

= Show Boat =

Show Boat is a 1927 musical in two acts , with music by Jerome Kern and book and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II . Based on Edna Ferber 's best @-@ selling novel of the same name , the musical follows the lives of the performers , stagehands and dock workers on the Cotton Blossom , a Mississippi River show boat , over 40 years , from 1887 to 1927 . Its themes include racial prejudice and tragic , enduring love . The musical contributed such classic songs as " Ol ' Man River " , " Make Believe " and " Can 't Help Lovin ' Dat Man " .

The premiere of Show Boat on Broadway was a watershed moment in the history of American musicals . Compared to the trivial and unrealistic operettas , light musical comedies and " Follies " -type musical revues that defined Broadway in the 1890s and early 20th century , Show Boat " was a radical departure in musical storytelling , marrying spectacle with seriousness " . According to The Complete Book of Light Opera :

Here we come to a completely new genre ? the musical play as distinguished from musical comedy . Now ... the play was the thing , and everything else was subservient to that play . Now ... came complete integration of song , humor and production numbers into a single and inextricable artistic entity .

The quality of the musical was recognized immediately by the critics , and Show Boat is frequently revived . Awards for Broadway shows did not exist in 1927 when the original production of the show premiered , nor in 1932 , when its first revival was staged . Late 20th @-@ century revivals of Show Boat have won both the Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical ( 1995 ) and the Laurence Olivier Award for Best Musical Revival ( 1991 ) .

= = Background = =

In doing research for her proposed novel Show Boat , writer Edna Ferber spent several weeks on the James Adams Floating Palace Theatre in Bath , North Carolina , gathering material about a disappearing American entertainment venue , the river showboat . In a few weeks , she gained what she called a " treasure trove of show @-@ boat material , human , touching , true " . Jerome Kern was impressed by the novel and , hoping to adapt it as a musical , asked the critic Alexander Woollcott to introduce him to Ferber in October 1926 . Woollcott introduced them that evening during the intermission of Kern 's latest musical , Criss Cross .

Ferber was at first shocked that anyone would want to adapt Show Boat as a musical . After being assured by Kern that he did not want to adapt it as the typical frivolous " girlie " show of the 1920s , she granted him and his collaborator Oscar Hammerstein II the rights to set her novel to music . After composing most of the first @-@ act songs , Kern and Hammerstein auditioned their material for producer Florenz Ziegfeld , thinking that he was the person to create the elaborate production they felt necessary for Ferber 's sprawling work . Ziegfeld was impressed with the show and agreed to produce it , writing the next day , " This is the best musical comedy I have ever been fortunate to get a hold of ; I am thrilled to produce it , this show is the opportunity of my life ... " Show Boat , with its serious and dramatic nature , was considered an unusual choice for Ziegfeld , previously known mainly for revues such as the Ziegfeld Follies .

Though Ziegfeld anticipated opening his new theatre on Sixth Avenue with Show Boat , the epic nature of the work required an unusually long gestation period and extensive changes during out @-@ of @-@ town tryouts . Impatient with Kern and Hammerstein and worried about their keeping too serious tone ( he strongly disliked the songs Ol ' Man River and Mis 'ry 's Comin ' Around ) , Ziegfeld decided to open his theatre in February 1927 with Rio Rita , a musical by Kern 's collaborator Guy Bolton . When Rio Rita proved to be a success , Show Boat 's Broadway opening was delayed until Rita could be moved to another theatre .

= = Synopsis = =

Note : Although the basic plot of Show Boat has always remained the same , over the years

revisions and alterations were made by the creators , and over time by subsequent producers and directors . Some of these revisions were for length and some for convenience , as when a different actor played a certain role and was unable to perform a specialty piece written for the role 's creator . Some have been made to reflect contemporary sensitivities toward race , gender and other social issues .

## Act I

In 1887 , the show boat Cotton Blossom arrives at the river dock in Natchez , Mississippi . The Reconstruction era had ended a decade earlier , and white @-@ dominated Southern legislatures have imposed racial segregation and Jim Crow rules . The boat 's owner , Cap 'n Andy Hawks , introduces his actors to the crowd on the levee . A fistfight breaks out between Steve Baker , the leading man of the troupe , and Pete , a rough engineer who had been making passes at Steve 's wife , the leading lady Julie La Verne , a mixed @-@ race woman who passes as white . Steve knocks Pete down , and Pete swears revenge , suggesting he knows a dark secret about Julie . Cap 'n Andy pretends to the shocked crowd that the fight was a preview of one of the melodramas to be performed . The troupe exits with the showboat band , and the crowd follows .

A handsome riverboat gambler , Gaylord Ravenal , appears on the levee and is taken with eighteen @-@ year @-@ old Magnolia ( " Nolie " ) Hawks , an aspiring performer and the daughter of Cap 'n Andy and his wife Parthenia Ann ( Parthy ) . Magnolia is likewise smitten with Ravenal ( " Make Believe " ) . She seeks advice from Joe , a black dock worker aboard the boat , who has returned from buying flour for his wife Queenie , the ship 's cook . He replies that there are " lots like [ Ravenal ] on the river . " As Magnolia goes inside the boat to tell her friend Julie about the handsome stranger , Joe mutters that she ought to ask the river for advice . He and the other dock workers reflect on the wisdom and indifference of " Ol ' Man River " , who doesn 't seem to care what the world 's troubles are , but " jes ' keeps rollin ' along " .

Magnolia finds Julie inside and announces that she 's in love . Julie cautions her that this stranger could be just a " no @-@ account river fellow " . Magnolia says that if she found out he was " no @-@ account " , she 'd stop loving him . Julie warns her that it 's not that easy to stop loving someone , explaining that she 'll always love Steve , singing a few lines of " Can 't Help Lovin ' Dat Man " . Queenie overhears ? she is surprised that Julie knows that song as she has only heard " colored folks " sing it . Magnolia remarks that Julie sings it all the time , and when Queenie asks if she can sing the entire song , Julie obliges .

During the rehearsal for that evening , Julie and Steve learn that the town sheriff is coming to arrest them . Steve takes out a large pocket knife and makes a cut on the back of her hand , sucking the blood and swallowing it . Pete returns with the sheriff , who insists that the show cannot proceed , because Julie is a mulatto woman married to a white man , and local laws prohibit such miscegenation . Julie admits that her mother was black , but Steve tells the sheriff that he also has " black blood " in him , so their marriage is legal in Mississippi . The troupe backs him up , boosted by the ship 's pilot Windy McClain , a longtime friend of the sheriff . The couple have escaped the charge of miscegenation , but they still have to leave the show boat ; identified as black , they can no longer perform for the segregated white audience . Cap 'n Andy fires Pete , but in spite of his sympathy for Julie and Steve , he cannot violate the law for them .

Gaylord Ravenal returns and asks for passage on the boat . Andy hires him as the new leading man , and assigns his daughter Magnolia as the new leading lady , over her mother 's objections . As Magnolia and Ravenal begin to rehearse their roles and in the process , kiss for the first time ( infuriating Parthy ) , Joe reprises the last few lines of " Ol ' Man River " .

Weeks later , Magnolia and Ravenal have been a hit with the crowds and have fallen in love . As the levee workers hum " Ol ' Man River " in the background , he proposes to Magnolia , and she accepts . The couple joyously sings " You Are Love " . They make plans to marry the next day while Parthy , who disapproves , is out of town . Parthy has discovered that Ravenal once killed a man , and arrives with the Sheriff to interrupt the wedding festivities . The group learns that Ravenal was acquitted of murder . Cap 'n Andy calls Parthy " narrow @-@ minded " and defends Ravenal by announcing that he also once killed a man . Parthy faints , but the ceremony proceeds .

## Act II

Six years have passed , and it is 1893 . Gaylord and Magnolia have moved to Chicago , where they make a precarious living from Gaylord 's gambling . At first they are rich and enjoying the good life , singing the song " Why Do I Love You ? " By 1903 , they have a daughter , Kim , and after years of varying income , they are broke and rent a room in a boarding house . Depressed over his inability to support his family , Gaylord abandons Magnolia and Kim . Frank and Ellie , two former actors from the showboat , learn that Magnolia is living in the rooms they want to rent . The old friends seek a singing job for Magnolia at the Trocadero , the club where they are doing a New Year 's show . Julie is working there . She has fallen into drinking after having been abandoned by Steve . At a rehearsal , she tries out the new song " Bill . " She appears to be thinking of Steve and sings it with great emotion . From her dressing @-@ room , she hears Magnolia singing " Can 't Help Lovin ' Dat Man " for her audition , the song which Julie taught her years ago . Julie secretly quits her job so that Magnolia can fill it , without learning of her sacrifice .

On New Year 's Eve , Andy and Parthy go to Chicago for a surprise visit to their daughter Magnolia . He goes to the Trocadero without his wife , and sees Magnolia overcome with emotion and nearly booed off stage . Andy rallies the crowd by starting a sing @-@ along of the standard , " After the Ball " . Magnolia becomes a great musical star .

More than 20 years pass , and it is 1927 . An aged Joe on the Cotton Blossom sings a reprise of " Ol ' Man River " . Cap 'n Andy has a chance meeting with Ravenal and arranges his reunion with Magnolia . Andy knows that Magnolia is retiring and returning to the Cotton Blossom with Kim , who has become a Broadway star . Kim gives her admirers a taste of her performing abilities by singing an updated , Charleston version of " Why Do I Love You ? " Ravenal sings a reprise of " You Are Love " to the offstage Magnolia . Although he is uncertain about asking her to take him back , Magnolia , who has never stopped loving him , greets him warmly and does . As the happy couple walks up the boat 's gangplank , Joe and the cast sing the last verse of " Ol ' Man River " .

Plot variants in 1951 film

The 1951 MGM film changed the final scenes of the story , as well as many small details . It reconciled Ravenal and Magnolia a few years after they separated , rather than 23 . By a chance meeting with Julie , Ravenal learns that Magnolia gave birth to his daughter . He returns to her and sees the child Kim playing . Magnolia sees them together and takes him back , and the family returns to the show boat . Joe and the chorus start singing " Ol ' Man River " as the scenes unfold , then the paddlewheel starts turning in tempo with the music , as the ship heads down river . Julie is shown , viewing from a distance . She had watched the scene from the shadows .

= = Musical numbers = =

The musical numbers in the original production were as follows :

= = = History of revisions = = =

The original production ran four @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half hours during tryouts , but was trimmed to just over three by the time it got to Broadway . During previews , two songs , " Mis 'ry 's Comin ' Aroun " and " Let 's Start the New Year " , were cut from the show . " Mis 'ry 's Comin ' Aroun " was published in the complete vocal score , and fragments of it are also heard in the scoring , notably in the original 1927 overture and in the miscegenation scene . The song " Be Happy , Too " was also cut after the Washington , D.C. , tryout The 1988 studio cast album reinstated the entire song , and it was also included in the 1994 Hal Prince revival . " Let 's Start the New Year " was performed in the 1989 Paper Mill Playhouse production .

Two songs , " Till Good Luck Comes My Way " ( sung by Ravenal ) and " Hey Feller ! " ( sung by Queenie ) , were written mainly to cover scenery changes . They were discarded beginning with the 1946 revival , although " Till Good Luck " was included in the 1993 Harold Prince revival of the show . The comedy song , " I Might Fall Back On You , " was also cut beginning in 1946 . It was restored in the 1951 film version and several stage productions since the 1980s . On record , " Hey Feller ! " appears only on the 1988 EMI album . Kern and Hammerstein wrote two new songs for revivals and

three more for the 1936 film version .

The Harold Fielding production in London in the early 1970s claimed to use the entire original score , but it omitted " Hey , Feller ! " and " In Dahomey " , among others . This cast album broke ground in being the first two @-@ LP version of Show Boat ever released .

The score also includes four songs not originally written for Show Boat : " Bill " was originally written by Kern and P. G. Wodehouse in 1917 and was reworked by Hammerstein for Show Boat . Two other songs not by Kern and Hammerstein , " Goodbye , My Lady Love " by Joseph E. Howard and " After the Ball " by Charles K. Harris , were included by the authors for historical atmosphere and are included in revivals . The New Year 's Eve scene features an instrumental version of " There 'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight " .

Some of the following numbers have been cut or revised in subsequent productions , as noted below ( the songs " Ol ' Man River " , " Can 't Help Lovin ' Dat Man " , and " Bill " have been included in every stage and film production of Show Boat ) :

Overture ? The original overture , used in all stage productions up to 1946 ( and heard on the three @-@ disc EMI / Angel CD for the first time in nearly 50 years ) , is based chiefly on the deleted song " Mis 'ry 's Comin ' Round " , as Kern wanted to save this song in some form . The song was restored in the Harold Prince 1994 revival of the show . The overture also contains fragments of " Ol ' Man River " , " Can 't Help Lovin ' Dat Man " , and a faster arrangement of " Why Do I Love You ? " The overtures for the 1946 revival and the 1966 Lincoln Center revival consist of medleys of songs from the show . All three overtures were arranged by the show 's orchestrator , Robert Russell Bennett , who orchestrated most of Kern 's later shows .

" Cotton Blossom " ? This number is performed in all the stage productions , and shorter versions were used in the 1936 and 1951 film versions . It was not used in the 1929 film version .

" Where 's the Mate for Me ? " ? Ravenal 's first song ; heard in all stage versions , partially sung in the 1936 film version , and sung complete in the 1951 film version . Not sung in the 1929 film version .

" Make Believe " ? Performed in all stage versions , and in the 1936 and 1951 film versions , but not the 1929 film version .

" Life Upon the Wicked Stage " ? This comic song is usually included in stage versions , but is heard in the 1936 film only in the orchestral score . Not included in the 1929 film , it is sung and danced in the 1951 film version .

" Till Good Luck Comes My Way " ? Kern and Hammerstein cut it from the 1946 revival , but it was reinstated in the 1971 London stage revival . It is performed instrumentally in the 1936 film , and is omitted altogether in the 1929 and 1951 films .

" I Might Fall Back on You " ? This was usually cut after 1946 , but it has been reinstated in revivals beginning in 1966 . It was absent from the 1929 and 1936 films , but included in the 1951 film .

" C 'mon Folks ( Queenie 's Ballyhoo ) " ? Always included in the show , it was sung in the prologue to the 1929 film version , It was omitted from the 1936 film and performed instrumentally in the 1951 film .

" Olio Dance " ? This is rarely performed now , since it was composed simply to cover a change of scenery . It is an orchestral piece that partially uses the melody of " I Might Fall Back on You " , and can be heard on the EMI 3 @-@ CD album ( as " Villain Dance " ) . The 1936 film substituted the new Kern @-@ Hammerstein number " Gallivantin ' Around " , performed as an olio by Irene Dunne ( as Magnolia ) in blackface . It was omitted from the 1989 PBS Paper Mill Playhouse production . Some modern productions move the song " I Might Fall Back on You " to this spot .

" You Are Love " ? Kern considered this popular waltz to be the score 's weakest song : he tried unsuccessfully to eliminate it from the 1936 film version . It has never been cut from any stage production . It was shortened , and the introductory section was omitted , in both the 1936 and the 1951 films . It was not performed in the 1929 film .

" Act I Finale " ? This was shortened in the 1936 film and omitted from the 1929 and 1951 films . Its midsection , banjo @-@ dominant , buck @-@ and @-@ wing dance theme became a repeating motif in the 1951 film , played onstage during the backstage miscegenation scene , and later as a soft @-@ shoe dance for Cap 'n Andy and granddaughter Kim .

" At the Chicago World 's Fair " ? Used in all stage productions except for the Harold Prince 1994 revival , it was omitted from all the film versions , but an instrumental version was performed in the 1936 film .

" Why Do I Love You ? " ? Used in all stage versions , this number was sung during the exit music to the 1929 film ; it was performed only as background music for the 1936 film , and was sung in the 1951 film version . In the 1994 Hal Prince revival , it was sung by Parthy .

" In Dahomey " ? This was cut from the score after the 1946 Broadway production and has not been revived since due to its being potentially offensive , as well as unnecessary to the plot . It is sung at the Chicago World 's Fair by a group of supposedly African natives . They chant in a supposed African language before breaking into modern English , singing about how glad they are to return to their apartments after the day 's performance . It was not used in any film version of the show , but was included in the complete 1988 EMI recording and in a 1993 studio recording on the Jay label of the 1946 score .

" Goodbye , My Lady Love " ? This is used only in American productions . It is included in the 1936 film , but not in the 1929 or 1951 films .

" After the Ball " ? Performed in all stage productions and in both the 1936 and 1951 films , but not the 1929 one .

" Hey , Feller " ? Used in nearly all stage productions up until 1946 , and sung in the prologue to the 1929 film . Not used in the 1936 film , but used as background score in the 1951 film during the opening post @-@ credits scene as the show boat arrives .

Additional numbers have been included in films and revivals as follows :

" Mis 'ry 's Comin ' Round " ? Though this was cut from the original production , Kern ensured that it was published in the complete vocal score . The 1988 album reinstated it , and it was also included in the 1994 Hal Prince revival .

" Let 's Start the New Year " ? Cut from the original production but performed in the 1989 Paper Mill Playhouse production .

" I Have The Room Above Her " is a romantic duet written by Kern and Hammerstein for Ravenal and Magnolia in the 1936 film . It was included in the 1994 Broadway revival .

" Gallivantin ' Around " is a cakewalk @-@ style number written by Kern and Hammerstein for Magnolia for the 1936 film .

" Ah Still Suits Me " is a comic duet written by Kern and Hammerstein for the 1936 film , and sung by the characters Joe and Queenie ( Paul Robeson and Hattie McDaniel ) . The number was also included in the 1989 Paper Mill Playhouse production .

" Nobody Else But Me " was written by Kern and Hammerstein for the 1946 Broadway revival , to be sung in the spot where Kim usually sings a reprise of " Why Do I Love You " . This was the last song written by Kern ; he died shortly before the 1946 production opened . In the 1971 London stage revival , the song was sung by Julie , in a new scene written especially for that production . It is not sung in any film version of the show , but was frequently heard in stage revivals up until about the 1980s .

" Dandies on Parade " is a dance number arranged for the 1994 Broadway production by David Krane , largely from Kern 's music .

= = Characters = =

= = = Principal roles = = =

Cap 'n Andy Hawks , the owner and captain of the Cotton Blossom show boat . He is the husband of Parthy Ann , and the father of Magnolia .

Magnolia Hawks , the daughter of Parthy and Cap 'n Andy . She marries Gaylord Ravenal and becomes the mother of Kim .

Gaylord Ravenal , a handsome river boat gambler . Later , the husband of Magnolia and father of Kim .

Julie La Verne , the leading lady of the troupe and the wife of Steve .

Steve Baker , the leading man of the Cotton Blossom and protective husband of Julie .

Parthy Ann Hawks , the stern wife of Cap 'n Andy .

Pete , the tough engineer of the Cotton Blossom who tries to flirt with Julie .

Joe , a dock worker on the boat , and the husband of Queenie .

Queenie , the ship 's cook and the wife of Joe .

Frank Schultz , a performer on the boat who often plays the villain characters . He is married to Ellie

Ellie , a singer and dancer in an act with her husband Frank ..

Kim , the daughter of Magnolia and Gaylord .

Windy McClain , the pilot of the Cotton Blossom .

= = = Minor characters = = =

The Sheriff , the Stevedores , the Townspeople , the Dandies , the Dockworkers , the Gals , the Flappers , the Nuns , the Chorus , the Sightseers , the Barkers , the Jubilee Singers and Dahomey Dancers are all somewhat of ensemble parts . The Sheriff incriminates Julie and Steve by order of Pete . The Stevedores are the workers and performers of the Cotton Blossom . The Townspeople sing the opening song and others , and watch the performances of the show boat . The Dandies sing " At the Fair " with the Sightseers and Barkers . The Dockworkers sing with Joe in all the versions of " Ol ' Man River " . The Gals back up Frank and Ellie in most of their songs , including " I Might Fall Back on You " . The Flappers back up Kim during " Why Do I Love You ? ( reprise ) " . The Nuns sing " Nuns ' Processional " . The Chorus sings at Magnolia and Ravenal 's wedding . The Jubilee Singers and Dahomey Dancers sing " In Dahomey " .

= = Production history = =

= = = Original 1927 production = = =

Show Boat premiered in New York on December 27 , 1927 . Ziegfeld previewed the production in a pre @-@ Broadway tour from November 15 to December 19 , 1927 . The locations included the National Theatre in Washington , D.C. , the Nixon Theatre in Pittsburgh , the Ohio Theatre in Cleveland , and the Erlanger Theatre in Philadelphia . The show opened on Broadway at the Ziegfeld Theatre on December 27 , 1927 . The critics were immediately enthusiastic , and the show was a great popular success , running a year and a half , for a total of 572 performances .

The production was staged by Oscar Hammerstein II . Choreography for the show was by Sammy Lee . The original cast included Norma Terris as Magnolia Hawks and her daughter Kim ( as an adult ) , Howard Marsh as Gaylord Ravenal , Helen Morgan as Julie LaVerne , Jules Bledsoe as Joe , Charles Winninger as Cap 'n Andy Hawks , Edna May Oliver as Parthy Ann Hawks , Sammy White as Frank Schultz , Eva Puck as Ellie May Chipley , and Tess Gardella as Queenie . The orchestrator was Robert Russell Bennett , and the conductor was Victor Baravalle . The scenic design for the original production was by Joseph Urban , who had worked with Ziegfeld for many years in his Follies and had designed the elaborate new Ziegfeld Theatre itself . Costumes were designed by John Harkrider .

In his opening night review for the New York Times , Brooks Atkinson called the book 's adaptation " intelligently made " , and the production one of " unimpeachable skill and taste " . He termed Norma Terris " a revelation " ; Charles Winninger " extraordinarily persuasive and convincing " ; and Jules Bledsoe 's singing " remarkably effective " .

= = = Paul Robeson = = =

The character Joe , the stevedore who sings " Ol ' Man River " , was expanded from the novel and

written specifically by Kern and Hammerstein for Paul Robeson , already a noted actor and singer . Although he is the actor most identified with the role and the song , he was unavailable for the original production due to its opening delay . Jules Bledsoe premiered the part . Robeson played Joe in four notable productions of Show Boat : the 1928 premier London production , the 1932 Broadway revival , the 1936 film version and a 1940 stage revival in Los Angeles .

Reviewing the 1932 Broadway revival , the critic Brooks Atkinson described Robeson 's performance : " Mr. Robeson has a touch of genius . It is not merely his voice , which is one of the richest organs on the stage . It is his understanding that gives ' Old Man River ' an epic lift . When he sings ... you realize that Jerome Kern 's spiritual has reached its final expression . "

= = = American revivals and 1936 film = = =

After closing at the Ziegfeld Theatre in 1929 , the original production toured extensively . The national company is notable for including Irene Dunne as Magnolia . Hattie McDaniel played Queenie in a 1933 West Coast production , joined by tenor Allan Jones as Ravenal .

Dunne was soon offered a contract by RKO Studios and appeared in the 1936 Universal Studios film adaptation of Show Boat , as did Jones as Ravenal and McDaniel as Queenie . The film also featured Charles Winninger ( Cap 'n Andy ) , Helen Morgan ( Julie ) , Sammy White ( Frank ) , and Francis X. Mahoney ( Rubberface ) recreating their original Broadway stage roles .

Show Boat was revived by Ziegfeld on Broadway in 1932 at the Casino Theatre with most of the original cast , but with Paul Robeson as Joe and Dennis King as Ravenal .

In 1946 , a major new Broadway revival was produced by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II at the show 's original home , the Ziegfeld Theatre . The 1946 revival featured a revised score and new song by Kern and Hammerstein , and a new overture and orchestrations by Robert Russell Bennett . The show was directed by Hammerstein and Hassard Short and featured Jan Clayton ( Magnolia ) , Charles Fredricks ( Ravenal ) , Carol Bruce ( Julie ) , Kenneth Spencer ( Joe ) , Helen Dowdy ( Queenie ) , and Buddy Ebsen ( Frank ) . The successful production ran for 418 performances and then toured extensively . Kern , however , died just weeks before the January 5 , 1946 opening , making it the last show he worked on .

Additional New York revivals were produced in 1948 and 1954 at the New York City Center . The Music Theater of Lincoln Center company produced Show Boat in 1966 at the New York State Theater in a new production . It starred Barbara Cook ( Magnolia ) , Constance Towers ( Julie ) , Stephen Douglass ( Ravenal ) , David Wayne ( Cap 'n Andy ) , Margaret Hamilton ( Parthy ) and William Warfield ( Joe ) . It was produced by Richard Rodgers , and Robert Russell Bennett once again provided a new overture and revised orchestrations .

1983 brought a production at the Kennedy Center , Washington , D.C. , that starred Mickey Rooney as Cap 'n Andy , and another at the Uris Theatre in New York . The latter revival was presented by Douglas Urbanski and starred Donald O 'Connor as Cap 'n Andy .

In 1989 the Paper Mill Playhouse of Millburn , New Jersey , mounted a production which was noted for its intention to restore the show in accordance with the creators ' original intentions . The production restored part of the original 1927 overture and one number discarded from the show after the Broadway opening , as well as the song Ah Still Suits Me , written by Kern and Hammerstein for the 1936 film version . It was directed by Robert Johanson and starred Eddie Bracken as Cap 'n Andy . The Paper Mill production was preserved on videotape and broadcast on PBS .

Livent Inc. presented the most recent major production of Show Boat on Broadway in 1994 . Produced and directed by Harold Prince , it premiered in Toronto , Ontario , in 1993 prior to opening in New York on October 2 , 1994 , at the George Gershwin Theatre . It ran for 947 performances , Broadway 's longest @-@ running Show Boat to date . This production went on tour , playing at the Kennedy Center ; and it was also staged in London and Melbourne , Australia . Prince 's production revived interest in the show by tightening the book , dropping and adding songs cut in various productions , and highlighting its racial elements . Perhaps the most notable change in the score was Prince 's transforming " Why Do I Love You ? " from a duet between Magnolia and Ravenal to a lullaby sung by Parthy Ann to Magnolia 's baby girl . The change was partly to accommodate the

song 's being performed by stage actress Elaine Stritch . The love duet for Magnolia and Ravenal , " I Have the Room Above Her " , originally written by Kern and Hammerstein for the 1936 film , was added to the production . Two new mime and dance " Montages " in Act 2 depicted the passage of time through changing styles of dance and music .

= = = London productions = = =

The original London West End production opened May 3 , 1928 , at the Theatre Royal , Drury Lane and featured among the cast , Cedric Hardwicke as Capt. Andy , Edith Day as Magnolia , Paul Robeson as Joe , and Alberta Hunter as Queenie . Mabel Mercer , later famed as a cabaret singer , was in the chorus . Other West End presentations include a 1971 production at the Adelphi Theatre , which ran for 909 performances .

The Hal Prince production ran at the Prince Edward Theatre in 1998 , and was nominated for the Olivier Award , Outstanding Musical Production ( 1999 ) . Other notable revivals in England have included the joint Opera North / Royal Shakespeare Company production of 1989 , which ran at the London Palladium in 1990 , and the 2006 production directed by Francesca Zambello , presented by Raymond Gubbay at London 's Royal Albert Hall . It was the first fully staged musical production in the history of that venue .

A production was transferred from Sheffield 's Crucible Theatre to London 's New London Theatre with previews beginning on April 9 , 2016 , and an official opening on April 25 , 2016 . Show Boat is directed by Daniel Evans using the Goodspeed Musicals version of the show . The cast includes Gina Beck as Magnolia , Lucy Briers as Parthy Ann and Malcolm Sinclair as Cap 'n Andy . Despite very favorable reviews , the show is scheduled to close at the end of August 2016 .

= = Media = =

= = = Film and television = = =

Show Boat has been adapted for film three times , and for television once .

1929 Show Boat . Universal . Released in silent and partial sound versions . Not a film version of the musical ; its plot is based on the original Edna Ferber novel . Immediately after the silent film was completed , a prologue with some music from the show was filmed and added to a part @-@ talkie version of the same film , which was released with two sound sequences .

1936 Show Boat . Universal . Directed by James Whale . A mostly faithful film version of the show , featuring four members of the original Broadway cast . Screenplay by Oscar Hammerstein II ; music arrangements by Robert Russell Bennett ; music direction and conducting by Victor Baraville .

1946 Till the Clouds Roll By . MGM . In this fictionalized film biography of composer Jerome Kern ( played by Robert Walker ) , Show Boat 's 1927 opening night on Broadway is depicted in a lavishly staged fifteen @-@ minute medley of six of the show 's songs . The number features Kathryn Grayson , Tony Martin , Lena Horne , Virginia O 'Brien , Caleb Peterson , and William Halligan as , respectively , Magnolia , Ravenal , Julie , Ellie , Joe , and Cap 'n Andy .

1951 Show Boat . MGM . Somewhat revised Technicolor film version . Follows the basic storyline and contains many songs from the show , but makes many changes in the details of plot and character . The most financially successful and frequently revived of the three film versions .

1989 A live performance by the Paper Mill Playhouse was videotaped for television and shown on Great Performances on PBS . It contains more of the songs ( and fewer cuts ) than any of the film versions . It includes the choral number " Let 's Start the New Year " , which was dropped from the show before its Broadway opening , and " Ah Still Suits Me " , a song written by Kern and Hammerstein for the 1936 film version of the show .

= = = Radio = = =



Show Boat was adapted for live radio at least seven times . Due to network censorship rules , many of the radio productions eliminated the miscegenation aspect of the plot . Notable exceptions were the 1940 Cavalcade of America broadcast and the 1952 Lux Radio Theatre broadcast .

Campbell Playhouse ( CBS Radio , March 31 , 1939 ) . Directed and introduced by Orson Welles . This was a non @-@ musical version of the story that was based more closely on Edna Ferber 's novel than on the musical . From the original stage cast Helen Morgan repeated her portrayal of Julie , here singing one song not from the musical . Welles portrayed Cap 'n Andy , Margaret Sullavan was Magnolia , and author Edna Ferber made her acting debut as Parthy . This version made Julie into an illegal alien who must be deported .

Cavalcade of America ( NBC Radio , May 28 , 1940 ) . A half @-@ hour dramatization with Jeanette Nolan , John McIntire , Agnes Moorehead and the Ken Christy Chorus . Although brief , it was remarkably faithful to the original show .

Lux Radio Theatre ( CBS , June 1940 ) . Introduced and produced by Cecil B. DeMille , it featured Irene Dunne , Allan Jones , and Charles Winninger , all of whom were in the 1936 film version . In this condensed version some songs from the show were sung , but Julie was played by a non @-@ singing Gloria Holden . This version made the biracial Julie a single woman . Only a few lines of Ol ' Man River were heard , sung by a chorus . While supposedly based on the 1936 film , this production used the ending of the original show , which the film did not use .

Radio Hall of Fame ( 1944 ) . This production featured Kathryn Grayson , playing Magnolia for the first time . Also in the cast were Allan Jones as Ravenal , Helen Forrest as Julie , Charles Winninger as Cap 'n Andy , Ernest Whitman as Joe , and Elvia Allman as Parthy .

The Railroad Hour ( ABC Radio , 1950 ) . Condensed to a half @-@ hour , this version featured singers Dorothy Kirsten , Gordon MacRae , and Lucille Norman . " Ol ' Man River " was sung by MacRae instead of by an African @-@ American singer . Explanation of Julie and Steve 's departure went completely unmentioned in this version .

Lux Radio Theatre ( CBS , February 1952 ) . A radio version of the 1951 MGM film featuring Kathryn Grayson , Ava Gardner , Howard Keel , and William Warfield from the film 's cast . Jay C. Flippen portrayed Cap 'n Andy . This version was extremely faithful to the 1951 film adaptation .

In 2011 , a two @-@ part version was broadcast on BBC Radio 4 in the Classic Serial spot . Solely based on the novel by Edna Ferber , it was dramatized by Moya O 'Shea , and was produced and directed by Tracey Neale . It starred Samantha Spiro as Magnolia , Ryan McCluskey as Ravenal , Nonso Anozie as Joe , Tracy Ifeakor as Queenie , Laurel Lefkow as Parthy , Morgan Deare as Cap 'n Andy and Lysette Anthony as Kim . Original music was by Neil Brand .

On June 16 , 2012 , a revival of the musical by Lyric Opera of Chicago was broadcast by WFMT @-@ Radio of Chicago . This production of Show Boat reinstated the songs Mis 'ry 's Comin ' Round , Till Good Luck Comes My Way and Hey , Feller ! . It marked the first time a virtually complete version of Show Boat had ever been broadcast on radio .

= = = Concert hall = = =

In 1941 , the Cleveland Orchestra , under the direction of Artur Rodzi?ski , premiered the orchestral work Show Boat : A Scenario for Orchestra , a 22 @-@ minute orchestral work weaving together many themes from the show . Rodzi?ski and the orchestra recorded it that same year , and there have been several modern recordings of the work since , notably one by John Mauceri and the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra .

= = = Selected recordings = = =

1928 ? original London cast album , with the show 's original orchestrations . This was released in England on 78 rpm records years before being sold in the United States . Because the U.S. had not yet begun making original cast albums of Broadway shows , the 1927 Broadway cast as a whole was never recorded performing the songs , although Jules Bledsoe , Helen Morgan , and Tess Gardella did record individual numbers from it . The cast on the 1928 London album included Edith

Day , Howett Worster , Marie Burke and Alberta Hunter . Due to contractual restrictions , cast member Paul Robeson was replaced on the album as Joe by his understudy , baritone Norris Smith . But that same year , Robeson , with the same chorus that accompanied him in the show , did record " Ol ' Man River " in its original orchestration . That recording was later released separately . His rendition appears on the EMI CD " Paul Robeson Sings ' Ol ' Man River ' and Other Favorites " .

1932 ? studio cast recording on 78rpm by Brunswick Records . Later re @-@ released by Columbia Records on 78rpm , 33 @-@ 1 / 3rpm and briefly on CD . This recording featured Helen Morgan , Paul Robeson , James Melton , Frank Munn , and Countess Olga Albani , and was issued in conjunction with the 1932 revival of the show , although it was not strictly an " original cast " album of that revival . The orchestra was conducted by Victor Young , and the original orchestrations and vocal arrangements were not used .

1946 ? Broadway revival cast recording . Issued on 78rpm , LP , and CD . The 78 @-@ RPM and LP versions were issued by Columbia , the CD by Sony . This was the first American recording of Show Boat which used the cast , conductor , and orchestrations of a major Broadway revival of the show . ( Robert Russell Bennett 's orchestrations for this revival thoroughly modified his original 1927 orchestrations . ) Jan Clayton , Carol Bruce , Charles Fredericks , Kenneth Spencer , and Colette Lyons were featured . Buddy Ebsen also appeared in the revival , but not on the album . Includes the new song " Nobody Else But Me " .

1951 ? MGM Records soundtrack album , with cast members of the 1951 film version . The first film soundtrack of Show Boat to be issued on records . Appeared both on 45rpm and 33 @-@ 1 / 3rpm , later on CD in a much expanded edition . Actress Ava Gardner , whose singing voice was replaced by Annette Warren 's in the film , is heard singing on this album . The expanded version on CD contains both Warren 's and Gardner 's vocal tracks . This marked the recording debut of William Warfield , who played Joe and sang " Ol ' Man River " in the film . Orchestrations were by Conrad Salinger , Robert Franklyn , and Alexander Courage .

1956 ? RCA Victor studio cast album conducted by Lehman Engel . This album featured more of the score on one LP than had been previously recorded . It featured a white singer , famed American baritone Robert Merrill , as both Joe and Gaylord Ravenal . Other singers included Patrice Munsel as Magnolia and Rise Stevens as Julie . Issued on CD in 2009 , but omitting Frank and Ellie 's numbers , which had been sung on the LP version by Janet Pavek and Kevin Scott . The original orchestrations were not used .

1958 ? RCA Victor studio cast album . The first Show Boat in stereo , this recording starred Howard Keel ( singing " Ol ' Man River " as well as Gaylord Ravenal 's songs ) , Anne Jeffreys , and Gogi Grant , and did not use the original orchestrations . It was issued on CD in 2010 .

1959 ? EMI British studio cast album . It featured Marlys Walters as Magnolia , Don McKay as Ravenal , Shirley Bassey as Julie , Dora Bryan as Ellie , and Inia Te Wiata singing " Ol ' Man River " .

1962 ? Columbia studio cast album . Starring Barbara Cook , John Raitt , Anita Darian , and William Warfield , this was the first " Show Boat " recording issued on CD . Although Robert Russell Bennett was uncredited , this used several of his orchestrations for the 1946 revival of the show , together with some modifications .

1966 ? Lincoln Center cast album . Issued by RCA Victor , it featured Cook , Constance Towers , Stephen Douglass , and William Warfield . Robert Russell Bennett 's orchestrations were modified even further . Also available on CD .

1971 ? London revival cast album . Jazz singer Cleo Laine , soprano Lorna Dallas , tenor Andre Jobin , and bass @-@ baritone Thomas Carey were the leads . It used completely new orchestrations bearing almost no resemblance to Robert Russell Bennett 's . This was the first 2 @-@ LP album of Show Boat . It included more of the score than had been previously put on records . Issued later on CD .

1988 ? EMI studio cast album . This is a three @-@ CD set which , for the first time , contained the entire score of the show , with the authentic 1927 orchestrations , uncensored lyrics , and vocal arrangements . The cast includes Frederica von Stade , Jerry Hadley , Teresa Stratas , Karla Burns , Bruce Hubbard , and Paige O 'Hara . The album is conducted by John McGlinn .

1993 ? Toronto revival cast recording , starring Rebecca Luker , Mark Jacoby , Lonette McKee , Robert Morse , Elaine Stritch and Michel Bell ( as Joe ) .

There have been many other studio cast recordings of Show Boat in addition to those mentioned above . The soundtrack of the 1936 film version has appeared on a so @-@ called " bootleg " CD label called Xeno .

= = Racial issues = =

= = = Integration = = =

Show Boat boldly portrayed racial issues and was the first racially integrated musical , in that both black and white performers appeared and sang on stage together . Ziegfeld ? s Follies featured solo African American performers such as Bert Williams , but would not have included a black woman in the chorus . Show Boat was structured with two choruses ? a black chorus and a white chorus . One commentator noted that " Hammerstein uses the African @-@ American chorus as essentially a Greek chorus , providing clear commentary on the proceedings , whereas the white choruses sing of the not @-@ quite @-@ real . " In Show Boat Jerome Kern used the AABA @-@ chorus form exclusively in songs sung by African American characters ( Ole Man River , Can 't Help Lovin ' dat Man ) , a form that later would be regarded as typical of ' white ' popular music .

Show Boat was the first Broadway musical to seriously depict an interracial marriage , as in Ferber 's original novel , and to feature a character of mixed race who was " passing " for white . ( Although the musical comedy Whoopee ! ( 1930 ) , starring Eddie Cantor , supposedly depicted a romance between a mixed @-@ blood Native American man and a white woman , the man turns out to be white . )

= = = Language and stereotypes = = =

= = = = The word " nigger " = = = =

The show has generated controversy for the subject matter of interracial marriage , the historical portrayal of blacks working as laborers and servants in the 19th @-@ century South , and the use of the word niggers in the lyrics ( this is the first word in the opening chorus of the show ) . Originally the show opened with the black chorus onstage singing :

Niggers all work on the Mississippi .

Niggers all work while the white folks play ?

Loadin ' up boats wid de bales of cotton ,

Gittin ' no rest till de Judgement Day .

In subsequent productions , " niggers " has been changed to " colored folk " , to " darkies " , and in one choice , " Here we all " , as in " Here we all work on the Mississippi . Here we all work while the white folks play . " In the 1966 Lincoln Center production of the show , produced two years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed , this section of the opening chorus was omitted rather than having words changed . The 1971 London revival used " Here we all work on the Mississippi " . The 1988 CD for EMI restored the original 1927 lyric , while the Harold Prince revival chose " colored folk " .

The Paper Mill Playhouse production , videotaped and telecast by PBS in 1989 , used the word " nigger " when said by an unsympathetic character , but otherwise used the word " Negro " .

Many critics believe that Kern and Hammerstein wrote the opening chorus to give a sympathetic voice to an oppressed people , and that they intended its use in an ironic way , as it had so often been used in a derogatory way . They wanted to alert the audience to the realities of racism :

'Show Boat begins with the singing of that most reprehensible word ? nigger ? yet this is no coon song ... [ it ] immediately establishes race as one of the central themes of the play . This is a protest

song , more ironic than angry perhaps , but a protest nonetheless . In the singers ' hands , the word nigger has a sardonic tone ... in the very opening , Hammerstein has established the gulf between the races , the privilege accorded the white folks and denied the black , and a flavor of the contempt built into the very language that whites used about African Americans . This is a very effective scene .... These are not caricature roles ; they are wise , if uneducated , people capable of seeing and feeling more than some of the white folk around them .

The racial situations in the play provoke thoughts of how hard it must have been to be black in the South . In the dialogue , some of the blacks are called " niggers " by the white characters in the story . ( Contrary to what is sometimes thought , black slavery is not depicted in the play ; U.S. slavery was abolished by 1865 , and the story runs from the 1880s to the late 1920s . ) At first , it is shocking to believe they are allowed to use a word that negative at all in a play ... But in the context in which it is used , it is appropriate due to the impact it makes . It reinforces how much of a derogatory term " nigger " was then and still is today .

The word has not been used in any of the film versions of the musical . In the show , the Sheriff refers to Steve and Julie as having " nigger blood . " In the 1936 and 1951 film versions , this was changed to " Negro blood " . Likewise , the unsympathetic Pete calls Queenie a " nigger " in the stage version , but refers to her as " colored " in the 1936 film , and does not use either word in the 1951 film .

= = = African @-@ American English = = =

Those who consider Show Boat racially insensitive often note that the dialogue and lyrics of the black characters ( especially the stevedore Joe and his wife Queenie ) and choruses use various forms of African American Vernacular English . An example of this is shown in the following text :

Hey !

Where yo ' think you 're goin ' ?

Don 't yo ' know dis show is startin ' soon ?

Hey !

Jes ' a few seats left yere !

It 's light inside an ' outside dere 's no moon

What fo ' you gals dressed up dicty ?

Where 's yo ' all gwine ?

Tell dose stingy men o ' yourn

To step up here in line !

Whether or not such language is an accurate reflection of the vernacular of blacks in Mississippi at the time , the effect of its usage has offended some critics , who see it as perpetuating racial stereotypes . The character Queenie ( who sings the above verses ) in the original production was played not by an African American but by the Italian @-@ American actress Tess Gardella in blackface ( Gardella was perhaps best known for portraying Aunt Jemima in blackface ) . Attempts by non @-@ black writers to imitate black language stereotypically in songs like " Ol ' Man River " was alleged to be offensive , a claim that was repeated eight years later by critics of Porgy and Bess . But such critics sometimes acknowledged that Hammerstein 's intentions were noble , since " Ol ' Man River " ' was the song in which he first found his lyrical voice , compressing the suffering , resignation , and anger of an entire race into 24 taut lines and doing it so naturally that it 's no wonder folks assume the song 's a Negro spiritual . "

The theatre critics and veterans Richard Eyre and Nicholas Wright believe that Show Boat was revolutionary , not only because it was a radical departure from the previous style of plotless revues , but because it was a show written by non @-@ blacks that portrayed blacks sympathetically rather than condescendingly :

Instead of a line of chorus girls showing their legs in the opening number singing that they were happy , happy , happy , the curtain rose on black dock @-@ hands lifting bales of cotton , and singing about the hardness of their lives . Here was a musical that showed poverty , suffering , bitterness , racial prejudice , a sexual relationship between black and white , a love story which

ended unhappily ? and of course show business . In " Ol ' Man River " the black race was given an anthem to honor its misery that had the authority of an authentic spiritual .

= = = Revisions and cancellations = = =

Since the musical 's 1927 premiere , Show Boat has both been condemned as a prejudiced show based on racial caricatures and championed as a breakthrough work that opened the door for public discourse in the arts about racism in America . Some productions ( including one planned for June 2002 in Connecticut ) have been cancelled because of objections .

Such cancellations have been criticized by supporters of the arts . After planned performances by an amateur opera company in Middlesbrough , England were " stopped because [ they ] would be ' distasteful ' to ethnic minorities " , a local newspaper declared that the actions were " surely taking political correctness too far " . A British theatre writer was concerned that " the kind of censorship we 've been talking about ? for censorship it is ? actually militates against a truly integrated society , for it emphasizes differences . It puts a wall around groups within society , dividing people by creating metaphorical ghettos , and prevents mutual understanding " . Specifically , the cancellation was based on protests of plans to have all the black roles to be played in this production by white actors in blackface , as the company had no black members .

As attitudes toward race relations have changed , producers and directors have altered some content to make the musical more " politically correct " : " Show Boat , more than many musicals , was subject to cuts and revisions within a handful of years after its first performance , all of which altered the dramatic balance of the play . "

= = = 1993 revival = = =

The 1993 Hal Prince revival , originating in Toronto , was deliberately staged to cast attention on racial disparities ; throughout the production , African @-@ American actors constantly cleaned up messes , appeared to move the sets ( even when hydraulics actually moved them ) , and performed other menial tasks . After a New Year 's Eve ball , all the streamers fell on the floor and African Americans immediately began sweeping them away . A montage in the second act showed time passing using the revolving door of the Palmer House in Chicago , with newspaper headlines being shown in quick succession , and snippets of slow motion to highlight a specific moment , accompanied by brief snippets of Ol ' Man River . African @-@ American dancers were seen performing a specific dance , and this would change to a scene showing white dancers performing the same dance . This was meant to illustrate how white performers " appropriated " the music and dancing styles of African Americans . Earlier productions of Show Boat , even the 1927 stage original and the 1936 film version , did not go this far in social commentary .

During the production in Toronto , many black community leaders and their supporters expressed opposition to the show , protesting in front of the theatre , " shouting insults and waving placards reading SHOW BOAT SPREADS LIES AND HATE and SHOW BOAT = CULTURAL GENOCIDE " . Various theatre critics in New York , however , commented that Prince highlighted racial inequality in his production as to show its injustice , as well as to show the historical suffering of blacks . A critic noted that he included " an absolutely beautiful piece of music cut from the original production and from the movie [ " Mis 'ry 's Comin ' Round " ] ... a haunting gospel melody sung by the black chorus . The addition of this number is so successful because it salutes the dignity and the pure talent of the black workers and allows them to shine for a brief moment on the center stage of the showboat " .

= = = Analysis = = =

Many commentators , both black and non @-@ black , view the show as an outdated and stereotypical commentary on race relations that portrays blacks in a negative or inferior position . Douglass K. Daniel of Kansas State University has commented that it is a " racially flawed story " ,

and the African @-@ Canadian writer M. Nourbese Philip claims

The affront at the heart of Show Boat is still very alive today . It begins with the book and its negative and one @-@ dimensional images of Black people , and continues on through the colossal and deliberate omission of the Black experience , including the pain of a people traumatized by four centuries of attempted genocide and exploitation . Not to mention the appropriation of Black music for the profit of the very people who oppressed Blacks and Africans . All this continues to offend deeply . The ol ' man river of racism continues to run through the history of these productions and is very much part of this ( Toronto ) production . It is part of the overwhelming need of white Americans and white Canadians to convince themselves of our inferiority ? that our demands don 't represent a challenge to them , their privilege and their superiority .

On the other hand , supporters of the musical believe that the depictions of racism should be regarded not as stereotyping blacks but rather satirizing the common national attitudes that both held those stereotypes and reinforced them through discrimination . In other words , just as quoting an out @-@ of @-@ context line from a play and claiming that it is the view of the playwright is absurd and deceptive , the fact that a dramatic or literary work portrays racist attitudes and institutions does not mean that it endorses them ? in the words of The New Yorker theatre critic John Lahr :

Describing racism doesn 't make Show Boat racist . The production is meticulous in honoring the influence of black culture not just in the making of the nation 's wealth but , through music , in the making of its modern spirit . "

Broadway writers have long used the musical as a medium to call for tolerance and racial harmony , as in Finian 's Rainbow and ( by Hammerstein ) in South Pacific . As described by Joe Bob Briggs :

Those who attempt to understand works like Show Boat and Porgy and Bess through the eyes of their creators usually consider that the show " was a statement AGAINST racism . That was the point of Edna Ferber 's novel . That was the point of the show . That 's how Oscar wrote it ... I think this is about as far from racism as you can get . "

Perhaps the strongest argument in defense of Show Boat lies in an understanding of the socially concerned intentions , aims , and backgrounds of its authors . According to Rabbi Alan Berg , Kern and Hammerstein 's score to Show Boat is " a tremendous expression of the ethics of tolerance and compassion " . As Harold Prince ( not Kern , to whom the quote has been mistakenly attributed ) states in the original production notes to his 1993 production of the show :

Throughout pre @-@ production and rehearsal , I was committed to eliminate any inadvertent stereotype in the original material , dialogue which may seem " Uncle Tom " today ... However , I was determined not to rewrite history . The fact that during the 45 @-@ year period depicted in our musical there were lynchings , imprisonment , and forced labor of the blacks in the United States is irrefutable . Indeed , the United States still cannot hold its head high with regard to racism .

Oscar Hammerstein 's commitment to idealizing and encouraging tolerance theatrically started with his libretto to Show Boat . It can be seen in his later works , many of which were set to music by Richard Rodgers . Carmen Jones is an attempt to present a modern version of the classic French opera through the experiences of African Americans during wartime , and South Pacific explores interracial marriage and prejudice . Finally , The King and I deals with different cultures ' preconceived notions regarding each other and the possibility for cultural inclusiveness in societies .

Regarding the original author of Show Boat , Ann Shapiro states that

Edna Ferber was taunted for being Jewish ; as a young woman eager to launch her career as a journalist , she was told that the Chicago Tribune did not hire women reporters . Despite her experience of antisemitism and sexism , she idealized America , creating in her novels an American myth where strong women and downtrodden men of any race prevail ... [ Show Boat ] create [ s ] visions of racial harmony ... in a fictional world that purported to be America but was more illusion than reality . Characters in Ferber 's novels achieve assimilation and acceptance that was periodically denied Ferber herself throughout her life .

Whether or not the show is racist , many contend that productions of it should continue as it serves as a history lesson of American race relations . According to African @-@ American opera singer Phillip Boykin , who played the role of Joe in a 2000 tour ,

Whenever a show deals with race issues , it gives the audience sweaty palms . I agree with putting it on the stage and making the audience think about it . We see where we came from so we don 't repeat it , though we still have a long way to go . A lot of history would disappear if the show was put away forever . An artist must be true to an era . I 'm happy with it .