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Great American Music: Broadway Musicals

Course Guidebook

Professor Bill Messenger

The Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University



PUBLISHED BY:

**THE GREAT COURSES
Corporate Headquarters
4840 Westfields Boulevard, Suite 500
Chantilly, Virginia 20151-2299
Phone: 1-800-832-2412
Fax: 703-378-3819
www.thegreatcourses.com**

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Bill Messenger

American Music Lecturer, The Peabody Institute
of the Johns Hopkins University

Bill Messenger studied musical composition, on scholarship, at The Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, under Louis Cheslock. He attended a master class in 1963 with Nadia Boulanger, the teacher of Roy Harris, Virgil Thomson, and Aaron Copland. Mr. Messenger has two master's degrees, both from the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. He has done additional graduate work in musicology at the University of Maryland.

Mr. Messenger has taught composition, music history, and music theory at Goucher College in Baltimore and at a number of community colleges. He regularly lectures on American music at The Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. Mr. Messenger's latest book, *The Melody Lingers On*, has elicited the following from reviewer and college dean Linda Nielson: "This book should be a mandatory part of the library of every senior citizen."

Mr. Messenger's musical career includes studio work on many early rock 'n' roll recordings. He has accompanied many nationally known performers during his years in the music business, including Cass Elliot before her tenure with the Mamas and the Papas. In 1983, he was voted Baltimore's best piano player by *Baltimore* magazine. For the Peabody Elderhostel, he currently teaches a total of 11 different courses on various aspects of American musical theater.

Great American Music: Broadway Musicals

Scope:

This course covers the 200-year evolution of American musical theater, including the minstrel era, the vaudeville era, the age of ragtime, the revue, and the book musical. Because recorded examples of music from recent Broadway musicals are readily available in retail stores, these are used less frequently here than the older, rarer recordings, without which most listeners would have little knowledge of the sound of early musicals. The shows chosen to be discussed in this course are each important links in musical theater's evolution.

"Give My Regards to Broadway," the theme song that opens each of the 16 lectures in this course, was written by George M. Cohan, the most popular star on Broadway during the 20th century's first decade and the grandfather of the integrated book musical. Every creator of Broadway musicals, from Kern and Hammerstein to Kander and Ebb and beyond, owes a debt to Cohan's innovations in musical theater.

The minstrel show represents America's first original form of musical theater. After the Civil War, it became an important source of employment for newly freed black performers.

In the songs of the minstrel and vaudeville eras, the form that dominates is the verse/chorus song. Such songs contained one chorus and several verses, usually constructed to tell a story. This was a sophisticated outgrowth of the folk ballad (including such songs as "On Top of Old Smokey" and "My Darling Clementine"), which constructed stories by accumulating verses. Understanding the way these songs are constructed musically (out of contrasting musical phrases) will aid the listener in understanding the processes involved in creating a musical.

Ragtime is, essentially, the use of marked and frequent melodic syncopation against an unsyncopated accompaniment. During the period from 1890 to 1910, it dominated American popular music. Even today, the rhythms of ragtime lie under the surface of much modern theater song.

Vaudeville appealed to men, women, and children and contained none of the offensive elements of the minstrel show. Consequently, by the early 20th century, it had largely replaced the minstrel show as America's primary source of musical stage entertainment. The great vaudeville chains that

circled the continent became a training ground for thousands of young performers who later appeared in movies, on radio, and on television.

For more than a century, the music publishing industry and the Broadway stage worked together to create America's hit songs. With the advent of talking-singing films, that relationship slowly began to deteriorate. Tin Pan Alley focused on selling sheet music; today, sheet music accounts for only a tiny fraction of song sales compared to recordings and music videos.

Musical theater as we now know it began in 1866 with a crude but popular show called *The Black Crook*. By the dawn of the 20th century, George M. Cohan was creating shows in which the songs had a dramatic purpose and the stories engaged the audience. Though most of Cohan's characters (such as little Johnny Jones) are drawn from his own personality, they are consistently lively and believable.

By 1909, Flo Ziegfeld and his extravaganzas were on Broadway to stay. Beautifully gowned girls and fabulous special effects (including an airplane that flew over the heads of the audience) made the Ziegfeld Follies the most popular item on Broadway.

Meanwhile, Jerome Kern (a decade before *Show Boat*) was creating intimate shows at the tiny 299-seat Princess Theatre that focused more on low-key plots, believable characters, and well-crafted songs.

Despite *Show Boat*'s great innovations as a musical in which story, song, and dance were integrated, the revue dominated the 1920s and 1930s. Revues showcased a variety of songs and sketches, often unrelated but sometimes unified by a broad theme, such as *Paris Nights* or *New Faces on Broadway*.

A year before World War I, America seemed to be getting ready for the jazz age. The new music appeared on recordings and began to emerge on Broadway. Between 1916 and 1920, Cole Porter and George Gershwin were writing their first Broadway songs. The George White Scandals (Ziegfeld's greatest competition) helped develop the talents of composer George Gershwin. Both American clothing styles and American music were becoming streamlined.

If any one person can be said to be the musical soul of the 1920s, it is George Gershwin. Using jazz ideas in both his concert and his theater works, he helped make the formerly despised idiom acceptable to America's intellectual elite.

With the exception of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, what seems to be permanent about the Depression era is not the shows but the songs—the great standards of Rodgers and Hart, Jerome Kern, and Cole Porter. The collaboration of Rodgers and Hammerstein, however, created a large body of classic musicals, beginning in 1943 with *Oklahoma!*.

While this team dominated the 1940s, new greats shared the scene during the 1950s, including Leonard Bernstein, Frank Loesser, and Lerner and Loewe. The huge number of classic musicals produced during the 1950s included *The King and I*, *The Music Man*, *West Side Story*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The Sound of Music*, and *My Fair Lady*. As a result, the decade is often referred to as the “golden age of Broadway.”

The 15 years from 1960–1975 represent an incredible variety of different kinds of classic Broadway shows. From 1960, *Bye Bye Birdie* is a hilarious, fast-paced satire of rock 'n' roll. That same year saw the beginning of the 40-year run of *The Fantasticks* at Greenwich Village's Sullivan Street Playhouse. Each new blockbuster seemed determined to surpass the attendance record of its predecessor. Starting in 1964, *Hello, Dolly!* ran for 2,844 performances. *Fiddler on the Roof*, mounted a few months later, ran for 3,242 performances. And 1975's *A Chorus Line* beat them all with a run of 6,137 performances.

The dark themes introduced by *West Side Story* in the 1950s and *Cabaret* in the 1960s dominated the remainder of the century, with such shows as Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*, Schönberg's *Les Misérables*, Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera*, and Kander and Ebb's *Chicago* and *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. But by the late 1980s, Broadway lightened up and offered something for everyone—remakes of *Oklahoma!* and *Anything Goes*, along with all-dance shows, such as Jerome Robbins's *Broadway* and *Fosse*. As the century turned, *Hairspray* and *The Producers* brought back the old-fashioned fun that had dominated the street in its golden age.

Lecture One

The Essence of the Musical

Scope: In this course, we'll cover the 200-year history of American musical theater. We'll look at the minstrel show; we'll hear how show music evolved into ragtime; and we'll see how vaudeville began in New York City and eventually blanketed America, with hundreds of theaters. We'll move somewhat chronologically through the evolution of the book musical up to the present, with brief pauses to look at different types of shows and to showcase some particularly important composers. We'll also hear interviews with some of the most important creators of Broadway shows, including Jerry Herman, the composer/lyricist of *Hello, Dolly!*; Mitch Lee, the composer of *Man of La Mancha*; and Stephen Schwartz, the composer/lyricist of *Wicked*. The lectures will cover the second half of the 20th century in great detail, but our recorded music will focus much more on the period from 1800 through the early 20th century. We'll also focus on important figures, such as Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, and Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein. In this lecture, we begin with the *essentials* common to all musical theater: the songs, the libretto, song placement within the show, the opening, dance, and special effects.

Outline

- I. By way of introduction to our review of the 200-year history of American musical theater, we listen to a song called "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans" from the Broadway revue *Spice of 1922*.
- A. In order to know what American musical theater sounded like in the 19th and early 20th centuries, we've used two sources:
 1. First, we've used the original music manuscripts of the 19th century and re-created the sounds of the shows. We've also used rare 78-RPM recordings, re-mastered and transferred to CDs.
 2. In the case of the 19th-century material and some of the hard-to-find early-20th-century material, we've employed a team of musician-scholars headed by Ed Goldstein of The Peabody

Institute of Music in Baltimore. Together, we've done some musical archaeology and reconstructed the sound of early musical theater. Many of these pieces have never before been recorded.

- B. I will also perform some of the pieces on the piano to demonstrate how songs are structured and to illustrate progressions in musical style.

II. From Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* onward, when a musical succeeds, it succeeds because of the *essentials*, because of the structure.

- A. Many theatergoers are oblivious to this structure; they enjoy a show on an emotional level.
- B. The intellectual level, however, is also important. How does the structure of a song, for example, contribute to our emotional response to that song?

III. Musical theater has at least one thing in common with all theater—it exists to tell stories in a way that creates not merely an intellectual response from its audience but also an emotional response.

- A. Every great theater song seems to begin with some basic emotion, which the writer experiences in life and re-creates in art. The story in the song may be fictional, but the emotions generated by the lyricist/composer are, in essence, autobiographical.
- B. For example, the shyness hiding behind the irony in “My Funny Valentine” is a representation of its creator, Larry Hart.
- C. A verse of the song “Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin’” was written in response to a pastoral scene long before Oscar Hammerstein ever had a thought of writing *Oklahoma!*.
- D. Steven Sondheim’s “Anyone Can Whistle,” written for a 1964 show of the same name, expresses the composer’s own complex, contradictory character.

IV. Before 1927’s *Show Boat*, librettos with stereotyped characters and situations were the rule, not the exception, and the songs in a musical were not essential to telling the story.

- A. From the time of *Show Boat* up to 1943’s *Oklahoma!*, a period coinciding roughly with the Depression, theatrical songs were isolated works of art, not necessarily intrinsic to the show. The

songs were written less for their plot or character value than for their potential hit value.

- B.** But songs are, obviously, an essential part of musical theater, and theatrical songs may hope to accomplish one or two of the following ends:

1. The song can simply be a pleasant musical interlude, inserted for no particular dramatic purpose.
2. In the modern musical (post-Rodgers and Hammerstein), the song can and should tell something about the character, create the proper mood for a scene, or advance the plot. Though this is the ideal, a song that achieves the ideal can become such an integral part of the musical that, outside the nourishing atmosphere of the show, the song wilts and dies or simply makes no sense without its context.
3. Finally, the song can sell the show. People flocked to *Hello, Dolly!* and *Cabaret* because they'd heard the title songs on radio, TV, and records. This usually doesn't happen today, because Broadway music, as music for the masses, has been almost totally displaced by top-40 rock and hip-hop.

- V.** During the 1940s, plots and songs were on a more equal footing.

- A.** Richard Rodgers and Larry Hart's *Babes in Arms* (1937), for example, had an incredible number of songs that remain jazz and cabaret standards, including "Where or When," "Lady Is a Tramp," and "My Funny Valentine." This last song tells the audience about a character in the show—Val—and it stands on its own outside the context of the show.
- B.** When *Brigadoon* came out in 1947, the whole country was singing "Almost Like Being in Love." If the song fit the "rare" mood of Tommy Albright in love with Fiona in a mythical village called Brigadoon, it also fit the more common mood of the top-40 love ballads of the day.
- C.** The song's title gives the lyric its thrust, something to remember and something to resolve. Think of Rodgers and Hart's "Little Girl Blue" or Jerome Kern's "Can't Help Lovin' That Man of Mine."

- VI.** What about song placement within the show?

- A.** If the opening of a show must be particularly strong, the entire first act must follow suit. If the audience members are "captured" in the

first-act situation as it develops, and if they are moved to care about the characters and how they will ultimately resolve their difficulties, chances are they'll stay attentive through the whole show.

- B. The composer must create a complete musical program that will be rounded and diverse. The musical problems of the second act are less demanding than those of the first, and the second act is a good place to reprise certain songs from the first. For example, Act I of *Oklahoma!* has 10 songs, while Act II has 3 new songs and 3 reprises.
- C. We refer to modern shows as *book musicals* or *integrated musicals*. An integrated musical is simply a musical in which the songs, libretto, and dances all work together to help tell a story. One part of the show's integration involves the placement of the songs.
 - 1. If the songs Al Jolson performed in his 1921 show *Bombo* were sung in reverse order, the audience probably wouldn't even notice.
 - 2. But if the songs in *Oklahoma!* or *West Side Story* were sung in reverse order, the show would make absolutely no sense.
- D. If there is a rhythm to a song, there is also a rhythm, albeit a longer one, to an entire show. The order of the songs in the show contributes to the rhythm and the flow of the show.
 - 1. *My Fair Lady*, called by critic Brooks Atkinson, "the greatest musical of the 20th century," perfectly illustrates this principle.
 - 2. Act I contains a comic song ("Why Can't the English?"), followed by a low-key, charming song of longing ("Wouldn't It Be Lovely?"), followed by no two songs with the same tempo or mood: a tango, "Rain in Spain"; love songs, "On the Street Where You Live," "I Could Have Danced All Night"; and a baleful ballad, "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face."
 - 3. The modern tendency not to reprise Act I songs may be one of the reasons few new shows produce songs that the audience remembers. The songs are simply not exposed in the show as often as formerly.
- E. At the beginning of this lecture, we heard "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans," the hit song of the all-black Broadway musical *Spice of 1922*.

1. On stage, it was quite a production number, that is, a song meant to bring the audience to its feet. The song “Oklahoma!” is another example of a production number; it was expanded from its original version to include the train effect and the spelling of the state name.
 2. Henry Creamer and Turner Layton expanded “Way Down Yonder” by adding a lively tango section for the stage production. The song was sung near the end of the second act as the climax of the show.
 3. We’ll listen to the great Broadway and vaudeville star Blossom Seeley singing the Creamer and Layton arrangement of their own song, with a rollicking tango coda.
- F. In today’s integrated musicals, a song’s effectiveness is largely dependent on its placement in the show.

VII. Two elements related to songs and song placement are unity and variety.

- A. Unity satisfies our expectations; variety thwarts them. Too much of the first bores us; too much of the latter confuses us. Achieving a balance between the two is what a good story, a good character, a good show, and a good song are all about.
- B. *Show Boat* thrills us with its opening chorus, as do *Guys and Dolls* and *The Producers*. The opening chorus is an ancient theatrical tradition.
 1. But *Oklahoma!*, a sappy little story about an early-20th-century cowboy wooing a teenage farm girl, doesn’t have an opening chorus, which is precisely why it doesn’t seem sappy. It doesn’t use a chorus at all, in fact, until midway through the first act.
 2. In this instance, variety—the failure to meet our expectations—creates great theater out of a potentially saccharin theme. Curly, entering the stage alone to sing “Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin’,” was totally unexpected in 1943.
 3. The other unexpected occurrences in the show, such as the dream ballet and the killing of Jud in the second act, turn a potentially mediocre theme into great musical theater.
- C. The opening is a vitally important part of each show. In the first few minutes, the tone of the show, its atmosphere, its concerns, and its musical style are created.

1. As we just mentioned, *Oklahoma!* grabs the audience in a totally unexpected way. When the show begins, the stage is empty. In a moment, the cowboy walks onstage, singing a capella.
 2. At first, we think he's singing a folksong, but under the simple surface lies a subtle passion, which serves as a perfect introduction to Curly and to the show.
- D. The show *Gypsy* from 1959 begins with Uncle Jocko's kiddie show onstage in Seattle. The stage is filled with grotesque moppets in tacky homemade costumes. Suddenly, from the back of the theater, a sandpaper voice shouts, "Sing out, Louise," and down the aisle comes Ethel Merman, playing the quintessential stage mother, Mama Rose.
- E. Beginnings create suspense; they make us want to know where the show will take us. If the opening doesn't get the audience's attention, the show's chances of success are slim.

VIII. As we listen to the songs in a show, we may be unaware of the relationship between the composer's style and the subject matter. John Kander and Fred Ebb's *Chicago*, for example, transports us to the 1920s by creating songs that sound as if they were lifted from the period.

- A. We can't say the same thing about the operatic repertoire. *Don Giovanni*, for instance, is set in Seville, Spain, a century before Mozart's time, but nothing musically in Mozart's style suggests an earlier period of Spain.
- B. But post-Rodgers and Hammerstein, musical theater writers often do alter their styles to create an illusion of time and place. The first to have done this may be Kern in *Show Boat*.
1. "Old Man River" uses the five-note pentatonic scale (played only on black keys) frequently heard in spirituals.
 2. The "Buck and Wing Cakewalk" uses the monotonous syncopation common to all cakewalks.
 3. In "I Can't Help Lovin' That Man of Mine," Kern creates a blue note for a dramatic purpose. It reveals that Julie, who is passing for white, is really black.
- C. Frederick Loewe's style, which can best be seen in *Gigi*, is pure Viennese, but he alters that style to strengthen his shows.

1. In *Brigadoon*, the songs suggest Scottish folksongs; bagpipes are implied in the orchestrations, and they're actually used in the funeral sequence.
 2. On the other hand, Loewe's songs for *Paint Your Wagon* have the cadence and rhythm patterns of minstrel-era songs the western pioneers would have brought with them.
 3. Of course, in *My Fair Lady*, Loewe's "With a Little Bit of Luck" sounds like it came right out of an English music hall.
- D. Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* is filled with the Latino style filtered through Bernstein's eclectic background.
1. "America" uses the rhythm of a Mexican folk dance, a quick 1-2-3-4-5-6, followed by a slow 1-2-3.
 2. "Maria" uses the mixolydian scale common to much Latin music.
 3. The "Dance at the Gym" uses beats and orchestration style popularized by Cuban mambo master Perez Prado in the 1950s.

IX. Why do we refer only to the composer and not to his or her collaborators when we discuss musicals?

- A. For more than 100 years, the songs *were* the show; whatever plot existed was pure decoration. Today, the relative importance of the song continues; as a result, a musical tends to be credited to the songwriter.
- B. During the era from 1920 to about 1960, when good songs from shows generated literally thousands of recordings, the songs often made more money than the show itself.
- C. We listen to "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows," a song that lives on from the 1918 musical *Oh, Look!*, although the show itself is forgotten.

X. Dance is another essential element of the Broadway stage. Always a part of musical theater, until *Oklahoma!*, dance was mostly a decoration. Since then, dance has become increasingly indispensable.

- A. With the ballets of *Oklahoma!* by Agnes de Mille, dance no longer functions as mere decoration in musical theater; it actually furthers the plot. Where the non-musical theater employs dialogue and action to carry the plot to another stage of development, the

musical theater frequently replaces these with song or choreographed movement.

- B. The “Dream Ballet” that concludes Act I of *Oklahoma!* takes the plot from Laurey’s indecision to an action.
- C. In *West Side Story*, Jerome Robbins used dance to initiate conflict between the Jets and the Sharks in the “Prologue” to the show. Later, the conflict advanced during “The Dance at the Gym.”
- D. If needed, dance can telescope the action, carry it a far distance in a short time. Through a dance sequence of only 40 measures of music, Tony and Maria see each other for the first time at the gym; all the other dancers freeze in place, and the lovers advance toward each other. They have fallen in love in under two minutes.
- E. On the one hand, songs replace dialogue with the compact language of lyrics set to music; on the other hand, dance replaces dialogue with images set to music. Dance moves the action forward more naturally and often more easily than dialogue. Dance scenes of a few seconds can equal book scenes that take minutes.
- F. Dance can transform abstract thoughts into concrete pictures; it can transform the surreal into something real on stage. Again, we think of Tony and Maria’s meeting in *West Side Story*. While all else freezes in place, the lovers meet, dance, fall in love, and set the plot on its inevitable course.

XI. Reality, or a simulation of it, can be created by stage sets and special effects.

- A. The stage possesses little of film’s capacity for re-creating natural spectacles. Consequently, when something onstage comes close to duplicating the world outside the theater, audiences tend to take notice.
- B. For that reason, producers and directors of musicals have, for more than a century, used special effects, such as windstorms and snowfalls, to titillate and amuse. They’ve also used huge objects, including battleships and airplanes, to provoke a reaction from the audience.
- C. The 1989 opening of *Miss Saigon* wowed the audience with a huge statue of Ho Chi Minh. The 1888 musical *Evangeline* caught the crowd’s attention with a spectacular new invention called the electric light bulb.

- D. The 1915 Hippodrome musical *Hip-Hip-Hooray* gave audiences a chance to see the entire cast ski down a mountainside and leap a seemingly impossible chasm on skis!
- E. In a subtler vein, John Raitt sold the song “Hey There” in *The Pajama Game* by singing into a Dictaphone. After the first chorus, the Dictaphone plays back Raitt’s musical memo and the live Raitt joins in to create a semi-automated vocal duet. The audience loved it!

XII. Let’s close the lecture by asking: Why bother to study American musicals?

- A. Musicals, the great ones, speak to us in voices we both recognize and pay attention to. Regardless of the historical period created in the show, the time is here and now.
- B. Half a century after the show *Carousel* premiered, Billy Bigelow still speaks to our sense of right and wrong; we want him to go down the right path and regret that he doesn’t. The paradox of the Broadway musical is that it’s an escape from reality while also a confrontation with it.
- C. After the assassination of President Kennedy, his widow, Jackie Kennedy, mentioned a few lines from *Camelot* in an interview with *Life* magazine. On November 22, 1963, when those lines were sung at the Chicago Opera House, the show stopped and the audience wept. *Camelot* had become a symbol of Kennedy’s 1,000 days.
- D. Broadway, from *Avenue Q* to *42nd Street*, from *Chicago* to *Oklahoma!*, still has its finger on the pulse of America’s past, present, and future.

Suggested Reading:

Lehman Engel, *The Making of a Musical: Creating Songs for the Stage*.
 Susan Sutherland, *About Musicals*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What are some possible reasons for the fact that current show music doesn’t have the broad popular fan base that show music had 40-plus years ago?

2. Give a few reasons why musicals, which are collaborative efforts, tend to be most strongly identified with the composer, rather than the lyricist, choreographer, or librettist.

Lecture Two

The Minstrel Era (1828 to c. 1900)

Scope: America's first original musical theater genre, the minstrel show, was born nearly 200 years ago. Although its existence is embarrassing to us today, for more than 40 years, it was one of the most popular forms of entertainment in America and around the world. Indeed, for the first time in history, the minstrel show spawned European imitation of Americans, instead of the other way around. In the post-bellum minstrel show, thousands of African-Americans had a lucrative vehicle for their singing, dancing, songwriting, and comedy. The minstrel show is also the ultimate source of all truly American music, from ragtime to rock 'n' roll, and the precursor of modern American musical theater. In this lecture, we look at the structure of the minstrel show and some of its key features, along with some of its greatest performers, songwriters, and promoters. We'll also learn about the business side of minstrel shows and discuss the legacy of minstrelry.

Outline

- I. The immediate ancestor of the minstrel show, the Jim Crow Act, began nearly 200 years ago. Its original location has been variously ascribed to Charleston, South Carolina; Louisville, Kentucky; and Baltimore, Maryland.
 - A. Thomas Dartmouth Rice ("Daddy" Rice, 1808–1860) was America's first renowned "Ethiopian delineator." He danced, played several musical instruments, sang, and told amusing stories, and wherever he performed, Rice filled the theater to capacity.
 - B. A chance encounter in 1828 with an African-American stable hand led Rice to discover the song "Jump Jim Crow." Rice couldn't forget the song and created numerous verses to go with the chorus he'd heard. In his dressing room at the theater, he burned the cork from his wine bottle and blackened his face with it.
 - C. Later, when Rice performed his act at New York's Bowery Theatre, he played to a standing-room-only crowd of more than 3,500 people. Soon, Rice was the most in-demand entertainer in America.

- D. Of course, imitators sprang up, and in time, Rice had to put a banner outside his theaters that read, “The *Original* Jim Crow.” We listen to a recording of the song by Bob Robinson.

II. The new American dances of the 19th century had largely come from the slaves on Southern plantations. One of the plantation dances, the cakewalk, later became a permanent part of the minstrel show and, by the 1880s, dethroned the waltz as the favorite dance of youthful Americans.

- A. The cakewalk involved walking with an arched back and very high steps, accompanied by syncopated duets between bones and banjo. In time, the music associated with the dance became more complex and more formalized. It became, essentially, a *syncopated march*—that is, a march with unexpected, off-the-beat accents.
- B. Like the marches of John Philip Sousa, the cakewalk contained several independent melodies, some of which returned later in the piece and some of which did not. In the hands of a master like Scott Joplin, ragtime contained a great variety of different kinds of syncopations, some of which were quite complex. We hear, for example, a bit of Joplin’s “Elite Syncopations.”
- C. The cakewalk, the immediate ancestor of classic ragtime, was simpler. Joplin’s rags covered the entire keyboard, were more instrumental in character, and used a great variety of smaller syncopations. Cakewalks covered a smaller range; as a result, they were more singable and often appeared with optional lyrics in the sheet music.
- D. We hear an example of the cakewalk’s simpler syncopations in “At a Georgia Camp Meeting” by Kerry Mills in the 1890s.
- E. The cakewalk began when slaves peeked into the windows of their masters’ ballrooms and returned to the slave quarters to try the dances they had seen. Making fun of their masters, they deliberately exaggerated the movements, unwittingly turning the standard marches and polkas into their own dance—the cakewalk.
- F. In time, white society took up the exaggerated dance steps, not realizing that they were doing a parody of their own dances. By the 1880s, fashionable ballrooms saw dances in which whites were, unknowingly, mimicking blacks mimicking whites.

- III. The minstrel shows had a little bit of everything—comedy, dance, songs, and stories acted out onstage, with painted backdrops changed in mid-show.
- A. Like all good shows, the minstrel show built to a climax, saving the larger production numbers for the second act, and ended with a spectacular finale, during which the entire troupe did a *walkaround*—the cast members held hands in a semicircle while they sang and danced an elaborate, high-stepping cakewalk.
 - B. As we’ve said, unity and variety make up the formula for all good entertainment. The constantly changing songs and routines gave the minstrel show variety; the unity was achieved by the show’s unchanging format.
 - C. A minstrel show was always a three-act musical. These three acts consisted of a *first part*, an *olio*, and an *afterpiece*, ending in a walkaround.
 - 1. The first part began with a rousing orchestral overture, a medley of songs that would be featured that evening.
 - 2. Next, the curtain opened to reveal the troupe of minstrels. At the center of a semicircle of gaudily dressed players sat the master of ceremonies, Mr. Interlocutor, often not in blackface. The two principal fun makers, Mr. Tambo and Mr. Bones, were seated at opposite sides of the stage and were appropriately called *end men*.
 - 3. Suddenly, all rose as one to sing a welcome and promise a good time. At the finish of the opening song, the interlocutor gave his ritual cry: “Gentlemen, be seated!”
 - 4. Then, the first burst of snappy patter between the interlocutor and his end men began, followed by songs, dances, comedy bits, and more songs for about 45 minutes before the curtain closed.
 - 5. Next came the olio, a set of various specialty acts performed in front of the curtain to give the troupe time to change the scenery for the final third of the program.
 - 6. During the olio, instrumentalists from the troupe or the orchestra would perform dazzling feats, such as playing two clarinets at once, playing tuned water glasses, or doing a trombone solo that included animal imitations. Many of the unique practices of early jazz players, such as growling trumpet calls, sliding clarinet effects, and wah-wah mutes,

were inspired by practices local musicians in New Orleans observed at minstrel show performances.

7. The olio also included jugglers, unicyclists, and comic singers, specialties that would later find their way to the vaudeville stage. But the indispensable part of the olio was the star comic's feature of the evening—a burlesque lecture in dialect on a controversial topic of the day, such as temperance or women's right to vote.
8. Finally, the curtain opened on the third and final part of the show—the afterpiece and walkaround. While the curtain was closed during the olio, the troupe was moving elaborate scenery onstage behind the curtain to create the setting for the afterpiece, a satirical drama.

IV. The minstrel system of producing, promoting, and booking companies marks the beginning of big-time American show business. The conventions of minstrelry were tried and proven over many years; the stage was set for the first freed slaves who wanted to be professional entertainers.

- A. Thousands of newly freed slaves formed their own minstrel companies, but ironically, to fulfill the audience's expectations, these black performers had to wear blackface makeup.
- B. More than anyone else, one man is responsible for the birth of the minstrel show, Daniel Emmett (1815–1904). Emmett was born in Ohio, a free state; an abolitionist, his teasing songs made white Southerners laugh at themselves. We hear, for example, “Jimmy Crack Corn.”
- C. Unemployed during the winter of 1842, Emmett and his friends, Billy Whitlock, Frank Pelham, and Frank Brower, decided to expand Thomas Rice's Jim Crow concept by creating the Virginia Minstrels, America's first minstrel troupe.
- D. Emmett called one end man Mr. Bones, the name derived from that of a plantation rhythm instrument originally made of cleaned and polished cow's ribs. The other end man was Mr. Tambo because he played a tambourine. Emmett also choreographed a walkaround cakewalk for the show's finale.
- E. The Virginia Minstrels troupe was an instant sensation, and soon, minstrel groups were everywhere. Indeed, when Commodore

Perry's fleet forced its way into Japan, his troops chose to introduce American culture with a minstrel show.

- F.** The most historically important song to come out of the minstrel show was written by Emmett as a walkaround. Of the song, Emmett was quoted as saying, "If I had known it was going to be so popular, I would have written it better." After the Civil War, he said, "If I had known to what use they were going to put my song, I will be damned if I'd have written it." The song, of course, was "Dixie."

1. General Pickett ordered "Dixie" played as his troops charged at Gettysburg.
2. On February 22, 1862, Jefferson Davis was inaugurated as president of the Confederacy, after which the entire audience sang "Dixie."
3. After Robert E. Lee's surrender, President Lincoln ordered the band at the White House to play "Dixie."
4. In February 1860, Emmett had sold all rights to "Dixie" to Firth, Pond and Company (Stephen Foster's publisher)—for \$300 outright. Had he held out for royalties, he could have lived in wealth for the rest of his life.
5. In any case, in 1888, Emmett retired to his farm in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, where he raised chickens and lived on a small pension from the Actor's Fund in New York until his death on June 28, 1904, at the age of 88. In the end, he was reconciled to the popularity of "Dixie" and was obviously proud of it.

- V.** Edwin P. Christy (1815–1862)—who later created the most popular minstrel show in America, the Christy Minstrels—had, as a young man, spent time socializing among black slaves early in the 19th century.

- A.** Like Emmett's original minstrel troupe, Christy's began small, with 4 people, but the troupe soon became much larger, with more than 50 people at its height.
- B.** Christy added additional structure and context to Emmett's original format. Drawing his inspiration from actual slave entertainments he may have seen on plantations, Christy created a show that represented an evening of entertainment on a plantation.
- C.** Christy's naïve representation showed slave life as a non-stop party. Everybody sang, nobody worked, nobody got whipped, and nobody was sold. The formula was so successful that Christy's

Minstrels, now the most popular troupe in the country, was booked into Mechanics Hall in New York City for 10 years, standing room only.

- VI. As dozens of other minstrel troupes began to spring up during the 1850s and 1860s, competition forced the shows to become increasingly large and lavish.
- A. No town could hold a minstrel show now without a railroad station nearby, because entire railroad cars were needed to transport the sets and personnel.
 - B. Minstrel show producers sent advance men to paste up huge billboards heralding the imminent arrival of “Gigantic Minstrels” or “Mammoth Minstrels,” shows big enough to shake up any town and most cities in those days.
 - C. Christy prided himself on the quality of his troupe’s music. In September 1847, he discovered the work of a songwriter from Pittsburgh named Stephen Foster (1826–1864). Until then, Foster had had no luck in placing his songs with professionals. When Christy heard Foster’s “Oh! Susanna,” he decided to use it for his minstrel show. At Christy’s urging, W. C. Peters, a publisher, paid Foster \$100 outright for the song.
 - D. Thus began a symbiotic relationship between the Christy Minstrels and Foster that lasted for the rest of Foster’s life. One-sided as it was, this relationship solved for Foster the 19th-century composer’s biggest problem—with Christy behind him, Foster received national attention for his songs.
 - E. Most of Foster’s best songs were written for the Christy Minstrels, arranged by Foster in rich four-part harmony on the songs’ choruses. We hear “Nellie Was A Lady,” vocals performed by Bob Robinson and Robert Tudor, with Tom Laurence on banjo. This is a respectful elegy for an African-American woman who has died.
 - F. Because minstrel shows all contained a vocal quartet, Foster wrote the choruses of nearly all his songs in four-part harmony, and that kind of close chording continued to be popular in the 19th century.
 - 1. Men, waiting their turns in barber shops, whiled the time away by trying to sing the latest popular songs in “minstrel show” harmony. Eventually, the groups came to be called *barbershop quartets*.

2. During the early 20th century, when recordings began, vocal quartets were still among the most popular groups. We hear “Carolina in the Morning” played by The American Quartet, a later version of the four-part harmony of “Nellie.”
 - G. It’s not too much of a leap from the barbershop quartet to a group such as the 1950’s Four Freshmen, the quartet whose voicings were directly imitated by a 1960’s quartet called The Beach Boys.
 - H. Thanks to song sheets sold in theater lobbies wherever the Christy Minstrels played, Stephen Foster was, aside from William Billings in the 18th century, the first American songwriter to live solely from his composer’s income.
- VII.** By the early 20th century, the minstrels’ use of blackface began to limit their effectiveness.
- A. This was a period of vast immigration from Eastern Europe. It was a time to stop mimicking blacks and start mimicking Germans, Jews, and Italians.
 - B. Instead of slapstick comedy with exaggerated Southern black accents, we were more likely to hear Eddie Cantor singing, “Josephina, please no leana on da bell,” or Fanny Brice singing in a pseudo-Yiddish accent. As an example, we hear Brice singing one of her big comedy hits in dialect, “Becky is Back in the Ballet.”
- VIII.** Another writer of minstrel songs was James Bland (1854–1911). He was an African-American composer/lyricist whose output was not nearly as large as Stephen Foster’s, but who, like Foster, has left America a few timeless classics.
- A. Bland’s life and Foster’s share a number of parallels: Both were born into upper-middle-class families; both experienced an early infatuation with minstrel shows and achieved success at songwriting; both were also careless with money and died penniless.
 - B. James Bland was born on October 22, 1854, in Flushing, Long Island. He was the descendant of free men on both sides of his family. His father, Allen, was one of the first college-educated blacks in the United States. Shortly after the Civil War, when Bland was in his teens, the family moved to Washington, D.C.

- C. In public high school, Bland took up banjo and began to play at school functions and parties. After graduation, he enrolled at Howard University. During his time at Howard, Bland noticed the singing of former slaves who were working there as groundskeepers, and he tried to compose songs like those he heard. In this sense, he was no different from Foster; both looked at lower-class black culture from the outside.
- D. After graduation, Bland joined a minstrel company and became known as a composer of minstrel songs. We listen to one of these, “The Evening by Moonlight.” Bland also wrote Virginia’s state song, “Carry Me Back to Old Virginy.”
- E. For several years, Bland toured with Haverly’s Minstrels. He traveled to London with the show, and English audiences loved him. He stayed in England and, for more than a decade, was the toast of Europe, performing solo in music halls, giving a command performance for Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales, touring Ireland and Germany, and attending society parties.
- F. Bland became so comfortable in London that he began to do his solo shows without blackface makeup. That may seem like a small achievement today, but at the time, it was, unquestionably, a coup. During this time, Bland was also a remarkably big earner, making as much as \$10,000 a year.
- G. By the 1880s, the new family entertainment, vaudeville, first created by Tony Pastor at his Union Square theater in New York, was drawing larger and larger audiences. The minstrel shows, conversely, found their audiences dwindling.
 - 1. By the turn of the century, Bland had begun to look old-fashioned. In 1902, he returned to America to begin a long slide into poverty and obscurity. Unmarried, apparently estranged from his family, and utterly without prospects, he borrowed an office from a lawyer friend in Washington and set to work on a musical comedy called *The Sporting Girl*. Produced at Washington’s Kernan Theatre, it played to a near-empty house and never reached Broadway.
 - 2. On May 5, 1911, James Bland, like Foster, died alone and penniless. He was buried in a cemetery outside Philadelphia.

IX. Like ragtime, swing, and rock 'n' roll, minstrelry was, unquestionably, America's music. No doubt, there was racism in the minstrel concept, but paradoxically, there was also respect for black performance practices. For an hour or two, the minstrel show may have been the only place on the 19th-century American stage where the difference between black and white performers totally disappeared.

Suggested Reading:

Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World*.

David A. Jasen and Gene Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around: Black Popular Songwriters, 1880–1930*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Does the hideous business of blackface performance have any redeeming value and, if so, what is it?
2. In what ways did the minstrel show pave the way for the 20th-century musical?

Lecture Three

Evolution of the Verse/Chorus Song

Scope: In this lecture, we listen to different kinds of songs and attempt to determine how they are constructed. The songs of the musical stage tend to adhere to certain rules and manifest certain traits that have much in common with both folk music and concert music. Because the majority of theater songs have both a verse and a chorus, we will focus on what those terms mean and how the verse/chorus form has evolved. We will see how the chorus, in time, became the focus of the song, the one part of the song remembered by the audience.

We'll hear how melodies are constructed out of small musical figures and how melodies are combined and contrasted to create memorable songs. We'll listen to songs that are constructed on a variety of classic models, focusing mostly on the A–A–B–A and A–B–A–C forms.

We will hear folksongs, in which multiple verses accumulate to tell a story, each verse ending in the same repeated chorus. This form inspired the minstrel, vaudeville, and theater songs of the 19th century, all of which have several verses but a single chorus. Then, we'll see how, in popular music, multiple verses eventually gave way to one verse. We'll close with a look at the *lead sheet*, which represents the essence of the composer's creation and reveals the song's balance, or lack of it, through the unadorned melody with its suggested harmonies

Outline

- I. We begin by listening to the verse and chorus of a song that was revived in the Barbra Streisand musical *Funny Girl* and was introduced by Fanny Brice in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1921. The song is "Second Hand Rose."
 - A. As we've discussed, songs are an integral part of any Broadway musical. For more than 100 years, the songs *were* the show and have continued to be so important to musical theater that a show tends to be credited to the composer.

- B.** The songs of the musical stage (and American popular music in general—before the birth of rock ’n’ roll) have tended to adhere to certain rules and have manifested certain traits that have much in common with folk music and concert music.
1. However, the formal structures in American popular music are generally somewhat simpler than those in concert music and somewhat more complex than those in folk music.
 2. For example, the recitative before an aria in opera, which is roughly equivalent to a verse in popular music, may go on for many minutes.
 3. Non-musicians generally have little trouble understanding the concepts of form that govern the songs of musical theater.
- C.** In this lecture, we’ll explore the structure of song before we take a detailed look at the evolution of the verse/chorus form, the form that dominated stage song for 200 years. The *form* of a song is its musical structure; that structure involves the process of combining short melodic ideas, called *musical figures*, to create complete songs.
- D.** Before we dissect that structure, we need to define a few related terms.
1. *Melodies* are usually constructed from tones of the major or minor scale. For simplicity, we’ll stick mostly with major melodies; we hear an example of a major scale.
 2. A melody may flow by *steps* from one note of the scale to the next. If the flow is by steps, no scale tones are skipped. We hear, for example, “Joy to the World.”
 3. *Skips*, however, add variety to make the melody interesting. We hear an example in “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”
 4. Occasionally, the tones of a scale are altered, as in George Gershwin’s “The Man I Love.” This song revolves around the fifth, sixth, and seventh notes of the major scale, but Gershwin alters the seventh note of the scale by flattening it. We hear the song, first without the altered seventh, then with the altered seventh, creating a *blue note*.
 5. Melodies are accompanied by *chords*, which are vertical harmonies built in thirds. We hear the chords alone in “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”
 6. As we said, “Mary Had a Little Lamb” moves largely by scale steps. Some melodies, however, are built on skips, and some

- on *broken chords*. Examples include “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “Over There,” and “On Top of Old Smokey.”
7. Melodic *rhythms* also follow the rules of unity and variety. We hear “The Man I Love” played with an unchanging rhythm. With a changing rhythm, the melody is more interesting.
 8. The smallest unit of form of a musical structure is the *figure*, which is often only two to four notes. Our example is “Over There.”
 9. Figures combine to make *phrases*. Our use of the term *phrase* is not exactly the same as the term is used in classical music. When jazz musicians and cabaret performers refer to *phrases*, they usually mean an *eight-bar unit*. (If we count four notes in 4/4 time, that unit is a *bar*.) Our example is “Someone To Watch Over Me,” in which each phrase consists of eight bars.
 10. Phrases are combined to make a complete song and are copyrightable, while figures are usually not. For example, we hear “Yes! We Have No Bananas”; in this song, almost all the figures are recognizable in other songs.
 11. A song, like a poem, contains incomplete statements and complete statements. The first figure we hear from “Someone To Watch Over Me” is in no way complete. The next one we hear is more nearly complete. To feel truly complete, we need, not a phrase, but a sentence, or as we say in music theory, a *period*.
 12. We can call the first phrase A and the second phrase, which is different only in its final note, A also. Put the two As together and we have a complete statement, which constitutes the entire first half of “Someone To Watch Over Me.”
- E. The form of a song—its musical structure—usually involves some degree of *repetition* and *contrast*, which equate to unity and variety. Again, we hear examples of these concepts in “Someone To Watch Over Me.” The repetition and contrast tend to be minimal in folksongs, simply because they’re so short. We hear, for example, “Hush, Little Baby.” Folksongs achieve variety through the changing lyrics.
- F. In the songs of Richard Rodgers or Cole Porter, composers we’ll discuss at length in later lectures, the form tends to be a little less obvious. Countless formal plans have been used in stage songs

over the past 100 years, but the following two account for most classic popular songs: A–A–B–A and A–B–A–C.

1. We hear an example of the first in “The Man I Love.” A more complex A–A–B–A song is “My Funny Valentine.”
2. We hear an example of A–B–A–C form in “Give My Regards to Broadway.”

G. One-part songs, which include many folksongs, repeat the same melody again and again, that is, A–A–A–A. We hear examples in “On Top of Old Smokey” and “Hush, Little Baby.”

H. Let’s listen to a few songs and see if we can identify their forms: “Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes” (simple A–A–B–A), “Somebody Loves Me” (more complex A–A–B–A), “All through the Night” (simple A–A–B–A).

I. Let’s listen to A–B–A–C form in a favorite song of jazz musicians, “Back Home Again in Indiana,” from 1917. This song borrows a melody from a 19th-century song called “Moonlight on the Wabash,” also an A–B–A–C song, which uses two-bar phrases.

J. Finally, we hear a song from World War I (simple A–A–B–A).

II. Originally, songs had many verses and one chorus because they were designed to tell stories. We hear a classic verse/chorus song from the 19th century, “The Man on the Flying Trapeze,” sung by Doug Jimmerson.

A. American popular song, both on and off the stage, has been in verse/chorus form from its beginnings. Today’s Broadway songs continue to be written in verse/chorus form, but from the 1960s onward, the schism between rock and Broadway has widened, resulting in the loss of the verse from many pop songs. The Beatles’ “Yesterday,” a product of the 1960s, has no verse, but every song in *Hello, Dolly!*, a musical from the same decade, for example, does have a verse.

B. For the rest of this lecture, we’ll explore the origins and development of the verse/chorus form and see how the forms and even the definitions of such terms as *verse*, *chorus*, and *ballad* have evolved over the past two centuries.

- III.** Nineteenth-century stage songs had many verses but only one chorus. Given that the chorus was repeated after each of the 3–10 verses, we can understand why the chorus is the part that audiences remembered. The chorus was the part that sold the song.
- A.** Before World War I, in vaudeville and nearly as often in musical theater, the audience members, after they'd heard several verses, were encouraged to join the performers in singing the chorus. This encouraged them to buy the sheet music and sit around the family piano singing the song in the evenings. Indeed, the songwriters' and publishers' primary purpose in including a song in the show was to tempt the audience into buying the sheet music.
 - B.** In the days before recordings, TV, and computers, the only profit in writing shows, aside from the ticket sales, was sheet music. In the early days of the 20th century, it was not uncommon for the sheet music to a song from a Broadway show to sell in the millions.
 - C.** In the first half of the 19th century, stage songs had many verses; three was usually the minimum. Like the recitative before the aria in opera, the verse or verses carried forward the storyline, created the setting, or gave background on the situation about to be revealed in the chorus. The verse was not meant to be as memorable or as melodic as the chorus, and it usually wasn't. We hear an example in "K-K-K-Katy" from 1889.
 - D.** By the 1920s, songs were required to have only two verses, partly because the increasingly popular phonograph records were too short to hold three verses.
 - E.** In the 1930s, one verse was required, but soon even that often was not sung. Swing bands were the national mania, and swing band arrangers demanded prolonged instrumental interludes to show off their arranging skills.
 - F.** By this time, some composers started writing songs without verses. For example, Kern's "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" and "The Way You Look Tonight" have no verses.
 - G.** Cole Porter wrote a Broadway show in 1935 called *Jubilee*. The musical was not a hit, but one of its songs, recorded by Artie Shaw three years later, reached number one on the *Billboard* charts. The song had no verse, but at 108 measures, it qualifies as the longest

song in the Great American Songbook. The addition of a verse would have made the song, “Begin the Beguine,” impossibly long.

- IV. Although verses tend to be forgotten and choruses remembered, there are some verses, tightly integrated with the chorus, that undeniably enhance the emotional effect of the chorus.
- A. In 1943’s *Oklahoma!*, Hammerstein’s lyrics for his verses of “Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin’” unquestionably heighten the impact of the simple, repetitive chorus, and our enjoyment of the song depends equally on the chorus and its verses.
 - B. In Andrew Lloyd Webber’s 1977 show *Evita*, the verses to “Don’t Cry for Me, Argentina” do precisely what verses were required to do a century ago—they move the story forward. *Evita* might almost be called monothematic, because variations of the verse of “Don’t Cry for Me” appear throughout the show to provide commentary on what has happened and what will happen.
- V. As for the word *chorus*, we know that today, it has multiple meanings, but originally, it had one definition: a group of vocalists, singing together, usually in harmony. How did the word later become identified with a certain section of a song?
- A. The part of a song that followed each verse, the repeated part of a song, has gone by many names, including *refrain* and *burden*.
 - B. By the early 19th century, a common way of performing popular songs, particularly minstrel songs, was to have each of the verses sung by a single person; when the main section of the song was reached, the entire group would sing it in harmony. As a result, in time, the word *chorus* became attached to the primary portion of a song, as it was to the group of harmonizers who sang that song.
- VI. Most of the songs we’ve heard are called *ballads*. The word originally applied to stories told in verse, which is precisely what most of these early songs were.
- A. The meaning of the word *ballad* in popular music on and off the stage has changed; it has come to mean a love song or, at least, a popular song in relatively slow tempo.
 - B. In other words, the label remained the same, but the contents changed, partially because the number of verses required to tell a

complete story could no longer be contained on a 10-inch, 78-RPM disc.

- C. When we talk about a *Berlin ballad*, we mean the love songs of Irving Berlin, such as “Always,” “All Alone by the Telephone,” and “How Deep Is the Ocean?”—songs that may describe situations or profess affections but don’t necessarily tell stories.
- D. Earlier Berlin songs, however, do tell stories. We hear, for example, “Call Me Up Some Rainy Afternoon,” a telephone song from 1909.

VII. What is the essence of any song? Strip away the fillers and the other musical devices and you have a *lead sheet*. The lead sheet is the naked song, the essence of the composer’s creation.

- A. We hear, for example, “On Top of Old Smokey.” The lead sheet for this song would have the lyrics, the melody, and the chord symbols.
- B. Strip away Mick Jagger’s “Satisfaction” or James Brown’s “I Feel Good” to a lead sheet, and you become immediately aware that the key to the success of these songs lies in their dynamic performances and in the use of background instruments, not in the song itself. That’s not true of George Gershwin, for example; the lead sheet of “The Man I Love” immediately reveals the song’s expressive potential.
- C. The lead sheet is a type of musical shorthand, enabling a musician to improvise the missing parts. It usually consists of a single melodic line with chord symbols above it and lyrics written below. Although the bass line is usually not given, bass notes that are not in root position or are foreign to the chord may be indicated by a slash after the chord symbol, followed by the letter name of the bass note, for example, C6/E.
- D. Despite its cryptic nature to the non-musician, all songs usually began with the lead sheet. Jazz musicians, whose improvisational skills must be well developed, generally use no musical score other than the lead sheet.
- E. The form of a song becomes more obvious when looking at the lead sheet. The song’s balance, or lack of it, becomes clear when we look at the unadorned melody with its suggested harmonies.

VIII. Let's hear one more example of a verse and chorus, "Meet Me in St. Louis," from 1904, sung on an early recording by Billy Murray.

- A. "Meet Me in St. Louis" is an easily identifiable A–A–B–A song.
- B. Don't feel frustrated if you come across a favorite theater song whose form you can't identify. Some songs use particularly complex variations on these two standard forms, and a few disregard them altogether.
- C. Although verses are far more variable in form than choruses, we can see that the A–B–A–C form dominated popular music for the first 20 years of the 20th century, and the A–A–B–A form dominated the next 20 years, from 1920 to 1940.

Suggested Reading:

Marvin Paymer, *Facts Behind the Songs*.

Alec Wilder, *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900–1950*.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. Explain how the verse/chorus form evolved out of the folk ballad.
- 2. How might listening for form in song aid the listener in understanding the song's compositional process?

On Top of Old Smoky (Lead Sheet)

C F
 On top of Old Smo - ky

4 C
 all cov - ered with snow,

8 G7
 I lost my dear sweet - heart

12 C
 from court - in' too slow.

Lecture Four

The Ragtime Years (c. 1890–1917)

Scope: Ragtime's popularity began as rock 'n' roll's did, as a youthful rebellion against the moribund music of the older generation. Suddenly, beginning in the 1890s, ragtime songs appeared by the hundreds. Youth sang the ragtime songs and stepped to the ragtime instrumentals. The new generation's music was livelier and more visceral. In this lecture, we look in-depth at several performers and Broadway shows, all of which featured the popular ragtime sound. As we'll see, ragtime opened even more doors for black performers around the turn of the 20th century and gave America a rhythmic vocabulary that became a permanent part of the Broadway musical.

Outline

- I. We begin by listening to William Brown's 1896 rag "That Takes It." Ragtime employs syncopations, which in turn, place accents off the beat; the genre takes its name from this "ragged" time. We get a clue about the origins of ragtime from Irving Berlin's 1911 "Alexander's Ragtime Band."
- A. During the 1880s and 1890s, minstrel shows coexisted with Broadway's book musicals, which were dominated by waltz songs, such as "East Side, West Side," "Bicycle Built for Two," and "After the Ball."
- B. By the late 1890s, waltzing Broadway was ready to move its feet to something a little livelier. What appeared was the injection of black culture into white musicals in the form of dances and the kind of Africanized, syncopated music that had originated in the minstrel shows. Ragtime enlivened a moribund late-19th-century musical stage.
- C. The most popular song of 1902 was Bob Cole's "Under the Bamboo Tree." Cole was a black songwriter, and although this song was sung in a black style, it was introduced on the stage by a popular white singer, Marie Cahill. It was interpolated into a show

called *Sally in Our Alley* and helped make both the show and Cahill immensely successful.

- D. The infectiously repetitive chorus was sung by practically everyone in America for the next few years. A parody of the song became the Yale University victory song, and T. S. Eliot used part of the song in his poem “Fragment of an Agon” to illustrate the decline of Western civilization.
 - E. Young people saw ragtime as their music, but the post-Victorian establishment did not approve of the new sound. One critic said, “A person once inoculated with the ragtime fever is like one addicted to strong drink!” (Berlin, *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History*).
- II. The line between ragtime and early jazz is invisible. With more improvisation, a rag can, in performance, become traditional jazz.
- A. Before World War I, Sophie Tucker called herself the Queen of Ragtime. When the jazz craze began, still singing the same songs in much the same way, she called herself the Queen of Jazz.
 - B. Tucker’s black piano accompanist wrote her ragtime theme song, “Some of These Days,” in 1912, but in the recording we hear from the 1920s, the song is unquestionably played in the early jazz style.
- III. Black ragtime shows on Broadway began in 1898, with a show written by Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Will Marion Cook, and Ernest Hogan.
- A. Early in life, Paul Dunbar (1872–1906), who created the story and many of the lyrics for the show, wrote while supporting himself as an assistant at the Library of Congress. His first book of poetry, *Oak and Ivy* (1893), was praised in print by William Dean Howells. Dunbar himself spoke impeccable English, but his writing reflected the speech of the ghetto.
 - B. Will Marion Cook (1869–1944), a conservatory-trained musician, employed ragtime syncopation consistently in his vocal lines and heightened its impact with his harmonic skill and ear for musical variety. He had a knack for climactic effects akin to those found in operetta finales of the time.
 - C. Ernest Hogan (1865–1909), born Rueben Crowders, was a first-rate singer, dancer, melodist, and lyricist who carved out a highly successful stage career for himself, but he succumbed to one fatal decision.

1. Hogan was a master of irony, in his songs, in his comedy, and even in his choice of stage names. He was dark-skinned, but he chose his sobriquet both to help him bond with the huge Irish audiences in New York City's theaters and, at the same time, to chide them. Here was the black Irish at its blackest. Here also was a black man saying, "I'm no different from you."
 2. Like Will Rogers, Hogan slapped his audiences and embraced them at the same time. Knowing this, it is a pity that writing the song "All Coons Look Alike to Me" (originally called "All Pimps Look Alike to Me") seems to have permanently broken his link to the black community. While white audiences continued to praise Hogan's work, black audiences shunned him.
- D. On July 5, 1898, at the Casino Theatre Roof in New York City, these three collaborators presented a musical called *Clorindy*, subtitled, *The Origin of the Cakewalk*. It was the first time all-black musical theater ever played a major white theater.
- E. *The New York Times* called *Clorindy* "sensational." Though its run was short, *Clorindy* marked the beginning of the ragtime musical on Broadway. It was also, aside from the minstrel shows, the first black musical on Broadway.
- F. Until *Clorindy*, ragtime (under the name *cakewalk music*) had dominated the minstrel stage, but it hadn't been the focus of an entire Broadway production.
- G. In 1907, Hogan wrote book, music, and lyrics to another ragtime show in which he starred, called *The Oyster Man*. Unfortunately, it proved to be Hogan's last show; he was taken ill with tuberculosis in 1908 and succumbed in May 1909. The show was so popular that it might have run for years, but Hogan was *The Oyster Man*'s strength; the show could not go on without him. We hear one of Hogan's most popular songs from *The Oyster Man*, re-created by Ed Goldstein, "When Buffalo Bill First Came to Baltimore."
- IV. The ragtime sound may have originated in the black community, but once it was successful, it was created and performed by everyone who had the talent to do so.
- A. Among the white performers enamored with the ragtime sound was Nora Bayes (1880–1928), born Dora Goldberg, who

performed wearing light tan makeup to make her feel a little closer to her material.

- B. In 1907, with her husband, Jack Norworth, Bayes wrote one of the most popular songs of the pre-World War I era, “Shine on Harvest Moon”; the song propelled her into the Ziegfeld Follies, where she became, by 1917, arguably America’s most popular female singer.
 - C. Toward the end of her career, Bayes started a public feud with the only other woman of her stature on the vaudeville stage—Sophie Tucker. In 1925, Bayes refused to go onstage at the Palace Theatre in New York because they’d placed her immediately after Tucker in the program.
 - D. Three years later, in March, dying of cancer and too ill to continue performing, Bayes came back to the Palace and begged for her life-sized photographs to be displayed in the lobby. The theater honored her request, and five days later, on March 18, 1928, Nora Bayes died.
 - E. Bayes wrote “Shine on Harvest Moon,” but the most popular recording of it was by two other singers, Ada Jones and Billy Murray. Murray and Jones’s duets are classics of the early acoustic era. Notice how Jones subtly alters her accent to suit the material and how the two of them create an illusion of spontaneity between choruses.
- V. Instrumental rags, such as Scott Joplin’s, were, from the 1890s until World War I, nearly as popular as vocal rags. A proper interpretation of instrumental rag required some feeling for ragtime’s rhythmic uniqueness. Without the infectious beat, without the subtly altered accents, ragtime lost its “intoxicating” effect.
- A. Let’s listen to a piece of instrumental ragtime, this one written by George Botsford in 1909 and named, by his publisher, Jerome Remick, “Chatterbox Rag.” The song is not singable, like a cakewalk, because it has a wide range; notice, too, the tendency of the musicians to create a variation when a theme repeats. The line that separates ragtime and jazz is a thin one.
 - B. This recording showcases Bruno Nasta on fiddle, Ed Goldstein on tuba, and Bill Messenger on piano.

VI. From the beginning of the ragtime craze on Broadway until its end, one man stands out, as a comedian, as a singer, and as a songwriter. Bert Williams (1874–1922), African-American star of the Ziegfeld Follies, rose higher in terms of audience recognition, critical acclaim, and financial reward than any other black performer.

- A.** *The New York Dramatic Mirror* (December 7, 1918) called Williams “one of the great comedians of the world.” W. C. Fields described him as “the funniest man I ever saw...and the saddest.” Near the end of his life, Eddie Cantor said, “In my 70 years, I’ve known many outstanding people in and out of the theater. A Will Rogers, an Al Jolson, comes once in a generation. Bert Williams...once in a lifetime.”
- B.** Williams’s strength was drawn from the fact that he avoided broad comedy, slapstick, bad puns, and jokes. Instead, like Jonathan Winters, Rodney Dangerfield, Bill Cosby, and Robin Williams, he created bizarre but believable characters and let the humor be ignited by their responses to things that happened to them. Williams’s characters were always sympathetic and sometimes just pathetic.
- C.** Even Williams’s original songs were “character sketches.” In 1904, he wrote, with some help from Alex Rogers, a song called “Nobody,” a musical monologue that creates a character whose luck is long overdue for a change.
- D.** We listen to a 1901 recording from Williams’s Broadway show *Sons of Ham*. The sheet music credits Williams and his partner, George Walker, with the song’s melody and lyrics. The lyrics and melody play against each other—the lyrics are sad, the melody is happy, and the overall result is pleasing.
 - 1.** The humor in this song stems from the fact that it reverses the cliché “the best things in life are free.” Williams tells us that money does buy happiness, friends, and much more. The recording consists only of William’s voice above a simple ragtime piano accompaniment.
 - 2.** Williams’s delivery eases in and out of rhythm with such naturalness that it sounds as if he is making the song up as he goes along. The song is “When It’s All Goin’ Out and Nothin’ Comin’ In.”

- E. On February 18, 1903, Williams's musical *In Dahomey* opened at the New York Theatre. *In Dahomey* was about a country that is today called Benin, which had been showcased at the 1893 World's Fair and, for many African-Americans, represented all of Africa.
 - 1. With his partner, George Walker, and librettist J. A. Shipp, Williams had spent the better part of 1902 writing *In Dahomey*, while supporting himself through performing. It was the first long-running, spectacularly successful black book musical to date.
 - 2. *In Dahomey* was the story of a group of unscrupulous Boston blacks who collect money to colonize Africa with down-and-out American blacks. They then skip town with the money.
- F. When Williams toured in vaudeville during the first decade of the 20th century, Washington, D.C. was considered the heart of deep Southern prejudice. Williams was the only black actor in vaudeville that the Keith Circuit could successfully book on a white bill in Washington. Williams was also the only black performer to play a command performance in England before King Edward VI.
- G. Other African-American performers before a white audience tended to go for easy laughs by poking fun at their own race. Williams, in contrast, poked fun at the human race. He found humor in situations that would apply equally to anyone of any race who was down on his luck.
- H. While others wrote songs about love, patriotism, and romantic ideals, Williams wrote about the everyday facts of life that still ring true a century later. In his show *In Dahomey*, a female character sings that she wants a man who'll spend money on her. We listen to this song, "I Don't Like No Cheap Man," recorded by a ragtime chamber ensemble featuring Ed Goldstein on bass, Bill Messenger on piano, Bruno Nasta on fiddle, and vocals by Maureen McCusker.

VII. Though we refer to American ragtime and American vaudeville, we should note that the most popular groups toured Europe and, as was the case with jazz musicians in the 1950s, often resettled in Europe.

- A. Ragtime had admiring audiences in Europe whose prejudices were directed at other ethnic groups. Many African-American performers found this situation inviting.
- B. Dan and Minnie Washington, after performing their much-praised cakewalk in the Williams and Walker show *In Dahomey* in Europe in 1905, remained there when the show returned to America. For years, they were the toast of Italy, France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Turkey, Syria, and Russia.
- C. On November 27, 1913, *The New York Age* noted “the successful engagement of Hen Wise and Katie Milton at the Apollo Theatre, Shanghai, China.” *The New York Age* also reported that many African-American performers had been in foreign lands for more than 20 years. As World War I began, most of these performers returned to the United States.
- D. For better or worse, ragtime permanently changed American music, on and off the stage. Fads come and go, but they often leave their mark behind.

Suggested Reading:

David A. Jasen and Gene Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around: Black Popular Songwriters, 1880–1930*.

Theodore Raph, *The American Song Treasury: 100 Favorites*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Explain the concept that ragtime is a synthesis of African and European approaches to music.
2. What are some possible explanations for the fact that ragtime (nearly two centuries old in practice) invaded and dominated Broadway at the end of the 19th century?

Lecture Five

The Vaudeville Era (1881 to c. 1935)

Scope: Tony Pastor's Music Hall, at 14th Street near Union Square in New York City, was, in the early 1880s, the birthplace of vaudeville, America's most important form of entertainment before moving pictures learned to talk. There were more than 2,000 vaudeville theaters in the United States, and about half of these were owned by men who became fabulously wealthy on the proceeds of vaudeville—such men as Marcus Loew and Benjamin Franklin Keith.

Never before and never again will there be such a training ground for young musicians, dancers, singers, comedians, and acrobats on the circuits. A performer signed a 50-week contract to play the same act at 50 different theaters around the country, earning financial security and 2 weeks off to rest before doing it all over again. Vaudeville also employed women and men of all races. We can't say that it was uniformly egalitarian, but it was a lot more so than the rest of the country during the early decades of the 20th century.

Outline

- I. Vaudeville, like ragtime, left a permanent imprint on American entertainment. We begin by listening to one of the most popular songs of the vaudeville stage, "Oh, Johnny!"
 - A. This song was written by composer Abe Olman and lyricist Ed Rose and introduced in vaudeville by a female singer during World War I. Originally, it was entitled "Oh, Johnny, How You Can Fight!" But when that version proved unpopular, Ed Rose rewrote the lyrics, calling the song "Oh, Johnny, How You Can Love!"
 - B. Overnight, "Oh, Johnny!" became a huge hit. Nora Bayes sang it in the 1918 Ziegfeld Follies. Al Jolson, Eddie Cantor, Ted Lewis, and Sophie Tucker recorded it and sang the song in their vaudeville performances.

- II. One man is responsible for the initial success of vaudeville—Tony Pastor (1837–1908). Although Pastor called the entertainment *variety*, the two terms are synonymous, and historically, *vaudeville* seems to have won out over *variety*.
- A. *Vaudeville* was originally a French phrase, *voix de ville*, or “voice of the city,” referring to urban folksongs. As late-19th-century America understood the term, vaudeville was variety theater made acceptable to middle-class men, women, and children by removing the vulgarity of earlier stage entertainments, particularly burlesque and saloon theatricals.
 - B. Vaudeville was based on a simple concept—stage shows with something for everyone. A typical vaudeville bill included singers, dancers, comedians, animal acts, jugglers, acrobats, magicians, monologists, musicians, and miscellany.
 - C. Vaudeville, unlike minstrel shows and later book musicals, contained independent acts that shared billing with other acts more by chance than by choice. The advent of television actually sustained vaudeville before eliminating it, as vaudeville had done earlier with minstrelry.
 - D. Tony Pastor, the father of vaudeville, was born Antonio Pastore. He started as a minstrel and, in the 1860s, opened a rough variety house in the Bowery.
 - 1. But the business was 90 percent men, and Pastor wasn’t happy that he was losing two-thirds of his potential clientele—women and children.
 - 2. In 1881, he opened his music hall in New York City at 14th and Broadway, across from Union Square. For the next 25 years, Pastor’s theater remained the temple of vaudeville.
 - 3. On a huge banner above the theater’s entrance, Pastor advertised: “Entertainment Clean Enough for Women and Children.” When men without families present entered Pastor’s front door, he checked their pistols and warned them not to drink or smoke inside the theater. Performers were instructed not to swear in their acts.
 - 4. Pastor’s music hall introduced New York City to up-and-coming stars. He created the greatest star of the 1890s by marketing the snow-white skin and wispy singing voice of Helen Louise Leonard as Lillian Russell. He nurtured family

acts, such as the Four Cohans, and he started Weber and Fields, who were destined to become the biggest comedy act in America and would eventually open their own music hall.

- E. Around 1882, when music publishers began opening businesses around Pastor's music hall to sell songs to his vaudeville performers, Tin Pan Alley was born.
 - 1. Music publishers had always done business in New York City, but now they were concentrated in one area, and with the growth of vaudeville, business was booming. Before records, radio, and TV, vaudeville was America's song salesman, creating a demand for the songs heard in the vaudeville houses.
 - 2. Sheet music publishers, theater owners, and performers worked to each other's profit to create bestselling vaudeville songs, including "Bicycle Built for Two," "The Band Played On," "East Side, West Side," and "Hello Ma Baby! Hello Ma Honey! Hello Ma Ragtime Gal!"
 - 3. The Nora Bayes song "Shine on Harvest Moon" scored such a hit on the vaudeville stage that she was pressured both by her publisher and her audience to come up with a sequel. We hear a recording of this sequel, "Turn off Your Light, Mr. Moon!" by Nora Bayes and Jack Norworth.

III. Tony Pastor's death in 1908 marked the beginning of a new and fertile era in vaudeville, the formation of nationwide vaudeville chains that created dozens of multimillionaires.

- A. By the time of the First World War, there were more than 2,000 vaudeville theaters in America, perhaps as many as 4,000. Visionary promoters bought or built chains of theaters in cities across America. These visionaries included such men as Edward Albee, Benjamin Franklin Keith, and Marcus Loew.
- B. There were constant turf wars among these entrepreneurial giants. In 1899, Percy Williams built the Orpheum Circuit, which included the Orpheum Theatre in New York City. In 1912, Keith paid \$5 million for the Orpheum Theatres in New York and its suburbs. In 1915, Keith refurbished the Orpheum in New York to compete with the Palace.
- C. When Loew moved in and opened a magnificent theater near Keith's in New York, both men launched a competition to build

bigger, more ornate, and more expensive theaters. Around 1914, when Keith and Albee merged, the result was the biggest vaudeville circuit in America.

- D.** We see a good example of the kind of bickering that went on between artists and entrepreneurs in the case of Keith and George M. Cohan. In the years 1897–1899, the Four Cohans played eight weeks a year for Keith’s houses around the country. The act played to standing-room-only audiences, but when Keith refused to give the Cohans top billing, George vowed that no Cohan would ever play a Keith house again.
1. This incident prompted Cohan to leave vaudeville and go into mainstream musical theater, where he wrote, directed, and starred in his own shows, including 1904’s *Little Johnny Jones*, which featured “I’m a Yankee Doodle Dandy” and “Give My Regards to Broadway.”
 2. Shortly after the altercation with Keith, Marcus Loew offered George top billing and \$10,000 a week if the Four Cohans would return to vaudeville in Loew’s theaters.
 3. Cohan went on to produce his own shows and pioneer in the art of making phonograph records for the Victor Talking Machine Company, at a price approximately 10 times higher than the company paid its previous top artist, Enrico Caruso.

IV. In 1899, vaudeville was at the center of lower-middle-class America’s life, and the growth of vaudeville created a newfound security for performers.

- A.** Signing a contract to play a circuit meant that a performer could count on a salary that might run year-round. Further, vaudeville acts were only 10 minutes long; thus, performers needed only a fantastic 10 minutes of song, dance, or comedy, and the same routine could be used for years.
- B.** We’ll listen to a song called “I’m Forever Blowing Bubbles,” which appeared in 1919 as a sequel to 1918’s “I’m Always Chasing Rainbows.” The song was performed by acts in several vaudeville circuits, accompanied by an offstage machine that filled the stage with bubbles. Our recording is by Selvin’s Novelty Orchestra.
- C.** Grace La Rue, a performer during the early 1900s, described her earnings and expenses for a typical week of work on vaudeville in

1913. La Rue was one of a number of white performers who included talented black children in her act, although the white circuits had quotas that limited black acts to one or two on a bill.

- D. One of the most famous African-American children to perform in vaudeville was Bill “Bojangles” Robinson (1878–1949), who after being orphaned, was farmed out by relatives at age 6 as a tap dancer in a white vaudeville act.
 - 1. In time, Robinson developed one of the most popular solo tap-dance acts in the history of vaudeville and was second only to Bert Williams in terms of critical acclaim and financial reward.
 - 2. In the 1930s, Twentieth Century Fox signed Robinson to a long-term contract, and he made several films with a very young Shirley Temple. Their tapping duets are classics.
- V. Though the majority of performers in vaudeville were singers, dancers, musicians, comedians, and acrobats, there were also a few bizarre acts.
 - A. One of the most bizarre was Hadji Ali, the “amazing regurgitater.”
 - 1. He swallowed watermelon seeds, jewels, coins, peach pits, and so on, then regurgitated specific items as requested by his audience.
 - 2. With a replica of a castle on a table on the stage, Ali drank a gallon of water chased down by a pint of kerosene. He would then light a match and eject flaming kerosene from his mouth across the stage, setting the castle on fire. As the flames shot into the air, he would spit up the gallon of water, instantly extinguishing the blaze.
 - B. One of the higher-paid musical acts in vaudeville, the Cherry Sisters, was also one of the worst. Oscar Hammerstein, Sr., booked them in New York City at his Olympia Theatre in November of 1896, and they played to packed houses every evening.
 - 1. Elizabeth, Effie, Jessie, and Addie Cherry were tall, awkward farm girls who sang badly out of tune. They were almost as bad at playing instruments and, occasionally, dancing.
 - 2. Hammerstein had to put up a wire screen to protect the girls from ripe tomatoes thrown at the stage. *The New York Times* wrote, “It is sincerely hoped that nothing like them will ever be seen again.”

3. But the bad publicity brought good crowds, and the sisters trod the vaudeville circuits for 20 years, returning to the farm in retirement to live in comfort on their savings.

C. Vaudeville chains were always looking for new talent to fill vacancies, advertising salaries of \$22 a week for 20 weeks' work.

VI. In addition to the mainstream vaudeville theaters, there were also many lower-paying Yiddish theaters. These booked vaudeville acts, musicals, and straight plays, all in a linguistic combination of German, Hebrew, and Russian.

- A. Long before Cole Porter created *Kiss Me, Kate*, his musical version of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, the Yiddish theater had tapped Shakespeare dozens of times to create vaudeville skits, complete musicals, and plays. Shakespeare was actually the Yiddish theater's most popular playwright.
- B. But Shakespeare, in Yiddish, was tailored to fit the Lower East Side audience. Hamlet was away studying to be a rabbi, and his mother shocked him by marrying a goy. The Yiddish Hamlet was retitled *The Yeshiva Bucher*.
- C. Sophie Tucker, the highest paid performer in vaudeville, dabbled with Yiddish theater before finding her niche in vaudeville. She even wrote an autobiography, *Some of These Days*, outlining the story of how her father, a Russian Jew, appropriated the Italian name Abuza.
- D. For children like Sophie Tucker, vaudeville represented an escape from tenement life, both for the performers and the audience. During the 1880s, when vaudeville was at its height, urban children worked in sweat shops, six 12-hour days a week, for \$2.50. A vaudeville childhood must have seemed like heaven in comparison, with its short hours and high salary. One of vaudeville's favorite child specialties was a temperance ballad, "Come Home, Father," which we hear recreated a capella by Sara Achor.
- E. Another of vaudeville's great stars was Eddie Cantor (1892–1964), born Isadore Iskowitz in the poorest section of New York's Lower East Side. Cantor's memoirs, entitled *As I Remember Them*, convey a picture of a young man rising like Horatio Alger from rags to riches.

1. Cantor was orphaned at the age of 2 and cared for by his grandmother. His childhood saw frequent moves from one overcrowded apartment to another, tight money, gang fights, petty crime, and suddenly, at the age of 11, an offer from vaudevillian Gus Edwards to join his act, *Kid Kabaret*.
2. Edwards wrote the act's theme song, "School Daze," which became so popular that, at one point, every elementary school student in America sang the song as part of opening exercises each morning. We hear a parody of the song, created by wise guy Georgie Jessel, who also joined the act at age 11.
3. Eddie Cantor's starting salary in Edwards's *Kid Kabaret* was \$35 a week, but he had to pay his own expenses on the road and save for lean periods.
4. In his late teens, Cantor married but was still able to play a school boy on stage because of his small size. Behind the glamour, Cantor and his wife, Ida, still lived in a sublet single room in his sister's flat. His beloved grandmother had since died, and Eddie paid for the funeral expenses out of his own pocket.
5. In 1916, Cantor left Edwards to do a solo comedy and song act at a posh cabaret in New York City. In 1917, Flo Ziegfeld tapped Cantor for the Follies, increasing his salary to \$400 a week.
6. By 1928, Cantor was the biggest star on Broadway, his name above the title on the year's most popular new Broadway show, *Whoopie*.

VII. Today, the vaudeville circuits are long gone, though the fortunes made in vaudeville by theater owners still exist, invested in other fields over the years.

- A. By the late 1920s, David Sarnoff, the man who started network radio, and Benjamin Franklin Keith, who now owned both the Keith and Orpheum Circuits, created a movie studio that was destined to make the great Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers musicals of the 1930s. The Radio-Keith-Orpheum studio became known by its acronym, RKO.
- B. Nothing was idyllic in vaudeville. Although it employed African-Americans, these performers never received the same red-carpet treatment as the best white acts. For the audiences, it was a

wonderful escape from a world of often oppressive and meaningless work, but the escape was, unquestionably, momentary.

- C. Vaudeville was a unique form of theater, the likes of which are unlikely ever to be seen again. Its influence, however, is stamped on the performing arts in America for all time. We close this lecture with a performance by one of vaudeville's most popular artists, Sir Harry Lauder, singing a song he wrote, "Roamin' in the Gloamin'."

Suggested Reading:

David Fantle and Patrick Byrne, *The Vaudeville Songbook*.

Stanley Green, *The World of Musical Comedy*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Explain how vaudeville originated the modern concept of "family entertainment."
2. How did the shift from individual theaters to nationwide vaudeville chains affect the security of those who performed in the genre?

Lecture Six

Tin Pan Alley

Scope: For more than a century, the music publishing industry and the New York theatrical industry worked together to create the hit songs of the day. During the heyday of this collaboration, the music publishing business in New York City was referred to as Tin Pan Alley.

Because most middle- and upper-class homes contained pianos in the 1890s, the publishers and songwriters of Tin Pan Alley tried to create songs that pianists with very limited skills could play and singers with very small ranges could sing. Tin Pan Alley also tried to stay topical, with songs devoted to new forms of transportation and communication. By the end of the century, this approach resulted in hundreds of songs that had sold more than a million copies of sheet music each. Composing songs and publishing them had become big business.

Tin Pan Alley was focused on selling sheet music, and in the beginning, sheet music sold in huge quantities, but improved recordings soon outsold sheet music and profits dropped. Then, talking pictures appeared, and such movie moguls as Jack Warner began buying out New York publishers and relocating them to Hollywood, where they could supply songs for films. Tin Pan Alley became extinct.

Outline

- I. We begin by listening to “Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland,” one of the biggest hits of Tin Pan Alley. It was written in 1908 by Leo G. Friedman, with lyrics by Beth Slater; by 1910, the sheet music for “Dreamland” had sold 5 million copies.
 - A. For more than a century, the music publishing industry, known as Tin Pan Alley, and the New York musical theater industry worked together to create the hit songs of the day.
 - B. This situation continued until the late 1950s with the death of network radio and the ascendancy of rock ’n’ roll. In the late

1950s, show music shared the spotlight with Elvis and Little Richard.

- C. Tin Pan Alley is now long deceased, and the music publishing business is no longer dominated by New York. But once upon a time, Tin Pan Alley both reflected and created mass musical tastes. Actually, the place existed long before the name, which appeared for the first time in 1906.

II. Two men are responsible for the name *Tin Pan Alley*.

- A. The first of these was Monroe Rosenfeld. During the 1880s, he was a successful if not particularly original songwriter. Only one of his many tearjerkers is occasionally performed today—"Take Back Your Gold," featuring a melody lifted from "The Man on the Flying Trapeze."
- B. By 1900, Rosenfeld had left songwriting to become a respected New York journalist. He was assigned to write a series of articles on the music publishing business, focusing on the newly made fortunes of several prominent publishers.
- C. Rosenfeld began by interviewing Harry Von Tilzer, the publisher who'd written "I Want a Girl Just Like the Girl Who Married Dear Old Dad." He also wrote "Wait Till the Sun Shines Nelly."
- D. At this time, publishing houses were in brownstone buildings, and at least one floor contained cubicles with pianos where songwriters worked on or demonstrated their latest potential hits. Though they were usually playable, the pianos weren't kept in tip-top shape; they tended to sound metallic and slightly discordant.
- E. When Rosenfeld tried to interview Von Tilzer, a half-dozen pianos playing simultaneously created such cacophony that Rosenfeld couldn't hear Von Tilzer speak. The interviewee commented, "Rosie, you could go deaf in there. Sometimes it sounds like a mob, beating on tin pans." After the interview, Rosenfeld titled his series "Tin Pan Alley."
- F. One song of Harry Von Tilzer's made him enough money to buy his own publishing firm—"A Bird in a Gilded Cage." This song is a typical 1890s tearjerker.
 - 1. Serendipitously, the height of the craze for weepy ballads coincided with the huge migration to America of Russian Jews. According to musicologist Charles Hamm, music

publishers and vaudeville scouts scoured the synagogues on the Lower East Side, looking for the tear-in-the-throat cantorial voices that perfectly communicated these maudlin missives.

2. We hear a re-creation of the 1890s sentimental song style by Doug Jimmerson with “A Bird in a Gilded Cage.” Notice how the verse sets the stage for the chorus.

- III. Tin Pan Alley was a place, but that place was not quite stationary. In the 1890s, when Tony Pastor’s music hall in Union Square was the heart of the theater district, the publishers tended to be between Pastor’s and Greenwich Village. When the theaters moved uptown, the publishers moved with them.
 - A. From 1900 until a little after World War I, Tin Pan Alley was a street—28th Street, between 5th Avenue and Broadway. It was known as the “Street of Songs.”
 - B. George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, and Irving Berlin all began their careers working on Tin Pan Alley. Here, the popular music business was first transformed into big business.
 - C. The songs became a mirror of the fads, fashions, tastes, morals, current events, and passing moods of America. America responded by buying hundreds of millions of copies of sheet music during the lifespan of Tin Pan Alley.
- IV. What gave rise to Tin Pan Alley? Before 1880, most song hits had come from classical music publishers; some had come out of music stores that occasionally farmed out sheet music to print shops.
 - A. Stephen Foster was published largely by Firth and Pond in New York City until the company went bankrupt in 1863.
 1. Like the Oliver Ditson Music Store in Boston, Firth and Pond specialized in classical music, but Ditson also published a good deal of popular music, including “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” and “Tenting on the Old Camp Ground.”
 2. John Church, another classical publisher, also published “I’ll Take You Home Again, Kathleen” in the early 1870s.
 3. These publishers, however, looked down their noses at popular songs, while openly taking pride in their classical repertoire.

- B.** In 1853, Stephen Foster's new song "My Old Kentucky Home" sold nearly 50,000 copies at Firth and Pond, impressive for the time but insignificant compared to the sales numbers that would become commonplace later in the century. During the 1890s, million-sellers were not exactly ordinary, but they were not all that unusual either. One of the reasons for this was the close link between sheet-music publishers and the musical productions on the Broadway stage.
- C.** During this period, songs, even in the so-called plot-centered musical, could be interpolated into a show with an offhand comment, such as "Let me sing you a song I heard today." And the right song could turn a flop show into a hit. Audience members would walk out singing, buy the song in the lobby or at the corner music store, and put it on their pianos, where they could gather around to sing it.
- D.** The first songwriter/publisher to sell more than a million copies of one of his songs was Charles K. Harris (1867–1930). After he opened his own publishing house, he even penned a book on how to write hit songs. His approach was shallow, opportunistic, and highly successful. In essence, Harris's message was as follows:
- 1.** Keep the range of the chorus within an octave.
 - 2.** Keep your ear and eye on what's currently exciting audiences and write songs about those topics. Such topics might include deceased loved ones, lost love, or a new invention that's in the news, which spawned "Bicycle Built for Two."
 - 3.** If you use sophisticated language, you'll sell songs to sophisticated people; if you use simple language, you'll sell songs to everyone!
- E.** All the hits of the 1890s followed Harris's formula, including "Bicycle Built for Two," "The Band Played On," and "East Side, West Side."
- F.** Harris also wrote about successfully marketing songs. His strategies included sending singers to restaurants and theaters to sing with the house band in exchange for free sheet music and orchestrations and, when all else failed, bribing a musical show's producer or its star to get a song sung onstage.
- 1.** This last strategy was how Harris turned his first successful song, "After the Ball," into the biggest sheet-music seller of

the 1890s; he claimed that by 1910, the song had sold 15 million copies.

2. Harris paid Aldrich Libbey, one of the most popular tenors on the American musical stage, \$500 to sing the song in his Broadway show *A Visit to Chinatown*, the most popular show of 1893.
3. Julius Witmark's publishing house then offered Harris the unprecedented sum of \$10,000 for publishing rights, in addition to royalties. Harris turned Witmark down.
4. The Oliver Ditson Music Store in Boston sent Harris an order for 75,000 copies. To meet it, Harris had to buy a printing press. Within a year, according to his autobiography, his publishing house was earning as much as \$25,000 in a single week from his first million-seller, "After the Ball."
5. What inspired the writing of this million-seller song? In 1888, Harris attended a formal dance at an elegant establishment in Chicago. Early in the evening, he saw a handsome young couple walking arm-in-arm. Later, Harris saw the same young man walking out of the room with a different woman on his arm. Surprised, Harris looked around the room for the first woman. He soon found her in the corner, tears streaming down her cheeks.
6. This emotional sight inspired Harris to write "After the Ball," which became the first song ever to sell a million copies of sheet music and the biggest selling song of the decade of the 1890s. We listen to a bit of it.

V. Tin Pan Alley was built on the foundations of sentimental ballads. The period of the 1890s was, essentially, a sentimental era. It paid lip service to morality, virginity, and other basic virtues in unctuous phrases. It regaled the home, the wife, and the family as sacrosanct.

- A. To my knowledge, not one mother song has been written during the past 50 years, but in Tin Pan Alley, mother songs proliferated. Here are a few of the popular titles: "I Want a Girl Just Like the Girl Who Married Dear Old Dad," "M Is for the Million Things You Gave Me," "Mother Machree," "Mammy," and many more.
- B. What does this mean in terms of women's roles in 1890s society? For the Victorian woman, her home was her life. Her blessings were her children and the security and peace that respectability

brought. The plethora of mother songs, mostly written by men, was payback, however inadequate, for a life of perpetual sacrifice.

- C. In Tin Pan Alley, the sentimental song sometimes blended with the topical song. “Hello, Central, Give Me Heaven for I Know My Mother’s There,” by Charles K. Harris, is sloshingly sentimental, yet it was written at a time when the telephone was still a novelty.
- D. Tin Pan Alley also thrived on songs about bicycles and other current modes of transportation. We hear a typical ballad from 1909, introduced on the stage by a gentleman singing to a young lady; he wears a duster and goggles, standard gear for an automobile ride in 1909. The song is “In My Merry Oldsmobile,” sung by Billy Murray.

VI. Publishers didn’t just sit back and wait for the money to come rolling in. They traveled around the country to vaudeville houses, promoting their songs. These Tin Pan Alley men were part artist and part salesman. They were after quick money, not lasting art, which is why few of their songs are sung today.

- A. Song pluggers, employed by the publishers, would do anything to sell a song. Bing Crosby, decades after the art of song plugging had vanished, waxed nostalgically about the pluggers: “They’d come into your dressing room to demonstrate whatever song their company was concentrating on.... They always had the same line: ‘Bing, I promise you, this is going to be the number-one song.’”
- B. We listen to a song that actually fulfilled that promise, staying at number one for a few weeks in 1910. It’s a very popular Nora Bayes song from the Ziegfeld Follies of 1910 called “Come Along, My Mandy.”
- C. Not all the Tin Pan Alley tunes were original. For example, “The Bowery,” Percy Gaunt’s huge hit from the 1892 Broadway show *A Visit to Chinatown*, used one of the themes from a Neapolitan folksong called “Spagnola.”
 - 1. One of Irving Berlin’s early hits was “That Mesmerizin’ Mendelssohn Tune,” a ragtime version of Mendelssohn’s “Spring Song.”
 - 2. “I’m Always Chasing Rainbows” used the slow theme from Chopin’s *Fantasia-Impromptu*.
 - 3. Other Tin Pan Alley hits appropriated from classics include:
 - a. “The Lamp Is Low”/Ravel’s “Pavane”

- b. “Moon Love”/Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 5
 - c. “Beautiful Ohio”/Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Song of India”
 - d. “Tell Me You Love Me”/“*Vesti la Giubba*”
 - e. “I Can’t Help Falling in Love with You”/Jean-Paul Martini’s 1790s French song “*Plaisir D’Amour*”
 - f. “Don’t Sit under the Apple Tree”/“Long, Long Ago” (an old folksong)
 - g. “I Don’t Know How to Love Him”/Second movement of Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto
 - h. “There’s a Place for Us [Somewhere]”/Second movement of Beethoven’s Emperor Concerto
- D.** In 1920, Al Jolson put his name on a song he introduced, “Avalon.” The melody of “Avalon” came from Puccini’s opera *Tosca* and was very nearly identical to the aria “*E lucevan le stelle*.”
- 1. Unfortunately, *Tosca* was not yet in the public domain. Puccini’s publisher, Ricordi, sued and was awarded damages of \$25,000 and all subsequent royalties.
 - 2. Jolson also put his name on a song taken from Ivanovicchi’s waltz “Waves of the Danube” under the new title “The Anniversary Song.”
 - 3. The song was a tremendous success and continues to be played at wedding anniversary celebrations today. Luckily for Jolson, the waltz melody for “The Anniversary Song” had been written in 1880, putting it in the public domain. Jolson made enough on this one song to compensate for all he lost on “Avalon.”

- VII.** In 1920, Tin Pan Alley’s impact on America’s tastes was strengthened by the birth of network radio. For the first time in history, a song could be plugged nationally and, in an instant, could reach millions of people.
- A.** The first few years of the 1920s were Tin Pan Alley’s golden age in more ways than one. Standards appeared by the hundreds. Sheet music still occasionally sold in the millions, and now recordings were beginning to do the same.
 - B.** In 1927, though, the impact of the Al Jolson film *The Jazz Singer* removed a few bricks from Tin Pan Alley’s foundation, forcing it, over the next few years, to crumble.

1. The success of the film musical inspired Jack Warner, whose Warner Brothers Studio had produced *The Jazz Singer*, to buy up New York publishers in order to have a backlog of songs for his forthcoming musical films.
2. Other movie magnates soon followed suit, and by 1930, Tin Pan Alley was decimated, but it limped on.

VIII. As a geographical entity on 28th Street between 5th Avenue and Broadway, Tin Pan Alley ceased to exist after World War I. But, relocated, the alley was still very much alive in the 1920s.

- A. With the theater district increasingly concentrated between 42nd and 50th Streets, publishers moved also. Berlin broke away from his partners to form Irving Berlin, Inc. By the early to mid-1920s, other major firms had deserted 28th Street.
- B. At the same time, many smaller firms found offices in the Brill Building at 1619 Broadway, which offered nothing like the baroquely ornate offices of post-Victorian 28th Street.
- C. Today, the Brill Building is the last vestige of Tin Pan Alley. Surviving for nearly a century, its denizens have been host to every kind of music that has originated in New York.
- D. Before we close, let's listen to one more song from the golden days of Tin Pan Alley, "April Showers." Lou Silvers interpolated it into Al Jolson's 1921 show *Bombo*.

IX. In essence, talking pictures killed Tin Pan Alley, though the new, improved electrical recordings also did their part.

- A. By the time *The Jazz Singer* had appeared in late 1927, sheet music sales were already about 75 percent below what was considered normal a few decades earlier.
- B. Warner Brothers paid \$10 million for three publishing houses, which were assembled into one giant corporation and renamed the Music Publishers Holding Corporation. Family businesses were taken over in the same way that giant corporations acquired and merged with smaller businesses at the end of the 20th century.
- C. The open-door policy that had prevailed in the old Tin Pan Alley—a policy that made publishers receptive to manuscripts by unknowns and to composers and lyricists who were on their way up—was closed after the 1930s.

- D. The 200,000 or so manuscripts that still pour into various publishing houses today from aspiring songwriters each year are never reviewed. These days, publishers rightfully fear plagiarism suits from would-be songwriters. Mail, therefore, is returned unopened. The craziness and romance of Tin Pan Alley have, over the past 70 or so years, given way to a rather antiseptic and passionless business.

Suggested Reading:

David A. Jasen, *Tin Pan Alley*.

Marvin Paymer, *Facts Behind the Songs*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Compare the evolution of Tin Pan Alley to the evolution of some other form of merchandising, such as the automobile industry.
2. Give several reasons for the decline of sheet music sales and the consequent decline of Tin Pan Alley.

Lecture Seven

Broadway in Its Infancy

Scope: America's first blockbuster musical, *The Black Crook*, was the total opposite of the integrated musical. William Wheatley had produced the melodrama at Niblo's Garden, the largest theater in New York City, but the show did *not* attract customers. Meanwhile, a troupe of Parisian ballerinas arrived in New York to discover that the theater into which they were booked had burned down. Wheatley and the ballet's producers had the semi-brilliant idea of combining the two shows at Niblo's Garden. Not only were the dances and songs *not* integrated into *The Black Crook*'s plot, but in some cases, the show actually stopped—froze in place—while the dancers or singers performed. Nonetheless, *The Black Crook* ran for 474 performances in its first engagement and was revived periodically for the next 25 years.

At the same time, the comedy shows of Harrigan and Hart, and Weber and Fields, offered a different form of entertainment to audiences that largely consisted of men. Their shows consisted of songs and sketches that parodied everyday life and explored timely topics of the day, much as *Saturday Night Live* would do at the end of the 20th century. Inspired by Harrigan, George M. Cohan came closer to the true book musical than any of these predecessors. *Little Johnny Jones* (1904) was the story of an American jockey (played by Cohan) in London, who is accused of fixing a race. His chauvinistic denial prompts him to sing "I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy." Cohan's stories and songs were, like Cohan himself, brash, noisy, aggressive, patriotic, and oriented to an age whose buzz phrase was "100-percent American."

Outline

- I. In this lecture, we look at the period from 1866 to 1908, years that represent the beginnings of modern American musical theater. We'll start with one of the most popular songs of this period, "Bicycle Built for Two."

II. In 1866, musical theater audiences, on the whole, consisted of men.

A. When singer/dancer Lola Montez toured American theaters with her troupe before the Civil War, New York newspapers reported that she attracted an audience of 3,000, only 7 of whom were women.

B. In 1866, America's first blockbuster musical appeared. It used unoriginal songs, and it contained wooden characters and a hackneyed plot. What did it have going for it?

1. During the 1860s, the largest theater in New York City was Niblo's Garden, where America's first smash-hit musical theater piece was produced. The show, *The Black Crook*, was one of the longest running and one of the worst in the history of musical theater.
2. Originally, *The Black Crook* was an unsuccessful Broadway melodrama—not a musical—produced by William Wheatley. As it was floundering at Niblo's Garden, two Broadway producers, Henry Jarrett and Harry Palmer, were importing a troupe of Parisian ballerinas to perform in New York at the Academy of Music. When the ballerinas arrived, they discovered that the theater in which they were booked had burned down.
3. The ballet producers, with a company of stranded dancers minus a theater, conceived the idea of joining forces with William Wheatley at Niblo's Garden to convert the melodrama into a melodramatic musical spectacle.
4. The resulting monstrosity was more than five hours long. The critics hated it, but miraculously, it held its largely male audience spellbound. Neither the play nor the ballet repertoire was cut, and songs were added, hence the length.
5. The New York critics were quick to point out that it did “feature spectacles of staging and lighting unprecedented on the American stage.” They were also quick to point out that the plot was hackneyed and bore no relationship to the musical numbers.
6. But none of this seemed to matter in a show that presented 100 ballerinas in tights, revealing more of the female form than had ever before been exposed to American audiences.

7. We hear Sara Achor singing one of the songs from *The Black Crook*, with a delightful, true-to-the-period arrangement by Jari Villanueva. The song is “You Naughty, Naughty Men.”
 8. *The Black Crook* ran for 474 performances in its first engagement at Niblo’s Garden and continued to be revived over a period of 25 years. Tasteless and stupid, it was also big, lavish, and for the 19th century, “sexy.”
- C. After *The Black Crook*, attempts were made from time to time to create Broadway musicals with plots that made sense and songs that had some relationship to the story. One of the most successful of these was *The Tourists in the Pullman Palace Car* from 1879.
1. The show was not a single story but a series of incidents, all of which took place on a set designed to look like the interior of a lavishly decorated train.
 2. The show was closer to a revue in format, but a revue that grew out of the environment of the train ride. In some ways, it was similar to a *concept musical*, which we’ll discuss in a later lecture.

III. While *The Black Crook* and *The Tourists in the Pullman Palace Car* were pulling in audiences, a different form of entertainment was packing them in at the music hall in the Bowery operated by Tony Pastor. This was a far less successful and less family-oriented theater than the music hall Pastor eventually ran at 14th and Broadway.

- A. In this earlier music hall, Pastor introduced a new comedy team named Harrigan and Hart. Ned Harrigan (1844–1911) and Tony Hart (1855–1891) became so popular that, by 1877, they were producing their own shows that parodied life on the streets at the time. They also have the distinction of being, perhaps, the first to employ black performers in their street scenes instead of whites in blackface.
- B. Harrigan and Hart began performing in the early 1860s in a ramshackle theater in Corlear’s Hook in the Five Points neighborhood. Recently arrived Irish and newly freed blacks created a poor and rough but essentially integrated neighborhood. Harrigan and Hart’s act reflected the mostly Irish makeup of the area.

- C. Harrigan and Hart moved from Corlear's Hook to the Bowery and, eventually, to mainstream Broadway. Theirs was a coarse and masculine theater featuring comedy that bordered on mayhem.
- D. Because the neighborhood saloon was the heart of masculine Irish society, the stage setting in a Harrigan and Hart show was often a bar, with the bartender singing "I Never Drink Behind the Bar."
- E. None of the Harrigan and Hart repertoire has survived into the 21st century. The songs have died for precisely the reason they were so popular when they were presented on the stage—they were topical, based on Harrigan's observations of the streets of 1870s Manhattan.
- F. A Harrigan and Hart song called "My Dad's Dinner Pail" brought tears to the eyes of the rough audiences at their theater, but today, who among us even remembers what a dinner pail looked like? Other Harrigan and Hart routines featured the telephone and a new sedative used by dentists, nitrous oxide, or laughing gas.
- G. Harrigan's bragging style was the model for a more lasting creator of songs—George M. Cohan. As a matter of fact, in 1908, after the Harrigan and Hart era had long faded, Cohan wrote a song that everyone knew was an homage to Cohan's inspirational figure, "H-A-Double R-I-G-A-N Spells Harrigan."
- H. Harrigan and Hart reached the peak of their popularity in 1879, with the creation of an Irish regiment of soldiers called the Mulligan Guard, which Harrigan and Hart used as material for a series of farces.
 - 1. Rather than put blackface on whites, Harrigan hired a black chorus, some of whom were gang members from the old neighborhood, and called them the Skidmore Guard, the Mulligans' natural competition.
 - 2. An evening of Mulligan Guard entertainment usually ended with a good-natured brawl between the Mulligans and the Skidmores. In *The Mulligan Guard Ball*, the Skidmores made such a ruckus in the hall above the Mulligans that they crashed through the ceiling. The pileup of arms and legs, smothered in plaster and entwined with the chandelier, created an astonishing spectacle.
 - 3. But however violent the brawl on stage, the evening ended with a Harrigan song that soon was sung around the world.

The melody became one of the favorites for circus bands and even more high-brow bands, such as John Philip Sousa's. We hear "The Mulligan Guard," re-created by Ed Goldstein and crew.

IV. The comedy team of Joe Weber (1867–1942) and Lew Fields (1867–1941) started in Tony Pastor's music hall and became one of the most popular acts of the 1890s.

- A.** Weber and Fields spoke in what their audiences called Dutch, but it was really a twisted and strangled kind of German accent. They created this classic joke:

Weber: Who vass dat lady I seen you wid last night?

Fields: Dat vass no lady, dat vass mine vife!

- B.** Their shows were characterized by slapstick humor, and their characters grew out of the ancient Yiddish tradition of the *schlemiel* (Weber) and the *schlimazel* (Fields). Fields was the straight man; Weber was the childlike, innocent character who usually ended up getting the best of Fields. Weber also got knocked around by Fields for his stupidity.
- C.** Weber and Fields were the first *schlemiel-schlimazel* team to become the toast of Broadway, and their impact on stage comedy was immense. Comedy teams consciously or unconsciously based on Weber and Fields's model include Abbot and Costello, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, Laurel and Hardy, and the Smothers Brothers.
- D.** The Weber and Fields music hall productions created a market for satire and travesty that is still thriving today. In the 1950s, we see echoes of Weber and Fields in *Your Show of Shows* with Sid Caesar, Carl Reiner, Imogene Coca, and Mel Brooks. In *Saturday Night Live*, we see the same tradition of ensemble improvisation.

V. We can't leave musical theater at its starting point without spending some time on one of its leading figures, George M. Cohan (1878–1942). No previous performer and no single performer in the 20th century comes close to Cohan in terms of the impact he made on audiences and the changes he introduced to Broadway.

- A. Cohan danced, sang, and wrote music, lyrics, and libretto to every one of his shows, in addition to auditioning the cast and directing. In an age when musicals were a patchwork of clumsy interpolations, Cohan's ego wouldn't let anybody else touch his work. As a result, his shows are closer to integrated musical theater than anything before *Show Boat*.
- B. Cohan is the American equivalent of British playwright/actor Noel Coward, without Coward's sophistication. Cohan's style was inspired by Harrigan and Hart. Nobody beats Harrigan or Cohan for sheer unadulterated self-assurance, and Cohan always made sure his audiences knew how fortunate they were to be in his presence.
- C. Cohan's songs captivated his audience. Although they weren't as sophisticated and harmonically complex as the later songs of Gershwin, Kern, and Rodgers, his melodies were snappy and unpretentious, and his lyrics had a refreshing conversational quality that made the singer seem all the more sincere.
- D. Cohan's libretti revolved around the all-American character he created—brash, relatively honest, ambitious, athletic, and chauvinistic. “Yankee Doodle Dandy,” for instance, is sung by an American jockey racing in London. Accused of fixing the race, he launches into a musical defense that shows the uppity English that Americans like Johnny Jones aren't to be tampered with.
- E. Cohan got his start in vaudeville, and when he embarked on a musical theater career, he ignored traditional formulas. Cecil Smith, in his book *Musical Comedy in America*, describes Cohan as “the apostle of breeziness, of up-to-datedness, of Broadway brashness and of current slang.”
- F. By the time he was 20, George was writing all the material for the Four Cohans vaudeville act. In 1899, when George married Ethel Levy, the act became the Five Cohans. In the same year, he wrote his first topical song hit, “I Guess I'll Have to Telegraph My Baby.”
- G. Though 1904's *Little Johnny Jones* was Cohan's first hit Broadway show, he had written a less successful show called *Mother Goose* in 1903.

1. The most successful songs from this show were also patriotic. We hear Cohan himself singing “I Want to Hear a Yankee Doodle Tune” from *Mother Goose*.
 2. Of course, Cohan’s other patriotic hit is “You’re A Grand Old Flag” from his 1906 musical *George Washington, Jr.* Surprisingly, this popular and enduring song was originally met with boos and jeers from his audiences, followed by castigating notes from local politicians.
 3. The controversy caused Cohan to quickly rewrite the song’s lyric. We hear it again, sung in its original form, “You’re A Grand Old Rag,” by Billy Murray in a 1906 recording.
- H. After Cohan’s peak years, on the day in 1917 when America declared war on Germany, Cohan wrote what was to become the most popular song of World War I, “Over There.”
- I. Cohan’s popularity continued even after his death. The movie *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942) earned James Cagney an Academy Award for his portrayal of Cohan. The 1968 Broadway musical *George M.* was not as successful, largely because its star, Joel Grey, could not communicate the pugnacious intensity of Cohan.
- J. Cohan may be no Rodgers or Hammerstein, but it’s questionable whether there could have been a Rodgers and Hammerstein without Cohan laying the groundwork for all who followed him.
1. On the one hand, Cohan advanced musical theater by writing songs that grew out of his plots and by speaking in a voice that was closer to “real” than any of the songwriters who’d preceded him.
 2. On the other hand, such shows as *Little Johnny Jones* were showcases for Cohan’s unique talents, extensions of his own personality, an impossible model to emulate.

VI. Paradoxically, musical theater from Harrigan and Hart onward depended on stereotypes, but at the same time, it exploded them. Harrigan found humor in his brawling, boozy Irishmen, but he also used black performers, not whites in blackface, for the Skidmore Guard. And the Irish pride of *George M.* Cohan didn’t stop him from marrying Ethel Levy and taking equal pride in her Jewishness.

- A. America was the great melting pot and at least gave lip service to being the great leveler. Nowhere did that leveling come closer to

reality than in the make-believe world of George M. Cohan's Broadway.

- B.** Let's finish this lecture with Cohan's great tribute to the Great White Way, "Give My Regards to Broadway" (1906), sung by Billy Murray.

Suggested Reading:

Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*.

Stanley Green, *The World of Musical Comedy*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Give several reasons for the phenomenal popularity of the Harrigan and Hart musicals during the 1870s.
2. Discuss some of the many ways in which America's first hit musical, *The Black Crook*, was different from the musicals of the mid-20th century.

Lecture Eight

The Revue versus the Book Musical

Scope: In this lecture, we'll take a short interlude to look at the *revue*, a form of musical theater that makes no pretense at integrating the songs in a show with the plot. It may, however, integrate the songs into a theme—as in *A Night in Paris*; *Watch Your Step*, which focused on dance crazes; or *As Thousands Cheer*, which focused on newsworthy topics of the day. Indeed, the revue's flexible form allowed it to experiment with topics that would be unlikely to appear in a book musical. We'll also talk about some of the first revues on the Broadway stage, but the revue continues to be a vital part of American musical theater. Recent successful revues on Broadway have included *Mama Mia* (ABBA) and the Twyla Tharp/Billy Joel collaboration *Movin' Out*.

Outline

- I. We start by listening to “There’ll Be Some Changes Made,” written in 1923 and made a hit six years later when Ethel Waters sang it in a Cotton Club revue.
 - A. Since the 1920s, this song has been recorded more than 200 times and was featured by Broadway star Ann Reinking in the 1970s Bob Fosse film *All That Jazz*.
 - B. Before we move on, let’s listen to the lyrics of this song. They’re almost a credo of the 1920s newly emancipated woman.
- II. The play with songs—what we’ve called an *integrated* or *book musical*—has been with us since the American theater’s beginnings, but in this lecture, we take a brief look at the *revue*, a form of musical theater that makes no pretense at integrating the songs with a plot.
 - A. The word *revue* is, of course, French. In 19th-century Paris, the revue was originally a satirical entertainment of fashionable Parisian life that featured music, specialty acts, and pretty girls. The American revue shares with the book show one common element—the dramatic ascension toward a climactic moment.
 - B. A unified revue offers some of the assets of a book show without a book show’s corresponding liabilities. Without the constraints of

plot and character progression, the revue brings flexibility into the process of creating a show. If a song doesn't work in Act I, for example, it might be moved to Act II. It's far easier to save an ailing revue by revision than to do the same thing with an ailing book show.

III. Until the era of Rodgers and Hammerstein, the 1940s and 1950s, the revue was far more popular than the integrated musical, and many so-called musical theater productions were, in reality, revues. The contrived plots were totally subservient to the songs and dances.

- A.** The revues before Ziegfeld focused less on girls but were often as spectacular or even more spectacular than Ziegfeld's, particularly those presented at New York's Hippodrome Theatre.
1. When the Hippodrome opened in 1905, it was the world's largest theater, with 5,200 seats. It was built by Frederick Thompson and Elmer S. Dundy, the owners of Luna Park at Coney Island.
 2. The Hippodrome cost more than \$2 million to build. It stood 110 feet high in the rear and 72 feet high in the front. Two electric towers, rising 120 feet above the sidewalk, beamed lights across Manhattan.
 3. The Hippodrome stage held 600 people and 150 horses simultaneously. It was 200 feet wide and 100 feet deep. A system of cranes was used to handle the huge sets.
 4. The opening show in 1905 was entitled *A Yankee Circus on Mars*. Running 120 performances, admission was scaled from 25¢ to \$2.00. For the second show, the Hippodrome presented *A Society Circus* (1906), featuring one spectacular scene in which the cast formed a gargantuan bouquet of flowers.
- B.** Revues, in addition to presenting new songs, often restaged older songs for celebrated performers who might be associated with a particular song. Such was certainly the case with Sophie Tucker, who sang her theme song in vaudeville, in revues, and later, in films. The song we'll listen to was written for her in 1910 by the composer/lyricist Shelton Brooks, who later wrote the blues song "Easy Rider."
1. Brooks wrote that suggestive novelty in 1913 for Mae West, making it and W. C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues" the two earliest blues songs to become nationally popular.

2. The song Brooks wrote for Sophie Tucker in 1910 was again staged for Broadway in the 1976 show *Bubblin' Brown Sugar*. It was also staged for the screen by Bob Fosse, in 1979, for the film *All That Jazz*.
3. This song explores the contradictory feelings of a jilted lover, with no end rhymes and only two internal rhymes: *lonely* and *only* and *leave me* and *grieve me*.
4. The melody, most of which is in a minor key, has a brooding, almost cantorial sound at times. The song is "Some of These Days."

C. Shortly before World War I, the producer Charles B. Dillingham began staging spectacles at the Hippodrome. The roster of Dillingham's Hippodrome revues included escape artist Harry Houdini, ballerina Anna Pavlova, bandmaster John Philip Sousa, and many others. Dillingham's 1916 Hippodrome production *The Big Show* introduced the old standard "Poor Butterfly," sung by Haru Ohuki, a tiny Japanese prima donna; the song encapsulates the plot of *Madame Butterfly*.

IV. The Ziegfeld Follies was the most extravagant series of revues ever created. No expense was spared in creating revolving stages, eye-popping costumes, and magnificent special effects. As a result, despite the millions that were made in ticket sales, Ziegfeld appeared always to be deep in debt.

- A. Florenz Ziegfeld, Sr., Ziegfeld's father, was president of the Chicago Musical College and a respected member of Chicago society. His son, Flo (1869–1932), had since childhood attempted to make his mark on the world in ways that often embarrassed his dignified father.
- B. Ziegfeld worked his way up in show business through various publicity stunts that did little to earn his father's respect. In 1892, he brought to the Chicago World's Fair Eugene Sandow, a German strongman whom Ziegfeld claimed was the most perfectly proportioned male in the world. But the crowds did not come to see Sandow until Ziegfeld tricked a prominent socialite into feeling the strongman's bicep and having her photograph taken by Chicago newspapers.

- C. The Ziegfeld Follies was an annual event in New York City from 1907 until Ziegfeld's death in 1932. The show typically opened in June, ran through the summer, then went on tour, afterwards returning to New York to play at Ziegfeld's theater through the winter. The first show in 1907 was called *The Follies: Jardin de Paris* to ensure that audiences knew it was inspired by the Follies Bergere.
- D. The first edition of the Follies cost \$13,000, and Ziegfeld was paid \$200 a week to produce it. The backers were the Klaw and Erlanger vaudeville circuit. Anna Held, Ziegfeld's wife, was the star of the show. She was a Hungarian Jew, but Ziegfeld convinced his audiences that she was the essence of French beauty.
- E. In 1908, the budget of the second Follies was doubled because of the immense success of the first. For this one, Ziegfeld hired a young lady named Dora Goldberg to sing a song she and her husband, Jack Norworth, had written. The song was one of the top 10 songs of the first decade of the 20th century, and Dora Goldberg, under her new name, Nora Bayes, became the Barbra Streisand of her era, America's most popular singing star. We listen to "Shine on Harvest Moon."
- F. By 1911, the Follies had become so popular and Ziegfeld had made so much money that he decided to produce the next edition under the title of the "Ziegfeld Follies." For this edition, Jerome Kern and Irving Berlin were commissioned to write songs, and Fanny Brice sang the Berlin songs. Bert Williams sang his own songs and, almost instantly, became one of America's top comedians. Within three years, the Follies had become the number-one ticket on Broadway.
- V. The revue was certainly not Ziegfeld's invention, but he perfected it. He was a master of spectacle, and to appear in one of his shows was to become a major theatrical star.
 - A. The *Ziegfeld Follies of 1919* included names that are still recognized today: Will Rogers, W. C. Fields, Bert Williams, Fanny Brice, and Eddie Cantor.
 - B. In his shows, Ziegfeld said that he was "glorifying the American girl." One of his most startling scenes consisted of a three-story-

high wedding cake that rose out of the floor, slowly revolving to reveal a tenor, singing Berlin's "A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody," and beautiful girls perched in niches on the cake.

- C. The Follies so dominated the 1920s that producers competed with Ziegfeld up and down the Great White Way. During that decade, more than 100 miscellaneous revues in the Ziegfeld vein appeared.

VI. Beyond all this, for the first time on Broadway, original revues by African-American songwriters and performers appeared in large number. This was, after all, the time of the Harlem Renaissance. Prosperity had extended into Harlem, and now, Harlem was coming to Broadway.

- A. One of the great black reviews, *Runnin' Wild*, appeared on Broadway in 1923 [sic], with songs by an African-American jazz pianist that Gershwin idolized—James P. Johnson, the teacher and mentor of a younger pianist named Fats Waller. For *Runnin' Wild*, Johnson wrote the anthem of the 1920s, "Charleston."
- B. During this same period, Eubie Blake wrote *Shuffle Along*. Also staged were *Dixie to Broadway*, the Plantation revues, and innumerable Cotton Club revues, backed by young Duke Ellington's orchestra and featuring songs by the 26-year-old intermission pianist Harold Arlen. Arlen's songs included "Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," "I've Got the World on a String," and for Ethel Waters, "Stormy Weather."
- C. The three Blackbirds revues of 1926, 1927, and 1928 featured Fats Waller songs, such as "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "Honeysuckle Rose." The 28-year-old Louis Armstrong performed in the Hot Chocolates revue. Song titles included "African Strut," "Strut Miss Lizzie," "Hot Rhythm," "Blackberries," and "Put and Take." Though these may seem condescending to us, the shows brought great African-American talent to the Broadway stage as never before in history.
- D. The stars whose careers were made in these revues included Bojangles Robinson, Ethel Waters, Adelaide Hall, Florence Mills, Cab Calloway, and John Bubbles, who starred on Broadway as Sportin' Life in the 1935 production of George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*.

- E. Ziegfeld himself had paved the way for this development by hiring the comedian Bert Williams, who quickly rose to top billing in the Follies.

VII. Each year, Ziegfeld felt a need to outdo what he'd done the previous year.

- A. In 1913, the Ziegfeld Follies was to move into its permanent home at the New Amsterdam Theatre on 42nd Street.
- B. The hit song of the show that year, "Peg O' My Heart," was written by Fred Fischer, with lyrics by Alfred Bryan, inspired by the actress Laurette Taylor, and featured in a show with the same title.

VIII. The Ziegfeld years, indeed, all the years before Rodgers and Hammerstein, were an age of songs—many of them good enough to remain standards today.

- A. Not having the constraints of a book show, in which a song had to spring from a situation, the writers were able to focus on songs as independent creations; the result was memorable songs.
- B. From the Ziegfeld shows alone, we have, among many others: "Shine on Harvest Moon," "A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody," "By the Light of the Silvery Moon," "Oh! How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning," and "Rose of Washington Square." We listen to a bit of this last song, which was sung by Fannie Brice in the *1920 Ziegfeld Follies*.

IX. The Greenwich Village Follies, an off-Broadway revue series, was to Ziegfeld's Follies what the Fantasticks are to the Radio City Rockettes.

- A. In Greenwich Village, the tiny theater and tinier budgets made for the opposite of pretentiousness. Ultimately, however, the Greenwich Village Follies became so successful that the show had to move to Broadway to accommodate the crowds, which eliminated some of its intimacy.
- B. During the decades immediately before and after World War I, Greenwich Village was New York's Left Bank. A pot of early off-Broadway theatrical fare simmered in Greenwich Village long before World War I in what were then called *little theaters*.
- C. After a dozen editions of the Ziegfeld Follies had created the template, producer John Murray Anderson got the idea of doing

something similar in the Village but stressing simplicity, imagination, and taste.

1. The Village itself was the topic of the Greenwich Village Follies, which covered such subjects as ukuleles, bathtub gin, and open talk about sex.
2. The band for the first Greenwich Village Follies was conducted by Ted Lewis. We hear a recording of “When My Baby Smiles at Me” (1920), written and performed by Lewis.
3. Among the regular fixtures in the Greenwich Village Follies were modern dancer Ruth St. Dennis and her partner, Ted Shawn, as well as Martha Graham. Another great Greenwich Village innovator was Jack Cole, who is remembered as the Bob Fosse of the 1920s through the 1940s.
4. The Greenwich Village Follies were, artistically, much more avant garde and experimental than the mainstream Follies on Broadway. Erté, the French art nouveau artist, for example, was impressed enough by the Greenwich Village Follies to offer his costume designs to John Murray Anderson.
5. Long before Lily Tomlin or Tracey Ullman, Margaret Severn created a huge roster of bizarre characters by wearing more than a dozen different Benda masks. And Aubrey Beardsley’s erotic designs in black and silver lent a dream-like atmosphere to certain scenes.
6. Just as Haight Ashbury became “hip” America in the 1970s, the Village became “modern” America in the 1920s. Yet most of the songs were a little old-fashioned. The most popular song to come out of the Greenwich Village Follies was “Three O’Clock in the Morning,” which became the sign-off tune for dance parties all over the world during the 1920s.

X. In our next lecture, we’ll move back to a more chronological history, looking at musical theater from 1909 to 1915.

Suggested Reading:

Kurt Gänzl, *The Musical: A Concise History*.

Richard and Paulette Ziegfeld, *The Ziegfeld Touch: The Life and Times of Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.*

Questions to Consider:

1. What advantages does the revue have over the book musical?
2. How was America's love of spectacle demonstrated in the Broadway revues of this period?

Lecture Nine

Superstars on the Horizon

Scope: The period from 1909–1915 was a particularly active time in musical theater, but it was not dominated by a single figure, as the period of 1900–1908 had been dominated by George M. Cohan or as the 1940s would be dominated by Rodgers and Hammerstein. These early years were the incubation period for songwriters who, in the following decade or two, were to become giants of the musical theater. Young Jerome Kern was writing interpolations for British and American musicals. Still in the process of acquiring his style, Kern wrote only one song during this period that shows the promise of things to come: “They Didn’t Believe Me.” Young Irving Berlin was also writing his first hit songs, among them “Alexander’s Ragtime Band.” But the profoundly tender waltzes, such as “All Alone by the Telephone” and “What’ll I Do?” were still a decade away. In this lecture, we’ll look at a few examples of the remarkable number of shows from this period, and we’ll examine the careers of some of its well-known performers and songwriters, including Al Jolson and Cole Porter, along with Kern.

Outline

- I. We begin with Chris Smith’s “Ballin’ the Jack” from the 1914 Broadway musical *The Girl from Utah*, the same show that introduced Jerome Kern’s “They Didn’t Believe Me.” This was one of the more successful musicals of the period we’ll be discussing in this lecture.
- II. In 1909, Nora Bayes returned to the Ziegfeld Follies, singing her trademark, “Shine on Harvest Moon.” Eve Tanguay also sang the song that had made her famous—“I Don’t Care.”
 - A. In the second act of the 1909 Follies, with Lillian Lorraine at the controls, a life-sized airplane actually flew off the stage and over the heads of the audience.
 - B. The show’s most memorable production number involved the suggestion that each state should present a battleship to the nation’s fleet. In this number, each chorus girl was dressed to

represent a state, with a huge hat on her head designed to look like a different battleship.

III. During this period, there were more than twice as many theaters in New York City than there are today. And because shows had far shorter runs than they do today, a period such as 1909–1915 covered a large number of musicals. In this lecture, we'll select a few examples to represent the period.

- A.** On July 18, 1910, *Up and Down Broadway*, one of the biggest hits of the season, premiered at the Casino Theatre.
 - 1.** The plot revolved around the Greek gods arriving in New York City and vowing to reform theatrical taste. The gods' janitor, Momus, tags along for laughs. In the end, the gods conclude that Broadway knows more about good entertainment than they do.
 - 2.** Eddie Foy, as Momus, led a cast that included Irving Berlin singing his song "Sweet Italian Love." Most of the score, however, was written by Jean Schwartz. One of Schwartz's songs, sung by a police officer in a Chinese neighborhood, became one of the top 10 songs of 1910. We hear "Chinatown, My Chinatown."
- B.** One of the most popular shows of 1910, starring Nora Bayes, was *The Jolly Bachelors*. Much of the score was written by Bayes with her husband, Jack Norworth.
 - 1.** Bayes played Miss Vandergould, a fabulously wealthy heiress who takes a job as a cashier in a drugstore. There, she hopes to find romance among the less effete men of the middle class. When she mistakenly gives a customer the wrong medicine, she and her beau scour the city to retrieve it.
 - 2.** Their search takes them to a college campus, where Norworth leads a chorus of students in a medley of college songs. The production included a life-sized ocean liner and an airship sailing through the clouds. The popularity of this show obviously came less from the story than from the spectacular props and scenery.
 - 3.** The score of *The Jolly Bachelors* included one song, by C. W. Murphy and Will Letters, that became Bayes's third biggest hit recording. We listen to it now: "Has Anybody Here Seen Kelly?"

- C. Joe Howard, in the 1909 show *The Prince of Tonight*, introduced another immensely popular song. The show's program gave Howard credit for writing "I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now," but the song was actually written by Howard's shy piano accompanist, Harold Orlob. Orlob didn't receive credit for the song until almost the end of his life. We listen to it now.
 - D. Before 1910, African-American comedian, songwriter, and singer Bert Williams had resisted Flo Ziegfeld's entreaties to join the Follies. However, when Williams's partner became ill, he no longer felt restrained from appearing as a solo act. He joined the Follies in 1910, along with the legendary Fannie Brice.
- IV. The year 1911 saw Al Jolson starring in musical theater on Broadway for the first time. The show, which appeared at the Winter Garden, was called *La Belle Paree* (Schubert's answer to Ziegfeld's French Follies).
- A. The Winter Garden, a spacious house with 1,600 seats, had been built by the Schuberts. With a disproportionately large number of its 1,600 seats on the orchestra level, the house was assured a handsome gross when it was filled to capacity, which it always was when Jolson played there. Jolson did so well for the Schuberts that they continued to produce his shows for the next 15 years.
 - B. The year after *La Belle Paree*, the Winter Garden produced *Hollywood Express*, in which Jolson introduced one of the most popular standards of the 20th century, "You Made Me Love You."
 - C. Jolson (1886–1950) was born in the Russian *shtetl* of Srednike, but he moved with his family to America at the age of 8. America's most popular star during the earlier part of his career, Jolson almost single-handedly held back the evolution of American musical theater.
 - 1. A Cohan show, although it was centered around the star, was still a show—with a plot, characters, and songs that had some relationship to the plot. But a Jolson show was just that—a Jolson show. His audiences loved his take-charge stage persona, but his co-workers were not so enamored of his methods.
 - 2. George Burns, a contemporary and a friend of Jolson's, talked about Jolson in his book, *All My Best Friends*. According to Burns, Jolson would sometimes stop the show, walk to the

footlights, tell the audience the ending of the show, then ask, “Now, you wanna see that or you wanna hear Jolson sing?”

- D. Why were people so taken with Jolson’s singing? Primarily because they’d never heard anything like it before.
1. Jolson, along with Crosby and Sinatra, is one of the three great innovators of popular singing in the first half of the 20th century. Singers before Jolson sang the song the way it was written and enunciated with the clarity of robots.
 2. Jolson brought to singing spontaneity and an approach closer to jazz. He would change the melodies, repeat phrases or words for emphasis or to create excitement, and insert slang words when he thought they’d pack more power.
 3. Though it may be hard to believe today, Jolson was, in the teens, what Elvis was to the 1950s. His unique style made early-20th-century musical theater more intimate, personal, and intense.
- E. Jolson wrote an autobiographical article in April 1919 for the *American Magazine* (provided by the International Al Jolson Society), painting a picture of the uniqueness of the theater of his day.
1. The performers, not only in vaudeville but also in musical theater, were improvisational, injecting personal references into the scripts, which made the audiences come back again and again because they knew the show was never going to be precisely the same twice.
 2. Further, though the plot of the show may have remained unchanged, many of the lines, unrelated to the plot, were simply there to give the actors something funny to say. In other words, what there was of a plot was continually interrupted with jokes.
- V. The 1912 season opened with an Eddie Foy romp called *Over the River* at the Globe Theatre.
- A. The show was based on a straight play of 1897 called *The Man from Mexico*. The plot concerned the problems of a man who must serve time in jail. Too ashamed to confess the truth to his wife, he pretends he is going on a trip to Mexico. After he has vanished, his wife’s travels, by highly unlikely coincidence, lead her to his jail cell.

- B. Most of the songs in *Over the River* were composed by Jean Schwartz, who later wrote the Jolson hit “Rock-a-Bye Your Baby with a Dixie Melody.” The show featured all the latest dance crazes and may have inspired Irving Berlin’s show of 1914, another dance-focused musical, *Watch Your Step*, starring Vernon and Irene Castle.
- C. To perform dances the Castles had first introduced, including the tango, the producers of *Over the River* hired the Marvelous Millers. There was some ragtime dancing, including the turkey trot and the grizzly bear, and composer Jean Schwartz took to the piano to accompany Lillian Lorraine and the chorus in his “Chopsticks Rag.”

VI. To compete with the Follies, the Schuberts produced *The Passing Show of 1912*.

- A. They hired a line of beautiful girls, putting them in attractive, sometimes provocative, costumes. They created an ocean liner set, a harem scene, and an elaborate ragtime wedding scene. The comedy in *The Passing Show of 1912* came from burlesquing other shows that were on Broadway that year.
- B. During this same period, Victor Herbert (1859–1924) was very active, composing both *Naughty Marietta* and *Sweethearts* (1913).
 - 1. Though we don’t focus on operettas, we should at least hear from Herbert, whose *Babes in Toyland* has been revived every Christmas season for the past 100 years.
 - 2. We listen to a little bit of a pre-1920s instrumental by Herbert that was later made into a popular song and one of the Glenn Miller Band’s biggest hits, “Indian Summer.” Our recording features Ed Goldstein and company re-creating the piece.
- C. In December 1914, The New Amsterdam Theatre premiered Irving Berlin’s first Broadway musical, *Watch Your Step*, starring Vernon and Irene Castle. From *Watch Your Step*, we hear “When I Discovered You,” which may have inspired a later George Gershwin song.
 - 1. *Watch Your Step* was destined to be Vernon and Irene Castle’s first and final Broadway musical. When World War I began in Europe, Vernon joined the RAF and was later killed when his plane crashed. Irene went on to a successful career in silent films.

2. Interestingly, the plot of *Watch Your Step* mysteriously vanished during the second act.
 - a. Classic Broadway shows have both plots and subplots; this allows for several kinds of conflict and doesn't restrict the important musical numbers to the leads. In the end, the subplot, skillfully employed, makes for a far more interesting musical.
 - b. In 1914, however, and all the years before the integrated musical, there was often no subplot, and variety was created by somewhat clumsy means. *Watch Your Step* is a good example.
 - c. The plot had to do with a will leaving \$2 million to anyone who had never been in love, but by the second act, the story was forgotten and the evening was turned into a facsimile of a 5th Avenue nightclub floor show.

VII. The next year, 1915, was the year a young man, destined to become one of America's greatest songwriters, mounted his first Broadway show. The young man was a recent graduate of Yale named Cole Porter (1891–1964), and the show was called *See America First*.

- A. Intended to be a spoof on the flag-waving musicals of Cohan, the show's story concerns an American senator who leaves the effete East so that his daughter can find a red-blooded he-man in the Wild West.
- B. By a coincidence, she meets a British duke thinly disguised as a cowboy. Once she discovers the subterfuge, she wants nothing more to do with the duke. But at the final curtain, after the cowboy-duke saves the whole cast from murderous bandits, the lovers reunite and win her parents' approval. "I've a Shooting Box in Scotland" was the only song singled out by critics as anything better than atrocious.
- C. Interestingly, fishing among the Yale archives turned up a song written in 1912 for one of Porter's college shows. Porter's "Longing for Dear Old Broadway," obviously influenced by Cohan, even begins with the same rhythm as "Give My Regards to Broadway." We hear this song, orchestrated by Jari Villanueva and sung by Bob Robinson.

VIII. Jerome Kern would do his second Princess Theatre show in 1915, by far his best work to date, and though the show contained no lasting

standards, Kern's music and Guy Bolton's lyrics were a step closer to the ideal integrated score Kern would later create for 1927's *Show Boat*.

- A. The plot of this show, *Very Good Eddie*, revolved around everyday people and was nearly believable. In the musical, the Hudson River Day Lines' *Catskill* stops for 15 minutes at Poughkeepsie. Dick Rivers (played by Oscar Shaw) comes aboard. Much of the action takes place among the ship's passengers, including a pair of newlyweds.
- B. The characters in *Very Good Eddie* were not cartoon clowns or cardboard heroes. Its situations were relatively plausible. Its songs, while not able to stand up without the supporting situations, were nonetheless serviceable and promised better things to come.
- C. The Princess shows were a wonderful way for Kern to hone his skills. The budget for a show at the tiny 299-seat theater was under \$8,000. The weekly costs were less than the weekly salary of one star at the larger theaters.
- D. The limitations of the theater were a challenge to Kern. His solutions resulted in intimate productions.
 - 1. The Princess Theatre stage wasn't large enough for a conventional chorus, so ensemble quartets and sextets were used.
 - 2. The orchestra itself was unlike anything previously heard in a show that filled a theater to capacity. Frank Sadler, who wrote Kern's orchestrations, arranged the music so that it needed no more than 11 musicians.
 - 3. Instead of making the show seem like a cheapskate production, these factors created a degree of intimacy, subtlety, and sophistication that was quite new to Broadway. At the show's end, people felt as if they had been privileged to attend an exclusive, private soiree.

IX. During the period 1909 to 1915, something new was on the artistic horizon.

- A. Harriet Monroe founded *Poetry Magazine* in 1912, making household names of such poets as Robert Frost and T. S. Eliot. In 1914, Edgar Lee Masters published *Spoon River Anthology*, the first collection of poems to become a bestseller. The visual arts were undergoing an explosion of modernism as well.

- B. Ragtime was still in vogue and so were the blues, first made popular in 1914 with the publication of Handy's "St. Louis Blues." The old order on Broadway with its musical roots in Europe was giving way to the newer sounds indigenous to America. The excitement of blue notes and syncopated rhythms was—at that point—the sound of modernism.
- C. The years 1909–1915 were a time of trial and error and a period of gestation for musical talents that were to triumph in the following decades.

Suggested Reading:

Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*.

Stanley Green, *The World of Musical Comedy*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Discuss Jolson's view that the musical theater of this period was both more intimate and more improvisational. Do you see the loss of these qualities in musical theater as positive or negative?
2. What limitations and advantages does a small theater present for composers and producers?

Lecture Ten

Transition into the Jazz Age (1916–20)

Scope: To some extent, every period of time represents a breakaway from the period that preceded it, but the years from 1916 to 1920 represent a particularly dramatic breakaway—in clothing styles, in acceptable public behavior, in language, in visual arts, and in the kind of music Americans created and listened to. America, for the first time, made the blues mainstream by turning W. C. Handy's song of 1914, "St. Louis Blues," into a standard over the next few years. Albert Einstein's 1915 publication of his general theory of relativity reformed the educated man's sense of space and time and created a rationale for artistic, social, and moral relativity. The dream world of surrealism allowed the artist to create worlds that defied the logic of everyday life but provoked the viewer into examining his or her inner life. In 1920, prohibition became law, but a few months later, another prohibition was lifted: The 19th Amendment allowed women to vote and, consequently, to possess a new power.

We might tend to ascribe these changes to World War I, but to some extent, the changes were already occurring, and the war, of course, accelerated them. Women shed pounds of clothing and cut their hair in the flapper bob. The new clothing styles, frenetic dances, and informal language appeared shortly after the war was over, as did the jazz- and blues-inspired songs that became the basis for George Gershwin's compositional technique a few years later. As the end of the Vietnam War did, the end of World War I gave us an excuse to kick up our heels and rebel against the past.

Outline

- I. On the musical stage, particularly in vaudeville and in the revue, songs of suffrage, both pro and con, were sung in the period 1916–1920. There were several parodies of the old song "Everybody Works but Father" with the gender changed because mother was busy on the picket lines.
 - A. At the same time, Hollywood began to challenge the musical theater stage for America's attention. Mary Pickford and Pearl

White, both silent film stars, each had vaudeville songs written about them. These two celebrities represented the pre-feminist and post-feminist ideals.

1. Biographer Lester Levy called Pickford “a beautiful girl with golden ringlets, a captivating smile, and innocent blue eyes.” She was born Gladys Smith in 1893 in Toronto, Canada, and she came to Hollywood in the days when Los Angeles was mostly adobe haciendas, sand, and sagebrush.
 2. In 1917, the magazine *Ladies World* conducted a popularity contest, in which Pickford received 1,147,000 votes, a half million more than her closest competitor. Several years later, Sid Grauman, the owner of Grauman’s Chinese Theatre, gave her the title by which she is remembered today, “America’s Sweetheart.”
 3. One of Richard Whiting’s first songs was called “Mary Pickford—The Darling of Them All.” It became a favorite on the vaudeville stage.
- B.** In contrast, Pearl White’s *Perils of Pauline* films were rugged adventures, and she found her own solutions to problems, rather than waiting to be rescued. Regardless of the danger, Pearl White insisted on doing her own stunts.
1. In April 1916, in New York City, White hung from the roof of a building on Seventh Avenue, and at a height of several hundred feet, using a gas torch, she burned her initials in large letters on the wall, a stunt that made front-page headlines.
 2. Immediately after the United States entered World War I, White was lashed to a steel cable being used in the construction of a 20-story building and hauled to the top, throwing down American flags and recruiting circulars during her upward journey. When she was lowered to the ground, she led dozens of young men to an Army recruiting station, where they immediately enlisted.
 3. White became fabulously wealthy, her income, at its peak, reaching \$10,000 a week, which she spent lavishly. Sadly, she died alone, addicted to gambling and still given to sudden, compulsive adventures.
 4. The song “Poor Pauline!” was inspired by her adventure films and was one of the popular songs of the stage during the years immediately before the war.

- II.** After World War I, jazz had people dancing and singing their way down the road to perdition. Let's take a look at some of the shows of the period from 1916 to 1920.
- A.** Churning out a new Princess Theatre show as often as every six months, Jerome Kern was honing his craft and, at times, showed glimmers of his greatness yet to come. The Princess was a small theater, and the show's budgets were even smaller; though they generally had short runs, nearly all of Kern's shows made a profit.
- 1.** *Oh Boy!* was Kern's longest running show before 1920. Premiering at the Princess on February 20, 1917, it ran for 463 performances. Its lyrics were by P. G. Wodehouse and its book was a collaboration between Wodehouse and Guy Bolton.
 - 2.** One lasting song came from the show, "Till the Clouds Roll By." We hear a rare 1917 recording of the song by Anne Wheaton.
- B.** The *Ziegfeld Follies of 1918* included Marilyn Miller, Eddie Cantor, W. C. Fields, and Will Rogers, among others. This year and the next represent the high points of the Follies.
- 1.** The first act of the 1918 Follies focused on World War I in most of its sketches, production numbers, and songs. The second act showed women on the home front performing jobs usually done by men. In order not to rankle the audience, who were looking at a stage full of what appeared to be "able-bodied" men, a note in the program stated, "All members of the male chorus were rejected for military service."
 - 2.** For these Follies, Ziegfeld hired bandleader Art Hickman, who wrote an instrumental for the show called "Rose Room," which we listen to. During the big band era, the song became a staple, recorded by Ellington, Lunceford, Artie Shaw, and Benny Goodman, among others.
 - 3.** Few recorded examples exist from the 1918 Follies, but we'll listen to Eddie Cantor singing a song he recorded from the Follies the year before, "That's the Kind of Baby for Me."
- III.** Eddie Cantor (1892–1964) was one of America's most popular comedian singers and one of Ziegfeld's highest paid stars. In the years after World War I, he became a household name.

- A. At around 14, Cantor landed his first job on Broadway with a vaudeville juggling act called Bedini and Arthur. He was originally hired to run errands and to press the jugglers' costumes. Later, after drawing a laugh from the audience during a walk-on, he was billed as part of the act.
- B. It was in this show that Gus Edwards saw Cantor and offered him \$75 a week to star in his *Kid Kabaret* vaudeville act. In 1916, after appearing in *Kid Kabaret*, Cantor was discovered by Ziegfeld, who made him into a Broadway star. Cantor later starred in *Whoopee*, the biggest show of 1928, in which he introduced the great standard "Makin' Whoopee."

IV. The war was in full swing, and the Harlem Renaissance was also starting to take shape.

- A. The Army had promised to open a special officer training school if 200 college-educated African-Americans enlisted; 1,500 did so, including James Reese Europe, who had been Vernon and Irene Castle's band leader and music director. Europe organized an orchestra of African-Americans that played close to the fighting lines in a regiment called the Hell Fighters.
- B. By the end of World War I, the Harlem area of New York had become the largest urban black community in the world.
 - 1. The crowded streets of Harlem were alive with different kinds of music and speech. Poets, such as Langston Hughes and Contee Cullen; musicians, including Duke Ellington and Eubie Blake; authors; and actors flocked to Harlem.
 - 2. In the 1930s, new dances, invented in Harlem, swept the nation, including the Jitterbug and the Lindy Hop. After World War I, Harlem's Savoy Ballroom became the home of the earliest big band jazz. By 1927, young Duke Ellington led his band at Harlem's world-famous Cotton Club.
 - 3. In 1917, a Chicagoan named Shelton Brooks wrote music and lyrics to a hit song that would soon bring him to Harlem. The "Darktown Strutters' Ball" was introduced in vaudeville by the white vocal trio of Benny Fields, Jack Salisbury, and Benny Davis, and its catchy tune was immediately recorded by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. We listen to the song now.

- C. During the early 1920s, Spencer Williams brought his Harlem cabaret to Paris with his latest discovery, a teenaged dancer named Josephine Baker. In Paris, in *Charleston Cabaret*, Baker danced wearing only a strategically placed flamingo feather. The opening-night audience went crazy. Baker had shocked the unshockable city. From that point until her death in 1975, Baker was a Parisian and a legendary performer.
- V. The *Greenwich Village Follies of 1919*, produced by John Murray Anderson, opened at the Greenwich Village Theatre on July 15, 1919, running for 232 performances and threatening Flo Ziegfeld's supremacy in the production of lavish revues.
- A. The show was so successful that the small Greenwich Village Theatre couldn't accommodate the crowds. After six weeks, the show was moved uptown to the larger Nora Bayes Theatre on 44th Street, close enough to Ziegfeld's Winter Garden to further rankle Ziegfeld.
 - B. The show, which called itself a revusical comedy of New York's Latin Quarter, took satirical aim at all the topics that were destined to dominate the 1920s—free love, prohibition, and modern art, among others. Its distinguishing characteristic was the use of female impersonators.
 - C. The year 1919 also gave the world Cole Porter's first hit song, which was absolutely abominable but popular nonetheless! It appeared in *Hitchy-Koo of 1919*, produced by Raymond Hitchcock. We listen to the song of the same name.
- VI. Though the ubiquitous Cinderella stories of the 1920s seemed as if they'd been around forever, they began, as a popular musical theater genre, in 1919, with the longest running show of that year, *Irene*, with music by Harry Tierney and lyrics by Joseph McCarthy.
- A. *Irene* ran at the Vanderbilt Theatre for 670 performances, and its record wasn't broken until 1937's *Pins and Needles*. *Irene* had a fairly believable plot, told about fairly believable people who sang songs that weren't forced into the story but appeared, on the whole, at places where songs might further the story.
 - B. Irene O'Dare, a poor shop girl from a Lower East Side tenement, is sent on an errand to the Marshalls' elegant estate. The critics loved the set that depicted the fire escape outside the O'Dares' flat.

The scene (though not the action) is nearly identical to the balcony scene in *West Side Story*. The Marshalls' son falls in love with Irene and attempts to palm her off on his parents as a debutante.

- C. The hit of the show, sung in the first act by Irene, was one of the most popular waltzes of the 20th century. The original Irene, Edith Day, had to leave the cast after the first five months to head the London cast. She was succeeded in the New York run by a series of Irenes that included a real Irene—Irene Dunne, who was at the beginning of her career. We listen to this hit, “Alice Blue Gown.”

VII. In 1920, Jerome Kern graduated from the tiny Princess Theatre shows to the spacious New Amsterdam Theatre in a show produced by Flo Ziegfeld, *Sally*. The hit of the show, “Look for the Silver Lining,” remains one of Kern’s greatest songs.

- A. We’ll hear a recording of this song in our next lecture when we take a closer look at two Broadway greats, Irving Berlin and Jerome Kern, but we’ll listen to just a little of the melody here.
- B. In *Sally*, Sally Green first appears as a dishwashing drudge at the Alley Inn in Greenwich Village, dreaming of a better future. The song she sings, “Look for the Silver Lining,” is also sung by Judy Garland in MGM’s film biography of Jerome Kern, *Till the Clouds Roll By*.
- C. Sally is invited by one of the Alley Inn’s waiters (played by Leon Errol), who is really the exiled Duke of Cheshogovina, to an elegant uptown ball. Sally goes, pretending to be a celebrated ballerina, Mme. Nookerova. Her true identity is discovered, but in the end, she not only wins the wealthy young tenor but is also signed for the Ziegfeld Follies, where she dances an interpolated “Butterfly Ballet” by Victor Herbert.
- D. At 570 performances, *Sally* was the third longest-running musical of the 1920s, coming in close behind number two, Kern’s *Show Boat*, and number one, Romberg’s operetta of 1924, *The Student Prince*. *Sally* is the first all-Kern show to display consistently that Schubertian lyricism so evident in later Kern songs, such as “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes,” “Yesterdays,” and “The Way You Look Tonight.”

VIII. Finally, we take a look at the George White Scandals of 1919 and 1920. The name alone is a sign of the times to come. Before the war,

scandals were to be avoided; after the war, they were to be indulged in and enjoyed.

- A. White, who began as a dancer in the Ziegfeld Follies, produced shows that contained well-crafted songs and lively, athletic dances. White's name was not in the title of the first Scandals in 1919, but after the immense success of that first revue, the series became known, from 1920 onward, as the George White Scandals.
- B. White (1890–1968), born George Weitz on the Lower East Side, worked his way from being a Bowery saloon hooper to a solo spot in the Ziegfeld Follies. With Ann Pennington, he choreographed the first edition of the Scandals. Though there was more dancing in the first Scandals than in the Follies, the formula was similar. A stage filled with beautiful girls, beautifully attired, made the Scandals the “must-see” show of Broadway.

IX. A new age was firmly established in 1920. The war was over; the ragtime era was over; the prewar formality and elegance were gone. New ideas and new forms of behavior were coming to be accepted. And a new young composer named George Gershwin was about to give jazz new, and apparently permanent, respect.

- A. The country's postwar prosperity gave it a new optimism, tempered by a light-hearted cynicism. During the 1920s, young men and women would turn their backs on “Alice Blue Gown” and dance the Charleston to “Runnin’ Wild” and “Yes Sir, That’s My Baby.”
- B. I think it would be appropriate to end this lesson with a hit song from the 1918 Broadway musical *Ladies First*. The show ran through 1919, and on January 29, 1919, the secretary of state announced that prohibition would be the law of the land. Broadway's reaction was a rash of interpolated songs about prohibition.
 - 1. First, we listen to “Jada,” a popular World War I song that was converted into a prohibition parody.
 - 2. From *Ladies First*, we hear “Prohibition Blues,” sung by Nora Bayes and written by Bayes and the humorist Ring Lardner. The popularity of this interpolation outlasted the show.

Suggested Reading:

Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*.

Stanley Green, *The World of Musical Comedy*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What changes in the arts occurred during this period that might be called harbingers of the modernist 1920s?
2. Discuss the relationships between the new music called *jazz* and the Harlem Renaissance that was on the horizon.

Lecture Eleven

Irving Berlin and Jerome Kern—Contrasts

Scope: Up to this point, we've thrown out, periodically, the names of some icons of the American musical theater scene—Rodgers and Hammerstein, George Gershwin, Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim—people who really need no introduction. Two towering icons who've been quite active in our last several lectures also require no introduction, but they make for such an interesting contrast—and have made such a lasting impression—that I think they deserve a more intense focus. In this lecture, we'll learn more about the lives and the music of Irving Berlin and Jerome Kern.

Outline

- I. We start with a little bit of a 1915 Billy Murray recording of one of Irving Berlin's earliest hits, "I Love a Piano."
 - A. Irving Berlin and Jerome Kern each produced one masterwork for the musical theater. In Berlin's case, the work is *Annie Get Your Gun*; in Kern's, *Show Boat*.
 - B. At the same time each composer is diametrically opposite in almost any way we might compare—in musical background, in early environment, in their relationship to their parents, in the way they treated the people around them, and in their general temperaments.
- II. We begin with Irving Berlin (1888–1989).
 - A. Berlin's childhood was far from privileged. Born in a Russian *shtetl*, he was the youngest of six children. In America, all six children, two parents, and a distant relative lived in three windowless rooms on Cherry Street near the East River. When Irving was 8, his father died, and he left school to help support the family.
 - B. The Lower East Side, at the turn of the 20th century, was so exciting to a small boy that poverty might have seemed like a minor inconvenience. People of every race and nationality crowded by the hundreds into every block, and live singing,

dancing, and comedy waited at the neighborhood vaudeville house for a nickel's admission.

- C. Like all real craftsmen, Berlin created his timeless songs by paying careful attention to small details. For example, there is a vast difference between starting a song with "Heaven! I'm in heaven," as Berlin did in "Cheek to Cheek," rather than just "I'm in heaven."
- D. Around 1910, after writing a few modestly successful songs, Berlin bought a unique piano.
 - 1. He had learned to play the piano by ear, in the key of F#, on the black keys. In his mind, he heard his songs modulating (moving from key to key), but he couldn't play those key changes because his fingers were stuck in F# major.
 - 2. The new piano had a lever with 12 notches under the keyboard. If Berlin moved the lever one notch to the right, the entire keyboard moved up to the next string. Though Berlin's fingers remained in F#, his tunes could now wander from key to key.
- E. In 1911, Berlin wrote "Alexander's Ragtime Band," which was so popular that he was summoned to London to perform the song for the king and queen of England. We hear this hit, performed by vaudevillian and bandleader Ted Lewis.
- F. Having finally achieved security, Berlin set a wedding date with his fiancée, Dorothy Goetz. For the honeymoon, he bought two steamship tickets to Havana, not knowing that Cuba was experiencing outbreaks of typhoid fever. A few months after the newlyweds returned to New York, Dorothy Berlin died of the disease. Berlin blamed himself and went into a depression that didn't lift completely until more than 10 years later when he met Ellin Mackay.
- G. At the same time, Berlin's songwriting style underwent a dramatic transformation. All his earlier songs are light, most of them broadly comic. But after Dorothy's death, he wrote: "I lost the sunshine and roses. I lost the sky of blue. I lost the gladness that turned into sadness... When I lost you."

III. Berlin's first Broadway musical was written in 1914 for America's most popular dance team, Vernon and Irene Castle.

- A. Berlin united the modern and the antique by having two characters in the show, Algy and Ernesta, sing two songs at once. Nearly 40 years later, the duet became a number-one hit for Bing and Gary Crosby. We hear Sara Achor and Doug Jimmerson singing “Simple Melody.”
- B. The year after World War I ended, Ziegfeld commissioned Berlin to write a theme song to be used for every subsequent edition of the Follies. We hear tenor John Steel singing “A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody” exactly as he sang it in the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1919*.
 - 1. The chord changes in this song are fairly complicated and would have required Berlin to make good use of his transposing piano.
 - 2. It’s hard to believe that Berlin wrote both his melodies and his harmonies when he played everything by ear in the key of F#. But according to Sid Lippman, Berlin’s arranger, he did indeed play the harmonies, which were then recorded by Sid.
- C. Two years after the war and 10 years after his wife’s death, Berlin, with a dark cloud over his head, wrote “All By Myself.” That feeling of isolation dissipated when he finally met his second wife-to-be, Ellin Mackay. But, first, the two of them had to overcome a few obstacles, the most formidable of which was Ellin’s fabulously wealthy father, Clarence Mackay, who tried desperately to keep the couple apart.
- D. As a wedding present to Ellin, Berlin wrote “Always.” The song declares his love for her—at least the chorus does—but the verse is more introspective—it’s a look at the years of crippling depression Berlin lived through before Ellin Mackay came into his life.

IV. After 15 years of Hollywood scores and a tremendously successful World War II musical called *This Is the Army*, Berlin wrote his masterwork for musical theater, *Annie Get Your Gun*.

- A. The strength of this show (aside from Berlin’s brilliant score) is its main character. It’s a Cinderella story, like *Irene*, *Sally*, and *My Fair Lady*, but Annie Oakley is even earthier than Eliza Doolittle, not only at the beginning of the show but also at the end. She’s not a woman driven to imitate the manners and speech of her social superiors; she’s a woman determined to be herself in the face of fame, fortune, and adulation.

- B. Berlin's *Annie Get Your Gun* racked up 1,147 performances in its initial run at the Imperial Theatre, making it the third longest-running show of the decade.
- C. Interestingly, the score of *Annie Get Your Gun* was originally to have been written by Kern, with lyrics by Dorothy Fields. But Kern's sudden death required Rodgers and Hammerstein, the producers of the show, to bring the project to Berlin. The change was probably a boon for musical theater. Kern's aristocratic touch would never have allowed him to craft the simple-minded perfection of "Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better!" or "Doin' What Comes Natur'lly."
- D. The score is one of the greatest ever written for musical theater, running the gamut of types, forms, and emotions. "They Say That Falling in Love Is Wonderful" is an exquisite gem of a ballad, while "There's No Business Like Show Business" is a rabble-rousing showstopper. "Moonshine Lullaby" skirts around the blues, with a subtlety previously displayed only by Gershwin and Harold Arlen.
- E. In an older composer, whose best days seemed to be behind him, what caused the creative explosion that produced the score of *Annie Get Your Gun*? Mary Ellin Barrett, Berlin's daughter, asked essentially the same question of Berlin's orchestrator, Jay Blackton, in her perceptive book *Irving Berlin: A Daughter's Memoir*. According to Blackton, "I would say Irving Berlin wrote this tremendous score, not just for himself, but for Richard Rodgers. The extra reach, again and again, to show he still had it in him."
- F. Though labeled by biographers as one of the top five American songwriters, Berlin is, unquestionably, in a class by himself. Everyone in America knows some Berlin songs: "God Bless America," "White Christmas," "Easter Parade," "There's No Business Like Show Business," and "Oh! How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning."
- G. Berlin knew nothing about prosody or music theory, yet he wrote songs as lyrically and musically sophisticated as any of the top five. To quote Berlin's colleague Jerome Kern, "Irving Berlin has no place in America's music; he is America's music."

- H. We close the Berlin portion of our lecture with a medley of his early hits, arranged by Berlin himself in 1913 for a performance before the king and queen of England, re-created by Ed Goldstein and company.
- V. We now turn to Jerome Kern (1885–1945).
- A. We start by hearing “Bill,” a song written by Kern and lyricist P. G. Wodehouse for their 1918 show *Oh Lady, Lady!* and resurrected for *Show Boat*.
- B. If any great American songwriter could be called the opposite of Irving Berlin, it’s Jerome Kern. Where Berlin grew up in poverty, Kern’s father owned a legendary emporium in Newark, NJ, where he sold, among other things, inexpensive pianos.
- C. Kern’s parents showered him with love and encouraged his artistic development by sending him, after high school, to Germany for advanced study in theory and composition.
1. Not yet 20, Kern acquired the polish of a European gentleman and a writing style patterned on classical European models.
 2. We can hear the European influence in *Show Boat*, in which “Can’t Help Lovin’ Dat Man” is patterned on the blues and “Old Man River” has the simplicity of a spiritual, but “Why Do I Love You?” and “Make Believe” and “You Are Love” would be perfectly at home in a Viennese operetta.
- D. After studying in Europe, Kern returned to America, found little success in American theater, and traveled to England, where he interpolated his songs into English musicals and operettas. We listen to “How’d You Like to Spoon with Me,” one of young Kern’s songs from his days in London.
- E. At about this same time, America’s most prominent theatrical producer, Charles Frohman, arrived in London, looking for British talent. When Kern played some of his music for Frohman, the producer said, “I wish our American songwriters could write the way you British do!” and Kern agreed to accompany him to America.
- F. Several weeks passed before Kern’s New Jersey origins were revealed. Nonetheless, he began writing for Frohman’s shows. Shortly after his return, Kern’s mother died, followed by his father. Kern became attached to a showgirl named Edie Kelly, who

ran through his money before leaving him. In 1909, he returned to England, where he met and proposed to the 19-year-old Eva Leale.

- VI.** Kern's true style appeared, for the first time, in 1914, in a show Frohman produced in which Kern had been asked to interpolate a few songs. The show was called *The Girl from Utah*; we listen to one of its songs, "They Didn't Believe Me."
- A.** In 1915, Kern's partnership with Charles Frohman ended suddenly and tragically. Kern was scheduled to go to Europe with Frohman on the *Lusitania*, but he overslept and missed the ship. As we know, the ship was sunk by the German navy, and Frohman was killed.
 - B.** After Frohman's death, Kern wrote a series of low-budget, short-running shows for the Princess Theatre, giving him a wonderful chance to experiment and polish his technique. Between 1915 and 1919, Kern's Princess shows included *Nobody Home*, *Very Good Eddie*, *Miss Springtime*, *Oh Boy!*, *Love of Mike*, and *Have a Heart*. The songs were well-crafted, though on the whole not spectacular.
 - C.** In 1920, Ziegfeld commissioned Kern to write a show at the Ziegfeld Theatre. The result, *Sally*, was the most popular show of 1920, but the simple-minded Cinderella story and the songs were not integrated, as Kern's *Show Boat* would be six years later.
 - D.** We must also mention Oscar Hammerstein here, who wrote the lyrics and libretto for *Show Boat* and was at least as important to that groundbreaking musical as Kern. For example, Hammerstein was responsible for the song "Old Man River."
 - E.** We close this lecture with the cast recording of one of Kern's earliest classics, "Look for the Silver Lining," from 1920's *Sally*, sung in our recording by Marilyn Miller, the original Sally.
- VII.** Because musical theater in the 1920s was dominated by one composer, we will devote the entire next lecture to him. George Gershwin was the personification of his era, and both the stage songs and the concert works he created are "here to stay."

Suggested Reading:

Lawrence Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*.

Michael Freedland, *Jerome Kern: A Biography*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How might their different musical backgrounds have affected the marked difference in Berlin's and Kern's musical styles?
2. What qualities made *Show Boat* perhaps the most important musical turning point of the 20th century?

Lecture Twelve

George Gershwin's Legacy (1919 to c. 1935)

Scope: George Gershwin, by incorporating the musical ideas of blues and jazz into his concert and stage works, became a living symbol of the jazz age. With the exception of Jerome Kern, no other theater composer of the 1920s equals Gershwin in importance. Gershwin got his start with the song “Swanee,” made famous by Al Jolson and, early in his career, wrote songs for the yearly productions of George White’s Scandals. Among these were “Stairway to Paradise” and “Somebody Loves Me.” In 1924, George began his collaboration with his brother, Ira, which resulted in such songs as “The Man I Love,” “Someone to Watch Over Me,” and “I Got Rhythm.” In 1935, Gershwin wrote his most important stage work, *Porgy and Bess*; politically incorrect even in its time, the show is nonetheless a masterpiece. Shortly after the production of *Porgy and Bess*, Gershwin moved to Hollywood to write film musicals. After just 15 months there, he died following surgery on a brain tumor at age 38.

Outline

- I. We begin this lecture with a rare 1919 recording of Gershwin playing a piano piece he wrote at age 18, “Novelette in Fourths.”
 - A. In discussing songs, people often ask: “Which came first, the words or the music?” With the Gershwins, the music almost always came first, with one notable exception. In 1937, when the two brothers were writing the score for *Shall We Dance?*, Ira recalled a lesson from an English teacher that prompted him to write the lyrics for “Let’s Call the Whole Thing Off.”
 - B. The Gershwin style influenced the style of every composer on Broadway for the next 20 years. Two of the most important aspects of that style are *repeated notes* and *blue notes*.
 1. In “Embraceable You,” the “Come to Papa” section is played all on one note. We hear the same kind of repetition in “They Can’t Take That Away from Me” and the Piano Concerto.

2. A blue note is a flatted note that does not belong in the key. For example, we hear “The Man I Love” played with and without the blue note.
- C. On December 4, 1926, George Gershwin presented five piano preludes to the public in a recital at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York. Three of the preludes have survived; we don’t know what happened to the other two. “Prelude # 1” is full of repeated notes and blue notes, a perfect model of the Gershwin style. We hear it played by Duke Thompson, an internationally acclaimed concert pianist and an acquaintance of Frances Gershwin, George and Ira’s sister.
- D. We also hear Duke Thompson play “Rialto Ripples,” a 1914 ragtime piece that was probably the first thing Gershwin ever wrote. In writing the music, Gershwin was assisted with the orthography by a co-worker at Remick’s. The music publishing firm printed the sheet music, but the song wasn’t recorded for 40 years.
- II. At age 19, with his neighborhood friend Irving Caesar, Gershwin wrote a song about the South using every cliché imaginable, including a quote from the original nostalgic song about the South—Stephen Foster’s “Old Folks at Home.”
- A. A new revue was in rehearsal at the Capitol Theatre, and Gershwin’s song seemed perfect for a special production number the theater had planned. On October 24, 1919, “Swanee” was introduced by 60 chorus girls with electric lights in their shoes on a semi-darkened stage. The electric lights were such a hit that nobody noticed the song.
- B. Later that year, Gershwin played the piano at a party at which Al Jolson was in attendance. Never shy, the young Gershwin managed to get Jolson’s attention and insisted he listen to the song. Jolson loved it.
- C. Jolson interpolated “Swanee” into his Broadway show *Sinbad*; it became the hit of the show and one of the biggest hits in Jolson’s career. Overnight, Gershwin became the boy wonder of Broadway. We listen to the original recording of Jolson singing “Swanee” in 1919.

- D. “Swanee” is usually performed in Jolson’s style, but that’s not the way that Gershwin played it. The composer loved jazz and was fascinated by jazz musicians’ ability to spontaneously create multiple variations on popular songs. We still have Gershwin’s concert variation on “Swanee,” which brings a little more sophistication to the song. We hear it played by Duke Thompson.
- E. From 1920 to 1924, Gershwin wrote songs for the yearly productions of George White’s Scandals. These shows produced his first timeless songs, among them “Stairway to Paradise” (1922) and “Somebody Loves Me” (1924).
- F. Earlier, we mentioned blue notes; notice that “Somebody Loves Me” uses a blue note on every sustained “who.” We hear the song performed by Alan Gephardt, singer and dancer with Goucher College’s Choreographie Antique, accompanied by James Harp of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and Baltimore Opera Company.

III. George and Ira Gershwin (1896–1983) began their long-term collaboration in 1924 with the show *Lady Be Good*. Two years later, in 1926, the Gershwins mounted a show called *Oh, Kay!*, with Kay played by a frail and not-altogether-confident Gertrude Lawrence. Three decades later, Lawrence would play the female lead in Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *The King and I*.

- A. Though *Oh, Kay!* was fluff, it produced one of Gershwin’s greatest songs, “Someone to Watch Over Me.”
 - 1. Lawrence’s uncertain delivery of the song almost caused it to be dropped from the show, but Gershwin saved the song by instructing Lawrence to sing it to a sad-looking little doll instead of the audience.
 - 2. We hear “Someone to Watch Over Me,” featuring Matt Belzer on tenor sax, James Fitzpatrick on piano, and Sara Achor on the vocal. As we listen, notice the unusually long lyrical verse melody, another characteristic of the Gershwin style.
- B. In 1924, the Gershwins wrote *Lady Be Good* for Fred and Adele Astaire, a show that produced “The Man I Love,” “Fascinatin’ Rhythm,” and the title song. In 1927, they wrote another show for the Astaires, originally called *Smarty* but later changed to *Funny Face*. The hit song of the show was “S Wonderful.”

1. “S’Wonderful” is a prime example of Gershwin’s less obvious debts to the world of jazz. It’s not a lyrical melody like “Someone to Watch Over Me,” as we hear in a comparison of the two.
2. “S’Wonderful” is, essentially, a *riff* song. *Riffs* are short musical jazz figures, played over and over, avoiding monotony by changing the harmonies each time the riff is played. Without the harmony changes, a riff tune can be boring.
3. We hear Alan Gephardt, accompanied by James Hart, sing “S Wonderful.”

IV. Gershwin wrote his most important stage work, *Porgy and Bess*, in 1935. Given that both the Gershwins and Dubose Heyward, their collaborator, thought of this show as an opera, why are we discussing it in a course about musical theater?

- A. The critics in 1935 were hesitant to call *Porgy and Bess* an opera; it contained too many hit songs, they contended, to be a real opera. But it used recitative and required trained voices, and Gershwin orchestrated every one of *Porgy and Bess*’s hundreds of pages of manuscript. If it premiered today, *Porgy and Bess* would fit neatly into the musical theater niche filled by *Les Miserables* and *Miss Saigon*; conversely, it would be accepted as an opera, too.
- B. *Porgy and Bess* was politically incorrect, even in 1935, when it premiered. Many educated blacks were repelled by it. The story showed a side of ghetto life as shocking in 1935 as the tenement world of *West Side Story* in 1957. Porgy, the hero, is handicapped; Bess, the heroine, is a cocaine-sniffing prostitute; and Sportin’ Life is a drug dealer. But we’re forced to look at them as sympathetic beings.
- C. Duke Ellington, who later grew to love the work, attended the premiere and immediately dashed off a letter to *The New York Times*, part of which read: “It is high time we put a stop to George Gershwin’s coal black Negro-isms.”
- D. As for its musical content, the month after *Porgy and Bess* premiered, Virgil Thomson wrote an article in *Modern Music* magazine that began, “Gershwin does not even know what an opera is.” True or not, the statement is inconsequential. Whatever

it was that Gershwin had written, it was, unquestionably, a masterpiece.

- E. Let's listen to a little more of the Gershwin sound. We hear Duke Thompson playing Gershwin's own arrangement of a song we heard earlier, "Somebody Loves Me."
 - F. A personality as strong as Gershwin's was bound to repel some people as strongly as it attracted others. As thick-skinned as Gershwin may have appeared, stings from the artistic establishment, including Virgil Thomson and the well-known teacher Nadia Boulanger, hurt him, despite the fact that, by this time, he had written, among many other pieces, the timeless song "The Man I Love." We hear Duke Thompson play Gershwin's concert arrangement of that song.
 - G. In 1935, Gershwin was faced with both the critical rejection and the financial losses of *Porgy and Bess*; nonetheless, the show was changing musical and social history. Black opera singers were performing on Broadway, and African-American social problems were being seriously explored. When the show was performed at the National Theatre in Washington, DC, Gershwin insisted that black theatergoers be allowed to attend performances without the indignity of segregated seating.
- V. At the same time, Gershwin's experiences seemed to him like professional defeat. Against Ira's advice, George left New York to write film musicals in Hollywood, but Hollywood did not provide the escape that George anticipated.
- A. On Broadway, Gershwin was more than a composer; he had quality control over every aspect of his shows. In Hollywood, where the division of labor was far more rigidly prescribed, he was just another songwriter.
 - B. Also in Hollywood, Gershwin began to experience the symptoms of the brain tumor that would kill him, although at the time, the tumor went undiagnosed.
 - C. Gershwin's talents went undiminished. During his approximately 15 months in Hollywood, he wrote some of his best songs, including "A Foggy Day (in London Town)," "Nice Work If You Can Get It," "They Can't Take That Away from Me," and "Love Walked In."

- D. As George's condition worsened, Ira called in Dr. Ernest Simmel, a psychiatrist, on the assumption that George's symptoms were psychological, not physical. On July 9, 1937, during one of his daily psychoanalytical sessions with Gershwin, Simmel recognized that his patient was experiencing papilledema and sent him to the hospital.
- E. Gershwin underwent brain surgery but never regained consciousness. He died on July 11, 1937, at the age of 38. We conclude this lecture with my own respectful parody of one of Gershwin's songs, composed in his honor and sung by Alan Gephardt.

Suggested Reading:

Joan Peyser, *The Memory of All That: The Life of George Gershwin*.

Deena Rosenberg, *Fascinatin' Rhythm*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Give several reasons for the critics' slow acceptance of George Gershwin's genius.
2. Discuss both the positive social fallout and the negative fallout Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* has had over the decades.

Lecture Thirteen

Rodgers and Hammerstein Era (1940s)

Scope: In 1941, four years after his brother's death, Ira Gershwin collaborated with Kurt Weill to write *Lady in the Dark*, a musical about a highly successful businesswoman undergoing psychoanalysis. With this show and the earlier *Pal Joey*, musical theater forged into new territories. On the whole, however, the 1940s belonged to Rodgers and Hammerstein, with the production of *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, and *South Pacific*. Other shows included Leonard Bernstein's and Jerome Robbins's *On the Town*, Yip Harburg's and Burton Lane's *Finian's Rainbow*, Lerner and Loewe's *Brigadoon*, and Cole Porter's masterwork, *Kiss Me, Kate*. If 1927's *Show Boat* had represented the beginnings of modern musical theater, the decade of the 1940s saw this art form firmly taking root and declaring the supremacy of the book musical for the rest of the century.

Outline

- I. The end of the 1920s aspired to a more serious musical theater with *Show Boat*, but the Depression era that followed *Show Boat* gave us only one lasting show, *Porgy and Bess*.
 - A. The only pre-Rodgers and Hammerstein show that was a harbinger of what was to come in the 1940s was written by Rodgers with his earlier colleague, Larry Hart. The show was *Pal Joey*, more serious, more nearly integrated, and more character-centered than most of the previous Rodgers and Hart shows.
 - B. But Larry Hart was the anti-Hammerstein. Where Hammerstein's humanity brightens all his shows, we tend, with Hart, to marvel at his pessimistic wit, his impossible rhymes, and his sardonic view of love.
 - C. Hart's anti-hero, Pal Joey, is a selfish, shallow opportunist, a far cry from the conventional musical comedy hero. He is a fascinating character, making the audience realize, as women become involved with him, that we often settle for what's available at the moment and regret it later. The chorus of "Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered" is so overloaded with

triple rhymes that we know with certainty that the praise for Joey is at least partially tongue-in-cheek.

- D. Another serious incursion into integrated musical theater occurred in 1941 with Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin's *Lady in the Dark*, the first major musical of World War II. A show about psychoanalysis, this Freudian story loses a little impact in today's world. The one aspect of the show that might hold a modern audience's attention is its surreal dream sequences.

II. The 1940s is, in certain ways, a unique decade in the musical's history: It was the first decade to leave substantial documentation in the form of cast recordings. The first such recording was from *Oklahoma!*.

III. The 1940s continued doing what the 1930s had done—that is, producing a large number of undisputed classic songs regularly performed today. Despite the other great teams writing then, however, the 1940s belonged to Rodgers and Hammerstein.

IV. On March 31, 1943, the curtain of the St. James Theatre rose to show a simple scene of the early American western frontier, and from offstage, a voice was heard singing a song so simple that, at first hearing, it might have been mistaken for a folksong.

- A. Of course, the show was Rodgers and Hammerstein's first collaboration, *Oklahoma!*, one of the longest-running Broadway shows in history and one that influenced all other musicals from that time on.
- B. The success of *Oklahoma!* was at least partially due to the fact that in 1943, America was at war with three fascist powers. *Oklahoma!* was about America's pioneer past, about home and family and love—precisely what we were fighting for.
- C. There is, however, a touch of evil in *Oklahoma!*, as there is in almost every Hammerstein show. The evil is embodied in Jud, the farmhand who collects pornographic pictures and who has shown the potential for both murder and rape. But the evil is there to be vanquished by the forces of good, which always triumph in Hammerstein's world.
- D. The ballet in *Oklahoma!*, conceived by choreographer Agnes de Mille, introduced a new concept in which dancing became part of the story and character development.

1. De Mille's ballet in *Oklahoma!* existed as a seamless part of the central plot, and from de Mille onward, the choreographer became a significant, often indispensable, part of musical theater production.
 2. Before de Mille, the term used in musical theater was dance director. De Mille brought prestige and a new label to a job that had previously commanded little attention from critics.
- V. The initial run of *Oklahoma!* at the St. James Theatre was 2,212 performances. Its young, unknown cast included Alfred Drake and Celeste Holm. The show has been performed, somewhere in the world, every day since it premiered.
- A. Based on Lynn Rigg's 1931 *Green Grow the Lilacs*, *Oklahoma!* is set in Indian territory soon after the turn of the century. The simple tale is mostly concerned with whether Curly or Jud will take Laurey to the box social. When the show toured before premiering on Broadway, it was called *Away We Go!*. Theresa Helburn of the Theatre Guild is credited with the stroke of genius—the exclamation point—that convinced the creators and producers to change the name to *Oklahoma!*.
 - B. As mentioned earlier, *Oklahoma!* contained no rousing opening chorus. As a matter of fact, it contained no chorus at all until midway through the first act. Later in the first act comes the long ballet and other serious overtones, including the inadvertent killing of Jud by Curly. These innovations proved that musical theater could address topics that were previously unheard of in these shows.
 - C. Another peculiarity of *Oklahoma!* is that nowhere in the show do the lyrics call attention to the lyric writer's cleverness. The lyrics are beautiful but nearly invisible. This is not the case with such writers as Larry Hart, Ira Gershwin, Cole Porter, or William S. Gilbert.
 - D. If Hammerstein's lyrics are more straightforward than Hart's, then so is Rodgers's musical style. He adapts to his lyricist in *Oklahoma!*, showing none of the Gershwin-influenced jazzy style of his 1930s collaborations with Hart. The fact that Hart let Rodgers write the music before the lyrics, while Hammerstein usually wrote the lyrics first, is also a factor in the appearance of the new Rodgers style.

1. The difference between the Rodgers style of Rodgers and Hart and that of Rodgers and Hammerstein was discussed in an interview conducted by radio host Bob Allen with William Hammerstein, Oscar's son.
 2. Mary Rodgers, daughter of the composer, is a composer in her own right. We also listen to an interview with her, in which she comments on her father's compositional technique.
- E. Before we move on from *Oklahoma!*, let's listen to "Oh, What A Beautiful Mornin'." Ours is the cast recording from the 1979 revival of *Oklahoma!*, featuring Lawrence Guittard.
1. The essential romanticism of the new Rodgers style and of Hammerstein's affinity for bucolic lyrical expression is perfectly encapsulated in this opening song. Curly is heard singing the song as he enters, unaccompanied, natural, and spontaneous. One note, which almost sounds like a wrong note, conveys the emotion under the surface of the song.
 2. The combination here—folk-like simplicity with the impression of something deeper—establishes Curly as a potential folk hero. It may seem as if we're reading a great deal into a single flatted note, but we can hear the difference if we listen to the song without it.
- F. The weakest part of Hammerstein's lyric is the first verse of the song. Before we examine the reasons for this, we should understand something about the functions of effective lyrics.
1. Lyricists do not have the freedom that poets take for granted. The verse of a lyricist must fit the melody; its accents must coincide with the accents of the melody. The sound of the lyrics must match the melody note-for-note and must "sing" well.
 2. Music is the most abstract of the arts; it may create a mood, but no piece of music by itself tells precisely the same story to two different listeners. Lyrics, in contrast, are made up of words, which have both meanings (sense) and sound.
 3. When something has to give in a lyric, sense goes first. No lyric that doesn't sing well will be successful, but many lyrics that make little or no sense have been very successful. Of course, the lyrics of many songs, including "Oh, What A Beautiful Mornin'," are often adapted to fit the requirements of the music.

4. “Oh, What A Beautiful Mornin’” reflects Hammerstein’s love of nature; he saw, in nature, the creative force that sustains humans and their fellow creatures. Indeed, Hammerstein’s lyrics abound with images from nature.
5. Hammerstein wrote in the rural tradition of Whittier and Frost; in this age of computer realities and lives insulated from nature, his words remain relevant, but it seems unlikely that a lyricist of his ilk will ever appear again.

VI. On December 28, 1944, one year after the premiere of *Oklahoma!*, a young composer mounted a show that has been successfully revived several times since then. In 1944, this composer was totally new to Broadway.

- A. At this point in his life, Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990) was living in Greenwich Village and had recently met a young dancer named Jerome Robbins. With Robbins, Bernstein created a ballet, *Fancy Free*, which was later turned into a full-blown musical and performed as *On the Town* at the Adelphi Theatre in 1944. The show garnered rave reviews.
- B. Soon Robbins and Bernstein came up with an idea for another musical and gave it the tentative title *East Side Story*. This musical was to be about two tenement dwellers, one Jewish and the other Catholic. Eventually, they discarded the idea because it sounded too much like a mushy hit play of the 1930s, *Abie’s Irish Rose*.
- C. The year following the premiere of *On the Town* saw the production of a second Rodgers and Hammerstein musical. *Carousel* premiered at the Majestic Theatre on August 19, 1946. With *Carousel*, Rodgers and Hammerstein solidified their position as the dominant creators of musical theater in the 1940s.
 1. This production transported playwright Molnar’s 1921 fantasy from Budapest to a New England fishing village to make the 19th-century story more relevant to an American audience.
 2. Billy Bigelow, a swaggering carnival barker, meets Julie Jordan, a local factory worker, and in their soaring duet “If I Loved You,” they reveal their feelings for each other. They marry, Julie becomes pregnant, and Billy, desperate for money to support his family, is killed in an attempted robbery.
 3. Later, however, he is allowed to return to Earth to do one good deed. This is accomplished when he shows up at his

daughter's high school graduation and encourages the girl to have confidence in herself by singing "You'll Never Walk Alone."

4. Bigelow was played by John Raitt; Julie by Jan Clayton; and the daughter by Bambi Lynn, whose dancing had been featured in the *Oklahoma!* ballet. Again, Agnes de Mille did the choreography.

VII. In 1947, Yip Harburg wrote lyrics and libretto to a score by Burton Lane for *Finian's Rainbow*, a show whose secondary theme paralleled the theme of racial intolerance in Kern and Hammerstein's *Show Boat*.

- A. In *Finian's Rainbow*, the bigoted white senator Billboard Rawkins wakes up one day to discover that, overnight, he has become black. For the first time in his life, his tension-fraught encounters with whites instill in the man some empathy for his black brothers.
- B. The songs from the show include "How Are Things in Glocca Morra?," "If This Isn't Love," and "Look to the Rainbow." Of course, the show includes a pot of gold, stolen from and pursued by Og the leprechaun, whose magic results in Senator Rawkins's waking up to a surprise when he looks in the mirror.
- C. One of Harburg's lyrics for *Finian's Rainbow* was a rewrite of an earlier song originally written for Gene Kelly's first film, *For Me and My Gal*. The song is "Old Devil Moon"; we listen to the lyrics as originally written and later changed.

VIII. The year 1947 also brought to Broadway the first successful collaboration between Fritz Loewe (1904–1988) and Alan Jay Lerner (1918–1986). The show, of course, was *Brigadoon*, which ran at the Ziegfeld Theatre for 581 performances. Agnes de Mille, a hot commodity in the 1940s, again was the choreographer, and the stars were David Brooke and Sharon Bell.

- A. *Brigadoon* is a story about two American tourists in Scotland, Tommy Albright and Jeff Douglas, who stumble upon a mist-clouded town that, they eventually discover, reawakens only one day every 100 years.
- B. Tommy falls in love with Fiona, one of the town's residents, and at the end, he makes the ultimate romantic sacrifice, giving up his earthly existence to spend one day every 100 years with the woman he loves. "Almost Like Being in Love," sung by Tommy

to Fiona, was one of the most recorded and most popular songs of 1947 and 1948.

- IX.** We can't leave the 1940s without mentioning one of the most cleverly integrated shows in musical theater history, Cole Porter's masterwork, *Kiss Me, Kate*.
- A.** Again, we can see how *Oklahoma!* set the pace for the decade. The star of *Oklahoma!*, Alfred Drake, also co-starred in *Kiss Me, Kate*, along with Patricia Morrison. The dances are by another choreographer from the world of ballet, Hanya Holm, who would later choreograph *My Fair Lady*. The show premiered at the New Century Theatre and, in its initial incarnation, ran for 1,070 performances.
 - B.** After a long period of depression (the aftereffect of a crippling horseback-riding incident in 1937), Porter emerged triumphant in 1947, with one of the greatest musicals in the history of Broadway. It begins with "Another Opening, Another Show."
 - C.** *Kiss Me, Kate* is two stories, one within the other, brilliantly written by Bella and Samuel Spewack. Drake and Morrison played a divorced couple brought back together after they've been cast in a tour of *The Taming of the Shrew*.
 - D.** "So in Love" is the timeless love ballad of the show, more direct than most of Porter's love songs, more intense, and not the least bit ironic.
 - E.** The tour after the Broadway run played two years, and the London company racked up 400 more performances. Cole Porter was back on top again, more on top than he'd ever been before.
- X.** We come full circle in this lecture; we started with Rodgers and Hammerstein, and we end with them.
- A.** The greatest musical about World War II, *South Pacific*, appeared four years after the war had ended, and again, it was a blockbuster. Adapted from James Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific*, it was set in Micronesia. The book had an Oscar Hammerstein kind of message—we need to be tolerant and to treat people as we'd want them to treat us.
 - B.** The show opened at the Majestic Theatre and, in its initial production, ran for 1,925 performances. It starred Ezio Pinza and Mary Martin and was beautifully orchestrated by Robert Russell

Bennett. Dance was a somewhat less important part of the show than in *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel* probably because director Joshua Logan also choreographed the show, and Logan was not a dancer.

- C. The show is a romance involving nurse Nellie Forbush and French planter Emile de Becque, who has two children by a native island woman, now dead. As had earlier shows, *South Pacific* made its case for racial tolerance within the escapist world of musical comedy.
- D. In the show, Bloody Mary, a large Polynesian woman, tacitly breaks away from stereotypes by singing the most beautiful song in the show, “Bali Hai.”
- E. In addition to thunderous praise for Mary Martin and Ezio Pinza, reviewers were rapturous about *South Pacific* itself. Brooks Atkinson’s opening night review in *The New York Times* was exultant: “This is a tenderly beautiful idyll of genuine people inexplicably tossed together in a strange corner of the world; and the music, lyrics, singing, and acting [all] contribute to the mood.”
- F. The phrase “genuine people” is a significant one. From *Show Boat* onward, the musicals that have lasted have created memorable and believable characters.
 - 1. The Faustian lead in 1866’s *The Black Crook*, for example, was a stock character, not a breathing soul. Magnolia, Ravenal, and Julie in *Show Boat*, however, approach reality, and with Curly and Laurey in *Oklahoma!*, we meet two real, if somewhat simple-minded, people.
 - 2. In *South Pacific*, the two leads are mature and complex. What makes *South Pacific* a little dated today is that, though racism certainly hasn’t vanished, the variety of it shown in Nellie Forbush is far less prevalent than during World War II.
- G. At the end of *South Pacific*, de Becque’s two children sing “Dites-Moi.” Nellie joins in the song, and Emile answers her singing. The show ends on a quiet note, unthinkable in earlier musical comedy, with Nellie and Emile looking into each other’s eyes.
- H. Earlier in the show, Nellie sings a rousing waltz, “I’m in Love with a Wonderful Guy.”
 - 1. Rodgers’s career is filled with updated waltzes, including “Hello Young Lovers” from *The King and I*, “The Most

Beautiful Girl in the World” from *Jumbo*, “Falling in Love with Love” from *The Boys from Syracuse*, and others.

2. In Nellie’s song, the repetition of “I’m in love” reminds us of what Bernstein and Sondheim did eight years later in *West Side Story*, with Tony showing his joy by singing the name *Maria* over and over. In closing, we hear a bit of “I’m in Love with a Wonderful Guy.”

Suggested Reading:

William G. Hylands, *Richard Rodgers*.

Mark Steyn, *Broadway Babies Say Goodnight: Musicals Then and Now*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Explain in detail how *Oklahoma!* broke with tradition, musically, dramatically, and in terms of its use of dance.
2. Name several 1940s musicals and explain what each owed to an earlier show.

Lecture Fourteen

Golden Age of Musical Theater (1950s)

Scope: If the 1940s belonged to Rodgers and Hammerstein, the 1950s belonged to Rodgers and Hammerstein, Lerner and Loewe, Leonard Bernstein, and Frank Loesser. Many observers of the Broadway scene consider this period the golden age of the Broadway musical. The list of tuneful hits introduced during this decade reads like a music buff's dream, and the librettos, in many cases, were as strong as the scores. Lerner and Loewe set new standards for adapting difficult material to perfection, turning Shaw's 1911 play *Pygmalion* into *My Fair Lady*. Rodgers and Hammerstein checked in with *The King and I*, *Flower Drum Song*, and *The Sound of Music*. Frank Loesser gave us *Guys and Dolls* and *The Most Happy Fella*.

Outline

- I. Frank Loesser (1910–1969) began as a lyricist in the 1930s, penning mostly Tin Pan Alley hits, such as “I Don’t Want to Walk Without You,” “Two Sleepy People,” and “A Slow Boat to China.”
 - A. With a limited musical background, Loesser progressed to writing lyrics and music and mounted his first complete show, *Where’s Charley?*, in 1948. Then, thinking of himself as a composer-lyricist for the first time, he studied piano and composition and emerged as a formidable talent. *Where’s Charley?* had a competent score, but two years later, *Guys and Dolls* had a score as varied and complex as any ever written.
 - B. Loesser’s first stab at writing a complete song (music and lyrics) occurred on December 8, 1941, the day after Pearl Harbor. In the newspapers, Loesser read that Father MacGuire, the Catholic chaplain on Pearl Harbor, had responded to the Japanese attack by telling the men to “Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!” MacGuire later denied ever having made that statement, but it nonetheless inspired Loesser’s song.
 - C. The cast of *Guys and Dolls* was outstanding, including Robert Alda (Alan Alda’s father) and Vivian Blaine, and the show was choreographed by Michael Kidd. Stubby Kaye, who played

Nicely-Nicely Johnson, sang “Sit Down, You’re Rockin’ the Boat,” a showstopper that demanded encores at every performance. “I’ve Never Been in Love Before,” “If I Were a Bell,” and “Bushel and a Peck” all ended up on the Hit Parade radio program week after week.

- D. Curiously, after *Oklahoma!*, many shows, including *Carousel*, *Bloomer Girl*, *Up in Central Park*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, and *High Button Shoes*, turned for their subject matter to the American past. But *Guys and Dolls* turned its back on serious themes and social significance and set itself in the almost contemporary Damon Runyon world of blithe shenanigans.
 - E. The setting for *Guys and Dolls* is around a Times Square that never quite existed, with no ugliness and no overt violence. Jo Mielziner’s sets were an almost cartoon-like stylization of Broadway that would suggest familiar landmarks but also disguise and glorify them.
 - F. A list of the characters’ names reads a little like 1940s excerpts from the “Dick Tracy” comic strip: Harry the Horse, Nathan Detroit, Angie the Ox, Big Jule, and Benny South Street. The opening song establishes the brash, garish pace of the show and introduces a cross-section of Times Square types: police, chorus girls, prostitutes, gamblers, sightseers, photographers, and sidewalk vendors.
 - G. On opening night on Broadway, Brooks Atkinson of *The New York Times* wrote: “A work of art... gutsy and uproarious!” The frenetic pace, the incredible vitality, help make this show a kind of reverse *West Side Story*.
 - H. We listen to Susan Loesser talking about her father’s work on the show in an interview with Bob Allen.
- II. The next year, 1951, saw the production of one of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s greatest musicals, *The King and I*. Opening at the St. James Theatre on March 29, this production ran 1,246 performances and saw repeated revivals over the next four decades, most of them with the original star, Yul Brynner.
- A. The show was not written for Brynner but for his co-star, the English actress Gertrude Lawrence. Lawrence had read Margaret Landon’s book *Anna and the King of Siam* and suggested the idea

of turning the book into a musical, first to Cole Porter, then to Rodgers and Hammerstein.

- B. Unfortunately for Lawrence, although she had commissioned a vehicle to show off her own talents, in the end, it was her young, unknown co-star who stole the show.
- C. Richard Rodgers described his first meeting with Yul Brynner, in which Brynner “projected a feeling of controlled ferocity!” Rodgers knew he had found his king.
- D. Lawrence died in September of 1952 and was succeeded by a series of Annas, including Celeste Holm and Patricia Morrison. Though Brynner was originally billed below the title, that changed after he won a Tony as Outstanding Featured Actor. In 1956, when he appeared opposite Deborah Kerr in the Twentieth-Century Fox film version of the show, he won the Oscar for Best Leading Actor.
- E. Jerome Robbins’s choreography used a highly stylized pseudo-Siamese movement that was spellbinding to Western audiences. The contrast between these faux-Asian movements and the rousing polka “Shall We Dance” with Anna and the king was extreme.
- F. In the film, Deborah Kerr was dubbed on the songs by Marni Nixon, an amazing singer whose work, 50 years later, continues to be first-rate. Most dubbing is observable to the focused listener, but Nixon’s dubbing never is. Her singing voice sounds exactly like the speaking voice of Deborah Kerr in *The King and I*.

III. On May 7, 1953, at the Shubert Theatre, Cole Porter mounted a new show, *Can-Can*, set in Paris in the late 1890s. The can-can, in which the chorus girls would show their panties, caused outrage in Paris and, of course, made the dance all the rage. The story of the show involves a puritanical magistrate out to ban the can-can; he ends up falling in love with the sexy owner of the nightclub where the dance is performed.

- A. The 1953 production was stolen by the ingénue, Gwen Verdon. On opening night, Verdon received such a tremendous ovation performing Michael Kidd’s choreography that she stopped the show—twice.
- B. Despite this, critics gave the songs a lukewarm reception, saying that Porter’s melodies were not up to his usual standards. Nonetheless, “C’est Magnifique,” “Allez-Vous En,” “It’s All

Right with Me,” and “I Love Paris” remained on the *Billboard* Top Ten for weeks.

IV. In December 1953, a highly original musical with totally unoriginal music—*Kismet*—began playing to packed houses on Broadway.

- A. This show used the melodies of the Russian composer Alexander Borodin. The music for the show was adapted and lyrics written by Robert Wright and George Forrest. The story was based on a 1911 play by Edward Knoblock; the setting was ancient Baghdad. The musical starred Alfred Drake and Doretta Morrow. We hear Wright and Forrest talking to Bob Allen about the creation of *Kismet*.
- B. A contributing factor to the show’s success was the Hit Parade status of several of the songs. We hear the influence of Borodin in “Baubles, Bangles, and Beads” (String Quartet in D, second movement), “This Is My Beloved” (String Quartet in D, third movement), and “Stranger in Paradise” (Polovetzian Dances).

V. On the tail of *Kismet*, on May 13, 1954, *Pajama Game* opened at the St. James Theatre. It has the distinction of being the first entire show choreographed by Bob Fosse. One song from the show became a *Billboard* number-one hit for Rosemary Clooney, “Hey There.”

- A. With music and lyrics by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross, *Pajama Game* is the story of a pajama factory union organizer and her supervisor, set during a strike. It was based on Richard Bissel’s novel *7½ Cents*. Bissel himself wrote the libretto, assisted by George Abbot, the show’s director. The stars were John Raitt, Janis Paige, and Carol Haney.
- B. Frank Loesser was approached to do the score but turned it down and recommended Adler and Ross, two unknown writers in their early 20s. Director George Abbott decided to take a chance on the team. Jerome Robbins co-directed the show with Abbott but left the choreography entirely up to Bob Fosse.
- C. One of Fosse’s dancers in the show was a young woman named Shirley MacLaine. During the run of the show, when Carol Haney hurt her ankle, MacLaine went on in her place, got spotted by Hollywood producer Hal Wallis, and was signed for a lead role in Alfred Hitchcock’s *The Trouble with Harry*.

- D. The *Pajama Game* showstoppers were “Hey There” and Fosse’s inventive dance number “Steam Heat,” a template for all the ultra-cool Fosse to follow over the coming years. In “Steam Heat,” Haney and her male chorus, dressed in derbies, white gloves, and black suits, snapped their fingers to music that was punctuated by the sound of escaping steam from an old-fashioned radiator.
- VI. Fosse’s next show, *Damn Yankees*, starred Gwen Verdon, who was not yet his wife. With the same songwriting team and director, this show would solidify Fosse’s position as the hottest young choreographer on Broadway.
- A. *Damn Yankees* was derived from a novel called *The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant*. It was Douglas Wallop’s fantastic takeoff on the Faust legend, in which a disgruntled baseball fan agrees to sell his soul to the devil in order to pitch for his beloved Washington Senators. He takes them to the World Series, defeating the accursed Yankees. The devil’s representative is Lola, a temptress, played by Gwen Verdon.
- B. Incidentally, no other baseball musical or straight play has ever been a hit on Broadway. In 1984, Harold Prince directed *Diamonds*, a review about the national pastime, which died after about 10 weeks. Another failed baseball musical was *The First*, based on the life of Jackie Robinson. It ran for only a few weeks in 1982.
- VII. The year after *Damn Yankees* appeared at the 46th Street Theatre, a musical opened that eclipsed all previous musicals, *My Fair Lady*. At 2,717 performances, it more than doubled the number of performances of any other show of the 1950s. But it was a show that, several times, seemed destined never to materialize.
- A. Having written *Pygmalion* in 1911, George Bernard Shaw later saw another of his masterpieces, *Arms and the Man*, made by Oscar Strauss into an operetta called *The Chocolate Soldier*. Shaw despised it and vowed never again to allow one of his plays to be destroyed by turning it into a musical.
- B. In 1950, Shaw died. His close friend Gabriel Pascal served as the executor of his estate. Pascal had promised Shaw that he would not allow *Pygmalion* to be turned into a musical, but a few months

after Shaw's death, he offered it to Rodgers and Hammerstein, who turned it down.

- C. Eventually, after Pascal's death, Allen Jay Lerner bought the rights to *Pygmalion*. Now the question was what to do with the play; after all, Henry Higgins seemed incapable of falling in love, as most leads in musicals must.
- D. Fritz Loewe's music for *My Fair Lady* was as good as show music gets, but it was Lerner's Shaw-centered libretto and his ability to "channel" Shaw in his lyrics that controlled the production's creative flow. Lerner's subtle changes in language, depending on who is singing, make the songs an extension of the characters.
- E. Lerner played the Pygmalion character himself and chose the 19-year-old Julie Andrews for Eliza. At the time, Andrews was playing on Broadway in the British musical *The Boy Friend*. Lerner saw the show, hired the ingénue, and wrote a new song for her, "All I Want Is a Room Somewhere," that was eerily similar to one she'd sung in *The Boy Friend*.

VIII. The year after *My Fair Lady*, two musicals, both vying against each other for Tonys, both now classics, appeared on Broadway. The first was *West Side Story*; the second was *The Music Man*. The Tony for Best Musical was won by *The Music Man*, despite the fact that it premiered in December of 1957, just weeks before the Tony selections were made.

- A. Despite its reputation with critics as "traditional," *Music Man* was one of the most innovative shows of the century. In it, we hear the kind of melodic transformation more commonplace in the works of Wagner or Strauss than on the musical stage.
 - 1. The tune for the gentle waltz "Goodnight, My Someone" transforms itself in the rousing march "76 Trombones."
 - 2. The barbershop quartet sings "Lida Rose" in lush four-part harmony as the ladies of the town "pick-a-little, talk-a-little, cheep-cheep-cheep," making them sound like a flock of hens.
 - 3. "The Piano Lesson" is sung to the notes of an ascending major scale and is later heard against a counter-melody.
 - 4. In "Rock Island," Meredith Willson, the composer/lyricist of *Music Man*, has a group of traveling salesmen on a train, standing and holding onto the straps that hang from the ceiling, *talking* in a half-dozen different rhythms

simultaneously. The effect simulates the cacophony one might hear on a crowded train, yet it all works together with precision.

5. Willson's book, music, and lyrics create a nostalgic slice of small-town history without becoming maudlin and without sacrificing the music's quality.

- B. Ultimately, however, *West Side Story* was the more influential show, a turning point in the history of musical theater.
- C. *West Side Story* was disconcerting for critics because it offended their sense of morality. It made audiences feel uneasy and unsafe. And instead of condemning the perpetrators of vulgarity and violence, it showed them with sympathy. This radically new approach was about to change Broadway forever.
- D. *West Side Story* was mounted at the Winter Garden Theatre on September 26, 1957. It ran for 732 performances and tempted some students of the Broadway theater to call it a musical tragedy.
- E. The spirit of *West Side Story* drifts through the remaining decades of the 20th century. There could have been no *Cabaret*, no *Sweeney Todd*, no *Les Miserables*, *Chicago*, or *Chorus Line* without *West Side Story*.
- F. United Artists ultimately brought the show to the screen. The film, co-directed by Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, used a real tenement neighborhood that had been condemned to make way for what is now Lincoln Center. Parts of the gang fights were brilliantly photographed from above, and Marni Nixon's dubbing of Natalie Wood's songs was flawless. The film won a record 11 Academy Awards, including the Oscar for Best Picture.

IX. The decade of the 1950s ended with yet another Rodgers and Hammerstein show, one of the most beloved of all time and one of the few that not only didn't suffer in its transformation to the screen but actually improved! Of course, the show is *The Sound of Music*.

- A. Let me precede my praise of this show by noting that Hammerstein's lyrics always hovered on the border between sentiment and sentimentality and tread a fine line in this show.
 1. Further, the problem was not strictly Hammerstein's. In a song such as "How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?" Rodgers set the already cutesy lyrics to a saccharine melody.

2. Elsewhere, Rodgers's music elevates the potentially pedestrian "Do-Re-Me." Based on the ascending major scale, the song deviates from the scale and from the chords of the scale just enough to make it interesting.
- B.** *The Sound of Music* opened on November 16, 1959, at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre and ran for 1,442 performances. The novice-turned-nanny, Maria, was played by Mary Martin, and her employer was played by Theodore Bikel. The show was nominated for nine Tony awards and won four. In the film, Bikel was replaced, competently, by Christopher Plummer, and Mary Martin was replaced by one of the finest voices ever to appear on Broadway or in films—Julie Andrews.
- C.** The film, directed by Robert Wise, begins with absolute silence as we gaze at the vastness of the Austrian Alps. Far away, on the ground, we detect a speck of life and hear a flute and a distant French horn. As the camera pans down into the endless valley of grass between snow-capped mountains, the speck reveals itself as Julie Andrews. How can we not believe in some higher power in the midst of such magnificence?
- D.** Edelweiss, a tiny flower that dots the mountainsides and grassy valleys of Austria in the spring, lends its name to one of the best-loved songs from the musical. Because it is relatively unique to the area, it has long been a symbol of Austrian independence.
1. The Austrian folksong called "Edelweiss" is quite different from the song Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote for *The Sound of Music*. As we listen, I think you will understand why they decided not to use it in the show.
 2. As he did with "Oh, What A Beautiful Mornin'" in *Oklahoma!*, Rodgers created a song with a folksy feeling that is a little more complex than a real folksong.
 3. One of the ways in which he creates this complexity is by using a descending bass line. The scale tones run down chromatically, moving from, for example, A flat to G to G flat to F.
 4. The more lyrical Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Edelweiss" became so popular that the Austrians have almost forgotten the original folksong and made Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Edelweiss" the unofficial anthem of their country.

5. We listen to Theodore Bikel singing “Edelweiss” from a 1959 recording of the original production of *The Sound of Music*.
- X. The end of the 1950s left us with two visions—one bright (*The Sound of Music*), and the other dark (*West Side Story*); one hopeful, the other hopeless. Oscar Hammerstein was no fool—he knew what the world was like, but he gave us something to aspire to.

Suggested Reading:

William G. Hylands, *Richard Rodgers*.

Richard Maltby, ed., *Passing Parade: A History of Popular Culture in the 20th Century*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Explain why the 1950s is often referred to as the golden age of musical theater.
2. Compare the Broadway version and the film version of *The Sound of Music*.

Lecture Fifteen

Rock 'n' Roll Reaches Broadway (1960s)

Scope: The 1960s on Broadway began with *Bye Bye Birdie* and ended with *Hair*, the former a spoof of rock 'n' roll and the latter an homage to it. In between came a number of shows that offered greater variety in musical theater, reflecting the experimental spirit that pervaded the 1960s but hinting at darker themes to come. The decade saw several milestones, including the opening of the longest-running musical in the history of theater, *The Fantasticks*. Musicals of the 1960s also brought theatergoers more serious themes, with such shows as *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Man of La Mancha*, and *Cabaret*. As we'll see in this lecture, some of the trends introduced in the 1960s would dominate musical theater for the remainder of the 20th century.

Outline

- I. We start by listening to a chord progression that should be familiar; it was used in hundreds of early rock 'n' roll songs, and it's called the 1-6-2-5 progression because the chords are based on the first, sixth, second, and fifth tones of the scale.
 - A. The triplets we hear were also used in many early rock 'n' roll recordings without the 1-6-2-5 progression.
 - B. In this lecture, we'll see how these sounds worked their way into musical theater in 1960.
- II. The year 1960 brought us a Rodgers-and-Hammerstein-type integrated musical—comic, satirical, fast-paced, and full of fun. The show, intended to be a spoof of rock 'n' roll, was *Bye Bye Birdie*. Though there was great fun in *Bye Bye Birdie*, time has proven that you really can't spoof rock 'n' roll.
 - A. Spoof involves parody, and rock 'n' roll is already a parody of the somewhat subtler rhythm and blues. Nevertheless, *Bye Bye Birdie* had great appeal for sophisticated playgoers, who savored a chance to make fun of rock 'n' roll, and the songs appealed to young rock fans. Not only did the cast album make the bestseller lists, but

individual songs, such as “One More Kiss” and “Sincere,” made the *Billboard* charts.

- B. The character of Birdie himself is a peculiar parody of two different entertainers, and the name *Conrad Birdie* is a takeoff on the name of a third person, country singer Conway Twitty. Of course, we know that Elvis Presley is caricatured by Birdie, and his bellowing also brings to mind Marlon Brando in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.
- C. Broadway historians often point to *Hair* as the first rock musical, but it wasn't—*Bye Bye Birdie* was. Paradoxically, *Bye Bye Birdie* was both a rock musical and an anti-rock musical, depending on the audience and its mindset.
- D. With a score by composer Charles Strouse and lyricist Lee Adams, *Birdie* opened at the Martin Beck Theatre on April 14, 1960, running for 607 performances. It is faced-paced and filled with variety.
 - 1. We have wonderful rock 'n' roll spoofs, such as “One Last Kiss” and “One Boy,” a sendoff on the 1-6-2-5 progressions used in songs by schmaltzy girl vocal groups.
 - 2. Paul Lynde, who played teenaged Kim's father, places a curse on the rock 'n' roll generation in “Kids,” a song wittily set to a Charleston beat, to show how old-fashioned he is.
 - 3. Maintaining the Rodgers and Hammerstein tradition, Chita Rivera, Albert's secretary, is showcased in two ballets. The first is entitled “How to Kill a Man,” in which she vents her frustration with her husband-to-be, Albert, played by Dick Van Dyke. The second involves her in a comic near-orgy at a Shriner's convention.
- E. *Bye Bye Birdie* is a show that leaves audiences dancing out of the theater and whistling down the street. The epidemic of revivals during the beginning of the 21st century seems to indicate that such shows are back!

III. On May 3, 1960, the longest-running musical in the history of theater opened at the tiny 150-seat Sullivan Street Playhouse in Greenwich Village, remaining there for 40 years.

- A. *The Fantasticks* did not make the kind of money that such productions as *South Pacific* or *My Fair Lady* had made, primarily because it was performed in such a minuscule house.

- B. Everything about *The Fantasticks* is intimate—the orchestra consists of a harp and a piano, and the cast has usually remained at eight people. The story is based on Edmond Rostand’s play of 1894, *Les Romanesques*, which in turn, was based on *Romeo and Juliet*, considerably lightened up by not killing off the leads.
 - 1. In this variation, the neighboring fathers pretend to be bitter enemies to make sure that their children will rebel against them by falling in love with each other.
 - 2. The fathers hire an actor, a monosyllabic American Indian, and a masked swordsman to pretend to abduct Luisa so that Matt can prove his valor.
- C. Although the characters are “types,” the show doesn’t deal in cliché. Its partly-in-verse scripts are full of delightful wordplay and more than a little bizarre. Unquestionably, it’s an “artsy” show, but when the house lights come down, it’s delightful, easy to enjoy, and funny.
- D. Some of the songs were popular outside the show. Ed Ames scored a top-10 hit with “Try to Remember,” and Barbra Streisand made a moving recording of “Soon It’s Gonna Rain.”

IV. On December 3, 1960, John F. Kennedy’s favorite musical appeared on Broadway, Lerner and Loewe’s *Camelot*.

- A. T. H. White based his novel *The Once and Future King* on Thomas Mallory’s centuries-old book *Le Morte D’Arthur* (*The Death of Arthur*). White saw the central theme of Mallory’s book as a quest to find an antidote to war—a perfect theme for the Cold War era.
- B. The show ran for 873 performances at the Majestic Theatre. It starred Richard Burton and Julie Andrews as Arthur and Guinevere and Roddy McDowell as a delightfully evil Mordred. Robert Goulet’s arrogant, egotistical Lancelot stole the show when he sang “C’est Moi!”
- C. Having succeeded so well with a non-singing singer in *My Fair Lady*, Lerner and Loewe repeated the triumph with Richard Burton, whose resonant speaking voice and rhythmic subtlety made even a schmaltzy, anti-feminist song, such as “How to Handle a Woman,” bowl over his audiences.

- D. Guinevere's songs—the ironic “Simple Joys of Maidenhood” and the suggestive “Lusty Month of May”—showed that *My Fair Lady* had taught Lerner and Loewe how to show off one of the theater's greatest voices to its best advantage. Julie Andrews never sounded better.
 - E. In the story, Arthur attempts to bring the various warring factions in medieval England together in Camelot. The *Pax Anglica* imposed by Arthur is destroyed by a love triangle. Guinevere, Arthur's wife, has an affair with a handsome, young knight, Lancelot. The affair and Mordred's scheming result in the destruction of Camelot.
 - F. The show was larger than life, with 56 in the cast and 33 in the orchestra; it was produced for around a half million dollars. To put that figure in perspective, even *The King and I*, an extremely lavish musical, didn't reach \$400,000.
- V. On May 8, 1962, at the Alvin Theatre, a show appeared that proved Stephen Sondheim was more than a lyricist.
- A. *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* ran for 964 performances and contained Sondheim's most tuneful score to date. The book was written by Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbart, the team who created *M*A*S*H*.
 - B. In this show, ancient Roman farce is combined with shtick from a 1930s burlesque show. This begins with the title itself—a typical opener by a moldy second banana. The characters, too, are right out of an ancient Roman burlesque show, had there been such a thing.
- VI. The hit of the decade and the show that broke *My Fair Lady*'s record was *Hello, Dolly!*. With music and lyrics by Jerry Herman, it opened at the St. James Theatre and ran for 2,844 performances.
- A. In 1938, Thornton Wilder had written a play called *The Merchant of Yonkers*; 17 years later, he rewrote it, giving Dolly Levi a larger part and calling it *The Matchmaker*. That title is all we need to know about the plot of the play on which this musical is based.
 - B. What set this show apart from everything else on Broadway during this decade was Gower Champion's staging, choreography, and direction. Even if we include Champion's final work for 42nd Street, *Hello, Dolly!* stands out as his best.

- C. Recall Dolly's famous restaurant sequence that starts with "The Waiter's Gallop," conducted with pomp by the haughty headwaiter and broken into by scenes among the restaurant's clientele. All this eventually leads to the title song; in the Gilbert and Sullivan manner, Dolly sings the song to the chorus and the chorus sings back to her.
- D. Before we leave *Hello, Dolly!*, we listen to an interview that Jerry Herman gave in 1996, looking back on the incredible success of his first Broadway show.

VII. *Fiddler on the Roof* from 1964 is a milestone in musical theater, and not just because it racked up 3,242 performances at the Imperial Theatre.

- A. Set in 1905, in the Jewish village of Anatevka, Russia, this show deals mainly with the efforts of Tevye, a milkman played by Zero Mostel; Tevye's wife, Golde; and their five daughters to cope with their impoverished but proud existence. They do not know, nor does the audience, that the pogroms are about to bring the Cossacks to do away with Anatevka's way of life.
- B. The plot summary sounds dreary, but the show is certainly not; the characters remained undefeated, and regardless of the subject matter, the treatment is comic. Tevye and Anatevka, after all, are the creations of Sholom Aleichem, Russia's greatest comic writer during the early years of the 20th century.
- C. The show was directed and choreographed by Jerome Robbins; the dancing isn't as difficult and athletic as Robbins's work for *West Side Story*, but it is just as unique and memorable.
- D. *Fiddler on the Roof* does not have a "No Business Like Show Business" finale. On the emptying stage, the people we have come to know look at each other, then march off in different directions. Of course, that's exactly what the early-20th-century Russian Jews did in real life, including Sholom Aleichem himself.
- E. In *Fiddler's* quiet finale, Tevye and his family are the last to leave. As Tevye pushes his wagon off stage, the Fiddler appears magically from behind Tevye's wagon. We know now that he is the symbol of tradition.

VIII. No show could be more unlike *Fiddler* than 1965's blockbuster *Man of La Mancha*. Premiering at the Washington Square Theatre in

Greenwich Village on November 22, it ran for 2,328 performances, the third longest-running musical of the 1960s.

- A. With a score by Mitch Leigh and lyrics by Dale Wasserman, the show starred Richard Kiley and Joan Dennier. It is almost as dark as Sondheim's 1979 musical creep show, *Sweeney Todd*.
- B. Kiley played both Cervantes, the Spanish Inquisition-era writer of *Don Quixote*, and Don Quixote himself. Not only is the story dark, but even the stage is. Howard Bay's brilliantly used lighting creates pockets of visibility among the depressing, dark stone in the dungeon. The costumes are extremely important because the drab set never changes, and there is almost no choreography.
- C. Set during the Inquisition, the show is about the totalitarian oppression of individuals. *Man of La Mancha*'s protagonist is Cervantes himself, using his imprisonment to enact the story of his novel, *Don Quixote*. Terror looms above the prisoners in the form of the lowering drawbridge, heard when a prisoner is dragged off to his death.
- D. The shadowy prison is the show's setting; the scenes from the adventures of Cervantes's fictional character Don Quixote are the show's decoration. The show's content involves Cervantes's ability to stand up to the tortures of the Inquisition.
- E. Another innovation in this show is that it's played in real time, without an intermission. Cervantes's two hours on stage equal his two hours in prison, during which he undergoes a mock trial by his fellow prisoners. His defense is drawn from short scenes excerpted from his great novel.
- F. What does all this tilting at windmills mean? As Oscar Hammerstein once said in a far lighter vein, "You gotta have a dream...." The Enchanter (or the truth teller) in this story strips Quixote of his pretensions and makes him see himself as he is, a bloated, old nobody. We despise the truth teller and feel sympathy for Quixote's need to believe that he is more than he is. Quixote's delusion, or faith, sustains him and helps Cervantes survive the Inquisition.
- G. With no choreography of note, little in the way of costumes or scenery, and a dark, depressing story, only the songs can bring a spark to this show, and they do.

1. *Man of La Mancha* requires real singers if the music is to bring some light into the dungeon. “The Impossible Dream” requires power and range. “Dulcinea” requires both these things combined with tenderness. And “Little Bird, Little Bird” requires a flamenco singer’s brassy vocal cords.
2. If the bolero beat of “Impossible Dream” or the flamenco beat of “Little Bird” is closer in style to 20th-century Spain than to the Spain of the Inquisition, we can easily forgive Mitch Leigh. These songs make the story more accessible to a modern audience.
3. We listen to an interview with Mitch Leigh, talking about why he decided to create a more contemporary Spanish sound for *Man of La Mancha*.

IX. The year 1966 brought us Kander and Ebb’s *Cabaret*, a show that ran at the Broadhurst Theatre for 1,165 performances and has undergone several revivals.

- A. The transvestites, the homosexuality, the strange makeup on Joel Grey’s emcee, the general decadence, and the sense that Nazi Germany has triumphed make this show the most complete break with the Rodgers and Hammerstein tradition to date. Entering the cabaret, we find ourselves in a repulsive place, a place where, under the surface frivolity, lie utter degradation and hopelessness.
- B. On Broadway, Jill Hayworth played Sally, and Joel Grey played the epicene Master of Ceremonies, opening the show with “*Wilkommen*.” In the opening, the song is a lively, Kurt-Weill-type, European 1920s pseudo-jazz number; at the show’s finale, “*Wilkommen*” is transformed into a cacophony of dissonance. The world is falling apart, and the audience has entered a nightmare.
- C. In 1957, critics were disturbed by *West Side Story*’s unwholesomeness, but the songs of *Cabaret* made *West Side Story* look like *Leave It to Beaver*.
 1. “Tomorrow Belongs to Me” uses a hymn-like melody by John Kander, but the lyrics lead us to the tomorrow of triumphant Nazi Germany.
 2. “Money, Money” repeats the word *money* so often that we find ourselves irritated by the machine-gun rhythm and the blaring declaration of selfishness; we inwardly rebel against

this song of greed—which is exactly what the songwriters want us to do.

3. “If You Could See Her” is so subtly ironic that, if you miss the final six words, you lose the point. Those words are, “she wouldn’t look Jewish at all!”
- D. The original *Cabaret* ended with the Nazi takeover of Germany. The audience knew that the decadence would be replaced by savagery and cruelty. In the 1999 Broadway revival, the ending is even more chilling: In the final moments, as the cabaret dissolves into chaos, the emcee appears in striped prison pajamas, with the Star of David on his chest. From the back of the stage is heard the hiss of the gas chamber as the emcee walks toward it.
- X. The fact that the 1960s began with *Bye Bye Birdie* and ended with *Hair* is a reflection of America’s shift in values. The former makes light of rock ’n’ roll; the latter deifies it.
 - A. Less dark than *Cabaret* but just as raunchy, *Hair* racked up 1,750 performances at Broadway’s Biltmore Theatre. During a period when deluded youth thought that a brave new world of peace, love, and benevolent anarchy might possibly be around the corner, *Hair* seemed liberating and hopeful. Now, *Hair* seems like one of the most dated shows of the second half of the 20th century.
 - B. In the 1960s, however, *Hair* was the show to see, drawing in huge audiences. “Good Morning Starshine” was full of drippy lyrics, but these un-hip, pseudo-bop syllables were sung as though they weren’t the least bit square. “Let the Sunshine In” was so simple that teenagers repeated it endlessly.
 - C. The show had a stage full of young performers labeling themselves as “hippies,” smoking grass and being “free,” which meant taking off their clothing and interacting with the audience.
 - D. Galt MacDermot wrote the music, and Jerome Ragni and James Rado wrote the lyrics and the book. There were genuine protest songs, staged with humor. At the close of the song “Air,” for example, everybody on stage coughs. The song “Initials” brings together LBJ and LSD. “Colored Spade” criticizes racist epithets by using them, as comedian Lenny Bruce had done a few years earlier.

- E. The beat is a rock beat, but is this a rock musical? I think it is, though the lyrics are far cleverer than most rock lyrics, and the music is a little less ear-shattering. Because the writers want us to listen to what they have to say, they write in a relatively literate manner and mute their primal screams.
- F. *Hair* grew out of the emotional turmoil of the Vietnam War years, with their strong antiestablishment, drug-influenced, sex-obsessed ethos. With a barely discernable story line, the show celebrates the lifestyles of “flower children” who welcome the Age of Aquarius by opposing the work ethos, conventional standards of behavior and dress, and the draft.
- G. The audience at *Hair* (most of it) responded as a unit, writhing along with the cast. In its small way, *Hair* may have helped end the war, but unfortunately, I think it also helped created a divisiveness, a laxness, and a self-destructiveness that plague our society to this day.

Suggested Reading:

Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*.

Kurt Gänzl, *Song/Dance*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How did the Vietnam War affect the musical theater of the 1960s?
2. Compare the “darker” and “lighter” shows of the 1960s.

Lecture Sixteen

Big Bucks and Long Runs (1970s–Present)

Scope: The final years of the 20th century saw the development of the *concept musical*, a genre created by, among others, Stephen Sondheim and exemplified by such shows as *Company*, *Cats*, and *A Chorus Line*. Sondheim has also revitalized American musical theater in other ways, exploring themes, such as mass murder and presidential assassination, that no other creator of musicals has dared to touch. Other trends in the late 20th century include a European influence on the American stage, a continuing interest in “dark” musicals, and the revival of old film musicals in Broadway shows. The late 1990s and early years of the 21st century seem to be bringing a much-needed light touch back to Broadway, with such shows as *The Producers* and the final musical we’ll discuss in these lectures, *Wicked*.

Outline

- I. The year 1970 gave Broadway the first of five collaborations between composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim and producer/director Hal Prince. These five shows are: *Company* (1970), *Follies* (1971), *A Little Night Music* (1973), *Pacific Overtures* (1976), and *Sweeney Todd* (1979).
 - A. Sondheim and Prince helped create a genre that only fairly recently has acquired a label: the *concept musical*. We’ll define this term and describe a little about *Company* to help make it more concrete.
 - B. The concept musical is a little like a revue with a serious theme. It need not have a plot, though it might have the thread of one. *Company* concerns Robert, a protagonist with whom the audience has little sympathy.
 - C. Sondheim’s concept musicals are not the traditional situation-conflict-resolution stories, with their build toward a climax and a satisfying denouement. That’s artifice. Sondheim’s presentations are more like life—or, at least, life as it exists for Sondheim: disjointed, dissatisfying, and often boring.
 - D. Though Sondheim’s musicals don’t make money (with the exception of *A Funny Thing* and his early collaborations), they are

clever (often brilliant) and always artfully done. Some, like *Sweeney Todd*, are tuneful enough to compensate for the gory subject matter.

- E. *Company* was pieced together from parts of 11 one-act plays George Furth had written previously, unified by the character Robert.

1. The couples in this show live in stylized cubes that make use of stairways, an elevator, and film projections onto the set. We assume the scene is an apartment building. The couples are less than idyllically happy; the general philosophy, expressed by Robert in the show's closing song, "Being Alive," is that marriage stinks, but being alone is worse.
2. Robert's problem is the same one that plagued most of the characters in the HBO series *Sex and the City*—an inability to make a commitment. The subject of *Company* is marriage, and one would think the subject of marriage might be romance, but this is not a romantic show. The separate lives of the characters intersect but never seem to connect.
3. The not-particularly-witty but often zippy repartee of *Company* keeps the show's momentum rolling along but going nowhere in particular. At one point, three women join forces at a microphone as if they were the Andrews Sisters and sing, at a pace too fast for anything but a frenetic delivery, "You Could Drive a Person Crazy." It's one of the most delightful spots in the show, a moment that forces you to smile.

- F. What has Sondheim done to revitalize American musical theater? He has used themes no previous creator of musicals has dared to use: mass murder in *Sweeney Todd*, presidential assassination in *Assassins*, the limits and definition of sanity in *Anyone Can Whistle*. Sondheim remains controversial, but he is unquestionably important.

- II. In 1971, the year after Sondheim's *Company*, a young Andrew Lloyd Webber mounted *Jesus Christ Superstar* at the Mark Hellinger Theatre, where it ran for 720 performances. In this brief history, we've tried, in general, to focus on Broadway musicals that originated in America, but we'll spend a little time on the British Webber because his shows have set Broadway attendance records.

- A. The history of *Jesus Christ Superstar* begins after composer Webber's and lyricist Tim Rice's moderate success in England with *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. With the success of *Joseph*, they looked around for another biblical story. Rice decided on the last six days of Jesus' life, but with Judas as the central character.
- B. The theme of betrayal intrigued Tim Rice. Was there something more to the story of Judas's betrayal of Jesus than a handful of silver coins?
- C. Murray Head, who had played in the London production of *Hair*, had decided to record the show's title song, which was then simply called *Jesus Christ*. Then, shortly before the recording session, Rice had the Andy Warholian inspiration to call it *Jesus Christ Superstar*—a title immediately memorable and unquestionably attention-getting. It is sung from Judas's point of view.
- D. There is a suggestion, in both the song and the show, that Judas was inwardly aware that he was making himself eternally despised but that his action was, in a perverse sense, a sacrifice that would, in the end, bring Jesus a fame beyond the Romans' comprehension.
- E. The single was followed by an LP that contained new songs covering other events related to those final days in Christ's life.
1. "Everything's All Right," in 5/4 time, obviously inspired by the Brubeck Quartet's "Take Five," gave us a tender moment and a lovely tune.
 2. "Hosanna" was a lyrical shout that resembled the chants sung by the flower children in San Francisco in the mid-1960s. But the shifts from "Ho-sanna" to "Hey-sanna" and such lines as "Hey J.C., won't you smile at me?" turn the sacred into the profane.
 3. Jesus' solo, "Gethsemane," takes the limelight off Judas and makes the Christ character fully human.
- F. With the success of the LP, Webber and Rice took the songs to the United States to be performed as a complete musical theater piece, directed by Tom O'Horgan, the man who had directed *Hair*. It starred Jeff Fenholt as Christ, Yvonne Elliman as Mary Magdalene, and Ben Vereen as Judas. Mary's "I Don't Know How

to Love Him” became a hit even before the show reached Broadway.

- G. If Sondheim appeals to a discerning minority, Webber creates shows that appeal to the masses as has no other writer of musicals since Rodgers and Hammerstein.

III. Now, let’s turn to *A Chorus Line*, a unique concept with memorable music by Marvin Hamlisch.

- A. “What I Did for Love” became a cabaret standard and “One” became the “Tea for Two” of 1975, the ultimate hoofers’ anthem.
- B. Like *Company*, *A Chorus Line* is a series of essentially disjointed stories, this time held together by the fact that nearly all the characters are fledgling dancers. The uniqueness of the stories that each of them tells grows out of the fact that they are distillations of taped interviews with real dancers talking about their lives.

IV. The year *A Chorus Line* appeared, *Chicago* also premiered, with a score by Kander and Ebb and directed by Bob Fosse. Originally running 898 performances at the 46th Street Theatre, *Chicago* has been revived on and off Broadway and made into one of the most talked-about film musicals of the past 20 years.

- A. Before I talk about *Chicago*, let’s listen to a song from its antecedent, the 1926 Maureen Dallas Watkins play of the same name. This song is “Chicago,” with music and lyrics by Fred Fischer.
- B. In the 1975 Broadway musical version of *Chicago*, Gwen Verdon played Roxxy Hart, and Jerry Orbach played the razzle-dazzle lawyer Billy Flynn.
- C. If this Kander and Ebb show wasn’t filled with 1920s-style vaudeville music, we might be tempted to call it an opera. The songs tell the story, and long sections of the show proceed with little or no dialogue.
- D. Interestingly, the show’s songs exist on two levels, one accessible to younger theatergoers and the other accessible only to the over-55 crowd. Many of the songs are deliberate takeoffs on classic pieces performed by performers of the 1920s; some were revived by those same performers in films of the 1940s and 1950s. Those old enough to be familiar with these vaudevillians have the pleasure of seeing things in the show that are visible only to them.

1. Gwen Verdon sits on the piano for “Funny Honey,” mimicking Helen Morgan who sat on the piano to sing “Bill” from *Show Boat*.
 2. “Mr. Cellophane,” sung by Roxy Hart’s cuckolded husband, is awfully reminiscent of Bert Williams’s “Nobody.”
 3. “When You’re Good to Mama” is sung in the style of Sophie Tucker. Even the song title is a takeoff on a Sophie Tucker hit called “You’ve Got To See Mamma Ev’ry Night (or you can’t see Mamma at all.)”
 4. We hear the original 1923 “You’ve Got to See Mamma Ev’ry Night,” with music by Con Conrad and lyrics by Billy Rose.
 5. The musical *Chicago* unmasks hypocrisy with crude and obvious irony. Billy Flynn sings “All I Care about Is Love” in the style of Ted Lewis singing his Greenwich Village Follies hit “When My Baby Smiles at Me,” and of course, what Billy Flynn really cares about is money and his own notoriety.
- V. A current that charges Broadway during the final decades of the 20th century is the reworking of old film musicals into Broadway musicals.
- A. Earlier, the procedure was to turn a stage musical into a film musical, thereby extending the show’s life and earnings. Then, beginning in the 1970s, that trend was reversed, for two reasons:
 1. First, it cost so much more to make a musical that producers could reduce their costs by using a property that had already gone through initial editing and revision.
 2. Further, with the tremendous demand for classic revivals, the old film musicals seemed surer of success because of their popular scores and because of their previous association with Hollywood’s stars.
 - B. Sometimes, as in the case of *42nd Street*, this worked beautifully; other times, as in the case of *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, it didn’t. Among the reverse-the-trend musicals were *High Society*, *Singin’ in the Rain*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *State Fair*, and *The Lion King*.
- VI. Let’s turn to one of the big successes, artistically and financially, of the 1980s. *42nd Street* premiered at the Winter Garden Theatre on August 25, 1980 [sic], where it continued for 3,486 performances.
- A. Jerry Orbach played the director, Tammy Grimes played the star who breaks her leg, and the unknown chorus girl who gets to

replace the star was played by Wanda Richert. It was another David Merrick-produced and Gower Champion-directed super-musical.

1. The score for *42nd Street* was written by the unsung genius of film musicals, Harry Warren. Among his perfectly crafted melodies, supported by modern and lush harmonies, are “Serenade in Blue,” “There’ll Never Be Another You,” “September in the Rain,” and “I Only Have Eyes for You.”
 2. The lyrics of *42nd Street* were written by Al Dubin, whose relationship with Warren is reminiscent of that of Richard Rodgers and Larry Hart. Warren was steady and dependable; Dubin was a glutton and an alcoholic. Their original score for the 1933 film *42nd Street* was supplemented on Broadway by songs from several of their other 1930s Warner Brothers films, including *Lullaby of Broadway*.
 3. In the show *42nd Street*, Peggy Sawyer is in Grand Central Terminal, sitting on her suitcase, about to give up on New York and Broadway. The director, Jerry Orbach, appears, to beg her to return and save the show.
 4. Orbach sings, “Come on along and listen to...the lullaby of Broadway,” and the stage fills with electricity. The rest of the cast appears from all directions. The number builds until it fills the auditorium with smiles.
- B.** We should mention a little about the great and powerful—and totally untrustworthy—David Merrick, Broadway’s greatest producer of the 1960s to late 1970s.
1. A critic once said, “David Merrick would destroy you for a Cracker Jack prize if the mood struck him,” but he also takes fabulous risks. The capital for *42nd Street* came entirely out of his pocket—all \$2.5 million of it.
 2. However, what David Merrick did on the night *42nd Street* opened was unforgivable. We hear the star of the show, Tammy Grimes, describe his tasteless grab for publicity in announcing the death of director Gower Champion onstage after the final curtain call.

VII. Having talked about shows that were film musicals, let’s go back one year, to 1979, and look at Sondheim again.

- A. *Sweeney Todd* is Sondheim simultaneously at his darkest and at his most melodious. His lyrics in this show are clever, and the music is dramatic and compelling. The opening ballad of *Sweeney Todd* sets the tone for the entire show—both terrifying and funny.
- B. *Sweeney Todd* is easily the most grisly musical ever to do a successful run on Broadway and, unquestionably, one of Sondheim's best. Premiering at the Uris Theatre on March 1, 1979, it ran for 557 performances.
- C. The operatic *Sweeney Todd* was sung by a mad barber (played by Len Cariou) who returns home from an unjust imprisonment, determined to get back at the world. Mrs. Lovett (played by Angela Lansbury) becomes his accomplice in murder, helping him to turn corpses into meat pies. All of this is accomplished through broad comedy.

VIII. Before we close, let's look at a blockbuster: The critical response paralleled the audience response for *The Producers*, which premiered at the St. James Theatre in 2001.

- A. *The Producers* won an incredible 12 Tony Awards and Mel Brooks's new songs simply added luster to a story that had already become a classic film comedy. This is a show about doing a show called *Springtime for Hitler*; it sounds like a sure-fire failure for a musical which, in *The Producers*, it's supposed to be. The idea is that Max (Nathan Lane) and Leo (Matthew Broderick) plan for the show to fail so that they can make off with the "angels" investment. The problem is that, to their chagrin, the show becomes a hit.
- B. This show has everything that only Mel Brooks could imagine, including Adolf Hitler, reincarnated as a vaudevillian, and a chorus of "little old ladies" tapping in unison with the feet of their aluminum walkers.

IX. Knowing that we have to stop somewhere, let's end with a recent blockbuster that has played to sold-out houses at the Gershwin Theatre. The show, with music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz and book by Winnie Holzman, is *Wicked*.

- A. Gregory Maguire's 1995 novel *Wicked* explored the tortured history of the green-skinned, so-called "wicked" Witch of the West, called Elphaba by Maguire. She and the good witch, Glinda,

used to be friends. We see the friendship from Elphaba's point of view and are forced to reevaluate our picture of her.

- B. Winnie Holzman ably adapted the story. Eugene Lee's set for the show is filled with "futuristic" machinery, overseen by a ferocious metal dragon that rests on top of the proscenium. Susan Hilferty created costumes for the ensemble that make them look, in one critic's description, "like the creeping, mutating figures in a Hieronymus Bosch painting." Wayne Cilento's munchkin choreography consists of a series of rather spasmodic movements, each ending in a bizarre pose.
 - C. The show has been described as having "more glitter than heart," but no show can be successful for this long without a heart. Stephen Schwartz's music, like Marvin Hamlisch's, has seldom been singled out for critical praise, but it does exactly what it needs to do in order to make this musical work.
 - D. With the end of the course in sight, we have a special treat. Composer/lyricist Stephen Schwartz shares some backstage information on the evolution of the song "The Wizard and I" from *Wicked*. This tale has never before been told in public. The interview was done by Dave Wilkes in New York.
- X. Over the past 16 lectures, my challenge was to capture the evolution of musical theater. If many of your favorite shows weren't discussed, don't feel disappointed. Many of mine weren't either.
- A. For instance, I far prefer Jerry Herman's *Mame* to his *Hello, Dolly!*, but I had to represent him with a single show, and I chose the blockbuster. *Carousel* is my favorite Rodgers and Hammerstein show, as it was theirs, but I focused more on *Oklahoma!*.
 - B. The huge corporations who currently produce musicals bank on choreographers with such names as Michael Bennett, Susan Stroman, Tommy Tune, and Bob Fosse, despite the fact that Fosse has been dead for 25 years. The choreographer now dominates Broadway and sees his or her name on the marquee above the show's title.
 - C. To some extent, this trend is unhealthy. When the theater is a writer's theater, the songs, stories, and characters are more likely to be worth reviving in new productions by new choreographers

and directors. That the writer's art is less valued may be partially responsible for the limited number of interesting new songs on Broadway today.

- D.** Let me hasten to add that musical theater on Broadway is in no danger of disappearing. As to how the form will change over the next few decades, we're all in the dark, which is exactly where we need to be in order to enjoy the show, whatever it might be.

Suggested Reading:

Gerald M. Berkowitz, *New Broadways*.

Steven Suskin, *More Opening Nights on Broadway*.

Questions to Consider:

1. In terms of European influence, how is the end of the 20th century like and unlike the end of the 19th century?
2. Define the *concept musical* and give reasons why *A Chorus Line* is considered, perhaps, the most successful example to date.

Timeline

- 1828 Thomas Dartmouth Rice dons blackface, learns plantation dances, and sings his pre-ragtime song “Jump Jim Crow.”
- 1842 Daniel Decatur Emmett expands Rice’s Jim Crow act and creates America’s first minstrel show.
- 1866 *The Black Crook*, America’s first hit musical, appears at Niblo’s Garden in New York City.
- 1881 Tony Pastor gives birth to vaudeville by opening his music hall in New York City’s Union Square.
- 1889 Charles K. Harris writes the first song to sell a million copies of sheet music, thus firmly establishing an interdependence between the music publishing industry and the Broadway musical stage.
- 1904 George M. Cohan creates his first hit Broadway musical, *Little Johnny Jones*.
- 1914 Irving Berlin writes his first Broadway show, *Watch Your Step*, a dance-focused musical starring Vernon and Irene Castle.
- 1914 Kern’s first classic song, “They Didn’t Believe Me,” appears as an interpolation in the Broadway show *The Girl from Utah*.
- 1915 Cole Porter mounts his first Broadway show, a flop called *See America First*.

1918	George Gershwin writes “Swanee,” a song that Jolson made into an international hit.
1924	Richard Rodgers and Larry Hart’s “Manhattan” becomes the hit of the Garrick Gaieties.
1927	<i>Show Boat</i> , the first serious integrated book musical, appears on Broadway.
1928	With the production of Warner Brothers’ <i>The Jazz Singer</i> , the birth of sound movies precipitates the death of vaudeville.
1931	George and Ira Gershwin’s Broadway show <i>Of Thee I Sing</i> wins the first Pulitzer Prize ever given to a musical.
1935	Gershwin’s <i>Porgy and Bess</i> is an artistic success and a critical and financial failure.
1940	The age of the anti-hero begins with Rodgers and Hart’s <i>Pal Joey</i> , the story of a sleazy, self-absorbed, second-rate performer in a seedy nightclub.
1943	Larry Hart dies, and Richard Rodgers begins his long and illustrious career with Oscar Hammerstein, starting with <i>Oklahoma!</i> .
1946	Irvin Berlin writes his greatest musical, <i>Annie Get Your Gun</i> .
1948	Cole Porter mounts his masterwork, <i>Kiss Me, Kate</i> .
1949	Rodgers and Hammerstein end the decade with their fourth collaboration, <i>South Pacific</i> .

- 1950 Frank Loesser writes music and lyrics to his most successful show, *Guys and Dolls*.
- 1950 Broadway is treated to Gertrude Lawrence's and Yul Brynner's performances in *The King and I*.
- 1956 The Lerner and Loewe show that Brooks Atkinson called "the greatest musical of the century" appears—*My Fair Lady*.
- 1957 The Bernstein/ Robbins/ Laurents/ Sondheim collaboration confuses the critics because of its dark, pessimistic tone, but the show proves to be tremendously influential in the remainder of the Broadway century—*West Side Story*.
- 1959 Stephen Sondheim writes lyrics to Jule Styne's music for *Gypsy*.
- 1959 The decade ends with Hammerstein's death; unfortunately, he does not live to see *The Sound of Music*, his final collaboration with Richard Rodgers.
- 1960 *The Fantasticks* opens its 40-year run at the tiny (150-seat) Sullivan Street Playhouse in Greenwich Village.
- 1962 For his first solo effort as composer and lyricist, Stephen Sondheim writes a brilliant score for the hilarious musical *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.
- 1964 Jerry Herman writes music and lyrics for the biggest show of the decade to date—*Hello, Dolly!*.

1964	Broadway is treated to one of the 20th century's most enduring and beloved musicals— <i>Fiddler on the Roof</i> .
1966	<i>Cabaret</i> , the biggest success of Kander and Ebb's early career, sustains the pessimistic tone established by <i>West Side Story</i> in 1957.
1968	The rebellious spirit of the Vietnam era is encapsulated in the rock musical <i>Hair</i> .
1971	The team of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice (music and lyrics) takes its first trip together across the Atlantic to mount <i>Jesus Christ Superstar</i> at the Mark Hellinger Theatre.
1975	<i>A Chorus Line</i> begins its 15-year run on Broadway, breaking attendance records and winning the Pulitzer Prize.
1982	<i>Cats</i> , another Webber and Rice production, becomes the “must-see” show on Broadway.
1987	The team of Claude-Michel Schönberg and Herbert Kretzmer mounts <i>Les Misérables</i> at the Broadway Theatre.
1988	With <i>The Phantom of the Opera</i> , it becomes clear that American musical theater, for the next decade, will be dominated by Andrew Lloyd Webber.
1989	Jerome Robbins firmly asserts the importance of the choreographer, whose name, by the 1990s, often appears above the title of the show.

- 1989 *Miss Saigon*, another Claude-Michel Schönberg musical, dark, tragic, and compelling, runs on Broadway for 11 years.
- 1993 Kander and Ebb's *Kiss of the Spider Woman* continues the gay subject matter and the dark tone of their first success, *Cabaret*; this show focuses on the daydreams of a transvestite locked in a South American prison cell.
- 1998 Disney turns its blockbuster film *The Lion King* into an ingeniously staged Broadway musical.
- 1999 *Fosse*, another musical tribute to a choreographer, appears during a period when Susan Stroman dominates the marquees as the most prominent Broadway choreographer of the 1990s.
- 2001 Mel Brooks's *The Producers* may have dark and perverse underpinnings, but this musical about making a musical about Adolf Hitler is a laugh-a-minute show with well-crafted, memorable songs; the darkness is pierced with light.
- 2002 Twyla Tharp choreographs the old top-40 hits of Billy Joel to create the revue-ish musical *Movin' Out*.
- 2002 *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, based on the 1967 Julie Andrews film, brings lightness and gaiety back to Broadway; after a decade of well-crafted but dark musicals, the first decade of the 21st century has audiences exiting the theater whistling and grinning.

2003 *Wicked*, a sympathetic view of the
Wicked Witch of the West, manages,
by 2004, to make back its incredible
\$14 million investment and, since then,
turns pure profit; this dark comedy was
Broadway's number-one musical as of
2005.

Glossary

accent: To emphasize a note.

altered chord: A chord in which one or more tones has been raised or lowered. For example, C–E–G is a C-major triad, while C–E–G-flat is a C-major triad with a flattened fifth (an altered chord).

appoggiatura: A non-harmonic grace note that resolves stepwise to a chord tone (a harmonic note).

blue note: The lowered third, seventh, and (sometimes) fifth degrees of a major scale that help create the characteristic sound of the blues.

chord: Three or more different tones sounded simultaneously.

concept musical: A presentation in which normal sequential storytelling is abandoned in favor of events connected by a common theme. Examples are Stephen Sondheim's *Company*, which revolves around the vicissitudes of people who all happen to dwell in the same apartment building, and *A Chorus Line*, whose vignettes are created by young dancers revealing themselves as they audition for parts in a musical.

counterpoint: See **polyphonic**. A musical composition with two or more melodies played simultaneously.

extended chord: A chord more complex than the triad, containing four, five, six, or more different tones.

form: The organization and structure of a musical composition.

harmonic rhythm: The frequency with which harmonies change within a piece of music.

harmony: The results produced when different tones are sounded simultaneously.

homophonic: Music with one melodic part that is supported by a chordal accompaniment.

integrated musical: A musical in which dialogue, song, and dance all directly contribute to telling the story.

key: The tonal center of a composition. (The first note of a scale is the *keynote*.) Most often, a song will end on the keynote.

major triad: A triad in which the root and the third consist of the first and third steps of the major scale (for example, C–E–G).

measure: The notes and rests between two bar lines. (A measure here is also referred to as a *bar*.)

meter: The pattern of beats by which the movement of a musical composition is measured. Most of the songs heard and discussed in this course move in a pattern that equals two beats per measure, three beats per measure, or four beats per measure. The two-beat songs are usually called *marches*; the three-beat songs are usually called *waltzes*.

minor triad: A triad in which the third has been lowered (for example, C–E-flat–G).

modulation: To change key within a musical composition.

overture: In the case of a Broadway show, the overture is an orchestral composition created out of musical themes taken from songs in the show.

pentatonic scale: A scale having five different tones to the octave; the five black keys (in groups of two and three) are identical to the pentatonic scale.

polyphonic: Two or more melodic lines overlapping or sounding simultaneously.

step: A narrow melodic movement from one scale tone to the next (C–D equals a *whole* step; E–F equals a *half* step).

syncopation: An off-the-beat accent or an accent on a normally weak beat.

triad: A three-note chord consisting of a root, a third, and a fifth (for example, the first, third, and fifth notes of a major scale, C–E–G or F–A–C).

Biographical Notes

Andrews, Julie (1935–). Julie Andrews’s phenomenal voice was first heard in America when the British musical *The Boy Friend* played Broadway. After Mary Martin had turned down the lead in *My Fair Lady* (1956), Alan J. Lerner approached 19-year-old Andrews about doing the show. The rest is one of the most pleasant chapters in Broadway history.

Bayes, Nora (1880–1928). Vaudeville star, Ziegfeld Follies star, musical theater star, and one of America’s most successful pre-World War I recording stars. Bayes’s original song (co-written with her husband) “Shine on Harvest Moon” was one of the top-ten moneymakers of the first decade of the 20th century. George M. Cohan chose Nora Bayes to make a bestselling recording of his song “Over There” during World War I. Though accounting methods during this period may be questionable, Bayes’s recording of “Over There” appears to have been the number-one bestselling recording of the World War I era.

Berlin, Irving (1888–1989). Berlin was America’s most successful songwriter (music and lyrics) of the first half of the 20th century. Years after his death, a generation that knows none of the standards written by the other members of the big five (Gershwin, Rodgers, Kern, Porter, and Berlin) instantly recognizes such Berlin songs as “White Christmas,” “Easter Parade,” “There’s No Business Like Show Business,” and “God Bless America.” Berlin’s pre-World War I songs caught the spirit of ragtime as did those of no other songwriter. His musical theater masterwork, *Annie Get Your Gun*, is arguably the most “hit-packed” musical ever written.

Bernstein, Leonard (1918–1990). One of the few composers since Gershwin who could successfully work with equal facility in both classical and popular music. Bernstein’s most renowned theater score was his collaboration with Stephen Sondheim for *West Side Story*. As a music educator to the masses, he has no peers in the 20th century, leaving behind a treasure of televised lessons for both children and adults that run the gamut from Baroque composers and humor in music to jazz styles and musical theater.

Bland, James (1854–1911). Appearing near the end of the minstrel era, minstrel James Bland has often been called the “black Stephen Foster.”

Like Foster, he wrote timeless minstrel songs, including “Carry Me Back to Old Virginny” and “Oh, Them Golden Slippers.”

Bock, Jerry (1928–). (See **Harnick, Sheldon**.) Bock wrote for television and films before his songs were heard on Broadway.

Brice, Fannie (1891–1951). One of the best-loved figures of vaudeville and the Ziegfeld Follies, because of the remarkable versatility with which she stepped back and forth from wisecracking Jewish comedy to the tear-stained ballads of the Bowery. Brice’s life was dramatized in one Broadway musical—*Funny Girl* (1964), starring Barbra Streisand, and three films—*Rose of Washington Square* (1939), *Funny Girl* (1968), and *Funny Lady* (1975), which chronicled her later years.

Cantor, Eddie (1892–1964). One of America’s best-loved entertainers on Broadway, on the screen, on radio, and on recordings. Cantor introduced many first-rate standards, including the timeless song “Makin’ Whoopee.” In 1953, he was the subject of a Hollywood musical biography called *The Eddie Cantor Story*, starring Keefe Brasselle. In 1956, Cantor was awarded a special Oscar for his distinguished service to the film industry.

Champion, Gower (1919–1980). During the 1950s, Gower was half of the MGM dance team of Marge and Gower Champion. The Champions became known for their work in such films as *The Clouds Roll By* (1946) and *Show Boat* (1951). Gower left MGM after the golden age of film musicals to choreograph Broadway musicals. *Hello, Dolly!* (1964) owes much of its success to Champion’s choreography. Champion’s final show on Broadway was *42nd Street*.

Cohan, George M. (1878–1942). Cohan was responsible for an important shift in the development of the American musical. At a time when musicals were, essentially, a potpourri of songs tied together by creaky plots, Cohan wrote songs that grew directly out of his stories. The value of the stories and the value of many of the songs may be questionable, but the value of the man is not. Cohan represents stage two in the evolution of the musical, a necessary precursor to stage three, the truly integrated musical.

De Mille, Agnes (1905–1993). A member of the famous theatrical family that included her grandfather, 19th-century playwright Henry de Mille, and her uncle, director Cecil B. DeMille. With her background in classical ballet, Agnes revolutionized musical theater dance. She increased the importance of dance in the musical, as well as the prestige of the

choreographer, thus paving the way for Jerome Robbins, Bob Fosse, Gower Champion, Michael Bennett, and Susan Stroman, who is currently considered Broadway's most important choreographer.

Edwards, Gus (1879–1945). Famous vaudevillian and songwriter who is remembered for his kiddie shows, which starred Edwards and assorted child performers and always ended with his song “School Daze.” Edwards also composed “By the Light of the Silvery Moon” and “In My Merry Oldsmobile.”

Emmett, Daniel Decatur (1815–1904). Creator of the minstrel show and composer of what became the anthem of the South during the Civil War. An abolitionist from Mount Vernon, Ohio, Emmett later regretted writing what appeared to him to be the “battle cry of the enemy.” Lincoln appeased Emmett by having the White House orchestra play “Dixie” immediately after the South's surrender and announcing, “Now ‘Dixie’ belongs to the entire country.”

Fosse, Bob (1927–1987). Fosse first showed his gift for choreography in the number “Steam Heat” from *Pajama Game* (1954). He allowed his performers to dance with snapping fingers and clicking tongues, as well as their feet. Every part of the body, particularly the hips and shoulders, became important in his dances. The Fosse moves revolutionized theater dance for the final four decades of the 20th century.

Foster, Stephen (1826–1864). Foster was both America's first great popular songwriter and America's first full-time professional songwriter. If he owes his success not only to his talent but also to the rise of the minstrel show, we can say that the minstrel show owes *its* success, at least partially, to the drawing power of Foster's imaginative and well-crafted songs. When Thomas Edison perfected cylinder recordings, Foster's were among the first songs to be recorded. His tragic descent from affluence to drunkenness and poverty has been the basis for novels, plays, and films, and his melodies seem to have been the inevitable choices of barroom piano players in the B-westerns that Hollywood churned out during the 1940s and 1950s.

Frohman, Charles (1860–1915). The most important producer of musical theater productions during the first 15 years of the 20th century. Frohman discovered Jerome Kern and became his mentor. Their partnership might be compared to that of David Merrick and Jerry Herman or of Hal Prince and Stephen Sondheim.

Gershwin, George (1898–1937). George Gershwin was the only songwriter of the golden age to transcend successfully the limits of popular song form. In addition to writing such standards as “The Man I Love,” “A Foggy Day,” and “They Can’t Take That Away from Me,” he wrote some of the most popular concert works of the century, including *Rhapsody in Blue* and the ballet *An American in Paris*. Blending the sounds of the early-20th-century symphonic masters with the elements of blues and jazz, Gershwin wrote a unique opera, *Porgy and Bess*, which may be the finest and most permanent creation of its kind in the history of American music.

Gershwin, Ira (1896–1983). Brother of George, who survived him by more than 40 years and continued to write songs with Jerome Kern, Vernon Duke, Kurt Weill, and Harry Warren.

Hamlisch, Marvin (1944–). A composer, pianist, arranger, and conductor, Hamlisch composed the Scott Joplin score for the movie *The Sting* in 1973, which attracted the attention of choreographer/director Michael Bennett. Bennett encouraged Hamlisch to work with lyricist Ed Klaban to create music for a work that eventually came to be called *A Chorus Line*, which ran on Broadway for 15 years and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. Currently, Hamlisch is focusing on his career as a conductor.

Hammerstein, Oscar (1895–1960). Aside from his immeasurable contributions of libretto and lyrics for shows with Richard Rodgers in the 1940s and 1950s, Hammerstein has the distinction of being the guiding force behind the first modern musical, 1927’s *Show Boat*, written with composer Jerome Kern. (See **Rodgers and Hammerstein and Kern, Jerome.**)

Handy, William Christopher (1873–1958). With more than 1,500 recordings, Handy’s “St. Louis Blues” vies with “Stardust” as the most-recorded song of the 20th century. Musicologist Isaac Goldberg wrote (about the blues): “Handy is its Moses, not its Jehovah. It was he, first of musicians, [who] first codified the new spirit of African music and set it forth upon its conquest of the North.” If we see echoes of Gershwin in the great songwriters of the 1920s and 1930s, we see echoes of Handy in Gershwin himself. Singer Nat King Cole portrayed Handy in the 1958 film biography *St. Louis Blues*.

Harnick, Sheldon (1924–). Although he has made a name for himself as a lyricist, Harnick received a thorough musical education. Like his partner, Jerry Bock, he started by writing college musicals at Northwestern

University. His 1964 musical *Fiddler on the Roof* is the work for which he will be remembered. His lyrics are perfect character pieces and, like the great lyrics of Oscar Hammerstein, they help create brilliantly staged scenes without calling attention to themselves.

Harrigan, Ned (1844–1911). Creator and performer in the yearly Mulligan Guard forces that were the hit of Broadway in the 1870s and early 1880s. George M. Cohan’s famous song “H-A-Double R-I-G-A-N Spells Harrigan” was a tribute to his idol, Ned Harrigan.

Harris, Marion (1896–1944). Broadway, vaudeville, and cabaret headliner; one of Gershwin’s favorite singers; and perhaps, the first person to record Gershwin’s song “The Man I Love.” For its era, the Marion Harris singing style is quite understated and modern.

Hart, Lorenz (1895–1943). This distinguished first partner of Richard Rodgers was, along with Cole Porter, the wittiest and most sophisticated of Broadway lyricists. Hart’s lyrics created wit and worldliness through his blending of learned references and complex interval rhymes. His ability to rhyme words that shouldn’t rhyme has been equaled only by competitor Yip Harburg. In 1924’s “Manhattan,” Hart writes, “The great big city will never spoil...The dreams of a boy and goil.” In a 1924 song, “Any Old Place with You,” he writes, “I’d go ta hell fa ya...or Philadelphia.”

Hart, Tony (1855–1891). Though Hart’s humor had an Irish sensibility and even some of his biographers referred to him as Irish, Hart was Jewish; however, his thousands of Irish fans accepted him as an honorary Hibernian. Harrigan’s success was largely the result of Hart’s amazing comic abilities as a mimic and female impersonator.

Herbert, Victor (1859–1924). Herbert was the first classically trained musician to involve himself in popular music in America. Though he had little influence on those who followed him, he was the first important composer of the American musical stage. Working primarily in the operetta genre, he is, perhaps, best remembered for *Naughty Marietta*, which MGM made into a film starring Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy, and for *Babes in Toyland*, which continues to be revived in community theaters throughout the country during the Christmas season.

Herman, Jerry (1933–). Before writing his attendance-breaking show *Hello, Dolly!* (1964), Herman wrote special material (music and lyrics) for such stars as Tallulah Bankhead, Jane Froman, and Hermione Gingold.

Dolly was followed by *Mame*, another highly successful show with a theme song that reached the top of the pop charts. Herman's songs are among the last Broadway songs to become popular hits before rock 'n' roll nudged Broadway songs off the edge of a cliff.

Hogan, Ernest (1865–1909). Born Reuben Crowders in Bowling Green, Kentucky, as Ernest Hogan, Crowders moved to New York City, where he became a major writer, actor, singer, dancer, and director of all-black Broadway musicals during the first decade of the 20th century.

Jolson, Al (1886–1950). America's most popular entertainer during the decade before World War I, Jolson was also the first person during this period to do a one-man show on Broadway. He has the further distinction of having had two film biographies—*The Jolson Story* and *Jolson Sings Again*.

Jones, Ada (1873–1922). The leading female recording artist from 1905 to 1912. Her duets with Billy Murray are considered among the finest recordings of that era.

Kander and Ebb (John Kander, 1927– ; Fred Ebb, 1932–2004). Beginning with the hit musical *Cabaret*, the team of Kander and Ebb continued, throughout the 20th century, to produce blockbuster hit shows with dark themes and lively, memorable scores. Among these are *Chicago* and *Kiss of the Spider Woman*.

Kern, Jerome (1885–1945). Once described as a giant with one foot in Europe and the other in America, Kern's songs from *Show Boat* can be linked to European operetta ("We Could Make Believe," "Why Do I Love You?") and the new jazz-influenced American style ("Can't Help Lovin' That Man," "Pick Yourself Up"). Kern and Hammerstein's *Show Boat* represents the beginning of modern American musical theater.

Lauder, Sir Harry (1879–1950). In American vaudeville, Harry Lauder was the lovable and amusing personification of Scottish kitsch. When he sang his original songs, such as "Roamin' in the Gloamin'," he winked as he steamrolled his *r*'s and played the Scotchman (which he was) to the hilt (and to the kilt).

Lerner, Alan Jay (1918–1986). Many called the Lerner and Loewe musical *My Fair Lady* (1956) the greatest musical of the 20th century. The show achieved Rodgers and Hammerstein's ideal of a perfectly integrated score, but it also provided the country with the number-one bestselling LP

and a half-dozen standards that everyone in America was soon singing. Lerner, son of the founder of the Lerner dress shops, followed Oscar Hammerstein's lead in writing both lyrics and librettos. His ability to channel George Bernard Shaw's wit and style in his lyrics is singular, to say the least.

Lewis, Ted (1890–1971). Broadway and vaudeville performer who was known for his battered top hat and half-spoken, half-sung style of song performance. Also a band leader, Lewis and his band backed up Sophie Tucker on the classic recording of her theme song, "Some of These Days."

Loewe, Frederick (1904–1988). Loewe grew up in Vienna and was at his best in the Viennese musical style (*Gigi*), but with the Lerner-Loewe collaboration, he showed amazing versatility by writing music that ran the gamut from cowboy ballads (*Paint Your Wagon*) to English beer-hall ditties (*My Fair Lady*). (See **Alan J. Lerner**.)

Murray, Billy (1877–1954). The most popular recording artist of the pre-electric era, though less well known today than such singers as Jolson and Cantor because his stage appearances were infrequent. Murray has the distinction of recording both the original Cohan song "You're a Grand Old Rag" and the more popular expurgated version, "You're a Grand Old Flag."

Porter, Cole (1891–1964). Of the five most important theater composers of the 20th century (Gershwin, Kern, Berlin, Rodgers, and Porter), only Porter wasn't Jewish, but he was fond of pointing out that he was the only one of the group who *wrote* Jewish. He was referring to his use of Semitic scales in such songs as "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" and to his love of minor-key melodies that almost sounded cantorial, such as "I Love Paris," "It's All Right with Me," "I Love You," and others. Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate* remains one of the masterworks of the American musical theater.

Rice, Thomas Dartmouth ("Daddy," 1808–1860). The "grandfather" of the minstrel show, Rice created a blackface stage persona called Jim Crow in 1828, touring the country with his act. Rice was the inspiration for Dan Emmett's creation of the first minstrel troupe, the Virginia Minstrels, in 1842.

Robbins, Jerome (1918–1998). Robbins's association with Leonard Bernstein resulted in the creation of *West Side Story* (1957), which like de Mille's work in *Oklahoma!* (1943), revolutionized theater dance. He created incredibly athletic dances that made greater demands on his dancers

and helped make dance, in his shows, as important as music and dialogue in telling stories and revealing character.

Rodgers and Hammerstein (Richard Rodgers, 1902–1979; Oscar Hammerstein, 1895–1960). During the 1940s and 1950s, Rodgers and Hammerstein brought about profound changes in the Broadway musical. From *Oklahoma!* (1943) onward, song, dance, and story were “craftfully” interwoven to create what was soon to be called the *integrated musical*. Their approach helped determine the course of musical theater from that time until the present. Although the Rodgers and Hammerstein shows produced a body of work that has merited almost continuous revival, the earlier (1930s) Rodgers and Hart work produced a huge body of songs that continues to be the heart of the jazz musician’s and the cabaret singer’s repertoire; among these songs are “Lover,” “Bewitched,” “My Funny Valentine,” “The Lady Is a Tramp,” “I Could Write a Book,” “Manhattan,” “My Heart Stood Still,” and “Blue Moon.”

Schwartz, Stephen (1948–). Schwartz’s first work on Broadway was the theme song for the 1969 play *Butterflies Are Free*. The immense success of the music and lyrics for 1971’s *Godspell* propelled him to write a series of musicals during the final three decades of the 20th century, culminating in *Wicked*, among the most successful musicals ever to appear on the Broadway stage.

Sondheim, Stephen (1930–). The composer/lyricist of the often-recorded “Send in the Clowns,” Sondheim was the most influential Broadway composer of the 1970s and 1980s. His most successful Broadway show, *Sweeney Todd*, appeared in 1979. Sondheim is known for his lyrical wit, his dark tone, and his uncompromising dedication to his own artistic ideals.

Stroman, Susan (1954–). Susan Stroman is a Broadway director, choreographer, and performer who grew up in Wilmington, Delaware. In 1992, she won her first Tony Award, for Best Choreography, for *Crazy for You*. In the next few years, she won three more Tonys for Best Choreography, for *Show Boat* (1995), *Contact* (2000), and *The Producers* (2001), and one Tony for Best Director, for *The Producers*.

Tucker, Sophie (1884–1966). Early on, Sophie Tucker became the first white blues shouter, with a voice that Janice Joplin (who probably never heard of Tucker) seemed to channel out of the past. Tucker was the first person to record W. C. Handy’s classic “St. Louis Blues,” and she was one of the biggest stars of the vaudeville era.

Webber, Andrew Lloyd (1948–). Possibly the most popular composer of musicals at present, Webber's shows are marked by oversized theatricality and memorable special effects. His Broadway triumphs include *Evita*, *Cats*, and *Phantom of the Opera*.

Williams, Bert (1874–1922). Bert Williams was one of the first and one of the greatest names in African-American show business. A star of the Ziegfeld Follies (he received top billing in the show), Williams, during the second decade of the 20th century, was America's highest paid African-American Broadway star. His ability to focus his comedy on foibles common to *all* people makes his the only comedy of that early era that still retains its wit. His original songs, particularly "Nobody," were international hits for several decades.

Ziegfeld, Florenz (1869–1932). The most important producer of musical extravaganzas in the theater's history. His Follies featured America's greatest songwriters (Berlin and Kern), performers (Will Rogers, Eddie Cantor, Fannie Brice, and Bert Williams), and sets and costumes so lavish that even the great beauties who performed in his shows were diminished by such opulence.

Bibliography

Essential Reading:

Bergreen, Lawrence. *As Thousands Cheer*. New York: Viking, 1990. No other Berlin biography has done the difficult job of re-creating this complex and somewhat peculiar man in all his light and shadow. When you finish the final page of this book, you'll feel, at least momentarily, that you've actually lived with Berlin.

Berkowitz, Gerald M. *New Broadways*. New York: Applause Books, 1997. The final few decades of the 20th century, rife with revivals, bizarre experiments (that often succeeded), and neo-traditional productions, are covered, in detail, in this text.

Bordman, Gerald. *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*. London: Oxford University Press, 1992. This is the bible of musical theater reference books, with data on nearly every show of the past 150 years.

Church, Maryann, et al. *The Schuberts Present (100 Years of Musical Theater)*. New York: The Schubert Organization, Inc., 2001. A century after it was founded, the Schubert empire continues to be a vital part of the New York musical theater scene. This highly readable book sheds a bright light on the family and its impact on theater.

Fantle, David, and Patrick Byrne. *The Vaudeville Songbook*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corp., 1995. Strictly for those who sing or play piano a little, this is a primary source for understanding the world of vaudeville. Includes mini-bios of great vaudevillians.

Forte, Allen. *Listening to Classic American Popular Songs*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. A scholarly approach to the Great American Songbook, this text is accompanied by a CD and suggestions for listening activities.

Frommer, Myrna, and Harvey Frommer. *It Happened on Broadway: An Oral History of the Great White Way*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998. Primary sources are usually superior to secondary sources, and you can't get much more primary than this. Frommer's book is the history of Broadway told by the people who created the musicals and performed in them.

Furia, Philip. *Ira Gershwin: The Art of the Lyricist*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. During his lifetime, Ira was the unknown Gershwin, living quietly in the background of his flamboyant brother's dramatic life.

(People were known to look at the sheet music to a Gershwin song and say, “Oh, look, George wrote this with his sister, Ira!”) This book establishes Ira as an artist in his own right and as an important behind-the-scenes decision maker in the creation of not only the songs but also the Gershwin concert pieces.

Gänzl, Kurt. *The Musical: A Concise History*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997. Gänzl, being German, includes more about European musicals than one usually finds in an American text, but he covers the 200-year sweep of the American musical in a manner that is readable without sacrificing depth.

———. *Song/Dance*. New York: Smithmark Publishers, 1995. Knowing that dance has become increasingly important to the American musical—these days, the choreographer’s name often appears above the title—I feel that this profusely illustrated book is essential to a full understanding of the evolution of American musical theater.

Hamm, Charles. *Irving Berlin: Songs from the Melting Pot: The Formative Years, 1907–1914*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. Hamm makes an excellent case for the idea that our popular songs reflect our social history. His analysis of the early Berlin songs clearly proves his point.

Hardy, Phil, and Dave Laing. *The DaCapo Companion to 20th-Century Popular Music*. New York: DaCapo Press, 2000. An inexpensive paperback reference book with a broad scope and concise articles on most of the personalities and topics covered in this course.

Hylands, William G. *Richard Rodgers*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. In past biographies, to make maximum use of the real contrast between dependable Rodgers and wild-man Hart, Rodgers has tended to come off a little saint-like. This biography, however, tosses away Rodgers’s halo and creates a less puritanical and more human picture.

Jasen, David A., and Gene Jones. *Spreadin’ Rhythm All Around: Black Popular Songwriters, 1880–1930*. New York: Schirmer Books, 2002. This is a long-overdue book that, at last, gives neglected black writers of theater music their due.

Mordden, Ethan. *Rodgers and Hammerstein*. New York: Harry Abrams, Inc., 1992. This book probably contains everything you ever wanted to know about the collaboration of these two important writers of classic American musical theater.

Nolan, Frederick. *Lorenz Hart: A Poet on Broadway*. London: Oxford University Press, 1994. Larry Hart was the greatest lyricist of the 20th century. That statement may be arguable, but it's an argument that inevitably stimulates stirring discussion. The man had no control over alcohol and drugs, but *wow*, did he have control over and delight in words!

Raph, Theodore. *The American Song Treasury: 100 Favorites*. New York: Dover Publications, 2000. Raph provides us with a vast sampling of American songs that run the gamut from colonial times to the mid-20th century. Included are the biographies of the songwriters and brief stories behind each song.

Riss, Thomas. *Just Before Jazz: Black Musical Theater in New York, 1890–1915*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989. This excellent book on early black musical theater fills a gap that, unfortunately, most histories of Broadway have created.

Rosenberg, Deena. *Fascinatin' Rhythm*. London: Lime Tree Press, 1991. Though this is a book about the collaboration of George and Ira Gershwin, it's also a book about the business, in general, of wedding music to lyric; wonderful insights into the working and personal relationship of two talented brothers.

Rubin, Marin. *Showstoppers: Busby Berkeley and the Tradition of Spectacle*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993. The eye-popping extravaganza dominated the 19th century and continued to influence shows throughout the 20th century. Berkeley's massed numbers, first on the stage and later in Hollywood, come from a long theatrical tradition of spectacle, explored here in detail.

Smith, Cecil, and Litton, Glenn. *Musical Comedy in America: From The Black Crook through Sweeney Todd*. New York: Routledge Publishers, 1978. For more than fifty years, a classic reference on American musical theater; covers everything from the minstrel shows of the 1800s to the blockbusters of the late 1970s.

Steyn, Mark. *Broadway Babies Say Goodnight: Musicals Then and Now*. New York: Routledge Publishers, 1999. Steyn's writing is witty, informative, and loaded with interesting musical anecdotes.

Suskin, Steven. *More Opening Nights on Broadway*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1997. Here you'll find opening-night reviews and long-term evaluations of classic Broadway musicals.

Wilder, Alec. *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900–1950*. London: Oxford University Press, 1972. This is the Holy Grail of America's greatest songs, the majority of which originated in Broadway musicals. Wilder focuses on 800 songs, evaluating each as an effective (or ineffective) work of art. He points out musical and lyrical strengths and weaknesses, unrelenting in his quest to identify and quantify *quality*.

Supplementary Reading:

Berlin, Edward. *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984. This book contains something for everyone—detailed analysis of ragtime for the musicologist and the sociology of the music for the armchair historian. Berlin's concrete examples and his quotes from periodicals of the times help bring the ragtime era to life.

Brantley, Ben. *The New York Times Book of Broadway*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001. This text covers everything you might want to know about Broadway shows that you won't find in other references.

Brooks, McNamara. *The Schuberts of Broadway*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. Lee and Jake Schubert, in addition to other family members, created and ran a theater empire that spanned the country for the entire 20th century. This is a complex story of the family, the theaters, and the Schuberts' important role in creating shows and stars.

Brooks, Mel, and Tom Meehan. *The Producers: How We Did It*. New York: Hyperion, 2004. It's rare to find a step-by-step description of the creation of a musical by its creators. This book makes a delightful and insightful read.

Cockrell, Dale. *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. While this Teaching Company course has chosen to emphasize the positive aspect of the bizarre business of minstrelry, Cockrell often focuses on the negative, with erudition and dark wit. A good follow-up to our introduction to the minstrel show.

Freedland, Michael. *Jerome Kern: A Biography*. New York: Stein and Day, 1989. Because Kern spent many of his early years in England, married an Englishwoman, and wrote most of his early shows with P.G. Wodehouse (noted British wit), Freedland (a British biographer) captures Kern more completely than any other author to date.

Gracyk, Tim. *Popular American Recording Pioneers, 1895–1925*. London: The Haworth Press, 2000. When you come across an old LP reprint or an ancient 78-RPM recording, one of the frustrating things for the curious is the lack of information available on the performers. This book compensates for that lack.

Green, Stanley. *The World of Musical Comedy*. New York: DaCapo Press, 1980. This was once *the* text to read to acquire an understanding of the evolution of musical theater; nothing new has done a better job, and though the book is out of print, because of its past popularity, hundreds of used copies are available at Amazon.com.

Groce, Nancy. *New York: Songs of the City*. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1999. This is a beautifully designed coffee-table book; readers will probably be surprised to discover that “East Side, West Side” and “New York, New York” are just a few of the hundreds of songs written about Manhattan. Interesting stories behind each song.

Hischak, Thomas. *The American Musical Theatre Song Encyclopedia*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995. If you’ve been wondering which show that song came from, regardless of how obscure the song or the show, this is the reference you’ve been looking for.

Iger, Arthur. *Music of the Golden Age, 1900–1950*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998. This is a useful, compact reference to hundreds of composers, lyricists, and songs, with very short bios on each songwriter.

Jasen, David A. *Tin Pan Alley: An Encyclopedia of the Golden Age of American Song*. New York: Routledge Publishers, 2003. This work contains more than you’ll ever need to know about Tin Pan Alley. Can be browsed through for a pleasant read or used as a reference to answer nearly every question you might have about Tin Pan Alley.

Lehman, Engel. *The Making of a Musical: Creating Songs for the Stage*. New York: MacMillan, 1973. Engel has conducted and/or composed music for more than 170 shows and operas and is a three-time Tony Award winner. While the views in this book are strongly opinionated, its author writes with unquestionable authority.

Lissauer, Robert. *Encyclopedia of Popular Music in America*. New York: Facts on File, 2004. What Bordman is to the shows, Lissauer is to the songs. He relates essential details (creators, performers, recordings, etc.) on literally thousands of songs.

Maeder, Jay, ed. *Big Town, Big Time: A New York Epic, 1898–1998*. New York: New York Daily News, 1999. A unique view of New York musicals and other events, told through 100 years of articles from the *New York Daily News*.

Maltby, Richard, ed. *Passing Parade: A History of Popular Culture in the 20th Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. This huge, photo-filled book covers a century of fads, follies, and entertainment; makes delightful skimming.

Paymer, Marvin. *Facts Behind the Songs*. London: Garland Publishing, 2002. This book is more than a song reference; it is (for those who would make the effort) a complete source for self-instruction in the basics of musical form, melody, harmony, lyric writing, and almost anything else that pertains to popular song from the 19th century to the near-present.

Peyser, Joan. *The Memory of All That: The Life of George Gershwin*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993. Peyser won the Pulitzer Prize for her biography of Leonard Bernstein, thus, we know her to be erudite, incisive, and capable of making sound judgments. Though she does the same here, she dwells on Gershwin's private life, particularly on his sexual excesses, more than any other writer to date. Though at times her tone seems a little shrill, the book is a fascinating read.

Sanjek, Russell, and David Sanjek. *Pennies from Heaven: The American Popular Music Business in the 20th Century*. New York: DaCapo Press, 1996. Broadway as an art couldn't exist without Broadway as a relatively solvent business. This book covers the music business over the century in great detail. A good reference that makes enjoyable skimming.

Sutherland, Susan. *About Musicals*. London: Teach Yourself Books, 1998. All the essentials in 234 pages; very simple, generally accurate, and a quick overall view of musical theater.

Ziegfeld, Richard, and Paulette Ziegfeld. *The Ziegfeld Touch: The Life and Times of Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.* New York: Harry Abrams, Inc., 1993. A huge book (it weighs several pounds) crammed with art nouveau and art deco scenes and costume designs and rare photographs. The words of Ziegfeld's own children make him (and the Follies) come to life.

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From the Broadway musical *Wicked*

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz

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