility to one of elated sadness, reverence, and respect. It might also be interpreted as a portent of Jud's impending death. But its main function is to confirm, in the collective mind of the audience, the characters of Jud and Curly, so that there will be no doubt as to who is the hero and who is the villain.

"Lonely Room"

The second song heard only once in Oklahoma! and never reprised is Jud's solo, "Lonely Room." It was omitted from the film version of the play. It is sung by Jud in the play after he and Curly have had their confrontation over Laurey. Finally Curly and Ali leave, and Jud is left alone to meditate over his condition. Immediately prior to his

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[1]Ibid.

singing his song, Jud says, "Don't want nuthin' from no peddler. Want real things! Whut am I doin' shet up here--like that feller says--a-crawlin' and a-festerin'? Whut am I doin' in this lousy smokehouse?"[1]

There are four sections in this song; the first and the third are almost identical. The sections have six, fourteen, six, and five lines respectively. The meter is anapest and iambic, and the number of feet per line vary from one to four. The rhyme schemes are, respectively, aabccb, abcbadedfghijk, aabccb, and abccb. The schemes of the first, third, and fourth sections are simple, but after the first eight lines of the second section, there are no more rhymes in this section. It is a rather strangely constructed song, meant for a rather strange character to sing. There is little sound manipulation, such as alliteration or assonance, but Hammerstein used several other poetic devices, such as two examples of personification:

> But when there's a moon in my winder
> And it slants down a beam 'cross my bed,
> Then the shadder of a tree starts a-dancin' on the wall
> And a dream starts a-dancin' in my head.[2]

He also used two similes, describing his sitting in his lonely room, "Like a cobweb on a shelf," and Laurey's hair

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[1]Ibid., p. 47.

[2]Ibid.

falling on his face, "Jist like a rain in a storm."[1]

Hammerstein wrote,

> In the second song, 'Lonely Room,' he [Jud] paints a savage picture of his solitary life, his hatred of Curly and his mad desire for Laurey. This is a self-analysis, but it is emotional and not cerebral. No dialogue could do this dramatic job as vividly and quickly as does the song. When Lynn Riggs attended a rehearsal of Oklahoma! for the first time, I asked him if he approved of this number. He said, 'I certainly do. It will scare hell out of the audience.' That is exactly what it was designed to do.[2]

Jud is alone and talking to himself in this song. In the first section he describes his lonely, unhappy life in his dingy smokehouse. Then he ruminates about how he sometimes fantasizes about Laurey's returning his affection. He also fantasizes that he is better than that "smart aleck," Curly. But then Jud awakens from his daydream and realizes his true reality once more, repeating the first section. This emboldens him to declare that he is going to make his daydream a reality. Since he has a date with Laurey this evening, this is the logical time for him to try to bring everything to a showdown. And this, of course, is what he does. Thus, this song affects the plot in that Jud makes up his mind to take action during it. If this song were left out, the audience would have to wait to see what his intentions are, because this song tells them rather explicitly what he is going to do:

I ain't gonna dream 'bout her arms no more!

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 19.

I ain't gonna leave her alone!
Goin' outside,
Git myself a bride,
Git me a womern to call my own.[1]

This song shows how Jud feels about himself and his situation, and thus strongly characterizes him. The song also affects the mood; the beginning of the song is sad, as Jud reviews his sad life and describes his pathetic daydream. But then Jud's declaration to go out and get Laurey brings the song to an aggressive, exciting, and even frightening end. Thus the song functions to achieve all three major purposes of integrated songs: advance plot, set mood and characterize. But since it was omitted from the film, apparently Rodgers and Hammerstein felt that it was dispensable, although it seems quite important in the play. Fordin reports that there was some thought of dropping this song from the show during rehearsals, because it tended to make people feel uneasy. Apparently the song made Jud more than just a cardboard villain and more of a psychological study into a deranged mind. But it was decided that the show needed the song to explain Jud's motivations, and so it was left in the play.[2] Perhaps it was felt that the film, going out to be seen by a more diverse, and perhaps more generally naive, audience than the Broadway show audiences, needed to show a less psychologically complicated, less motivated, more melodramatically villainous Jud, and that

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 48.

[2]Fordin, p. 193.

this song, therefore, seemed unnecessary and perhaps even inappropriate. Since the plot would continue with or without the song, and since the mood at this point is rather unhappy anyway, the main function of the song appears to be characterization of Jud, because the purpose of the song's being in the show is to show why he does what he does. He ruminates about himself and his bad situation and decides what should be done about it. He reveals his fantasies about Laurey and declares that he will make them come true. The song's being in the show allows more understanding of the villain, which is what Hammerstein intended the song to do.

"Out of My Dreams"

In the third scene of act 1, Laurey wants to try her Elixir of Egypt in order to decide what to do. She finds herself in love with Curly, but going to the party with Jud. Curly has gone to the trouble of renting a fine surrey to take her to the party in style, yet she is going with Jud, whom she fears, despises, and does not want to be near. Although the obvious answer to her problem is to tell Jud that she cannot go with him and then to go with Curly, she senses Jud's hostility and is afraid to cross him. Besides, her pride caused her to make the date with Jud, and her pride would have to suffer in admitting that she was wrong in order to break the date. Thus she is in a quandary.

The girls are amusing themselves in a grove on Laurey's farm, when she asks them to go somewhere else, so that she can be alone to make up her mind. One of the girls says, "Hey, Laurey, is it true you're lettin' Jud take you tonight 'stid of Curly?" And Laurey answers, "Tell you better when I think ever'thin' out clear. Beginnin' to see things clear a'ready." Then one of the girls says, I c'n tell you whut you want . . . " and begins singing: "Out of your dreams and into his arms you long to fly."[1] Different girls sing individual lines, and then the girls' chorus sings together, and the message is that the smelling salts will not tell her what she wants to know; her heart must tell her. Then Laurey sings the song, "Out of My Dreams," which leads into the "Dream Ballet."

The song consists of three sections, and the first and third are very similar. The girls' chorus sings the first and second sections and Laurey sings the third. The number of lines are six, four and six, respectively, with correspdonding rhyme schemes of aabcbc, aabb, and aabcbc. The similarity in sections one and three include sharing the same rhyming sounds at the ends of the corresponding lines. The song is basically in iambic hexameter and it contains several poetic devices that are figures of speech, but few sound devices. For example, there are seven instances of personification and two instances of hyperbole, as she sees

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 49.

herself, for example, "flying" out of her dreams and into Curly's arms. In addition, Hammerstein describes nature in beautiful terms, from "the hush of falling shadows" to stars' "breaking through."[1] Another Hammerstein trademark used in this lyric is repetition. The first section begins "Out of your dreams and into his arms you long to fly," and the last section begins "Out of my dreams and into your arms I long to fly."[2] And this song illustrates Hammerstein's fascination with the word "dream." It appears in this lyric seven times, here referring to daydreams.

In a sense she is telling what she plans to do this evening; she will emerge from her dreams and fly into Curly's arms at the same time as day is turning to night:

> I will come as evening comes to woo a waiting sky.
> Out of my dreams and into the hush of falling shadows,
> When the mist is low, and stars are breaking through,
> Then out of my dreams I'll go,
> Into a dream with you.[3]

Music cue 17 in the score is called the "Dream Sequence," and it consists of: (a) "Melos," (b)"Out of My Dreams," (c) "Interlude to Ballet," and (d) "Dream Ballet." "Melos" begins the music of the song under the spoken dialogue, which goes right into the song sung by Laurey and the girls' chorus, as described above, with the chorus leaving as Laurey begins her solo and Curly entering at the

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

end. The "Interlude to Ballet" consists of some of the music's being played again as the ballet-dancing counterparts of Laurey and Curly replace the acting-singing characters. Then the ballet begins as the figures dance to more music of this song. Thus although the music to this song is heard only during this one long continuous period of time, it could be said to be repeated four times, if each of these segments were counted individually. The only part of this music cue that is sung, however, is (b), and thus this is the only time that the title would be heard. And it is repeated six times during this presentation. After the "Dream Ballet," the song is never heard again, but the tune was heard in the "Overture" at the beginning of the show.

This ballad is about dreaming and sets a mood of leisurely relaxation. This is appropriate since it acts as a bridge leading from Laurey's waking life to her dream life. There are only two examples of colloquial pronunciation during the song, and both of these appear in the chorus sections. Laurey has no colloquialisms nor grammatical errors in her verse. The words do not detract then from their function of mood setting. Yet the song also gives a hint at how the plot will evolve, because Laurey eventually does exactly what she says she is going to do that evening. And since the song tells how Laurey intends to stop fantasizing about Curly and to activate her love for him, it also acts to characterize her. The function of plot movement is minimal, since it is only a hint. The

characterization of Laurey in her dream life is to be realized more in the ballet than in this short song, so the main function of the song appears to be mood setting. It prepares the audience for the dream actions in the ballet to follow, and thus fulfills an important function in setting the mood at this point in the play.

"The Farmer and the Cowman"

After the overture to the second act, the curtain rises as the guests at the party are dancing to the music of the song, "The Farmer and the Cowman." The music was used in the "Overture" at the beginning of the show, and the music is played again, after it is sung here, for more dancing, as well as for two subsequent scene changes. This means the music is heard five times, including the singing here, when the stage directions read, "Soon after the curtain rises, the melody settles into 'vamp' and CARNES holds up his hand as a signal that he wants to sing. The dancing couples retire and listen to him."[1] Rodgers and Hammerstein discussed how to open the show. Rodgers wrote, "We didn't want to begin with anything obvious, such as a barn dance with everyone a-whoopin' and a-hollerin'."[2] Obvious or not, this is exactly how they did open the second act, since they did not use it for the first act.

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[1]Ibid., p. 51.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 218.

There are fifty-six lines in this song; some are sung by individuals: Carnes--twenty-two lines, Will--one line, Curly--two lines, Eller--twelve lines, Annie--one line, and Ike Skidmore--four lines. And the chorus of girls and boys sings fourteen lines.

The song consists of six stanzas and three refrains. The refrains are all identical, except that the last one is divided into two parts, with the final two stanzas being sung between the two parts. The basic pattern for the lyric is iambic pentameter, although there are many exceptions.

The refrain consists of nine lines with the rhyme scheme of aabbacdcd. The first five lines discuss how the farmers and the ranchers should be friends, although their professions differ slightly. The last four lines are an admonition to the party guests that representatives of each profession should dance together to prove their friendship. In its first rendition, it is a solo for Carnes. The second time, Carnes sings the first five lines, followed by the chorus's joining on the last four lines. The last rendition is sung by all, although separated into the two sections, as described above, of five and four lines.

The four-lined stanzas have a rhyme scheme of abcb. Carnes, Will and Curly sing the first stanza, alternating lines. Being a farmer, Carnes is using this opportunity to say some nice things about the good things that the farmer has done for the community, but he is interrupted by Will and Curly who petulantly say that the farmer built fences

across the ranchers' cattle ranges. Carnes and Curly sing the second stanza. Carnes tries to defend the farmers by saying that they are thrifty and sober. Curly interrupts him to say that the reason the farmer is so sober is that he is too cheap to buy drinks. Aunt Eller and Ado Annie sing the third, and Eller and Carnes sing the fourth. Both of these stanzas are Eller's defense of the cowboys. She points out that the cowboy has a hard and lonely job. Then she says that the farmer should be more considerate of the cowboys when they stop by the farms for refreshment, but Carnes adds that the farmer must protect his women from the cowboys. Ike Skidmore sings the fifth stanza. It is at Skidmore's ranch that the party is being held, and Curly works for him. Skidmore sings a stanza urging brotherhood between the two factions, because their Territory is soon to become a state, and this implies camaraderie of the inhabitants. Aunt Eller sings the last stanza. This is where she teaches the chorus her philosophy of being proud of oneself, "I don't say I'm no better than anybody else,/But I'll be damned if I ain't jist as good!"[1] The chorus likes Aunt Eller's philosophy so much that they repeat these two lines, before finishing the song with the last four lines of the refrain. Then they return to their dance.

The feud between the farmers and ranchers was based

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 54.

on the fact that the ranchers arrived first and had unrestricted space in which their cattle could graze. But the farmer fenced off areas for his crops, which seemed an infringement on the ranchers' open spaces. The feud might be compared to the Romeo and Juliet theme of two warring factions. Seven times during the singing of this song, angry members of one side or the other interrupt the singer to interject a comment against what the singer is saying. On the seventh interruption, a fracas breaks out between the two factions, only to be stopped by Aunt Eller, who shoots a gun and shames them. She insists that the festivities continue, and they comply. This occurs between the singing of the fourth stanza and the beginning of the last refrain. Thus, although this is generally a happy song on the surface, and although the representatives of the older generation--Carnes, Skidmore, and Aunt Eller--are singing about being friendly and stopping the feud, the younger members of the groups continue to resent each other's infringement. However, as in Romeo and Juliet two members of the younger generation, one from each warring side, fall in love to bridge the gap. This resolution concludes both the melodrama and the comedy. Laurey and Ado Annie represent the farmers' side, and Curly and Will are both cowboys. Yet the marriages of the two couples will bring the two sides together. The merchant trade, however, does not get mixed, since both Gertie and the Peddler can be said to represent that profession.

Although there are solo voices in this song, it is basically a choral number. Everyone is, for the most part, singing about friendship. When a soloist takes over, he or she might add a little tease at the other side, but the song is basically a happy one. It has a few funny lines, but is just a friendly song with a beat to accommodate the country dancing.

The title names the two sides and is heard in the first two lines of the refrain in each of its repetitions, totalling six times the audience will hear the title, again emphasizing Hammerstein's penchant for repetition. However, poetic devices of any kind are scarce in this lyric. Aunt Eller uses an interior rhyme in the third line of the third and fourth stanzas, and one of these even contains a simile which also uses alliteration: "Don't treat him like a louse; make him welcome in your house."[1] The words of the song are notably informal, with liberal use of slang, using such terms as "pals," "gals," and "stick together."

This song functions in the play to set the gay mood for the party. No plot movement takes place, and nothing in the song adds or changes anyone's character portrait. But the occasion is a party, and parties are supposed to be fun. What do country folks do at a party? They sing, dance, laugh, and socialize with each other, and this song affords ample opportunity for all of these activities. The

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[1]Ibid., 53.

essential message in the song is embodied in Skidmore's stanza:

> And when this territory is a state,
> And joins the union just like all the others,
> The farmer and the cowman and the merchant
> Must all behave theirsel's and act like brothers.[1]

"All er Nothin'"

The last of the three songs that is sung only once and never heard anywhere else in the show is "All er Nothin'." It is a comic duet between Will and Annie after they have sealed their engagement. It is act 2, scene 1, and Will has asked Annie to name their wedding day. Annie says she wants August 15, because that is the anniversary of the first day she was ever kissed, reminding the audience how important kissing is to her. Will is delighted that she thinks so much of his first kiss that she fondly remembers the date of it. He says, "Was it? I didn't remember that," to which Annie responds, "You wasn't there."[2] Will decides that it is time that he brought up Annie's promiscuity to her; he wants a promise of future fidelity from his philandering wife-to-be. He says, "Now looka here, we gotta have a serious talk. Now that you're engaged to me, you gotta stop havin' fun! . . . I mean with other fellers."[3] And then he begins to sing.

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[1]Ibid., 54.

[2]Ibid., p. 65.

[3]Ibid.

The song consists of one stanza and two refrains. The stanza is twelve lines long, divided into three sections of four lines each. Each of these sections starts a new rhyme scheme, which is abab with a double rhyme in lines 1 and 3, except in the last section, which has a rhyme scheme of abcb, but it has a double interior rhyme in lines 1, 2, and 3 to compensate for the change in scheme. The meter is iambic pentameter, and sound devices are prolific throughout. Examples of alliteration are used in almost every line, and much humor is added by the use of colloquial expressions, such as, "kickin' up some capers," "lost my bloomers," and "dig myself a hole where I c'n hide."[1]

Following the stanza, there is an eight-line interlude, which is spoken in rhythm to music, and has a rhyme scheme of abcbcefe. This is described in the stage directions as Will's "Breaking in and spurting out his pent-up resentment at a great injustice."[2] It is set in iambic tetrameter and continues the use of many poetic sound devices, such as this assonance in the first line of this interlude: "I go and sow my last wild oat!"[3] There is even a triple rhyme in the second and fourth lines: "shenanigans" with "Flannigan's."

The two refrains are similar, but not identical.

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[1]Ibid., p. 66.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

They are in iambic trimeter. They consist of eleven lines each, with a rhyme scheme of abcdbeffgag. The two refrains are heard consecutively, except that there is a six-line interlude between them, which copies the rhyme scheme of the last six of the refrain. This gives the impression that the refrain consists of two sections: a five-lined section, A, and a six-lined section, B. Looking at the two refrains this way, the sections are in this order: A, B, B, A, B. The alliterations continue in proliferation, but there are no figures of speech in the entire song, and the colloquial pronunciations and grammatical errors are rampant. It is a comic song, and the wording is comic, both in the words chosen and in sound devices.

The title occurs in the first two lines of each refrain, totalling four repetitions during the song. The title also describes the content of the message, which is Will's contention that he wants all of Annie's love or none at all. He will not accept a wife who plays around.

In making his point, Will first reminds Annie of the rumors about her behavior. She defends herself by saying it is just idle gossip. He tells her of all that he has given up to be true to her and expects her to do the same. Annie asks for confirmation on a few points and then teases him that he need not give up anything for her, because she has no intention of giving up anything for him. But in the end they kiss and dance off together, so it seems that Will's point is well made, although it may take a monumental effort

on Annie's part to change her outlook on life.

This song functions in the show to characterize both Annie and Will, as Will describes his ideal of a happy, mutually exclusive, wedded life, and Annie continues to show her preference for variety. It is the last love scene between these two until they show up at the end of the show after their romp in the hay. Thus it serves to tie up their comic love story, and therefore functions in the plot. It also serves in mood setting. It follows the tense auction at the party, after which Jud has just tried to stab Curly with the Little Wonder. Thus it breaks the frightening and serious mood with some light-hearted humor. This is good because the next scene is the one in which Laurey fires Jud, which is also frightening and serious. Therefore, this song serves to break the tension and to contrast with the scenes that come before and after it. Thus, although it is never reprised, it is an important song, in that it serves all three functions of a song in an integrated musical. But since it is the final love scene to tie up the loose ends of the comic love affair, its main function appears to be its service in carrying the plot of the comedy to a happy solution.

"Oklahoma"

In the last scene of the play, the young couples have been joined in either marriage or promise of marriage. Laurey and Curly's wedding is just over and the entire

wedding party is at her farm. The crowd enters with happy shouts of laughter; Laurey is in her wedding dress. This is when the rousing title song is sung.

Before the show had started out-of-town tryouts, there was a series of performances of some of the songs, narrated by Hammerstein, in the drawing rooms of rich New Yorkers, in search of backers. Money was hard to come by. A "cowboy musical" was a new idea. Hammerstein had not had a hit for several years, and Rodgers had previously only written with one lyricist, not Hammerstein. And there were no stars in the cast. One evening during a taxi ride to one of these backers' auditions, Terry Helburn, one of the producers, said to Hammerstein, "I wish you and Dick would write a song about the earth. . . . Oh, I don't know, just a song about the earth--the land."[1] Although producers often have nothing to do with the aesthetic end of a show, Helburn's suggestion was the seed that grew into the song, "Oklahoma." At this point the show was called Away We Go! But after Helburn's suggestion, Hammerstein wrote a song describing the land--the crops it produces, the pasture land, the flowers, the open air, the wind, the rain--and ended up naming it after the state that the Territory would become. It was earthy, patriotic, clean, healthy--a typical Hammerstein type of lyric. It was originally planned as a solo for Curly to sing after the wedding, showing his

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[1]Fordin, p. 197.

happiness at being married, becoming a farmer, and living in a new state. But in New Haven, according to Bennett, the orchestrator, one of the singing girls in the chorus suggested to Rodgers that he change it to a full choral number. She mentioned that there were many trained voices going to waste, just singing in unison on the few choral numbers, and that they really could sing something more challenging which would be more interesting to the audience.[1] Rodgers and Bennett worked out the choral arrangement for this number, which is one of the most intricately arranged numbers in the American musical theatre.

This song so impressed everyone connected with the show that the decision was made after the New Haven tryout to name the show after the final song. Almost everyone connected with the show takes credit for changing the title, and even the addition of the exclamation point, so it is impossible to know at this time who actually should be credited. Waldau gives some of the other titles that were originally considered for the show: Yea-airree, Swing Your Lady, and Cherokee Strip. When the show got to Boston, the title was Oklahoma, but the advance publicity had used Away We Go, so this title was used there. The title in the advance publicity for New York was Oklahoma,

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[1]Bennett, 1981.

but without the exclamation point. When the decision was made to add that punctuation, some of the employees of the Theatre Guild had to go all over New York adding exclamation points to the posters, already posted, advertising the show.[1]

The song consists of one stanza and one refrain. The music was first heard in the initial "Overture," and it is sung only this one time in the show. However, Curly sings the refrain alone once, to be followed by a full choral treatment of it, and then there is an additional encore choral rendition of it, too. Thus the refrain is heard three times, always using the same words, but slightly different musical arrangements.

The stanza is sung in solo lines by Aunt Eller, Ike Skidmore, Curly, Laurey, and Fred, with two lines sung by the chorus. It is made up of fourteen lines, set basically in iambic tetrameter, with a rhyme scheme of ababbbcdedeeff. The message is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the present situation:

> They couldn't pick a better time to start in life!
> It ain't too early and it ain't too late.
> Startin' as a farmer with a brand-new wife--
> Soon be livin' in a brand-new state!
> Brand-new state
> Gonna treat you great![2]

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[1]Waldau, p. 385.

[2]Rodgers, Six Plays, pp. 75-76.

The second section describes the attributes of the new state:

> Gonna give you barley,
> Carrots and pertaters--
> Pasture for the cattle--
> Spinach and termayters!
> Flowers on the prairie where the June bugs zoom--
> Plen'y of air and plen'y of room--
> Plen'y of room to swing a rope!
> Plen'y of heart and plen'y of hope.[1]

Hammerstein uses repetition to good effect here. For example, the word "start" appears in the first and third lines. The second line contains the phrase, "It ain't too" twice. The hyphenated word "brand-new" is used three times, twice referring to the state and once to a wife. And the word "plen'y" occurs five times in this stanza, telling what there will be plenty of in the new state.

There is also much alliteration in this stanza. The plosive t sound is heard thirteen times in the first two lines, and the n sound is heard eight times in the next two lines.

The refrain has seventeen lines, set in iambic meter, with varying numbers of poetic feet per line. The rhyme scheme is abbacddceefff, except in four lines that consist mainly of the word "Oklahoma," which is rhymed with nothing else.

The refrain is also full of alliteration, with eight

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[1]Ibid., p. 76.

w's in the second through the fifth lines, seven n's in the seventh through the tenth lines, and six l's in the tenth through the twelfth lines. Hammerstein continues his description of the natural beauty of Oklahoma which he started in the stanza, when he now adds,

> And the wavin' wheat
> Can sure smell sweet
> When the wind comes right behind the rain.[1]

The message of the refrain is that Oklahoma is a wonderful place to live, as Curly looks forward to evenings looking out at the land with his new wife. He says that the guests at the party are people who belong to the land, and that the common sound of cowboys and farmers yelling, "Ee-ee-ow! A-yip-i-o-ee-ay!" translates into a compliment to the land, telling it, "Your're doin' fine, Oklahoma! Oklahoma, O. K.!"[2]

This whole last scene is about weddings: the wedding of Laurey and Curly which has just taken place, the wedding of Gertie and Ali Hakim four days ago, the approaching wedding of Ado Annie and Will, and the wedding of the Territory with the United States. These parallel wedding events, happening at about the same time, symbolize unity, a joining of disparate elements into a cohesive whole, a combining that erases differences and creates a new, happy, and successful alliance. Since Jud was an obstacle that

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

could not be assimilated, he had to be removed. This song is the anthem for this symbolic union. It even contains the spelling out of the name of the new state in the elaborate choral arrangement that Bennett made of it, which is typical of a "fight song" for a school athletic team. And like a fight song, the words, even more when the music and its special arrangement are added, tend to be uplifting. They say that America is a great place to live and the characters in this play like living in it. It is understandable that an American audience, especially during World War II in 1943, would be rallied behind its country by this song--and by this whole show, for that matter. The only music yet to be heard is a reprise of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" and "People Will Say We're in Love" as Curly and Laurey leave on their honeymoon. So this is the last new song to be heard in the show, leaving a final impression on the audience of patriotism, hope, and contentment.

The title is used four times in the refrain of this song, which means, with the two choral repetitions added, that the title is heard twelve times. And it does tell what the song is about. It is interesting to note that "Oklahoma" was made the official state song of the state of Oklahoma, the only song from a Broadway show ever to be bestowed such an honor.

The song functions in the play to characterize the entire cast, but especially Curly, since the song was originally written for him. It also advances the plot by

indicating that Curly and Laurey are ready to settle down to a happily married life. But its main function is to set the mood, described above, of elation in being married in a beautiful land.

Summary and significance of lyrics

Of the thirteen songs in Oklahoma!, there are four comic songs, one sad song, one mock heroic song, one love song, two lyric ballads, and four special numbers that fall into various categories. The three comic songs, "Kansas City," "I Cain't Say No," "All Er Nothin'," and "It's a Scandal! It's a Outrage!," tend to emphasize sounds, including many rhyming effects, but few other poetic devices. Their lyrics also contain a great deal of poor grammar and colloquial pronunciation, and they are all sung by the principals in the comedy subplot. Dialogue that is spoken in rhythm to a musical background is used in two of the comic songs. "Kansas City" is repeated once in the show; "I Cain't Say No" is repeated three times, and the other two comic songs are among the three songs that are heard only once in the show and never reprised. The comic songs include one of narration, one of self-explanation, and two songs of complaint. Three are solos and one is a duet, although the boys chorus does join in on two of the songs.

The one sad song, "Lonely Room," is a self-analysis by Jud, and also a declaration of impending action. It is the third song that is never reprised in the show. There is little rhyme in this song, and there are no poetic sound

devices at all; however, there are a few figures of speech in it.

The mock heroic song, "Pore Jud Is Daid," heard three times during the show, is between a comic song and a sad song, because it is sad on the surface, but has a comic intent. This duet also contains some rhythmic dialogue that is spoken to music.

The one love song, "People Will Say We're in Love," is a duet, and it is repeated eight times in the script, more than any other song. It uses many rhymes and much alliteration. It is the only love song between the hero and heroine of the melodrama, and its counterpart in the musical comedy is the comic duet, "All Er Nothin'." It also has a surface meaning different from its intent.

There are two lyric ballads, each a solo which pours out inner thoughts: "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" and "Out of My Dreams." The former is repeated four times in the script, and the latter is repeated only once, after its lengthy original sung presentation. These songs use many figures of speech, but few sound devices.

The remaining four songs are of various types. "Oklahoma" is a rousing, patriotic tribute to the land, which is repeated three times during the show. "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top" is a slightly comic sales pitch, which is repeated twice. "Many a New Day" is a women's liberation number, the counterpart of "It's a Scandal! It's a Outrage," which is a comical men's liberation number. It

is also the opposite of Ado Annie's "I Cain't Say No," because "Many a New Day" says that Laurey definitely can say no. This latter song is repeated three times during the show. "The Farmer and the Cowman," repeated four times during the show, is a happy, philosophical song about the brotherhood of man, sung to hoe-down music. The poetic devices vary in these songs, but they tend to have more rhymes and sound devices than figures of speech.

All of the songs display faulty grammar and nonstandard articulation, but Laurey's lyrics tend to have the least. The more comic the song, the more sound devices, including extensive rhyming, it is likely to have. More figures of speech occur in the comtemplative songs. Curly shows that he has a talent for swaying people's moods with his singing, and he also shows a penchant for exaggeration. Most of the songs talk about nature, especially Curly's songs, and the lyrics make it quite clear that everyone loves the land and all of its products. The songs also often display Hammerstein's penchant for repetition, and dreams are mentioned in five songs in the show: "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top," "Kansas City," "Lonely Room," and "Out of My Dreams."

Seven of the thirteen songs function in all three of the means by which songs can be integrated into the show. Two more songs function in two of the three ways. The individual breakdown of major functions is as follows: two songs advance the plot; three songs set the mood; and eight

songs' main contribution to the show is to characterize those who are singing them.

Although these statistics indicate a high degree of integration of lyrics with the libretto, they also reveal that the main function of songs in this show is character delineation. The songs' lyrics alone, i.e. without the spoken dialogue of the plot, reveal who the hero, heroine, villain, comic characters, and the older, wiser citizens are. And many of the personality traits of each character are displayed in the lyrics they sing: Curly is revealed to be a braggart with a talent for salesmanship; Laurey is a snob; Ado Annie is promiscuous; Jud is a lonely, deeply troubled man; Will is naive and very much in love; Eller is sensible and practical. And everyone is shown to be fond of nature and of their land.

The lyrics in this show are indispensable in conveying the full message that was intended by its creators.

CONCLUSIONS ON SCRIPT

Hammerstein closely adapted the script of Oklahoma! from Riggs's Green Grow the Lilacs. Much of the dialogue is identical or extremely similar in the two plays. The dialect and references to rural lifestyle of Oklahoma in 1900 are retained.

The plot changes include setting more of the play outdoors and making the story generally happier in Oklahoma! The added joy in the latter play comes from

shortening the time spent on Jud's death and even making Curly's legal entanglement resulting from Jud's death humorous. There is no long, frightening shivoree, jail, nor escaping fugitive. Rodgers and Hammerstein retained Rigg's melodramatic romantic triangle and added a parallel comic subplot.

Each triangle has its own hero, heroine, and blocking character, but some characters function in both plots. The characters represent the farming, ranching, and mercantile trades of two social classes: upper and lower. The social classes are joined by the final romantic matings, but only the farming and ranching trades are blended, leaving the mercantile trade still unmixed, except by the mingling of its social classes.

The characters Will and Gertie are added to Oklahoma! and the parts of Ado Annie and Ali are magnified. But all characters function in one or both of the plots of the play; none are added for the specialty number they could offer, nor merely for humor. Jud is made more psychologically understandable, rather than just being a cardboard villain. All of the characters are more three-dimensional than traditional musical comedy characters, especially Laurey, who even develops during the play from a spoiled, immature child to a woman. Most of the characters are wholesome and likeable.

The songs and dances are integrated into the play, either by being necessary to tell the story, to delineate

the characters and/or to set the proper mood. And the ballet continues the story of the play. The most often used integrating device is to delineate character. The songs are integrated into the show, not only by their content, but also by the dialogue that leads into them. There are nine solos, three duets, and one choral number. All are reprised, except three, to equal thirty music cues in the show. The least repeated songs are the comic and sad ones.

The themes of the play include good conquering evil, romantic love leading to marriage, learning through suffering, and hope for betterment. There is a parallel between the theme that love plus marriage equals individual fulfillment and the theme that statehood of Oklahoma equals fulfillment for all the inhabitants of Oklahoma. The theme of hope includes success as a reward for hard work and living a good life, as well as the brotherhood of man that is necessary in working together for the good of all. Nature is treated throughout the play as a serious symbol of good.

On the whole, Oklahoma! has more integration of the characters, plots, lyrics, and dances than the prior musical plays on Broadway. This play helped reject the stereotypical elements previously common to Broadway musicals, but its innovations were copied, only to become new prototypical elements to be copied by future writers.

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF THE OKLAHOMA! SCORE

This chapter is devoted to the analysis of the complete printed vocal and piano score of Oklahoma!, copyrighted in 1943 by Williamson Music Company,[1] the publishing company which was formed, in partnership with Chappell Music Company, by Rodgers and Hammerstein that year for this specific publication and which continued to publish all musical works by Rodgers and Hammerstein throughout their entire collaboration.[2] The page numbers and cue numbers for music discussed in this chapter are those used in this source.

Introduction

Harold Schonberg, former music critic of the New York Times, has stated his concern that the scores of Broadway musicals should be analyzed:

> Nobody, curiously enough, has ever subjected the musical part of the Broadway music [sic] to a really professional analysis. Trained musician-critics avoid the musical; it would be slumming, far beneath the

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[1]Rodgers, Oklahoma!, A Musical Play.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 234.

> dignity of a musical savant. Yet through the years the Broadway musical stage has accounted for a more permanent body of music (in that great show tunes have lived and been loved continuously for three generations and more) than American classical music has. It is time that a real expert took a definitive look at the subject . . . .[1]

This dissertation therefore is intended to help fill this void by subjecting the score of Oklahoma! to analysis.

According to Jan LaRue, professor of musical theory at New York University, the analysis of music forms a framework for understanding the music, thus allowing conclusions on musical style to be based predominantly upon actual musical facts and relationships, rather than relying exclusively on subjective aesthetic judgments.[2] LaRue states:

> Taking a solely musical view, therefore, the style of a piece consists of the predominant choices of elements and procedures a composer makes in developing movement and shape . . . . By extension, we can perceive a distinguishing style in a group of pieces from the recurrent use of similar choices, and a composer's style as a whole can be described in terms of consistent and changing preferences in his use of musical elements and procedures.[3]

J. E. Cohen describes musical composition as the process of putting the available elements into an order that is pleasing to the composer. He says, "The composer's task is to select among available possibilities, and,

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[1]Schonberg, "A Special Kind of Theatre," pp. 28-29.

[2]Jan LaRue, Guidelines for Style Analysis (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), pp. vi-ix.

[3]Ibid., p. ix.

traditionally, to impose some sort of 'order' on them. . . . The degree of selection differs among composers and among their compositions. . . . The degree of selectivity of the works of composers is then a parameter of their style."[1] In extension of this theory, Igor Stravinsky has said that when he was composing he felt "The need . . . to bring order out of chaos . . . . Now art is the contrary of chaos . . . . All art presupposes a work of selection. To proceed by elimination--to know how to discard, as the gambler says--that is the great technique of selection."[2]

Thus this chapter was written in order to reveal Rodgers's style of composition in Oklahoma!, i.e., his choices in musical structural materials that, if compared with other composers' choices, would set the Oklahoma! score apart. This analysis also gives an insight into his variations in choices to suit different dramatic situations and to expose or represent different character traits. Rodgers has spoken of his style in composition of the music for Oklahoma! as follows:

> Though the words could be poetic and the music tender and romantic, Oscar and I were both careful in writing the score and lyrics to make the songs sound natural when sung by cowboys, ranchers and farm girls living in

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[1]J.E. Cohen, "Information Theory and Music," Behavioral Science 7, no. 2 (April 1962): 137.

[2]LaRue., p. x, citing Igor Stravinsky, Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons (New York: Vintage Books, 1956).

> Indian Territory at the turn of the century. Though I had no prior experience creating melodies indigenous to this period and locale, I felt it important that the songs be embellished with a certain amount of regional flavoring. . . . If my melodies were going to be authentic, they'd have to be authentic in my own terms.
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> This is the way I have always worked, no matter what the setting of the story. . . . Had I attempted to duplicate the real thing, it would never have sounded genuine, for the obvious reason that I am neither Chinese, French, Siamese, nor from the Southwest. All a composer--any composer--can do is to make an audience believe it is hearing an authentic sound without losing his own musical identity.[1]

Therefore, Rodgers's composition of the music was a process of choosing those musical elements and structures that he believed would best fit the interpretation of the characters and situations depicted in Oklahoma! This leads to a consideration of the decision-making process of composers. That is, how does a composer decide which musical material will convey what message? No one has yet discerned conclusive answers to this question, but much research is being done on the subject by psychologists. Some examples follow.

Psychological aspects of music

Carl E. Seashore, in his book Psychology of Music, describes the aesthetic experience of music from the viewpoint of the composer, the performer, and the listener. He explains that "music is . . . in the mind of the composer and in the mind of the listener, not actual sounds but

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 219-20.

images, ideas, ideals, thoughts, and emotions."[1] He speaks of conveying a message in music:

> The musical message is that esthetic experience--be it feeling, ideation, impulse, craving, wish, or inspiration--which the composer in the first instance and the interpreter at the next level desire to convey to the audience through the form given by the musical medium. In the same manner, the message may be regarded as that experience or interpretation which the listener arrives at from hearing the rendition, from scanning the score, or from reminiscent memory in vivid and constructive imagination. The esthetics of the message, therefore, becomes the psychological analysis, interpretation, and explanation of the musical experience of the sender and the receiver of music, in terms of content.[2]

Musicians customarily separate music into two basic categories, as determined by the approach and intent of the composer: program music and absolute music. Most theatre music can inherently be classified as program music, i.e., music which is composed to reveal an emotional experience or visual image, as opposed to absolute music, which is created merely by composition rules with little thought of interpreting a mood or an image.[3] Seashore discusses program music:

> The composer or performer who desires to transmit an experience of pure feeling places himself in a receptive mood in which the musical material takes the form that

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[1]Carl E. Seashore, Psychology of Music (New York: Dover Publications, 1967), p. 14.

[2]Ibid., p. 379.

[3]Westrup, pp. 2, 515.

> satisfies his mood spontaneously. . . .
> . . . in program music, the originator attempts to use musical figures which convey concrete ideas that serve as a sort of idol, stilt, or skeleton to which the musical feeling is attached. Such themes aim to portray moonlight, the lover, contest the forces of nature. . . . music can be a language which conveys ideas and pictures of objects that arouse the feeling revealed in the tone conveyed in the music.[1]

Seashore points out that the listener must complete the transmission of the visual or emotional impact of the music by his own imaginative capabilities, after it has been created by the composer and interpreted by the performer, and this can vary somewhat from one listener to another. He says:

> What a listener shall hear in music depends on what he is, or is capable of putting into it, that is, hearing into it. Hearing is not a mere registering of sounds. It is a positive, active process of reconstruction in the mind of the listener. . . . In the highest form of appreciative listening, we approach the attitude of ecstasy in which the actual sounds of the tones merely furnish the cues for the mental reconstruction that proceeds from the mind of the listener. To a person who is not capable of imagery, there can be no genuine music, because, like the lines in the crayon sketch, the tones by themselves, however accurately heard, furnish at the best a mere skeleton for hearing.[2]

The music of Oklahoma! can be classified as program music, since it was specifically composed to help to tell the story, illuminate the characters, and set moods for the situations, i.e., to convey ideas. Rodgers primarily wrote music that was intended only for some form of the

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[1]Seashore, p. 380.

[2]Ibid., p. 125.

theatre, i.e., stage, films, ballet, or television, thus qualifying virtually all of his music to be called programmatic. He indicated that he was always aware of the programmatic quality of his compositions: "Whenever I get an idea for a song, even before jotting down the notes, I can hear it in the orchestra, I can smell it in the scenery, I can see the kind of actor who will sing it, and I am aware of an audience listening to it."[1] This indicates that he did want to communicate to his audience the feelings he had concerning the characters and situations in Oklahoma! as he composed the music for them. He summarized his feeling by saying, "If a composer is to reach his audience emotionally--and surely that's what theatre music is all about--he must reach the people through sounds they can relate to."[2]

How music affects the emotions has been the subject of extensive research. In 1952 Emil Gutheil wrote a summary of the results of some of his experiments in which he said,

> The influence of music upon human emotions has been studied empirically for a long time. . . . Experiments proceeded along two main lines: investigation of the effect music has on the physiological functions of the human organism, and study of its influence upon the human mind.
>
> On the basis of these observations it was assumed that music can elicit certain psychosomatic reactions within the spheres of circulation, respiration, and others, and that it can also influence the mood and

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 239-240.

[2]Ibid., p. 273.

> other psychological conditions in a large group of people.[1]

Gutheil points out that the effects of music on the human body and mind were assumed, even by the ancients. For example, Gutheil points out that Plato said in the fourth book of The Republic that music makes the body and mind healthy; Aristotle spoke of the emotional cathartic function of music; Cassidorus observed that music could cheer up depression; and Pythagoras said that music is good for one's health.[2]

However, Gutheil does point out the difficulty of measuring psychological effects of music because of the many variables in the numerous elements of music and in the receptivity of individual listeners. But he does insist that the existence of music's effectiveness over man's mood, appetite, sleep and general well-being is no longer denied.[3] He indicates that human differences cloud the possibility of determining the exact consequences of music, in that everyone differs in his experiences of the world around him, and there is no control over this differential, because the response one has to the world is virtually

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[1]Emil Gutheil, Music and Your Emotions: A Practical Guide to Music Selections Associated with Desired Emotional Responses (New York: Music Research Foundation, 1952), p. 9.

[2]Ibid., p. 26.

[3]Ibid., pp. 18, 24.

involuntary.[1] Gutheil states, "The emotional reactions which music may arouse are as numerous as the individuals reacting, and the subjectivity of emotional experiences which is reflected in all this variability is the core of our problem. . . . Science is usually befuddled by subjectivity."[2]

Psychologist Melvin Rigg has also done extensive research into the effects of music on the moods of listeners. He asks:

> What is the meaning of a piece of music? To the professional musician, significance is apt to be placed upon intrinsic meanings embodied in harmonic, contrapuntal, or formal relationships. On the other hand, the musical layman often seeks for extrinsic meanings beyond the music. The extrinsic meanings may be divided into two subtypes: (a) mood effects and (b) definite ideas and actions that the music is supposed to portray. . . .
>
> Music can produce changes in breathing, pulse rate, blood pressure, and galvanic skin response. . . . The verbal report, in spite of its subjectivity, has been more satisfactory than the physiological measurements . . . .[3]

Rigg goes on to describe the usual structure of a mood test for music. He says that short bits of music are played and listeners are asked to check adjectives on lists to describe how each bit of music makes them feel. For example, musical bits might be chosen that emphasize fast speeds, medium

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[1]Ibid., p. 17.

[2]Ibid., p. 15.

[3]Melvin Rigg, "The Mood Effects of Music: A Comparison of Data from Four Investigators," The Journal of Psychology 34 (October 1964): 429.

speeds, slow speeds, or music in major keys, minor keys and so on. The idea is to select each bit of music so that one outstanding aspect of music's effects can be measured. The significant amount of agreement among tested subjects as to the mood effect of specific bits of music leads Rigg to conclude that the tests are valid and that mood response to music is a definite and measurable effect.[1]

As far as this researcher can determine, the specific effects of the music on the audience at a performance of Oklahoma! have not been measured. But it does appear that the writers of the show intended to convey feelings and to evoke some emotional responses in their audience. Therefore, although identifying the specific elements of the music of Oklahoma! which evoke various precise responses from various members of the audience is not possible, the potential effects and surreptitious messages of some of the various structural elements used by Rodgers in the music will be discussed, based on previous psychological experiments on emotional responses to similar musical materials.

Organization of the Score of "Oklahoma!"

The score of Oklahoma! is divided into an overture and twenty-nine consecutively numbered music cues, with

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[1]Ibid., p. 427.

music cue #17 being divided into four sections. Considering each of these cues as individual entities, there are thirty-three separate musical pieces to consider in this show. In this analysis these thirty-three music cues are divided into three groups. To begin with, there are only thirteen songs that comprise the score; these are analyzed in the first part of this chapter and are referred to in this dissertation as "primary" presentations. Secondly, fifteen times there occur virtually complete repetitions of some of the primary songs; these repetitions are dealt with in the second portion of this chapter and are referred to as "repetitions." Thirdly, five music cues in the score are made up of a potpourri of some of the original tunes and these are discussed in the third section of this chapter's analyses and are referred to as "potpourri" numbers. These three sections are mainly concerned with the structure of the music in the score. The influence of the lyrics on the structure is also mentioned in these sections, since the lyrics were written before the music in most cases and thus influenced Rodgers's choices of musical elements.[1] However, this chapter deals mainly with musical structure. In addition to discussion of the organization of the different sections of the music of each piece, the musical components which will be discussed are the time elements,

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 220.

the melodies, and the harmonies of the music of Oklahoma!, which are usually composed concurrently. Aaron Frankel, musical theatre director, writer, and teacher, says the following about the Broadway composer: "The moment he hears a musical idea, it is true, a composer would find it impossible to disconnect melody from rhythm and harmony. They are as inseparable in composing as character, action and situation are in dramatizing."[1]

Table 5 lists all thirty-three music cues in the Oklahoma! score as they are listed on its "Musical Program" page.[2] It will be noted that the "Overture" has no program number, because none was assigned to it in the score, and that the "Dream Ballet" is divided into program numbers 17a, 17b, 17c, and 17d, as it is in the score, but these are treated as separate pieces of music in the analysis. The titles of the cues (column 2) were copied from the same page, and the page numbers for the score pages (column 3) are those pages of the score on which the actual music for that piece is printed. The script page numbers (column 4) indicate the pages in the script copy used for this dissertation on which the lyrics for the songs appear or where the music is indicated to be played in the stage directions or where the music cue would be played in the

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[1]Frankel, p. 84.

[2]Rodgers, Oklahoma!, A Musical Play, p. 4.

TABLE 5

THE THIRTY-THREE MUSIC CUES IN OKLAHOMA!

Program No.	Title	Score pp.	Script pp.	No. of Bars	Presentation Form	Basic Function	Type
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Overture	5-15	7	254	Instrumental	Mood	Potpourri
1	Opening Act I ("Oh, What a Beautiful Morning'")	16-22	7-8	120	Vocal Solo	Characterization	Primary
2	Laurey's Entrance ("Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'")	23	9	16	Vocal Solo	Technical	Repetition
3	"The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top"	24-36	10-12	175	Vocal Solo	Plot	Primary
4	"Kansas City"	37-49	15-16	292	Vocal Solo/ Dance	Characterization	Primary
5	Reprise of "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top"	50-51	18	28	Vocal Solo	Plot	Repetition
6	"I Cain't Say No"	52-56	21-22	149	Vocal Solo	Characterization	Primary
7	Encore--"I Cain't Say No"	57-59	22	60	Vocal Solo	Characterization	Repetition

TABLE 5--Continued

Program No.	Title (2)	Score pp. (3)	Script pp. (4)	No. of Bars (5)	Presentation Form (6)	Basic Function (7)	Type (8)
8	Entrance of Ensemble	60-62	28-29	37	Vocal Chorus	Technical	Potpourri
9	"Many A New Day"	63-69	29-30	93	Vocal Solo	Characterization	Primary
10	Dance--"Many A New Day"	70-76	30	117	Dance/Vocal Chorus	Characterization	Repetition
11	"It's a Scandal! It's a Outrage!"	77-83	33-35	187	Vocal Solo/Chorus	Characterization	Primary
12	"People Will Say We're in Love"	84-90	36-38	180	Vocal Duet	Characterization	Primary
13	Change of Scene ["People Will Say We're in Love"]	91-92	39	50	Instrumental	Technical	Repetition
14	"Pore Jud Is Daid"	93-98	41-43	65	Vocal Duet	Characterization	Primary
15	"Lonely Room"	99-103	47-48	53	Vocal Solo	Characterization	Primary

TABLE 5--Continued

Program No. (1)	Title (2)	Score pp. (3)	Script pp. (4)	No. of Bars (5)	Presentation Form (6)	Basic Function (7)	Type (8)
16	Change of Scene ["Many a New Day"]	104-105	48-105	32	Instrumental	Technical	Repetition
17 (a)	Dream Sequence Melos ["Out of My Dreams"]	106-107	48-49	32	Instrumental	Mood	Repetition
(b)	"Out of My Dreams"	108-113	49	124	Vocal Solo/ Chorus	Characterization	Primary
(c)	Interlude to Ballet ["Out of My Dreams"]	113	50	10	Instrumental	Technical	Repetition
(d)	"Dream Ballet"	114-134	51	521	Dance	Characterization	Potpourri
18	Entr'Act	135-139	51	96	Instrumental	Mood	Potpourri
19	Opening Act II--"The Farmer and the Cowman"	140-153	51-54	255	Vocal Chorus	Mood	Primary
20	Farmer Dance ["The Farmer and the Cowman"	154-158	54	140	Dance/ Vocal Chorus	Mood	Repetition

TABLE 5--Continued

Program No.	Title	Score pp.	Script pp.	No. of Bars	Presentation Form	Basic Function	Type
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
21	Change of Scene ["The Farmer and the Cowman"]	159	65	18	Instrumental	Technical	Repetition
22	"All Er Nothing"	160-174	65-68	248	Vocal Duet	Characterization	Primary
23	Change of Scene ["The Farmer and the Cowman"]	175	68	18	Instrumental	Technical	Repetition
24	Reprise of "People Will Say We're in Love"	176-178	72	48	Vocal Duet	Plot	Repetition
25	Change of Scene ["People Will Say We're in Love"]	179-180	72	50	Instrumental	Technical	Repetition
26	Change of Scene ["People Will Say We're in Love"]	181-182	75	50	Instrumental	Technical	Repetition
27	"Oklahoma"	183-197	75	205	Vocal Chorus	Mood	Primary
28	Encore-- "Oklahoma"	198-204	75	65	Vocal Chorus	Mood	Repetition
29	Finale Ultimo	205-208	84	68	Vocal Chorus	Mood	Potpourri

SOURCE: Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. Oklahoma!, a Musical Play Vocal Score. New York: Williamson Music, Inc., 1943; Idem. Six Plays by Rodgers and Hammerstein. Play 1: Oklahoma! New York: Random House, 1959, pp. 1-84.

production, even if no indication of such is given in the script.[1] The number of bars (column 5) specified for a musical piece includes the total number of measures that would be played if all the indicated repetitions in the composition are used.[2] However, in the case of music to be used to cover a scene change, it is impossible to know how many, if any, repetitions would be necessary to fulfill this technical function, for the notation at the top of such music is usually as it appears between act 1, scenes 1 and 2 in Oklahoma!: "Play until next scene is ready--then fade out."[3] Lehman Engel discusses music used to cover scene shifts in musicals: ". . . there were frequent scene shiftings. Each time, for eight bars (or as many bars as the shift required--it varied somewhat nightly), the orchestra played scene-change music."[4] In these cases, therefore, an arbitrary decision was made to count only the number of measures on the printed page, as if it were all played and there were no repetitions. Column 6 in table 5 explains in what form the piece of music is being presented, such as vocal, solo, dance, instrumental number, etc. For the sake of brevity, the listing in column 7 indicates only the primary function of each piece of music in the progress

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[1]Rodgers, Six Plays.

[2]Westrup, p. 541; see Glossary, "Measure."

[3]Rodgers, Oklahoma!, A Musical Play, p. 91.

[4]Engel, The Making, p. 29.

of the show. It is not implied that each piece of music fulfills only one function.

Column 8 specifies to which group of music the cue belongs, i.e., primary song, repetition, or potpourri number.

The Thirteen Primary Songs

Of the thirty-three pieces of music that constitute the score of Oklahoma!, only thirteen of these are actually separate, different musical compositions, although some of them are repeated, with some modifications, to constitute the entire score of thirty-three cues. Aaron Frankel states that the traditional musical contains about fifteen songs, so the thirteen used in Oklahoma! make it close to average in that respect.[1] It should be noted that a few additional songs (other than those thirteen) were originally composed for the play, but were dropped during rehearsals and out-of-town tryouts. The words to some of these unused songs appear in the original typescripts which are housed at Lincoln Center, but will not be dealt with in this dissertation, since they were not performed in the original Broadway version and do not appear in the printed text and score being used in this

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[1]Frankel, p. 46.

analysis.[1]

Each of these thirteen compositions is presented primarily as a song, i.e., as a musical number with lyrics that is basically intended to be sung in the production, although the tune may also be repeated for dances, scene changes, etc. Each of these primary presentations shows the song to be self-sufficient, individual, unique from the other songs, and integrated into the script with appropriate dialogue leading to and/or from each song when it is primarily presented. These thirteen compositions are listed in table 6. The information given concerning each of the thirteen compositions in table 6 refers only to the primary presentation of that number, i.e., the first time the song is heard by the audience, being sung by its intended presenter(s), and not as it varies in repetitions throughout the production. Columns 1 through 7 of table 6 contain the same information for these thirteen songs that the same numbered columns contained in table 5 for all thirty-three cues, with the exception of the additions in column 5. The upper numbers in this column refer to the number of bars to be heard when the song is performed as intended (the same information as in table 5), but the numbers in parentheses,

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[1]Oscar Hammerstein II, "Green Grow the Lilacs, Musical Version" (Unpublished Typescript, n.d.); Oscar Hammerstein II, "Oklahoma!, a Musical Play," Version 1 (Unpublished Typescript, n.d.); Oscar Hammerstein II, "Oklahoma!, A Musical Play," Version 2 (Unpublished Typescript, n. d.); Oscar Hammerstein II, "Oklahoma!, a Musical Play" (Unpublished Typescript, 30 April 1943).

TABLE 6

THE THIRTEEN PRIMARY COMPOSITIONS
OF THE OKLHAOMA! SCORE

Program No.	Title	Score pp.	Script pp.	No. of Bars: Printed/ (Composed)	Presentation Form	Basic Function	Category
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1	"Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'"	16-22	7-8	120 (32)	Vocal Solo	Characterization	Ballad
3	"The Surrey With the Fringe on the Top"	24-36	10-12	175 (50)	Vocal Solo	Plot	Special
4	"Kansas City"	37-49	15-16	292 (81)	Vocal Solo/ Dance	Characterization	Rhythm
6	"I Cain't Say No"	52-56	21-22	149 (95)	Vocal Solo	Characterization	Rhythm
9	"Many A New Day"	63-69	29-30	93 (48)	Vocal Solo/ Chorus	Characterization	Special
11	"It's a Scandal! It's a Outrage!"	77-83	33-35	187 (49)	Vocal Solo/ Chorus	Characterization	Rhythm

TABLE 6--Continued

Program No.	Title	Score pp.	Script pp.	No. of Bars: Printed and (Composed)	Presentation Form	Basic Function	Category
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
12	"People Will Say We're In Love"	84-90	36-38	180 (64)	Vocal Duet	Plot	Ballad
14	"Pore Jud Is Daid"	93-98	41-43	65 (8)	Vocal Duet	Characterization	Special
15	"Lonely Room"	99-103	47-48	53 (42)	Vocal Solo	Characterization	Special
17b	"Out of My Dreams"	108-113	49	124 (77)	Vocal Solo/Chorus	Characterization	Ballad
19	"The Farmer and the Cowman"	140-153	51-54	255 (32)	Vocal Chorus	Mood	Rhythm
22	"All Er Nothin'"	160-174	65-68	248 (87)	Vocal Duet/Dance	Characterization	Rhythm
27	"Oklahoma"	183-197	75	205 (94)	Vocal Chorus	Mood	Special

SOURCE: Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. Oklahoma!, a Musical Play Vocal Score. New York: Williamson Music, Inc., 1943; Idem. Six Plays by Rodgers and Hammerstein. Play 1: Oklahoma! New York: Random House, 1959, pp. 1-84.

which are located beneath the first numbers, tell the actual number of bars of music which were composed for each complete song, not counting the repetitions within the primary presentation nor any bars of music that do not accompany lyrics, such as introductions.

Aaron Frankel states that "music expands dramatic moments" in a musical and that "songs in general will make the most developed statements, against which dialogue in general will seem closer to 'telegrams' . . . ."[1] Frankel divides songs into three conventional categories: ballads, rhythm tunes, and special material.[2] While other categorization of songs is possible, these three categories are those chosen by this researcher for use in this analysis. Thus, by using these divisions, Oklahoma!'s primary songs consist of three ballads, five rhythm tunes, and five numbers of special material. Although individual songs may straddle two or even all three of these categories in various subjective opinions, the decisions made in determining the listing in column 8 of table 6 were made after careful consideration of the songs and fitting their characteristics to Frankel's descriptions.

Ballads

Describing the ballad, Frankel says that ballads usually deal with love, but that they may cover other

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[1]Frankel, p. 44.

[2]Ibid., p. 42.

subjects of pleasure or sorrow: "Ballads encompass, in short, all the feelings which are tender or soaring."[1] The ballad is usually slow to moderate in tempo, and the melody is the dominant element of the song.[2] The three songs in Oklahoma! that fall into this category are "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," "People Will Say We're in Love," and "Out of My Dreams."

Cue #1: "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'."

Immediately following the overture, this is the first song the audience hears in Oklahoma! It is not a romantic song, but a ballad dealing with the beauty of nature, a celebration of how good Curly feels just to be alive, happy, and in love in a naturally beautiful world.

Rodgers and Hammerstein spent many weeks discussing the show that was to become Oklahoma! before they started to write it, and "Oh, What A Beautiful Mornin'" was the first song they wrote for the show. Hammerstein wrote:

> Dick and I, for several days, sought ways and means of logically introducing a group of girls into the early action of the play. The boys were no problem. Here was a farm in Oklahoma with ranches nearby. Farmers and cowboys belonged there, but girls in groups? No. . . . We came finally to an extraordinary decision. We agreed to start our story in the real and natural way in which it seemed to want to be told! This decision meant that the first act would be half over before a female chorus would make its entrance. We realized that such a course was experimental, amounting almost to the breach of an

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[1]Ibid., p. 92.

[2]Ibid., pp. 92-3.

implied contract with a musical comedy audience.[1]

Rodgers continued the story:

> We sat under a huge oak tree and tossed ideas around. What kind of songs were we going to write? Where would they go? Who would sing them? What special texture and mood should the show have?
>
> We had many such sessions until we became thoroughly familiar not only with every aspect of the play but with each other's outlook and approach as well. Fortunately, we were in agreement on all major issues, so that when we finally did begin putting words and notes on paper--which didn't occur until we'd gone through weeks of discussion--we each were able to move ahead at a steady pace.
>
> The first problem was, appropriately, how to open the show. We didn't want to begin with anything obvious, such as a barn dance with everyone a-whoopin' and a-hollerin'. After much thought and talk we simply went back to the way Lynn Riggs had opened his play, with a woman seated alone on the stage churning butter. For the lyric to the first song, Oscar developed his theme from the description that Riggs had written as an introduction to the scene . . . .[2]

Thus Oklahoma! begins, after the potpourri overture, with the curtain rising on "a radiant summer morning" with Aunt Eller seated and churning with "a contented look on her face. Like the voice of the morning, a song comes from somewhere, growing louder as the young singer comes nearer."[3] Following a twelve-measure introduction, Curly sings the first three lines of lyrics without accompaniment, and then the orchestra joins him as he comes into view on the stage.[4]

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[1]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 8.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, pp. 217-18.

[3]Rodgers, Six Plays, p. 7.

[4]Rodgers, Oklahoma!, A Musical Play, p. 17.

Rodgers and Hammerstein apparently felt that this quiet and unusual opening would set the desired peaceful, rural, simple, natural mood that they wanted to establish. According to Hammerstein, "I recalled how deeply I had been impressed by Lynn Riggs' description at the start of his play. . . . On first reading these words, I had thought what a pity it was to waste them on stage directions . . . . I reread the description and determined to put it into a song."[1] As for Rodgers, he said his idea of the most important function of any opening number was that it should give "the members of the audience an idea of what the rest of the show would be like and put them in a properly receptive mood."[2] Specifically about the opening of Oklahoma!, Rodgers said that

> By opening the show with the woman alone onstage and the cowboy beginning his song offstage, we did more than set a mood; we were, in effect, warning the audience, 'Watch out! This is a different kind of musical.' Everything in the production was made to conform to the simple open-air spirit of the story; this was essential, and certainly a rarity in the musical theatre.[3]

Fordin calls the opening number of a show an "icebreaker" and discusses how unhappy Hammerstein was with the icebreakers preceding Oklahoma! He says that the formula musicals always opened the first act with

> lots of action and the actors singing something that

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[1]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 9.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 63.

[3]Ibid., p. 218.

> was not intelligible. Its purpose was to keep the audience interested enough while latecomers were banging down on their seats without giving them any valuable part of the plot or wasting a song. Oscar felt that the very existence of the icebreaker . . . illustrated a kind of insincerity about musical comedy writing in general . . . .[1]

Three weeks were required for Hammerstein to complete the lyrics for this first song before they were turned over to Rodgers for setting to music. Thus in the composition of this specific song's music Rodgers already knew the natural, simple, and happy mood that was to be set by this song's lyrics and unusual method of presentation. Thus he made his choices of musical elements to convey that mood to the audience. This was indeed a new kind of icebreaker.

However, Frankel assigns a stronger influence to the music on character delineation and mood setting:

> Since music makes its own statement, it should express the action and reveal the character without words. Granted, it may be hard to spell these out from the music before hearing the words, but after, the music should seem to express them explicitly. . . . Male or female, young or old, single or several voices, the music should enhance such character elements however it can. (The music may even be required to make the dramatic point when the lyrics may not be totally successful.) Words and music should sound allied at the start, fulfilled at the end.[2]

Therefore, it appears that Rodgers studied Hammerstein's lyrics for their content and structure and then created a framework to express the requirements of the text, both physically (e.g., in meter and rhythm) and aesthetically

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[1]Fordin, p. 51.

[2]Frankel, p. 99.

(i.e., the beauty of the ideas expressed in the text). As Rodgers made his choices, he was instinctively choosing those elements that to him expressed the meaning of the lyrics and the character who was to sing them. Jonathon Schwartz, son of composer Arthur Schwartz, has described Rodgers's music: "What was most important to him [Rodgers] was a story situation into which an idea expressed in song could be installed. . . . Songs became extensions of characters. Even though an actor would break into music, it didn't seem as if anything unusual was happening."[1]

"Oh, What A Beautiful Mornin'" is made up of 120 bars of music, divided into 3 stanzas, 3 repetitions of the refrain, plus 24 additional measures of introduction, interlude and coda. But the basic form of the piece is binary, i.e., there are only 2 main parts of the song--the stanza (16 bars) and the refrain (16 bars). In time, melody and harmony, the 16 bars of music for the 3 stanzas are identical, as are the 16 bars for the repeated refrain, so Rodgers actually composed only 32 bars of music for the entire song, although there are 120 printed measures of music for the song in its primary presentation, as is shown in column 5 of table 5. The other printed bars are accounted for by the repetitions, interludes, and other non-sung portions of the piece.

The introduction is interesting, in that it consists

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[1]Schwartz, p. 8.

of twelve bars of music that imitate sounds of nature, such as flute trills to imitate bird sounds, in order to set the bucolic mood before the song starts, although Curly subsequently sings the first eleven bars unaccompanied.

The significant time elements of this song are its even rhythm and moderate speed. According to psychologists Dorothy Schullian and Max Schoen, rhythm can be considered to fall into categories of consonance and dissonance. Rhythm is described as the relationship of tones in terms of time. They describe rhythmic consonance to exist when "the melodic voices proceed smoothly, the moving tones being for the most part equal subdivisions of the metric pulse."[1] They state that consonant rhythm "may be described as being calm, serene, and in a sense impersonal," and they assign a soothing quality to consonant music.[2] The melody notes in "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" occur at regular intervals of time, giving a consonant, consistent feeling. The listener knows what to expect next, in the rhythmic sense, thus qualifying it as calm and serene music, by Schullian and Schoen's definition. The tempo, i.e., the speed of the music, is marked "Moderato," meaning a medium speed, implying moderation, another sign of serenity and calmness in the song. This calmness and moderation could

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[1]Dorothy Schullian and Max Schoen, Music and Medicine (Freeport, N. Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1948), p. 248.

[2]Ibid., pp. 248, 254.

sooth the listener and give the relaxed audience a pleasant attitude toward toward Curly, the singer.

The melody of the song consists of the tones that are to be sung by the soloist. The key is E major, and it never modulates. The fact that it is in a major key may tend to make the song sound happy to most listeners, as was proven of major keys in the psychological reports of Melvin Rigg, who states that in psychological experiments conducted by Hevner, Mueller, and himself, the major mode was found to have an "influence in the direction of the happy, while the minor mode tends toward the sad."[1] The melodic intervals used in the melody of this song are primarily small ones, with predominately scalewise movement in the stanzas and predominantly chordal movement in the refrain. This means that the stanzas have small intervals between the notes of the melody, much as if one were singing the notes of a scale. The refrain's being predominately chordal means that the melody sounds like arpeggios, or chords broken up into their constituent tones. This latter sort of melody can be called consonant, according to Schullian and Schoen. Their research has revealed that "emotional response to music is intimately connected with such basic factors as consonance, dissonance, rhythm, melodic displacement and the like," and that a melody can be considered consonant if the notes comprising it make

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[1]Rigg, pp. 429, 436.

consonant chords if played simultaneously.[1] Thus a melody line that moves on the notes of a chord, as the melody of this song's refrain does, is consonant. They say, "The impression . . . is one of harmonic consonance because the mind retains the memory of the previous tones and relates them as a consonance."[2] Schullian and Schoen declare that a consonant melody depicts "purity and absence of human passion" and has a calming and soothing effect on the listener.[3]

It can also be observed that the melody contains a significant number of repetitions of melodic motives. Musicologists Westrup and Harrison explain the necessity for the elements of repetition, variation on the repeated form, and contrasting material: "Repetition is essential, because the stuff of music is transient and cannot be captured by the ear as a picture can by the eye. Variation is necessary, because unvaried repetition is intolerable. Contrast is necessary, because even varied repetition of the same material would become monotonous."[4] In "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" the melody in the stanza is made up of repeated three-note motives, and the melody of the refrain outlines chords in three-note motives, thus using a great

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[1]Schullian, pp. 248-51.

[2]Ibid., p. 251.

[3]Ibid., p. 248.

[4]Westrup, p. 252.

deal of repetition. But the direction of the motives is constantly changing, thus giving variation. Yet the scalewise notes of the stanza contrast with the arpeggiated notes of the refrain, rendering an interesting combination of repetition, variation, and contrast in the melody of this song.

In the opinion of Deems Taylor, Rodgers's most unique and personal touch in composition is his peculiar use of melodic innovations, which Taylor calls "the Rodgers Patented Wrong Note."[1] Taylor says, "Rodgers's most effective trick is that of suddenly introducing an extraneous note--one that is foreign to the scale to which a tune is written."[2] In spite of the otherwise very conservative nature of this song, an example of this Rodgers phenomenon occurs in measure 19, when the seventh note of the scale is lowered one-half step on the first syllable of the word "mornin'" in the first line of the stanza. Not only does this have a pleasingly unusual effect at this point in the song, but it also saves the higher seventh for the climactic point in measure 27 on the first syllable of the word "feelin'."

While notes of the melody travel horizontally across a printed page of music, the notes that constitute the harmony appear vertically below the individual melody notes.

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[1]Taylor, p. 229.

[2]Ibid., p. 228.

The "harmony" of a song refers to the relationship of tones sounded simultaneously in support of the melody notes.[1] Rodgers follows the traditional harmonic rules of homophony and diatonic chording. "Homophony" means that there is "one main melody with accompaniment . . . which is always subordinate to the melodic line."[2] And "diatonic chords" refer to those chords that "are made up of the notes of the key prevailing at the moment," i.e., using the notes that would constitute the major or minor scale of the key being used, without alterations which would sound foreign to the present key.[3]

Modern harmony is created by using each note of the scale as a root and adding the third and fifth notes above it to form a chord. The most often used chord in any key is the one built on the first note of the scale, which is called the tonic chord. The tonic is considered to be home base, being the chord to which the harmony repeatedly returns. The second most often used chord uses the fifth note of the scale as a root and is called the dominant chord. The third most often used chord is built on the fourth note of the scale and is called the subdominant chord. Westrup calls these three chords the primary chords of a key and points out that the most common harmonic ending

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[1]Schullian, p. 245.

[2]Winold, p. 128.

[3]The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music, 1964 ed., s.v. "Diatonic and Chromatic."

to a phrase is a succession of these three chords in the order of subdominant, dominant and tonic.[1] Modulations, i.e., changes of key during a piece of music, are considered to be less drastic changes when going to the key of the dominant or subdominant. These keys are said to be closely related to the tonic.[2]

The chords for "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" are 94 percent primary chords, and exactly half of them are tonic chords, indicating a rather traditional and conservative approach to harmony. Since Rodgers wrote out his own piano accompaniments, it seems safe to assume that the printed score does represent the chords he specified to be used.

The harmonic accompaniment of any melody can completely change the mood that is projected by the song. Frankel speaks of the importance of the harmony of a Broadway show song as follows:

> In shows, transcribing the harmonies is not only a musical question but also a theatrical one. Musically, harmony is color. Dramatically, it is situation. It completes the sound, and compacts the circumstances; it incorporates period and locale, and pressure and development. Without a single melodic or rhythmic change . . ., "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," set to harmonies for Alfred Hitchcock suspense or for Marx Brothers farce, becomes two different songs.[3]

One last observation about the harmony of this song is that its harmonic changes are evenly spaced and not

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[1]Westrup, pp. 302-3; Winold, p. 123.

[2]Donald Ivey, Song: Anatomy, Imagery, and Style (New York: The Free Press, 1970), p. 58.

[3]Frankel, p. 91.

frequent. Usually there is one single chord for an entire measure, indicating that there would be no abrupt, unexpected changes to which the listener's ears would have to adjust. Winold refers to this phenomenon as a moderate harmonic rhythm.[1]

The conclusions that can be reached about this song are that it is predominantly a conservative, traditionally structured song with diatonic harmony in a major key. It uses consonant time elements and melody notes, small intervals in the melodic movement, and moderate tempo. These structual aspects might convey a feeling of stability, happiness, and calmness in the audience's collective mind, that might therefore be transferred to its impression of Curly. Since the lyrics of this song also convey that he is a wholesome, pleasant lover of nature, this kind of musical accompaniment only reinforces the message of the lyrics and further establishes the primary purpose of this song to be to characterize Curly.

Cue #12: "People Will Say We're in Love." The second ballad in Oklahoma! is the love duet that is sung by the hero and heroine. Being the only song in the show that had its music before the words, it may well represent less influence from the lyrics than the other songs. However, a love duet was an established essential to all

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[1]Winold, p. 118.

musicals, and Rodgers and Hammerstein merely wanted the one for this show to be a little different from every other one in every other show. They were apparently pleased with the resultant song, since it is reprised more than any other song in the show.

"People Will Say We're in Love" consists of 181 bars of printed music, including the repetitions, divided into a repeated stanza of 16 bars and repeated refrain of 48 bars, totalling 64 bars of composed music. After an introduction, Laurey and Curly each sing a stanza and refrain, followed by an instrumental replaying of the refrain under dialogue.

The tempo is again moderato, but the rhythm of the notes, while not being extremely uneven, are not so consonant as those of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'." The stanza is in the key of A major, and the refrain is in D major, the key of the subdominant of A major, and thus a closely related key. This transposition makes the song a little less conservative than "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," which stayed in one key. The modulation surreptitiously makes the listener mentally "shift gears" between the stanza and refrain, and therefore is slightly less predictable than the former song. It must also accommodate the voice of a baritone, as well as that of a soprano an octave higher, and therefore requires careful selection of notes to accomplish this task.

The melody of the stanza moves again primarily in a scalewise fashion, but the refrain contains many fifths,

meaning that the intervals between the melody notes are often five notes apart--a departure from the closer-knit melody of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," although still being consonant parts of chords.

The melody of "People Will Say We're in Love" is again well balanced between repetition, variation, and contrast. The refrain is divided into sixteen-bar sections in an AABA order, i.e. with the first sixteen-bar section being repeated, with variations, three times, and with the third sixteen-bar section offering a contrasting melody.

The refrain also exhibits another example of Rodgers's "Patented Wrong Note" in the B section, where he temporarily modulates (for only four measures) to C major and uses a lowered sixth note of the scale on the word "collecting," a device that was common in the blues music of the 1930s. "Blues" is described as "a sort of bitter-sweet jazz song . . . written in quadruple time, generally moving at slow speed and in more or less flowing style . . . ."[1] This blues note is one of the few examples of the jazz influence on Rodgers's music for Oklahoma!

The harmony for "People Will Say We're in Love" is again traditional, homophonic, diatonic harmony, with 97 percent of the chords being primary and 55 percent of the chords being tonic. The only unusual aspect of the harmony

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[1]The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music, p. 65.

is the fact that the stanza is in one key and the refrain is in another. And there is also the short modulation within the refrain. While these modulations are not radically uncommon departures from the norm in a song, they do serve to make this song a little more unusual in musical structure than the simple "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'."

The conclusion to be reached then about this second ballad in Oklahoma! is that it is only slightly less conservative and traditional in structure than the first ballad. It is less consonant than the first, but is again in a major key with moderate tempo. The melody consists mainly of scalewise steps and fifths, meaning relatively short distances between the notes--again a conservative aspect of this song. There is slightly less even, consonant movement in the rhythm and in the melody than there was in "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'." Since this song is to be sung by two characters and has as its basic function to characterize both of them, it must mix the portrayal of elements of Curly's steady, easy-going personality with those of Laurey's more complex, developing personality. In doing this, it uses conservative, traditional elements, but less so than when portraying Curly alone.

Cue #17b: "Out of My Dreams." The last ballad in the show is sung by Laurey. Although it does serve to characterize Laurey as she tries to make up her mind about with whom she is going to the social, its main purpose was

determined to be mood setting. The "Dream Ballet" is the next sequence to follow and this song, sung by Laurey and the girls' chorus, creates the mood in the audience that is necessary in order for them to watch and appreciate a ballet depicting a fantasy in a young girl's mind.

The song consists of 124 measures in ABA form, divided into three sections of (A) 44, (B) 33, and (A) 46 measures respectively. The music of the first and third sections are virtually identical, although the first is sung by the girls' chorus and the last by Laurey. The middle section is sung by the girls' chorus.

The tempo is again moderate, and the time signature specifies triple meter, as in a waltz. Perhaps this meter was chosen because of the gracefulness and the romantic association of the waltz beat, which might be considered appropriate for a song to be sung by some moody girls, as opposed to a perhaps more rubust beat for the music for the boys' songs. The two A sections contain only the even rhythms of quarter, half and dotted half notes; no beats are divided into shorter notes. This gives a feeling of evenness and gracefulness. The B section, however, often has the middle beat of the measure divided into two eighth notes, giving a feeling of more urgency in the faster moving notes. But since the A section is repeated after the B section, there is a return to the smoother, more even rhythm, to give the song an overall rhythmic feeling of evenness, with a few unexpected faster notes in the middle

for variety.

Most of the melody of this song again moves in scalewise steps, but it also contains several fifths and even octave leaps. Thus, it would appear that songs meant for Laurey to sing are inclined to have larger intervals between their melody notes than songs intended for Curly, although fifths and octaves are still consonant, because they are parts of the same chord. Rodgers emphasizes his altered notes in this song by putting them at the ends of three consecutive phrases in the A sections, on the words "shadows," "low," and "through" on the line, "into the hush of falling shadows/When the mist is low and stars are breaking through."[1] It is also significant that Rodgers saved the highest note in the song for the declaration, "I'll go," making this declaration sound like a climactic decision that is based on much weighing of the variables. The octave leaps are also strategically placed, coming as they do most often on the chorus's calling Laurey's name, giving a musical interpretation of the extra energy involved in calling out to someone.

The harmony of the song is again traditional, homophonic, and diatonic, but with a departure from the usual unison singing in a Broadway musical, in that the girls chorus sings in three-part harmony. One interesting innovation in this song is the constant drifting into the

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[1]Rodgers, Oklahoma!, a Musical Play, pp. 108-9, 112.

parallel minor key, only to go immediately back into the major key of the song. This suggests that the singer is not entirely happy about the present situation, although not in the depths of depression. The B section modulates to the key of the dominant note of the key in which the A section is written, for added variety. Since the dominant key is closely related to the tonic key, this modulation does not sound as if anything drastically different is happening.

Over all, this is a conservative song, but not nearly so conservative as Curly's song, "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," nor even the duet, "People Will Say We're in Love." It has a moderate tempo with a slightly more active B section of the ABA structure of the song. The melody is primarily scalewise again, but has a liberal number of larger intervals throughout. The harmony is traditional and conservative, even when accompanying the altered "Patented Wrong Notes." This tends to indicate that Laurey is conservative, yet less restricted than Curly. The notes to her song spread out farther, with more variety than his, indicating a more adventurous personality, looking for excitement, but still within traditional boundaries.

Conclusions on ballads. Thus, taken as a group, the three ballads from Oklahoma! tend to be moderate and consonant, with conservative, traditional melodic lines and harmony, sung by the hero and heroine. Laurey's song tends to be less conservative than Curly's song, perhaps indicating her maturing personality. The ballad that

they sing as a duet straddles the conservative and the more flamboyant natures of the two individual songs, by blending the characteristics of the two different characters' songs.

Rhythm tunes

Frankel describes rhythm tunes as those songs that are dominated by fast rhythm, resulting in such irresistible responses as toe-tapping. He says they may deal with any subject, but their appeal is generally to the physical body, not to the intellect.[1] Emil Gutheil has reviewed the important work done by Kate Hevner on psychological effects of music and he states:

> Based on a study . . . made by Kate Hevner, some conclusions were that in causing excitement, the most important element is tempo, and the tempo must be swift. . . . Still another factor is dotted figures or uneven rhythms. In producing a given affective state, melody plays a very small part in expressing musical meaning. The difference in expressiveness for certain melodies is generally attributed to their rhythm, tempo, etc., instead of the pitch pattern of the successive tones.[2]

Schullian and Schoen assert that "It is not necessary to point out the emotional attributes inherent in rhythm. The mass hysteria present in recordings of the rhythmic chants of primitive peoples and the similar mass hysteria of the modern 'jam-session' indicate--at times all too clearly--the emotional tension producible by subjecting groups . . . to

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[1]Frankel, pp. 92-3.

[2]Gutheil, pp. 31-2.

contrasted doses of rhythm."[1] Thus there seems to be general agreement that in rhythm tunes, the source of their interest is mainly in the speed and the arrangement of the notes in relation to time.

The five songs that were determined by this writer to be rhythm tunes are: "Kansas City," "I Cain't Say No," "It's a Scandal! It's a Outrage!," "The Farmer and the Cowman," and "All er Nothin'." The first three of these are solos to be sung by each of the three comic leads. As such, they serve to characterize the persons singing them. The last song is a duet, sung by the comic lovers, and serves to characterize them. The fourth song is a choral number, which is sung at the opening of the second act, and it serves to set the mood for the box social, which has been much discussed in the first act and is finally taking place.

Cue #4: "Kansas City." This is Will Parker's song, telling of all the wonders he saw on his trip to the big city, from which he has just returned. Since the music will be used, immediately after Will sings the song, for his demonstration of the new dance steps he has seen in Kansas City, a rhythm is required which would accommodate a lively dance. Being intended for a comic character, the music might perhaps be less conservative and consonant than the music intended for the hero and heroine. Rodgers appears to have chosen musical elements that meet these requirements.

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[1]Schullian, p. 257.

Following a thirty-six bar stanza, there is a forty-five bar refrain, which Will sings twice with different sets of words, totalling eighty-one bars of composed music. Then the refrain's music is used repeatedly for Will's dance demonstration. The song is in the key of A flat major and the tempo is marked "Brightly (allegretto)," which implies a speed that is rather lively.[1] In addition the notes are of uneven temporal value. The most predominant rhythmic pattern in the song is that of a longer note, followed by a shorter note, followed by a longer note, followed by a shorter note, resulting in a "jerking" rhythmical sound. Thus, in addition to being a fast song, the rhythm in this song is uneven, which makes it quite a contrast to the ballads previously discussed.

The melody predominantly uses many intervals of the fourth, meaning that the notes often jump distances of four notes apart. There are also many octave leaps, plus several sixths, fifths, and thirds. All this means that the melody moves about much more liberally than did the ballads previously discussed.

The harmony of this song is equally unlike the ballads. The primary chords now only occupy about half of the song's harmony, with the other half venturing out into harmonic territory that is musically farther away from home base. Although the sung presentation stays in the key of A

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[1]Rodgers, Oklahoma!, a Musical Play, p. 37; The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music, p. 15.

flat major, the repetitions of the music for demonstrating the dance steps modulate to four new keys, giving the overall presentation a less conservative harmonic sound than that of the ballads. Although it is still homophonic, chords are sparsely played in the accompaniment, so that Will must sing much of the song unaccompanied.

This song is very different from the ballads. The tempo is faster and the rhythm is more uneven. The melody jumps around more, and the harmony is less traditional and less constant. This results in a song that sounds more erratic in nature than the more flowing, conservative-sounding ballads. It still sounds happy in its major key, but is considerably more lively and thus less likely to be contemplative than the ballads. Its musical characteristics make it suitable for humor and dancing, which is how it is used. It characterizes Will as a comic character and shows him to be a lively, happy young man.

Cue #6: "I Cain't Say No." This is Ado Annie's song, and there are 95 composed bars of music, which with repetitions totals 149 bars of sung music. It is in the key of F and the tempo is moderato with the additional marking, "Brightly." It has a stanza, a refrain, a trio or interlude section, and then the refrain is repeated with new words.

The tempo marking does not indicate an especially faster speed than the ballads had, but the time signature changes back and forth several times between four beats to a measure and two beats to a measure, giving the disconcerting

feeling accompanying a change of accent pattern. To compound this feeling, many of the notes in this song are syncopated, a common technique of jazz. Syncopation may be defined as "a displacement of either the beat or the normal accent of a piece of music. It is, then, rhythmic contradiction that constitutes syncopation."[1] This rhythmic contradiction is brought about in this song by notes that are sounded on the usually unaccented parts of the measure and held over on the usually accented parts of the measure. In other words, when one's ear expects to hear a stressed note, one hears only a note being sustained from a previous beat; when one's ear expects to hear an unstressed note, one hears a new note sounded, creating a slightly stressed sound. Thus, syncopation results in a highly notable rhythmic pattern, which is brought on by shifting the expected arrangement of stressed and unstressed notes.

The melody for this song, as for the last one, moves about in larger leaps than the ballad tunes do. Although the stanza and trio are slightly more conservative in range, the refrain hops about in octaves, quickly going back and forth between the top and the bottom of an octave. This rapid, expansive melodic movement expresses Ado Annie's wilder nature, by showing her to be less confined than the ballads' singers were.

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[1]Ibid., pp. 561-2.

The harmony again uses chords that are farther away from home base than the ballads, although in this song, there are fewer of these unusual chords than there were in "Kansas City."

This song gets its unusual sound from the fast, syncopated beat and its often-leaping-about melody. This results in a sound that is clearly not conservative. Ado Annie's unconventional personality is well represented as different from that of the melodramatic heroine of the play by the whimsicality of the chosen musical elements of this song.

Cue #11: "It's a Scandal! It's a Outrage!" This is Ali's solo, which he never actually sings as a part of the musical; it is always spoken against the accompaniment. But since it was originally written to be sung, complete with a melody which is played as part of the accompaniment, and occasionally sung by the male chorus, the intent of the authors is still there, although it was not carried out, due to the original cast member's lack of singing ability. It consists of a stanza and refrain. The 53-bar stanza is written without a key signature, but it consists mainly of a series of accented bass notes, played determinedly to four marching steps per measure, as the Peddler paces around the stage making telegraphic pronouncements against being tricked into marrying Ado Annie. The 49-bar refrain is in D major, which is alternately spoken by Ali and sung by the boys chorus.

The entire song is dominated by a strong, intrusive beat--in the stanza by the accented march beats and in the refrain by an "oom-pah" beat set to two beats a measure, producing a bouncing, lively, happy beat as background to Ali's humorous complaints against women. The speed is marked "Allegretto," again indicating a lively speed.

The melody that is sung by the boys chorus and also played in the accompaniment is predominantly scalewise in intervals. The song is very conservative and unremarkable in its melody.

Ivy discusses characters who "speak" their songs: "In some cases where the voice is assigned a largely 'reciting' role, a contrasting lyricism is provided in the accompaniment so that the 'singing' character, so important in the song, is not forsaken entirely."[1] So while the melody is only sung part of the time amd is not very remarkable when it is heard, the accompaniment does proceed as if accompanying a sung song. The harmony that is used in this accompaniment, however, is as unremarkable as is the melody. It consists of the expected primary chords, and the notes of the melody.

This song is not remarkable in melody nor harmony, but it has a driving, lively beat that is its dominant element. Perhaps this unremarkableness is partially why it is never reprised in the show.

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[1]Ivey, p. 39.

Cue #19: "The Farmer and the Cowman." The second act opens with the box social in full swing. The chorus is singing and dancing to the music of this song. The printed music consists of 259 measures, but there are really only 32 composed bars of music. There is a 16-bar refrain and a 16-bar stanza. The refrain is in the key of B-flat major, and the stanza is in F major.

The temporal element of this song is its dominant characteristic. The time signature for this song dictates only two beats per measure, meaning that a stressed note will occur on alternate beats--a frequent recurrence of accents. In addition, the notes are of short duration, so they come at a fast rate--usually in a continuous barrage of eighth or sixteenth notes. The speed is marked merely "Brightly," and this could also be interpreted as an indication of a fast speed. This combination of frequent accents, fast speed, and often recurring notes makes this song suitable for a country "hoedown."

The melodic movement is predominantly chordal in the refrain, but it is more scalewise with a high number of repeated notes in the stanza. The majority of the intervallic steps, however, are relatively small, making the melody a conservative element of the song.

The harmony is also conservative, with almost entirely primary chords in the accompaniment, played in "oom-pah" fashion. The fact that the song modulates between every rendition of the stanza and the refrain seems not to

disturb the conservative nature of the harmony, because the modulation is handled surreptitiously, so as to be hardly noticed. It was perhaps done merely to accommodate the solo voices of the original players who sang the stanzas. Had the stanzas not modulated to another key, the pitches of many of the notes would have been uncomfortably high to sing. By modulating to the key of the closely related dominant, the notes are kept within a comfortable, conservative range.

Other than the temporal elements of this song, it is quite conservative in composition choices. The melody and harmony are basically simple and traditional in sound. But the speed and accent pattern of cue #19 spell excitement and foot-thumping rhythm to accompany the country singing and dancing.

Cue #20 is a repetition of "The Farmer and the Cowman" and therefore is not one of the primary presentations. But there are thirty-two bars of music in the middle of this repetition which are original music. They are not different in their chosen compositional characteristics from the rest of "The Farmer and the Cowman." This part has the same speed and is made up of mostly sixteenth notes running in scalewise fashion. It is made up of four eight-bar sections, each of which is repeated once. It comes in the middle of the repetition of "The Farmer and the Cowman," which at this point accompanies dance. The only significant element in it is the addition

of syncopation, which was not present in the primary presentation. But it is a different melody and thus is new material. This researcher has tried to find the source of this new material. Robert Russell Bennett's first response when asked where this material came from was, "Oh, I think I added it." But upon more discussion, he admitted that he did not remember that this bit of music was there, nor did he remember having added it. He suggested that perhaps the dance accompanist may have added it inadvertently as Agnes De Mille worked out the dances and may have needed an additional, somewhat more rhythmic section at that point.[1] When Agnes De Mille was asked about this, she said that it was possible, but she did not remember.[2] Since the original dance accompanist for Oklahoma! has not been found, the composer of this thirty-two bars remains unknown. When the Rodgers and Hammerstein office was queried about this bit of music, the indignant answer was that there is no music in the show that was not composed by Mr. Rodgers.[3] Whoever composed it, it is not a significant bit of music. No published, written information on the show has ever mentioned it. It is doubtful that anyone else has ever even noticed that it is there, because it blends in with "The Farmer and the Cowman" as if it were part of the original.

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[1]Interview, Bennett, 1981.

[2]Interview, De Mille, 1981.

[3]Interview with Bob Baumgart, Rodgers and Hammerstein Theatre Library, New York City, 15 November 1984.

In fact, there is the possibility that this may have been an original section of "The Farmer and the Cowman" that was later discarded. Perhaps no one will ever know where this music came from, but this researcher is proud to be the only one who seems to have discovered its presence.

Cue #22: "All er Nothin'." The last of the rhythm tunes is this comic duet. It is heard only once. It has a 51-bar stanza, a 17-bar interlude spoken to musical accompaniment, and a 36-bar refrain, totalling 248 printed bars of music, but only 87 composed bars. The refrain music is used three times: (1) Will sings his version of what married life will be like, (2) Will dances with two girls to the refrain music, and (3) Ado Annie sings her version of what married life will be like. Until the dance, the song is in the key of F major, but the dance music is in A-flat major and G major, while Ado Annie's refrain is in E-flat major. The only explanations for the changes of key may be the variety offered, since the musical accompaniment itself is rather unexciting. It is also possible that Ado Annie's new key was necessitated by range limitations of the original singer.

Its two-beats-per-measure time signature is common to most of Rodgers's rhythm tunes, giving, as it does, an accent on alternate beats. A "choppy" effect is given in the stanza, as the accompaniment is played on staccato eighth notes, which cuts the sound off quickly, leaving an abrupt silence between each of these short notes. There is

additional temporal interest in the stanza with some syncopation in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth measures. Therefore, although the tempo is specified to be "Moderato," the significant temporal elements are numerous enough to make this the dominant element in the song.

The melody of the stanza is predominantly scalewise, although there are a liberal number of fifths also. The refrain is predominantly chordal, with the melody simply moving up and down the tonic chord. Thus the melodic element of this song is conservative and not remarkable.

The harmony of this song uses some unusual chords, including some diminished chords built on the seventh note of the scale and the even more unusual major chords built on the third note of the scale, which diatonically are expected to be minor chords. These serve to make the song sound less conservative and traditional than the ballads did.

In all, this song is perhaps more conservative than the other rhythm tunes, with its conservative melody and moderate tempo. But its unusual chords in the harmony, its syncopation and its staccato accompaniment insure that it could not be classified as a song that characterizes ordinary, well-adjusted people. Will and Ado Annie are not traditional hero and heroine types. They are less intelligent, less controlled, and more unpredictable than Laurey and Curly, and this song musically interprets their unusual character traits with unexpected musical choices.

Conclusions on rhythm tunes. The five rhythm

tunes tend to have conspicuous temporal elements, but also to use larger melodic intervals and more unusual chords than the ballads. Since the messages of the lyrics of rhythm tunes tend to be less esoteric than those of ballads, it seems logical that the musical setting should be more notable for its unusual choices of structural elements than the ballads. Since they also are usually sung by the comic leads, they represent more erratic personalities and therefore tend to vary more from the traditional, conservative sound of the ballads, which are usually sung by the hero and heroine.

Special material

Frankel's category of special material covers songs that do not fall into either of the other two major divisions. He describes it as material that exploits a performer's and/or a writer's strengths--musical, dramatic, or comic. He says that these songs may be dominated by melody, rhythm, or harmony and may be comic or dramatic, but they usually are "comedy patter songs and bit dramatic songs, or comment songs and diversion songs--either to establish, relieve or intensify the action, or as vehicles for virtuoso display."[1] The five special songs in Oklahoma! are "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top," "Many a New Day," "Pore Jud Is Daid," "Lonely Room," and "Oklahoma." None of these could be classified as vehicles

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[1]Frankel, p. 93.

for virtuoso display, since all are well integrated into the script of the play. Using Frankel's description of this type of song, there are two songs that are somewhat comic and also tend to act as a diversion: "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top" and "Pore Jud Is Daid." Only one is a dramatic song, "Lonely Room." Three of the five could be said to comment on the action: "Many a New Day," "Lonely Room," and "Oklahoma"; the latter two of these comment songs also serve to intensify the action.

Cue #3: "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top." This first song of special material is used as a "sales-pitch" by Curly to convince Laurey to go to the box social with him. It consists of three stanzas and three refrains. Although it is basically in the key of A major, there are frequent modulations in the stanzas. The stanzas are sixteen bars each, and the refrain is thirty-six bars long, so Rodgers composed a total of fifty measures for this entire song.

The tempo is merely marked "Brightly" and "Tempo Giusto," the latter indicating a strict adherence to the regular beats. The beats have alternate accents, because the time signature indicates two beats per measure, as is so common with the comic songs of the show. The last refrain is specified to be quieter and slower, since the words for this refrain deal with Laurey's falling asleep. Rodgers wrote that the lyrics of this song suggested a

"clip-clop rhythm" to him, which is what he used in the refrains.[1]

The melody of the stanza is primarily a series of thirds, whereas the refrains use a series of repeated notes, followed by a jump of a fourth upward. This melody was also influenced by the lyrics, as Rodgers wrote that the lyrics suggested to him a "melody in which the straight, flat country road could be musically conveyed through a repetition of the straight flat sound of the D note, followed by a short upward flick as fowls scurry to avoid being hit by the moving wheels."[2] This kind of melodic device, which attempts to portray in sound a mental image, is sometimes called "tone painting." Ivey describes this practice as follows:

> Perhaps the most deliberate melodic device of all is the use of patterns that are meant unashamedly as pictorializations of individual words, phrases, or elements of the poem. Although such patterns are often quite expressive, they function most effectively as a musical counterpart to some purely surface aspect of the text and are therefore largely objective in nature. The use of tone painting . . . has had a long history in song. The period of greatest emphasis was the baroque, during which it was one of the definitive features of musical style in all media, but especially in vocal compositions. There was a genuine attempt to express the general mood of the poetry, but just as often the representation was applied to individual words. . . .
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> The actual mechanics of tone painting have varied from period to period and from composer to composer. But the basic principle has always been the musical reflection of the sound or characteristic mood or action or thing suggested by a particular word or phrase--and sometimes even by poetic content. The process, though largely oriented toward one or more of the most obvious poetic factors, represents one of the continuing means

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 219.

> by which composers have attempted to arrive at a reasonable musico-poetic integration.[1]

Thus, the notes' repetition, in Rodgers's mind, conveyed the constant flatness of a road. Rodgers also wrote that repetition of notes helps to convey a light-hearted feeling, which "Surrey" certainly does.[2] One could wonder, however, how vividly the upward jump of four notes' distance conveys a picture of a fowl jumping out of the way of an approaching vehicle to a listener. But at least this was Rodgers's stated intent.

The harmony of this song has an interesting innovation in the stanza. It modulates every four measures to a new key, which is not even closely related. It begins in A major, then goes to F-sharp major, then to E-flat major, then to C major and finally ends again in A major. Since the modulations are so short lived, they do not have time to sound established as real key centers in the listener's ear, but this is a large amount of key hopping for an otherwise rather conservatively constructed song. In addition, this same portion of the song is filled with dynamic markings for accents, sustained notes, and staccato notes. It is indeed a remarkably constructed stanza. The refrain is less remarkable harmonically and uses almost entirely primary chords.

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[1]Ivey, pp. 54, 57.

[2]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 144.

This song is a well planned song, so that Curly's "sales pitch" is well presented. Curly is dramatizing the situation of this important event, because this represents a turning point in his life. The song is at once romantic, gay, folk-like, comic, dramatic, and different from the other songs in the show. There is much variety in its harmony, and the temporal elements are active and pronounced. The melody is pictorial and thus is more interesting and varied than that of other songs. The song offers an interesting contrast to the simple, yet beautiful, "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," which precedes it and, in a repetition, also follows it. It is a song of "special material," because of its unique construction and intent. Ewen praises the song for its revelation of the spirit of America. Rodgers reported that Hammerstein cried when he first heard the song, because it expressed so well the naive happiness of a couple of young people over just looking forward to a surrey ride.

Cue #9: "Many a New Day." Including a four-bar introduction, there are ninety-three measures in this declaration of independence by Laurey. This includes a twenty-one-bar stanza and a twenty-seven-bar refrain, totalling forty-eight composed measures that make up the song. Laurey sings through all of it once by herself, but the girls' chorus then repeats the refrain. It is entirely in the key of D major and is marked "Allegretto" with a

quadruple time signature.

The tempo is not only indicated to be a lively one, but the refrain also has the added notation "Con grazia--non legato," which means that it is to be done gracefully without smoothness, in other words, with a bit of delicate bounce.[1] The rhythm pattern in the refrain is dominated by a triplet on the first beat, followed by three quarter notes. This means that there are three fast notes on the first beat, followed by a single note per beat for the rest of the measure. This is a rather unusual rhythmic arrangement, one which Deems Taylor posits that Rodgers would have been unlikely to have concocted, had Hammerstein's lyrics not first led him into them.[2] There are also two ritardandos in the song, indicating a temporary, gradually diminishing speed, to be followed by a return to the original speed.[3] This indicates a variation in the speed of the song four times as it is slowed down, speeded up, slowed down, and speeded up again. Thus the temporal element of this song is quite different from any other song in the show.

The melody is primarily chordal throughout the song,

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[1]The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music, pp. 15, 125, 237, 325, 398.

[2]Taylor, p. 220.

[3]The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music, p. 486.

but the triplets in the refrain readily lend themselves to the use of a "neighbor tone," a melodic device, which is described by Winold as follows: "It is . . . possible to derive a melody from a single chord by using not only notes in the chord, but also some notes not in the chord. These are called non-chord tones or non-harmonic tones."[1] And one of these non-chord tones he goes on to describe is a note that is reached by moving one pitch step up or down and then returning to the original chord tone.[2] This is what Rodgers used on the triplet in the refrain of this song. It creates a rather ornamental melody line. The intervals used in this song are often larger than the thirds and fourths usually used when merely deriving a melody from the notes of a chord, as Rodgers often skips one chord tone in order to leap up or down to the next note of the chord above or below that one. However, this ornamental melody line is still basically consonant, because it is primarily built on the notes of a series of chords, although it is unusual and unique with its use of ornamentation and larger leaps than are usually used in chordal melodies.

The harmony of this song also offers some unusual techniques, in that 25 percent of the chords are not based on primary roots. Furthermore, almost one-third of the

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[1]Winold, p. 119.

[2]Ibid., p. 120.

chords in the song have chromatic alterations to vary them from their traditional diatonic forms. This amounts to chordings that are not so conservative as the other songs that have previously been discussed. They are not so far from the norm as to sound foreign to the ear, but they are unusual.

Therefore, this song can be said to be a song that sounds different from the other songs by virtue of its triplet rhythms, its ornamented melody, and its frequent use of non-primary and altered chords. These unique characteristics are not likely to make the song sound odd to anyone's ear, but they are likely to make this song sound different from the very conservative and traditional songs that make up most of the rest of the score. This is why this song is classified by this researcher as a special number. Since it serves to characterize Laurey's burgeoning independence and womanhood while she is upset with feelings of jealousy for her chosen young man, these unique musical choices appear to be appropriate to indicate these unusual feelings.

Cue #14: "Pore Jud Is Daid." The section of this dissertation that dealt with the nature of each of the characters in Oklahoma! pointed out that Curly is fairly good at persuasion. The song "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top" is a perfect example of his persuasive powers.

Although an uncultured, uneducated, natural young man, he has develped his own instinctive talent for persuasion to a high degree. In "Pore Jud Is Daid," he again uses this talent to catch Jud up in the vision of how Jud might be thought of kindly after his death. He appeals to Jud's own low self-esteem and feelings of having been mistreated in life to convince Jud that it is possible that people will forget all the bad about him and remember only the good after he is dead. As pathetic a figure as Jud may be because of his mental sickness and low intelligence, one can only laugh that this blatant satire can be effected in front of Jud without his taking offense.

The music for the song consists of five identical verses of eight bars each, plus some chords to be played under Curly's chanting, which takes place between verses 1 and 2, and a four-bar coda at the end of the song. Essentially, Rodgers composed only eight measures of music for this song. It is in the key of E major and set in quadruple meter.

The only indication of speed is simply the word, "Slowly," plus a ritardando at the end. Since the song is meant to simulate the comments that would be said or sung at Jud's imaginary funeral, the slow tempo seems appropriate. In fact, Rigg's research proved that slow music tended to be construed as sad.[1]

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[1]Rigg, p. 430.

The melody of "Pore Jud Is Daid" is rather uneventful. It consists of mainly respeated notes and small intervals, which are appropriate to indicate Jud's non-expansive personality. Since Jud lives in a rather small, confined world of his smokehouse and his fantasies, it comes as no surprise that his song would also be small. A song that consists of only eight composed measures is indeed small. And this smallness is also conveyed by the small intervals between the pitches of the notes involved.

The harmony of this song is not so inhibited as the melody is, but it moves slowly from one chord to another--i.e., its harmonic rhythm is as slow as its tempo is. The actual variety of chording is amazingly varied, with only 65 percent of the chords being primary chords and 35 percent of the chords being altered. Thus, although there are few chord changes and although they occur at a slow pace, the kinds of chords that are chosen are definitely not conservative. This does, however, signify a non-conservative character in Jud. For, although Curly sings most of the song, the song is meant to describe Jud's funeral and thus characterizes Jud more than Curly. It characterizes Curly only in that he is supposedly creating the wording of the song, and it thus illustrates his intelligence to be able to word the song so cleverly as to put Jud down at the same time that Jud thinks he is being respected. But the music is meant to accompany the words

that describe Jud, so it seems to this researcher that the musical elements were meant to convey the character of Jud.

Cue #15: "Lonely Room." The very next song in the show is "Lonely Room," Jud's solo that characterizes him more than any other song or dialogue in the show. Hammerstein wrote that it was intended to frighten the audience by showing the inner workings of Jud's deranged mind.[1] Thus the music could be expected to deviate a great deal from the conservative texture of most of the music for the rest of the show. It consists of fifty measures in the key of b minor, with a quadruple time signature. Being the only song in the show in a minor key, this significant factor indicates that Rodgers intended to denote the most unhappy point in the play, because minor keys have been proven by psychological research to impart a feeling of sadness to the listener.[2] The piece is composed of four sections. The first and the third sections are virtually identical. The second and fourth sections show some small bit of similarity, but are far from identical. Therefore, Rodgers can be said to have composed forty-two bars of music for this song.

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[1]Hammerstein, Lyrics, p. 19.

[2]Rigg, pp. 429, 436.

The speed of the song is marked "Moderato" for the first three sections and "Allegro" for the first half of the last section. Apparently, when Jud reaches the section in which he makes his declaration to go out and get himself a bride, Rodgers felt that he would need a more urgent sound, since "Allegro" means that this section is to begin at a livelier speed, although it slows down again at the end.[1] This urgency in this last section is reinforced also by gradually increasing the loudness of this section to end at a very loud level.

The melody of this song is not much varied. More than half of the melodic intervals are repeated notes, and another one-third are scalewise steps. This gives the song a very inhibited sound, as if Jud were afraid to venture far from his own little hiding place. In an interview with Bob Baumgart of the Rodgers and Hammerstein office, Baumgart told this researcher that part of the reason for this small range was that the actor who originated the role could only sing within a small range, and the song had to be tailored to fit his vocal capacities.[2] Nonetheless, the small intervals do convey a lack of imagination and an inhibition that seems appropriate for Jud.

One more observation about the melody of "Lonely

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[1]The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music, p. 15.

[2]Interview with Bob Baumgart, Rodgers and Hammerstein Theatre Library, New York City, 8 November 1984.

Room" is that the song ends on a C sharp, although it is still in the key of b minor. The last note of a song is traditionally on the tonic. In fact, every other song of Oklahoma! ends on tonic. Even though this song ends on a dissonant b minor chord, however, the melody is on the dissonant C sharp. Since the lyrics at this point highlight Jud's declaration to go out and "Git me a womern to call my own," this cacophony underlines his emotional outburst with appropriately dissonant sounds.[1]

The harmony of the song consists of the most non-primary chord usage in the entire score of Oklahoma! The tonic chord is used only 44 percent of the time, and two non-primary chords are used 40 percent of the time, more than the dominant and subdominant chords, which are used only 16 percent of the time. In addition, 60 percent of the chords are altered, in order to create dissonant sounds in the accompaniment. Schullian says, "The expression of personal feeling in music seems inevitably to be associated with the use of dissonance. Indeed, the expression of emotion in music seems to be bound up in the contrast between dissonance and consonance, the former producing a sense of tension and conflict . . . ."[2]

And none of the accompaniment carries the melody, but is set with a drone or pedal type of chording which

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[1]Rodgers, Oklahoma! Vocal Score, p. 103.

[2]Schullian, p. 248.

sustains chords that have little or nothing to do with the melody above it. These types of chords compare to the chords played on a bagpipe, which drone away while the melody is juxtaposed above it with little connection harmonically.[1] This effect gives a very strange, alienated sound, in that the melody and harmony do not always sound like part of the same song. This also adds to the peculiar nature of this song, which was composed to characterize the most peculiar character in Oklahoma!

Thus this song could be said to be the most unusually constructed song in the show. It is the least conservative and traditional. Its minor key conveys unhappiness, and the pulsation of the drone accompaniment could convey a sort of throbbing hostility. Jud's inhibition could be conveyed by the small intervals in the melody, and his growing dissatisfaction might be shown in the growing loudness and speed of the song. Its unusual choices of chords and their alteration could signify an unconventional person. The lack of close connection between the melody and the harmony gives a feeling of being out of harmony with the world. According to Schullian and Schoen, musical dissonance tends to produce "a sense of tension and

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[1]The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music, pp. 40, 253, 434.

conflict" in the listener.[1] Other researchers found that listeners dislike listening to dissonances.[2] This dislike for the dissonance in Jud's music could then be transferred to a dislike of Jud.

Cue #27: "Oklahoma." This is the last remaining primary song of this show to be discussed. It is also the last song to be presented in the show. The music had been heard only briefly in the overture until this full, primary presentation. It has a stanza and a refrain. The stanza is in D major, and the refrain is sung first by Curly in D-flat major and then is repeated by the chorus in D major. This researcher can discern no possible reason for this shift of one-half step down, and then back up, of the tonal center, since this small difference in pitch would not be likely to affect substantially a singer's ability to sing any better in one key than in the other. The time signature for the refrain is quadruple, but is duple in the stanza. Since the tempo also switches between these two sections from Moderato to Vivo ("lively"[3]), it seems logical to conjecture that the switch from a medium speed to a faster speed also needed a more frequent accent, which would be effected by the

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[1]Schullian, p. 248.

[2]Helen Mull, "The Effect of Repetition Upon the Enjoyment of Modern Music," The Journal of Psychology 43 (January 1957):159.

[3]The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music, p. 607.

switch from four to two beats per measure, making the stressed notes come twice as frequently. An additional interest is added to the rhythm in the refrain by syncopation on the lines, "We know we belong to the land/And the land we belong to is grand," and again on the half-chanted, "Ok-la-ho-ma Ok-la-ho-ma Ok-la-ho-ma," etc.[1]

The melody is relatively simple, primarily with intervals of the third in the stanza, but it does get more adventurous in the refrain. The refrain contains a variety of intervals, ranging from a great number of scalewise passages to intervals of the ninth, being the largest leaps in the entire show. These ninths, coming as they do near the end on the words "A-yip-i-o-ee-ay" and then between the words "say'in" and "You're" on the line, "We're only sayin', 'You're doin' fine, Oklahoma!,'" mark the climactic point of the melody, lyrics, and thus of the song.[2]

Although the time and the melody are interesting in this song, the overwhelmingly significant musical element is the harmony. The interest here lies, not in the choice of chords--which is quite traditional, but in the arrangement of the voices of the choral arrangement. Although exact statistics are not available, a random search through many scores of musicals from the thirties and early forties did

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[1]Rodgers, Oklahoma!, a Musical Play, pp. 191, 194-5.

[2]Ibid., pp. 187, 192-3, 196.

not uncover any other choral arrangements to compare with the complexity of this song's arrangements. The harmony in the choral rendition is sometimes divided into as many as seven different parts, singing at the same time. Often one group of voices sustains a combination of notes while another group of voices moves in contrapuntal motion. Ivey describes the effect of a sustained note being accompanied by a fluctuating harmony as being dramatic.[1] For example, on the rendition of "We know we belong to the land,/And the land we belong to is grand," the melody is sung by the leading singers, while the remaining voices are divided among seven harmonic parts, singing/chanting, "Ok-la-ho-ma Ok-la-ho-ma/Ok-la-ho-ma Ok-la-ho-ma's grand." To add to the excitement of this complex combination of voices, the orchestral accompaniment plays fast-moving octaves in a repeated series of four descending notes. Then at the end, there is an added Coda in which the name of the state of Oklahoma is spelled out and then is sung, with the top voices reaching the highest note in the entire score, an A flat, followed by a joyous yell of "Yeow!" All of this amounts to an extremely exciting and exuberant delivery of the message of the lyrics that the young couples are happily married and the state of Oklahoma is going to give everyone a happy future.

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[1]Ivey, p. 135.

Thus this last song of special material is not so different in the basic elements that it uses, as it is in the arrangement of these elements. The time element is exciting with its speed, frequent accents and syncopation; the melody reaches the highest pitch in the score; and the harmony is arranged in as many as eight voices singing at once in counterpoint. All of this adds up to a very exciting and unique final primary presentation in the show.

Conclusions on the thirteen primary songs. While the uses of musical elements in this score may not constitute rules that Rodgers and Hammerstein always followed, there were tendencies to use certain kinds of musical materials to apply to specific characterizations or situations in this show, and these tendencies will be summarized here. For example, this analysis has shown that, in this show, the ballads, which tend to have meaningful messages in their lyrics and beautiful melodies, are sung by the hero and heroine. The rhythm tunes, which emphasize their temporal elements and tend to have less deep meaning in their lyrics, although the lyrics are most often humorous, are sung by the comic leads. The songs of special material tend to have unusual musical elements and are sung by the hero, heroine, villain, or the chorus. The "Patented Wrong Note," which is common in Rodgers's music, tends to occur mainly in his ballads. The duple meter tends to be used in comic, rhythmic songs, while the more serious songs use triple or quadruple meter. Faster speeds are most often

used for the rhythmic, comic songs. A moderate tempo is most often used for the ballads, but in the songs of special material, the speeds vary. Discord is primarily used in the villain's solo. Rodgers used major keys for all songs except the villain's solo.

On the whole, the music has basically traditional, homophonic, diatonic harmony, moderate temporal elements, and conservative melodies. But these are only the general characteristics, and exceptions have been noted.

Repetitions

Of the thirteen primary compositions in Oklahoma!, three songs are heard only the one time of their primary presentation; these are "It's a Scandal! It's a Outrage!," "Lonely Room," and "All er Nothin'." The other ten songs are repeated, either as a total repetition or as a part of a potpourri number. This section will discuss those numbers that are repeated singly, i.e., not as part of a potpourri. These repetitions may be classified as encores, reprises, or as segues, i.e., orchestral numbers to cover scene changes, and there are fifteen instances of these types of repetitions. Specifically, there are two encores, seven reprises, and six repetitions to cover scene changes.

Encores

The two encores are for the songs "I Cain't Say No" and "Oklahoma." In the encore (cue #7) for the first song, Ado Annie is actually singing different words from the

primary rendition, so this presentation constitutes an additional refrain from the primary presentation. But there is no change in the music for the song. Apparently this song got so much applause in the out-of-town tryouts, that it was decided that there should be an additional refrain to be sung as a final sign of appreciation for the applause for the song. "Oklahoma" has an encore (cue #28) that has no new words nor music, but it is a shortened version of the primary presentation of the refrain.

Reprises

The seven reprises are of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top," "Many a New Day," "Out of My Dreams" (twice), "The Farmer and the Cowman," and "People Will Say We're in Love." Unlike the encores, these repetitions of the songs do not necessarily follow the primary presentations of these songs, nor are these repetitions necessarily sung by the original presenter. In the case of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," its reprise (cue #5) follows the first rendition by Curly, but is sung by Laurey as she enters the stage for the first time. There is a page of dialogue between these two presentations, and Laurey just repeats the refrain once more, but no changes are made in the words nor the music.

The reprise of "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top" (cue #3) is separated from the primary presentation by four pages of dialogue and Will's song, "Kansas City." But Curly again sings it, and there are no changes in the music

nor words as he repeats part of the first refrain of the song.

About two-thirds of the way through the first scene, after Laurey and the girls chorus have sung "Many a New Day," there is an immediate repetition (cue #10) of the music, to which the girls dance, followed by a complete repetition of the last refrain of the primary presentation. This time the girls' chorus sings in three-part harmony, as opposed to the unison rendition of the primary presentation. But there is no change in the music nor lyrics.

When the Dream Sequence, which constitutes cues #17a through 17d, begins, the first section (cue #17a) acts only to provide instrumental background music for dialogue between the girls and Laurey. This cue is named "Melos," which is a Greek word meaning merely "a song."[1] But the music used is part of the melody for "Out of My Dreams," and there is a notation at the end of cue #17a to "segue," which indicates that the music is to continue uninterruptedly into the next cue, which is the primary presentation of this song.[2] Following the primary presentation, there is again a segue into cue #17c, which is called "Interlude to Ballet," again using the melody

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[1]Webster's New Twentieth-Century Dictionary of the English Language, s.v. "melody."

[2]The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music, p. 522.

of part of "Out of My Dreams." This repetition consists of only ten measures of orchestral music, played as the ballet counterparts of Curly and Laurey replace the original characters in preparation for the "Dream Ballet."

Cue #20 has been mentioned before as the only repetition of music in the score of Oklahoma! that also contains a small bit of original music. It is an instrumental repetition of "The Farmer and the Cowman," which here accompanies a dance. In fact, this cue is called "Farmer Dance." It consists of an instrumental rendition of the refrain of the original song. The only changes made are the key and the inclusion of the new music. It begins in the key of the primary rendition, F major, but after once through the main theme, the key moves up a whole step to G major. Moving up can make a song sound brighter and fresher, but nothing is changed structurally in the song. After this forty-seven bars of repetition of the original song, there are the thirty-two bars of music, which come from no other piece in the show. It could have been treated as a primary song, but since it is part of a repetition, has no lyrics, and is not a significantly structured piece of music, this researcher decided to treat it merely as a unique element of this repetition. Following these thirty-two bars, the repetition of "The Farmer and the Cowman" continues for another twenty-eight bars, and this time it is in the key of E-flat major.

The last reprise in the score is cue #24, "People Will Say We're in Love." This rendition occurs in the second act after Laurey and Curly have decided to marry, where it replaced an originally planned primary song, "Boys and Girls Like You and Me," which was removed because it was decided that this song slowed down the action.[1] The reprise begins as an orchestral accompaniment to Laurey and Curly's dialogue, discussing their happiness about their coming marriage. There is no change in the music, but the lyrics are changed from the words that warn each other to stop showing their love to keep people from saying they are in love, to words that say that it is all right if people say they are in love.

There are no changes in the music for any of these encores or repetitions, except for those noted in "The Farmer and the Cowman." However, this is not always true of the repetitions of music in the potpourri numbers, which will be discussed later.

Segues

The repetition of songs to cover scene changes are often referred to as segues, in that they bridge the scene that precedes and the scene that follows, without allowing the audience's mind to stray from the play.[2] Frankel says these segues function to lead the audience

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[1]Wilder, p. 218; Fordin, p. 199.

[2]Frankel, p. 108.

into the next scene, by either telegraphing the surreptitious message of what the mood of the next scene will be, or retaining the mood from the previous scene; this prepares the audience to anticipate the next event or to hold on to the last event. In light of this important function of this type of repetition, Frankel says that all the collaborators on a show, including the director, choreographer, orchestrator, composer, librettist and lyricist, offer their opinions as to what music would be appropriate for what segue.[1]

There are six of these repetitions to cover scene changes in this score. "People Will Say We're in Love" is used for three of these. The first one (cue #13) follows the primary presentation of "People Will Say We're in Love," and it covers the scene change from the outdoors of Laurey's farm to the interior scene in Jud's smokehouse. The change is thus from a rather happy love scene to a sadder, more introverted scene. The music chosen retains the mood from the prior scene and perhaps acts to emphasize the contrast between the two scenes. The second two segues of this song follow the reprise of the song in the second act. The first (cue #25) happens immediately after the reprise, retaining the happiness of the engagement of Laurey and Curly and leading to the comic scene in which Ali Hakim introduces Ado Annie to the "Persian Goodbye," and Will

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[1]Ibid., pp. 108-109.

adds the "Oklahoma Hello." Following this comic scene, the second segue (cue #26) bridges this kissing scene into the last scene, which portrays the wedding of Laurey and Curly. In the first of these bridges then, the function appears to be the retention of romance and yet contrast of the comic romance to the serious romance. In the second, the function appears to be to change the mood from the comic to a more serious view of romance, in order to prepare the audience for the wedding scene and the confrontation of Curly and Jud.

Cue #16 is a repetition of "Many a New Day." It follows the dreary smokehouse scene; Jud has just sung his sad and frightening "Lonely Room." "Many a New Day" is a happier, brighter song--both in the memory of its female liberation lyrics and in its sprightly rhythm. This serves to raise the mood from gloomy to happy as the scene changes from the smokehouse back to the outdoors of Laurey's farm.

During the party scene at the beginning of act 2, there is a curtain closing at the end of the "Farmer Dance," and Ado Annie and Will have their love scene, setting their wedding date, in front of the curtain. This change of scene is covered by a repetition of "The Farmer and the Cowman" (cue #21). It has just been used as accompaniment to the happy dance at the party, and since the scene that will follow is also happy, the music functions to preserve the mood and continue it into the next scene. Cue #23 uses this same music to cover the scene change from this Will-and-Ado

Annie love scene to the Curly-and-Laurey love scene which follows at the back of the Skidmore ranch house, when they will seal their wedding plans. In this case the music keeps the mood happy, although the following scene contrasts, because it begins with the conflict between Laurey and Jud, before ending with Curly and Laurey's firming their wedding plans.

Thus the six instances of scene-change music are used to retain a mood three times, to set a new mood two times, and once for a combination of the two purposes. Since no one was available to advise how the music was chosen for each segue in the Oklahma! score, the researcher used logical conjecture to try to determine the intended function of each choice.

Apparently, most of the songs that were used for repetitions and their placement within the script were decided upon during the development of the original show. That is, during rehearsals the need for additional bits of music--either encores, reprises, or segues became apparent and these fifteen instances were decided upon. It is regrettable that no one can now explain how each need arose and how each selection was made.

Potpourri Numbers

The five potpourri numbers are the "Overture," "Entrance of Ensemble," "Dream Ballet," "Entr'Act," and "Finale Ultimo." Although the previous musical numbers have

been discussed in chronological order, the discussion of the potpourri numbers will save the "Dream Ballet" discussion for last, because it is more complex than the others.

"Overture"

The overture of a Broadway musical is traditionally a fusing of some of the tunes in the show, in order to set the tunes in the memory of the audience, so that they sound familiar when heard again during the show, according to Engel and Kislan. The tunes are usually chosen by the orchestrator. He usually starts with a rousing, vividly memorable piece of music, follows with contrasting pieces of music, and concludes with a rousing finale. The overture serves an important function, in that it catches the audience's attention, sets the mood, atmosphere, style, and introduces the whole show.[1] The overture to Oklahoma! is a typical one. It consists of 253 measures and contains parts of 6 of the show's 13 songs. The songs used are as follows:

1. "The Farmer and the Cowman" for 32 bars in the key of F major, played at Vivo tempo

2. "Pore Jud Is Daid" for 8 bars in the key of F major, played Andante

3. "Many a New Day" for 32 bars in E-flat major,

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[1]Kislan, The Musical, p. 210; Engel, Words with Music, p. 117.

played Allegretto

4. "Out of My Dreams" for 47 bars in A-flat major, played Moderato

5. "People Will Say We're in Love" for 45 bars in D major, played Moderato

6. "Oklahoma" for 77 bars in D major, played Allegro

There are also 13 bars of transitional music, required for the changes in key and tempo. The original songs' tempos are retained in the Overture, but there are 3 changes in keys from the original. These changes, however, were most likely decided upon, merely because they allowed a smoother transition from one song to the next in this medley.

It can be noted that there is a definite change in mood from one song to the next, except perhaps between "Out of My Dreams" and "People Will Say We're in Love." Three numbers of special material, two ballads, and one rhythm number were chosen to comprise this potpourri number, but two of the special numbers have a prominent rhythmic element ("Farmer" and "Oklahoma") and thus there are really three slower and three faster numbers that make up the overture. This seems appropriate in order to balance the variety of tunes in the overture. It begins with the foot-tapping rhythm of the country dance tune and ends with the rousing rhythms of the patriotic tune, and thus would be likely to catch the audience at the beginning and to inspire it at the end. Although the mood for the first song of the

show ("Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'") is quite peaceful and quiet, the mood for the show as a whole is joyful and energetic, and the Overture thus sets this latter mood. The flavor of rural happiness and patriotism, two of the play's themes, is also set by this number. Thus this overture seems to be an appropriate one for this play.

Cue #8: "Entrance of Ensemble"

Although the boys chorus was onstage for "Kansas City," the first appearance of the entire chorus follows Ado Annie's primary rendition and her encore of "I Cain't Say No." By this time Will has joined Annie and tries to get a kiss from Annie; oddly she resists him, so he starts to sing part of her song back to her to convince her that she really must not say no to him. This is the beginning of cue #8. As Annie weakens and Will gets his kiss, the entire ensemble enters, and the music changes to a reprise of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'." It is interesting to note at this point that this same song has served to introduce Curly, Laurey, and now the entire chorus. Its words are universal; they apply to all the young farm and ranch people in the morning of the day of the big party. Thus it seems suitable to be the song chosen for these functions.

Cue #18: "Entr'Act"

Although this cue is listed on the "Musical Program" page of the score as being the last number of the first act, in reality it is played as the overture to the second act.

The songs chosen for this overture are:

1. "People Will Say We're in Love" for sixteen bars in the key of E-flat major, played gracefully

2. "Many a New Day" for thirty bars in the key of E-flat major, played lightly

3. "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top" for thirty-eight bars in B-flat major, played at moderate speed. There are an additional twelve bars of introduction and transitional music, making the total bars for this cue ninety-six. The keys for these tunes have all been moved one-half step from the original key, but that is too small a move to be significant. The keys were probably chosen by Bennett simply because they easily modulated into each other, and because at the end the orchestra is ordered to go straight into the opening number for act 2, "The Farmer and the Cowman," without a break. Since this latter number is in F major, the final section of the medley's being in B-flat major would make the modulation simple, since each of these notes is the base note for one of the primary chords of the other. It can be noted that no definite instructions on the speed of the first two songs in the medley are given in the score. The orchestra is merely told to play gracefully and lightly. It can only be assumed that the music would be played as it was in the original presentations, since both of these songs were already heard in the play, being performed at moderate and slightly fast speeds, respectively. With the last song being played at

moderate speed, this gives a contrast of medium, faster, and finally medium speeds. This offers further constrast as the next song is the bouncy "The Farmer and the Cowman." It should be noted, however, that there are no slow songs in the second act overture. This is probably intentional, since the second act opens on the very happy party, already in progress, and the mood to be set is therefore happy. It also should be noted that two of these three songs were also used in the "Overture" at the beginning of the show.

Cue #29: "Finale Ultimo"

This last song in the show is performed as Curly and Laurey are pulled away in the surrey, leaving on their honeymoon. For thirty-six bars the chorus reiterates "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'." It is in the orignal key of E major at the original moderate speed. At the end of this song, the curtain falls. This is followed by thirty-two bars of "People Will Say We're in Love" in the original key of D major at the orignal moderate speed, while the curtain goes up again for the curtain calls, ending with the final curtain, unless there are additional curtain calls, which has happened frequently. Thus this medley consists of sixty-eight bars of music, made up of two songs, each presented as it was originally. It consists of two ballads, no doubt the two most enduring songs of the show, in order to help the audience remember these tunes as they leave the theatre. Engel says that, "In nearly all musicals, ... tunes (songs) have been reprised a number of times and . .

. the repetition, of course, helps the audience to remember and to be able to reproduce. . . . Nevertheless you've <u>really</u> heard the songs before you go home, and it is likely that you will hum a number of them."[1]

<u>Cue #17d: "Dream Ballet"</u>

This piece of music consists of 521 bars of music, a medley of music from 7 different songs of the show, as follows:

1. "Out of My Dreams" is played for 44 measures in the key of F major at moderate speed, while the dance counterparts of Curly and Laurey dance together happily

2. "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" is played for 50 measures in the key of D major at a faster speed while the girls' chorus enters to observe the happiness of the lovers. Then as Laurey and Curly kiss and he goes off, the key changes to F major, the speed moderates, and the song continues for another 47 measures

3. "Kansas City" is played for thirty-two measures in the key of G major at a moderate tempo, while the girls joyously dance

4. The music returns to "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" for 37 bars in G major in an animated tempo, while the girls dress Laurey in her wedding veil

5. "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top" is played for 37 bars in B-flat major at moderate speed, while

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[1]Engel, <u>Words with Music</u>, pp. 117-18.

the boys come on as if astride horses. Then the same song is played for 7 more measures in E-flat major at a slower tempo as it becomes the wedding march for Laurey and Curly's fantasy wedding. But then Jud comes on to claim the bride as the key changes to c minor and the song is played with a more sustained and expressive beat

6. "Pore Jud" is played majestically for 7 bars in E major, but with many dissonant chords, as the dance hall girls (whom Laurey remembers from the pictures on Jud's walls) enter

7. "I Cain't Say No" is played for 80 bars, first in E-flat major and then in A-flat major, at first at a moderate speed but then getting faster, as the dance hall girls dance with Jud and some of the boys from the chorus

8. "Pore Jud" is played again for 13 measures in E-flat major at a majestic tempo, as the dance goes on

9. "I Cain't Say No" is repeated for 72 measures in A-flat major at a fast speed as the dance continues

10. "Pore Jud" begins again, in the key of g-sharp minor, but with so much dissonant harmony that the key center is never clearly established, being played slowly and sorrowfully at first and then in an agitated manner, for 45 measures, as Jud and Curly fight

11. "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top" is reprised again for 11 measures in g minor, being played very loudly, as if a grandiose march, as Jud chokes Curly and carries Laurey off

12. "People Will Say We're in Love" is played for the final 10 measures in E flat, as the real Jud wakens the real Laurey to go to the party and Curly stands dejectedly as Jud and Laurey go off together

Thus although there are only seven different pieces of music in the ballet, all previously heard in the show, they are used in a succession of twelve separate entries, to constitute the whole number. Ten different keys are used, of which seven are major and three are minor. The speed of the music varies from one part of the medley to the next, to give a variety that runs from fast and animated to slow and and sorrowful.

It should be recalled that De Mille told this researcher that she and the rehearsal pianist together selected the pieces of music to be used during their rehearsals. They knew the thirteen songs from the show and used these pieces, changing harmony, keys, and tempos where necessary to accommodate the dance steps that De Mille envisioned to be appropriate to convey the story of her scenario for the ballet. According to De Mille, Rodgers and Hammerstein had nothing to do with the scenario, nor with the music that was selected to accompany the ballet.[1]

It is interesting to conjecture what connections De Mille and the rehearsal pianist may have made in their minds as they chose the music to accompany each event in

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[1]Interview, De Mille, 1981.

the scenario of the ballet. To start, Laurey had just sung "Out of my Dreams," so it seems logical that this music should continue while the lovers dance. Then as the girls join the couple and share in the happiness, "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" seems appropriate to express the happiness of a couple approaching marriage. Perhaps "Kansas City" is a strange choice for the girls' dance, which is the third piece of music used in this potpourri, since "Kansas City" was originally sung by a man. But it is a happy-sounding song, with a rhythm that is suitable for dancing, since it originally accompanied Will's demonstration of the latest dance fads. Perhaps De Mille was eager to try setting something to this music, since the original actor playing Will did his own choreography for this number. The next event is suitable for "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," because it portrays Laurey's getting dressed for her wedding. "The Surrey with the Fringe on the Top" is used to accompany the boys astride their horses. Since the repeated beats at the beginning of this song could portray a surrey ride, why not use them for a horse ride?

Jud has to enter at this time, however, so the pianist changed the key from E-flat major to c minor. This is a simple change, because c minor uses the same key signature as E-flat major. Changing from a major key to a minor key is appropriate for Jud's entrance, since major

tends to sound happy and minor tends to sound sad.[1] And the only minor key previously heard in the score was Jud's solo, "Lonely Room," so it seems logical to return to this sad sound when he enters the ballet, in order to remind the audience that he is the villain. To continue identifying Jud, the music chosen next is "Pore Jud," complete with lots of dissonant chords to indicate a tense and conflicting situation, as was proven to be conveyed to listeners to dissonant music by psychological tests.[2] In addition, the temporal element, which has been moderate or faster in tempo and rhythmic enough to be suitable for happy dancing, now suddenly changes to a slower speed and a steadier, smoother beat to indicate a less gay mood since Jud has entered.

When the dance-hall girls dance, the music changes to the song that sings of promiscuity, "I Cain't Say No." This seems appropriate, since the girls in the pictures at least appeared to be promiscuous to Laurey and it also has a rhythmic beat, suitable for dancing. The music alternates back and forth between "I Cain't Say No" and "Pore Jud," perhaps to indicate the promiscuity of the girls and to remind the audience of the villainy of Jud.

For the fight between Curly and Jud, the music

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[1]Rigg, pp. 429, 436.

[2]Schullian, p. 248.

returns to "Pore Jud," but with added dissonance in the harmony, and a slow and sorrowful beat. As Jud chokes Curly and carries Laurey off, "Surrey" would seem an inappropriate choice of music, except that here it is played with a grandiose, marching beat, and the harmony becomes totally dissonant. Perhaps a contrast was intended, in order to indicate the type of life Laurey would experience with Jud, as contrasted to the happy life described in "Surrey" that Curly sang to her.

Finally, when Laurey has returned to reality and Curly arrives, thinking perhaps she has changed her mind and will go with him, "People Will Say We're in Love" seems a logical choice, although she must actually leave with Jud. Thus the music to this song is not altered, except to be played extremely loudly.

Therefore, there seems to have been logic used in the choice of the specific songs used to portray the events of the ballet scenario. It also shows the adaptability of various songs to different situations and moods, merely by changing keys, tempos and harmony. The people doing the choosing may not have studied the psychological tests on the ability of music to affect the human moods, but they seem to have used common sense to judge what song would evoke what memory from its previous presentation, and what element of it should be changed to create a different mood. Rodgers had done this same thing in his musical film, Love Me Tonight, in which he used the

song "Isn't It Romantic" to fit a scene in a tailor shop, in the street, in a taxi, on a train, for soldiers marching by, in a gypsy camp, and finally as a love song on a balcony, merely by changing the tempo, keys, rhythms, and orchestrations.[1]

Conclusions on potpourri numbers

Thus the five potpourri numbers in Oklahoma! combine the music of nine songs from the show. The function of three of these medleys is to set a desired mood, as in the two overtures and the finale of the show. The medley to introduce the chorus serves a purely technical function, and the ballet music tells a story that gives an insight into Laurey's psyche, since she imagines all of this story.

Unlike the more or less complete repetitions, the potpourri numbers were repeated more creatively by combining the songs into meaningful medleys, giving new tempos, keys, and levels of volume to formerly heard songs, in order to create new effects.

Conclusion on the Analysis of the "Oklahoma!" Score

Rodgers's music for Oklahoma! is traditional, homophonic, diatonic music. The entire score consists of only 759 measures of composed original music to constitute, including all repetitions, the complete score of 3,956

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[1]Rodgers, Musical Stages, p. 149.

measures of printed music. The score consists of thirteen songs, which are repeated in various ways to constitute 33 music cues. Of the 13 primary songs, 8 are presented primarily as solos, 3 as duets and 2 as choral numbers, although several of the solos also do have choral material included. Of the 33 music cues, 10 are instrumental numbers with no vocal nor dance presentation, 3 are basically dance presentations (although 2 of these have choral singing integrated), 11 are vocal solo presentations (although 2 also have choral portions and 1 has a dance included), 4 are duets, and 5 are choral numbers. However, by taking a page count, the results show the following totals and percentages, listed in descending order of prominence:

solo	54 pages	27 percent of score
choral	50 pages	25 percent of score
dance	38 pages	19 percent of score
duet	29 pages	15 percent of score
instrumental	28 pages	14 percent of score

This shows that approximately 67 percent of the score is sung, as opposed to 33 percent that is either solely instrumental music or music used to accompany dances.

Leonard Bernstein has written that "There is a happy medium somewhere between the music-appreciation racket and purely technical discussion . . . ."[1] This chapter has attempted to maintain that balance by giving the essential

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[1]Bernstein, p. 16.

musical facts about the score of Oklahoma!, while relating those facts to the uses to which Rodgers put them. As Bernstein said, "Musical notes can move in from their native habitat to the middle ground of conceptual meaning, as in program music, musical drama, background music, and the like."[1] The musical notes chosen by Rodgers may be technically analyzed, but they also serve distinct purposes in relation to the script of Oklahoma! that help to tell the story and delineate characters. This analysis has attempted to cover both.

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[1]Ibid., p. 38.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

By 31 March 1943 American theatre audiences were receptive to a more serious type of musical theatre than the prior type. Both the theatre's audiences and the theatre's talents were mature and ready to support a truly American, conservative blend of music, dance, and drama. This condition and attitude were conducive to the creation and success of Oklahoma!

The author of the libretto and lyrics, Oscar Hammerstein II, had already been involved in the writing of twenty-six Broadway musicals before collaborating with Rodgers on Oklahoma! Hammerstein thought of himself primarily as a lyricist and had developed many rules for himself on writing successful lyrics to songs for musicals. He thought that the lyrics should be written before the music and that every song should have a clear function in the libretto of a show. He preferred repetition of words or phrases to a great deal of rhyming. He liked references to nature and often used the word "dream" in his lyrics. In addition, he felt that the words of a song should have a meaning to the listener, should sound pleasing to the ear, and should be easy for the singer to sing.

In his librettos, Hammerstein tended to write about fundamental values in life, such as love, jealousy, death, patriotism, humanity, and hope. He tended to be conservative and to approach the subject of sex with old-fashioned morality and decency. He did a better job at adapting a story from another source than he did at creating an original; that is, his strength lay in arranging the words to tell the story, rather than in creating the story.

The composer of the music of Oklahoma!, Richard Rodgers, had previously composed music for twenty-five Broadway musicals. Rodgers felt that the music to a song should convey the emotional aspects articulated in the lyrics. Some of the characteristics of Rodgers's compositions for the stage include his use of diatonic harmonies, even rhythms, and simple melodic lines. His more identifiable stylistic devices are his predominant use of repeated notes and his use of an unexpected, chromatically altered tone at a pivotal point in a song. He maintained that every song's music has to be suited to the character in the play, the singer who sings it, and the situation that leads into the song. He made his musical choices to interpret these considerations.

The collaboration of these two men began with Oklahoma! It was somewhat of a departure for each of them to write a musical play, instead of a musical comedy or an operetta. The unity of all the parts of a musical was of prime importance to these creators. They always had long

discussions of the plot, the characters, and the placement and kinds of songs needed for a play before beginning to write. Each helped the other to plan and perfect his contribution to the script and score of the play. Therefore, their works were the result of a true collaboration of two men working closely, yielding a completely integrated musical play.

Both Rodgers and Hammerstein attended all auditions and all rehearsals, overseeing every aspect of the production. They can truly be said to be responsible for the successful run of Oklahoma! for 2,156 performances, breaking all previous records for length of run. It is a play remembered for its seriousness of plot, its realistic characters, and the integration of its drama, music, lyrics, dance and every other aspect of production. In its day, these were innovative characteristics.

Oklahoma! was adapted from Lynn Rigg's Green Grow the Lilacs. Rigg's play was produced by the Theatre Guild in 1931 with moderate success. It was a play taken from Rigg's own memories of his childhood in Oklahoma. He used familiar, realistic characters and local dialect to depict a love story between a farm girl named Laurey and a cowboy named Curly. It was a one-plot melodrama, complete with a hero, heroine, villain, comedy, and incidental music. The reviewers found the play to be fun and nostalgic. The directors of the Guild wanted to make it into a musical and hired Rodgers and Hammerstein to do the adaptation.

In their adaptation, Rodgers and Hammerstein owe a great deal to Riggs for his local color, dialect, original characters and story. But their musical version was not merely a musicalized Green Grow the Lilacs, because they added a whole comic subplot that parallels the main plot, having its own comic hero cowboy, comic farm-girl heroine, and blocking character, who is more comic than villainous.

Oklahoma! consists of two acts, each containing three scenes. Except for the dour confrontation scene between Curly and Jud in the smokehouse (act 1, scene 2), all scenes are exterior. This permits the natural beauty of the Oklahoma landscape to act as a wholesome setting for the action of the play, giving the additional enhancement of Americana.

Oklahoma! is also a melodrama, complete with hero, heroine, confidantes, comic characters, villain, music, and good winning over evil. The virtuous heroine, Laurey, is pursued by the villain, Jud, but is saved by the courageous hero, Curly. In the meantime the parallel romantic triangle of the comic characters resolves with the soubrette's mating with her comic hero, in spite of complications brought about because of their blocking character. In the end, the villain in the main plot is killed; the hero and heroine marry and leave on their honeymoon; the comic leads are joined, and the blocking character in the comic triangle is unhappily married. This rewards the virtuous characters,

severely punishes the villain, and gives a milder punishment to the comic blocking character.

In Oklahoma! the subplot offers contrast as a comical version of the main plot. For example, the heroine of the melodrama is virginal and intelligent, whereas the soubrette is promiscuous and not at all bright. The hero of the melodrama is intelligent with a glib tongue, whereas the male comic lead is stupid and gets himself into much difficulty by not keeping his mouth shut. Perhaps the blocking characters of the two plots offer the most contrast. The melodrama's villain is a genuinely evil, sullen man who wants to dominate the heroine. But the blocking character in the subplot is a comic, scheming, generally harmless travelling salesman, who just wants to have fun.

The characters in Oklahoma! are generally good, law-abiding citizens of Oklahoma Territory, who hope soon to be citizens of the new state of Oklahoma. They are hard-working, wholesome, virtuous people who, for the most part, live off of the land. They represent the farmers, ranchers, and merchants of 1900 America. Each character has an objective and most of the good characters achieve their objectives. The two blocking characters do not achieve their objectives and this is part of their punishment.

Some of the characters function in both the main melodrama and the comic subplot, but the two plots do not

depend very much on each other for resolution. All characters serve functions that make them necessary to the play. None were added merely for comic relief or for an added specialty number, thus adding to the integration of all the elements.

One of the major changes in the adaptation to a musical is the lessening of the unhappiness connected with the killing of the villain. Whereas in Lilacs this unhappiness lasts for the final two of the six scenes that make up that play, in Oklahoma! the villain appears, is killed, and the matter is dispensed with in less than half of one of the six scenes of this play.

Since the comic subplot was added and since space had to be allotted to the integrated songs and dances of the show, the characters in Oklahoma! have less depth and development than they have in Lilacs. Therefore, less information is given on the characters' backgrounds, and the characters appear at the beginning to be basically the same as they are at the end of Oklahoma!

The main element of Oklahoma! that sets it apart from what had preceded it is a ballet that expands the story of the main plot of the play. It is a psychological pantomime of the possible outcome of the plot and therefore could not be moved to another musical; its integration into the plot was an innovation that made musical theatre history. The scenario for the ballet may have been devised by its choreographer, Agnes De Mille. At the recent live,

twelve-hour tribute to Richard Rodgers, "Wall-to-Wall Richard Rodgers," De Mille commented that Rodgers just gave her the thirteen songs he had composed for the show and said, "Get on with it." She said that she did not like the scenario with which Hammerstein had provided her and so she just got a pianist and tried steps to bits of the songs played on the piano until she picked and chose what to keep. Then, she said, Robert Russell Bennett, the orchestrator, watched her dance rehearsals and made notes on what happened visually to which bits of music in the ballet and thus was able to interpret in music what was visually seen in the ballet.[1]

The themes of Oklahoma! are, first, the triumph of good over evil, and the ideas that love, hope and education are good. For example, love is shown to conquer all, and love plus marriage is the ideal way of life. There is hope in life for personal, as well as general, betterment. And finally, learning to live a moral life, through suffering from experiences that test one's endurance, is shown to be the key to living a successful life.

The songs are so well integrated into the plot that they could not be dropped from the play or moved to another character to perform without altering the play. Although there are thirty-three music cues in the play, the score is

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[1]Agnes De Mille, "Recollections," speech at "Wall-to-Wall Richard Rodgers," program at Symphony Space, New York City, 23 March 1985.

made up of only thirteen songs. The thirty-three music cues consist of the thirteen songs, plus fifteen virtually complete repetitions of some of the original thirteen songs, and five potpourri numbers.

The thirteen songs divide into three ballads, five rhythm tunes, and five songs of special material. The ballads emphasize their messages, which are worded as lyric poems, and their beautiful melodies. They are conservative in musical structure, so that these songs can be enjoyed merely for their appeal to the mind of the listener and are sung by the hero and heroine of the melodrama. The messages tend to be contemplative and include many figures of speech.

The rhythm tunes are dominated by their fast, sometimes complicated rhythms. These songs all have humorous lyrics and are sung by the comic leads or chorus. Their lyrics tend to contain many sound devices, including rhymes. Their music is not so conservatively constructed as the ballads' music is, containing larger melodic intervals and less common chords. They appeal to the body of the listener by imparting a non-intellectual urge to move and be excited.

The songs of special material are diverse in structure and in the nature of their appeal. They include the two songs in which the villain participates, the rousing title song of the play, and a song by each of the two leads.

The songs' main contribution to the plot is to characterize those who sing them. They may show that the

character is in love, patriotic, happy, sad or lonely. However, some songs also advance the plot and/or set moods.

The script of Oklahoma! is closely adapted from that of Green Grow the Lilacs. But the songs are all new and serve a function in the play. The songs most repeated in the play are the happy, yet not comic songs. This helps to keep the show generally optimistic, but not to make it a musical comedy.

The major significance of Oklahoma! is its total integration of all elements, plus its treatment of more serious aspects of life than the traditional musical comedies. It shows that there is sadness, even death, in life, yet perseverence and adherence to the good will produce success in the end. It has universal appeal, in that it displays the innate goodness of nature and how one may better oneself by working together in brotherhood to overcome evil.

Oklahoma! helped to reject old formulas of what could or could not be done in a Broadway musical. It set new patterns for ways to create a successful musical. It succeeded and became a new prototype. Gerald Bordman sums up Oklahoma!'s significance:

> The show that most notably changed America's thinking about the nature of musical theatre was almost certainly Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II's Oklahoma! . . . . It was generally proclaimed that the show had initiated a new lyric genre, the musical play, and that musical plays were characterized by an unprecedented integration of song and story. . . . Integration of

songs, story, and dance became more than a catchphrase; it became the keynote of most musicals that followed Oklahoma! into New York.[1]

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[1]Gerald Bordman, American Musical Comedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 159-60.

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GLOSSARY OF MUSICAL TERMS

arpeggio: the notes of a chord played in rapid succession.

baritone: the medium low male voice.

beat or count: the recurrent pulsation in music. The first beat of a measure is usually stronger than the subsequent beats. In a measure containing four or six beats, there is a secondarily strong beat halfway through the measure.

binary beat: two beats per measure.

blues: a slower version of Jazz, mostly used for singing, with sad lyrics.

chord: three or more notes sounded simultaneously. Most chords are built on three notes, taken from the notes of a scale, skipping a note between each used note, such as the first, third, and fifth notes of a scale.

chord symbols: each chord is named by the position of its root in the scale. A symbol for the chord is usually the root number shown in Roman numerals. For example, a chord built on the first note of a scale would be symbolized by "I," meaning the chord consists of the first, third, and fifth notes of the scale. If other notes are added to the basic three, they are usually indicated by raised Arabic numbers to the right of the Roman numeral, which indicate the distance above the root at which the added notes are located. For example, a I^7 chord indicates a chord consisting of the first, third, fifth, and seventh notes of a scale.

consonance: sounds that render a pleasing auditory congruity, referring to notes heard simultaneously, notes heard consecutively, or to a succession of regularly occurring beats.

contrapuntal: having several melodies existing simultaneously, but with music arranged in such a way as to produce an overall consonant sound.

coda: a passage at the end of a piece of music that extends the musical ideas presented and brings the entire piece to a satisfying conclusion.

diatonic: the notes proper to a major or minor key, referring to a scale, chord, or harmony in general. It means that the notes involved are not altered, but are contained in the diatonic key being used.

diminished chord: the usual distance between some of the notes of the chord has been shortened.

dissonance: sounds that suggest stress or incongruity in the listener's ear. This can refer to notes sounded simultaneously or in succession.

dominant: the fifth degree of a major or minor scale, or the chord built on this note.

fermata: indication that a note or chord should be sustained longer than its normal duration.

flat: the lowering of the pitch of a tone by one-half step from the original pitch.

form: intelligible shape of the consecutive sections of a piece of music in relation to each other.

harmony: the relationship of notes sounded simultaneously, constituting a succession of chords.

homophony: music in which a melody is supported by chords.

interlude: a phrase of music between the regular sections of a piece.

interval: the distance between two notes. In diatonic music, the distance between a note and the note nearest to it is called a half-step. A whole step is double that distance and is also called a second. Beyond this distance, intervals are named by the distance between them in a scale. For example, the interval between the first and sixth note of a scale, counting from the bottom pitch up, would be called a sixth.

inversion: anything that is turned upside down in music. It usually refers to an inverted chord, when the root note is moved up above the other notes.

jazz: a fast, highly syncopated, contrapuntal, improvisatory musical form, reaching its height of popularity around the 1920s.

key: the first and last notes of the scale being used in a diatonic piece of music.

lead sheet: a skeletal version of the components of a piece of music. It usually contains the lyrics, melody, and the chord symbols to indicate harmony.

major: based on the arrangement of notes according to the major diatonic scale. This consists of a root note, followed by a whole step, another whole step, a half step, whole step, whole step, whole step, and ending with a half step, in that ascending order of pitches. A major chord is built from tones with the same intervallic relationship as the first, third, and fifth notes of a major scale. Music in major keys tends to sound happy to listeners.

measure or bar: a metric grouping of beats, marked off by bar lines on the written music. Each grouping begins with a stressed sound, louder than the subsequent beats in the measure.

melody: the arrangement of tones in succession that are intended to be sung by the singer of a song. If there is no singer, it is the tones that sound like the leading, consecutive sounds in the piece of music.

meter: the organization of pulsations into regularly recurring groupings of two, three, or more units. This organization is indicated at the beginning of a written piece of music by a time signature.

minor: the arrangement of notes based on the diatonic minor scale. This basically consists of a root note, followed by a whole step, half step, whole step, whole step, half step, whole step, and ending with a whole step, in that ascending order of pitches. However, alterations are often made in the minor scale by raising the seventh and sometimes the sixth note one half step each. A minor chord is built from tones with the same intervallic relationship as the first, third, and fifth notes of a minor scale. Music in minor keys tends to sound sad to listeners.

motive: the smallest grouping of consecutive notes in music that constitute a distinctive portion.

note: a single musical tone.

octave: the interval between the first and eighth notes of a diatonic scale, having the same letter name, the auditory effect being somewhat a duplication of sound.

phrase: a self-contained, complete musical utterance, usually consisting of four measures of music.

pick-up notes or upbeats: notes that precede the bulk of a phrase, occurring on weak beats of a measure.

pitch: the highness or lowness of a tone, determined by the rate of cycles per second in the sound wave.

prime: the intervalic relationship between a note and the same note repeated.

ragtime: a somewhat fast, bouncy, syncopated music form popular around 1900.

range: the distance between the lowest and highest note of a melody.

repeat: the musical term indicating that a section of a piece is to be performed again.

rhythm: the temporal organization of the notes within the regular pulsations of the beat. The arrangement of notes of different time durations.

ritardando: becoming gradually slower.

root: indicating the first note in an ascending scale, or the generating or fundamental note on which a chord is built.

scale: a prescribed arrangement of notes, usually eight in number, in an ascending succession of pitches. The prescribed arrangement of notes in a major and minor scale are explained under the headings "major" and "minor" in this Glossary.

sharp: the raising of the pitch of a note one-half step above its original pitch level.

staccato: indicating notes are to be of the shortest possible duration.

subdominant: the name for the fourth note of a scale or the chord built on that note.

swing: a predominately instrumental, moderately fast, loud popular music form, used primarily for social dancing in the 1930s.

syncopation: stress or accent is placed elsewhere than on the usually strong beats of a measure.

tenor: the higher-pitched male voice.

tempo: the speed of the regularly recurring pulsations of beat.

tertiary beat: three beats per measure.

thirty-two bar AABA popular song refrain form: the main melodic theme is presented in the first eight bars of the refrain, which is then repeated for another eight bars. Then there are eight bars of contrasting melody, ending with a repeat of the original eight bars. This was the traditional form of the refrain of popular songs from the 1920s until the 1950s.

tone: a single musical sound with a fixed pitch.

tonic: the first note of a scale or the chord built on that note.

trill: a trembling sound in music, consisting of the rapid alternation between one note and another note that is close in pitch.

triplet: three notes played as equal divisions of a single beat.

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Betty Sue Taylor was born Betty Sue Effler in Blount County, Tennessee, 4 January 1936. She received her Bachelor of Science in Music Education from the University of Tennessee in 1955, after which she taught public school music in New Mexico for several years. Following a few years as a housewife, she became active in local theatre activities in East Tennessee and returned to the University of Tennessee for a Master of Arts in Speech in 1967. Subsequently she moved to New York City to pursue a career as a singer-pianist and during this period earned a Professional Diploma from Columbia University Teachers College in English as a Second Language, Speech, and Theatre in 1969. This was followed by a Master of Arts in Theatre Arts from Hunter College in 1970 and a Master of Philosophy in Theatre Arts from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York in 1970. As she receives her Doctor of Philosophy from the City University of New York in 1985, she is single, living in New York with her nine cats, and is on the full-time faculty of New York City Technical College teaching Writing and Speech. In the future she hopes to continue her involvement with the components of her life which have given her the greatest pleasure: teaching, writing, music, theatre, financial investments, and cats.