

If someone were to push a microphone into your face on an odd Tuesday afternoon and ask you what an ice-cream soda, a hot dog, and a musical comedy ^{have} had in common, I wouldn't want you to be stuck for an answer. In the first place, they are all absolutely, incontrovertibly, and also without a doubt indigenously American. ~~Happily, gorgeously, uninhibitidly so!~~ That ice-cream had been known before the ice-cream soda, that sausage was on the scene before the hot dog, that musical shows were in the theatre before musical comedy is true; but the ancestry, though apparent, is not real.

[This brings me to my second point, which is where I was headed in the first place.] More subtle, but perhaps more important, is the curious fact that even though valiant attempts ^{respected to faithfully} have been made in other countries to carefully reproduce every ingredient, no one has ^{ever} been able to ^{capture} reproduce the whole; the ^{invisible string} ~~binder~~, the magic is missing. And what the magic is - or was - is what this book is about.

Curiously enough, even though you can get a great hot dog or ice-cream soda any place within the continental United States, ^{good "x" quality meat makes magic} the true magic of the American Musical Comedy (there ^{is} isn't any other) ^{is never quite captured except in} that mythical ^{little area} narrow strip called Broadway, on the small island of Manhattan.

But, unlike the first two, Musical Comedy is no longer with us. Born in 1915 at the Princess Theatre, it passed quietly away in the mid-60s - so quietly, that most people don't even know it's gone. The generic term, in the last eight or ten years, has been cheerfully misapplied to a form of theatre rooted in Marlowe and briefly touched by the genius of Brecht and Weill. Actually, Brecht and Weill were writing what they fondly thought was musical comedy, but what was essentially a musical version of the Morality Play. One can almost date this "new" kind of American musical theatre by the off-Broadway musical German cabaret version of The Three Penny Opera in 1955-64

W. J. *NO SCENARY*
 *I will expand on such story substitutes as trampolines, ~~flying~~

~~flying~~ plans and singers in various stages of sweat and undress marching through the audience.

I find the "new" musical as unrelated to Musical Comedy as was the Operetta, ^{of the} with its far-fetched libretti, ^{laughing} its lyrics of purple generalities, and its Vienna-before-the-War music. To me, Sigmund Romberg and Stephen Schwartz have a lot in common.. What they have in common is as much understanding of what made a Musical Comedy as an African aborigine would have of Noel Coward's wit.

Let me note in passing that what distinguished Musical Comedy from the Operetta was music of quality, written in the idiom ^{current} of the present, plus, most importantly, ^{contemporary} lyrics of wit, literacy, and style. Ever since Rock became the music of today, it's been tossed into the theatre as if the theatre were a discotheque - fully amped and camped - and with no variety in the music at that. ^{*(p. 2)} [It's like going to see a show in which every single number is a samba. After the third samba, it would be impossible to ^{tell for melody from another} remember or hear the melody, since the beat over-rides ~~it~~ all.] So with Rock - with the added hurdle of ^{Electronic assault} ~~ear and nerve-shattering volume~~ - the lyrics have

become unimportant. Even if they were good you couldn't hear them - not even a dog could. ^{for the most part, -} And, ⁱⁿ the language of the theatre, the lyrics are dogs. The only way you can tell a love song from a protest song is that you can occasionally hear the word love shouted in the former, and the word hate shouted in the latter. And if by any chance the lyricist decides to use a poetic line, ^{it's} he repeated it eight times to assure the fact that eventually it will be understood.

As for the music being contemporary, Kern, Gershwin, Rodgers et al never put the equivalent of "Tiger Rag" in a show. The great over-riding Jazz triumphs - Ellington, Basie, Goodman, etc. - were for the band-stand and not for the theatre. Not all contemporary music is theatrical. All good theatre is, and should be, highly selective. One doesn't wear a bathing-suit to a ball nor a ball-gown to go swimming. ^{Except}

of course, to the Under Water BALL.

As the result of a passing joke (since I sometimes ^{give} get funny answers when a straight one will do), I found myself last year teaching a course in "The History and Analysis of

*Rewrite whole
page*

5.

Musical Comedy" at U.S.C. - not to be confused with U.C.L.A.,
which has a great basket-ball team) - I found myself explain-
ing that the art and craft of writing and producing Musical
just about Comedy were ^{dead} and that the so-called musical theatre of
today had about as much in common with American Musical Comedy
as a motorcycle with a Bentley.

~~as fried liver and onions had with pate de fois gras (Edgar A.
Guest-Shakespeare, African war chant with "Begin the Beguine")~~

ALL
This met with not a little surprising resentment at first; but
thorough understanding and agreement ensued in rather short
order. I had been warned that *today's college students* juniors and seniors of college
thought in a different idiom and spoke in a different language,
but by the second or third week they were all into my world

with both feet, *and with their passion* I'll never know what really got them, but I
think it was a combination of my *of my passions but very direct approach, deal* explaining in detail the differ-

of demonstrating why the music + lyric must function as one,
ence between a lyric and just rhyming lines, *by* inventing a
game to teach them how to try to write lyrics. For instance,

most tyros don't seem to realize that *the* punctuation and the

emphasis for a lyric is provided by the music, e.g. a famous

of Plato did not say it - I will -

My student came from the School of Drama, of Curran
+ of Music. I suspected that most of them had
wanted to get a look at Danny Kay's wife.

--- which has a great basket-ball team - I found myself explaining
and that the art and craft of writing and producing musical
Comedy were dead; and that the so-called musical theatre of
today had about as much in common with American musical comedy
as fried liver and onions had with pate de foie gras (which is
Guest-theatre, African was meant with "Boris the Russian")
this was with not a little surprising resentment at first; but
throughout understanding and agreement ensued in rather short
order. I had been warned that juniors and seniors of college
thought in a different idiom and spoke in a different language,
but by the second or third week they were all into my world
with both feet. I'll never know what really got them, but I
think it was a combination of explaining in detail the differ-
ence between a lyric and just rhyming lines, by inventing a
use to teach them how to try to write lyrics. For instance,
most lyrics don't seem to realize that punctuation and the
emphasis for a lyric is provided by the music, e.g. a famous

song from "One Touch of Venus," which, on opening night I thought was "speak low when you speak love." As the song proceeded, I found myself puzzled by some of the lyrics and couldn't figure how or why someone had to speak very quietly of love. Thin walls?

Too many people in the room? Some days later I looked at a copy of the sheet music and found to my surprise, ^{an all important comma, and} ~~that the lyric was~~

that the title need
"speak low when you speak, love."

The music, however, didn't

supply the comma - there the confusion.

I then explained that the only true ~~answers to the~~

answers of

American Musical Comedy were Gilbert and Sullivan, although their works were called comic operettas. Gilbert took the first step away when he wrote lyrics so witty, of such high quality, and so related to the plot that they became for the first time as important as the music. Sullivan, for his part, set the lyrics so that they were heightened and ^{heightened, i.e.} ~~broadened and set to~~ tunes so lilting and so irretrievably bound to the lyrics that people who couldn't ordinarily rhyme cat with brat were happily singing "opportunity and impunity." (For some insane reason there was then a lapse of about thirty-five years before this was transposed to an American

idiom by three British writers - one of them Jerome Kern, (who was born in England but brought up in America), P.G. Wodehouse - he of the famous Jeeves - and Guy Bolton.)

I then proceeded to the history and analysis of musicals

by tape, film, and illustrations at the piano. Since Musical Comedy,

like Topsy, was something that just grew, I found that I got the

and could u won leave a master blue print
lyric needs a round kind of tune - not an angular one) or - so else would be a walk + wrote "Just Out of Those Things") made the process cover alive for them.

best understanding of what made it grow and glow was by anecdote. And that is where the heart of this book will lie.

I think it was because of this background that my pupils *Students*

didn't rise up and ~~g~~gore me when I announced that in my opinion

"Hair" was not only not a musical comedy, but wasn't very good.

(It was a formless Rock ballet, the dialogue being few and far between.)

In that case, they wanted to know how I explained the fact that

"Hair" was universally acclaimed and was one of the greatest hits

the musical theatre had ever produced. Well, *let's consider.* I say that ~~"Hair"~~

was ~~"The Emperor's New Clothes"~~ of its day. It opened in 1965

~~and~~ ^{AT} just about the time that the generation over thirty decided to

bridge the generation gap by invading the discotheque, wearing Love Beads, and generally pretending not only to understand the younger people but to love everything they loved. They were determined to prove they wouldn't be shocked by the nude scene nor

by the staggering smell of pot in the theatre. What it got down to was that they didn't dare not like it. *Actually, it was the* I speak, of course, of its opening run on Broadway. *Empire's New Clothes' of its day.* After awhile it became a tribal rou-

tine for the more daring members of the audience to leap up on the stage tearing off some *or all* part of their clothing, and to join with the cast in an impromptu love fest - the "in" thing, so the critics loved it too. (I notified, with amusement, this fall that the scathing notices on "Dude" objected to exactly the same

Approaches + ambience that were hailed in "Hair".) "Hair" did have a couple *of good* songs, but it was really impossible to tell *that* in the theatre and *How* were revealed only later when they were recorded and/or sung on television. "Hair" was formless which the Musical Comedy was not.

But it's extremely interesting to note that the final form of almost every good musical was not apparent in its first

draft. Musical Comedy much less so than straight plays don't emerge from writers' heads like Minerva out of Zeus'. Let's take "The Rain in Spain" from "My Fair Lady. Lerner and Loewe were busily writing away one afternoon, when Fritz Loew suggested that "the rain in Spain falls mostly on the plain" might make a good song. Alan suggested that Fritz was crazy. "What kind of lyric is that - the rain in Spain? It's the silliest thing I ever heard." Fritz persisted, but Alan just wouldn't buy it. A couple of weeks later they went to Herman Levin's office to play three new songs they'd written, ^{with which} ~~and everybody~~ *everybody* was ^{delighted} ~~mad~~ for them. They jumped up and down, congratulated each other, opened champagne, etc., and in the spirit of celebration, Fritz went to the piano and dashed off the by-now famous tango strain, singing "the rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain."

Moss Hart jumped up and said, "That's great! Why don't you write it?" Alan sheepishly allowed that it was, ^{but brilliantly} ~~and they did.~~

And ^{for} That song, as everyone knows, lifted the audience about four feet out of their seats ^{where?} ~~and~~ ^{happily} they stayed ~~there~~ for the rest of the show. ~~After having paid for their seats, too!~~

insert When I was asked why it had such a galvanic effect, I

Suddenly realized that

had to think about it. In my opinion it took the place of
~~mandatory~~
 a love song. The audience was dying to see some emotional
 connection between Higgins and Liza. Just before the song,
 he, for the first time, speaks to her as a human being and
 not a "thing." He finally touches her and reaches her, and
 for the first time she responds after hours and days and

Remaining madly ~~deaf to~~
 nights and weeks of just trying to get her to hear the dif-

is so much the unexpected or capricious
 ferences. The response, of course, was emotional because *Angus*

read her by
 it was touched off by emotion rather than by reason, and

that is one of the best possible reasons for a song in a
 musical. ¶ The characters have to explode emotionally and the
 audience wants them to, and the release of the music and the
 genius of having the *rigid British* Higgins break into a tango sent
 the audience into a paroxysm of joy. ¶ After that, the atmos-
 phere absolutely required Liza to sing "I Could Have Danced
 All Night," which was as deft a way of telling the audience
 that she is in love with Higgins as could ever be found.

That sort of divine accident, I always say (when I'm not busy saying something else), only happens when the moon is shining. Other people say, when you're lucky, when the stars are right, -but as far as I'm concerned "when the moon is shining" covers all good theatrical accidents. When the scenery doesn't work or the costumes don't arrive, ~~or the right scene is taken out and the wrong one put back~~, or you open in San Francisco on the first day of Lent -- then the moon is not ^{definitely} shining.

Paul Charode

60 Clarkson Ave

B'lym - 11226

469-6506

access - etc.

Milwaukee

On Your Toes

Oklahoma

GREAT SCORES

Anything Goes

Oklahoma *1/2*

Carousel *1/2*

2 A

REVUES

Band Wagon

Three's A Crowd

As Thousands Cheer

GOOD "NEW" MUSICALS

Your Own Thing

Chapters

- 1. RECIPE FOR A MUSICAL COMEDY - Shake Well Before Opening
- 2. Tribal Customs of Broadway - Then and Now

- 3. *The Emergent Era - 1915-22 (Kern, the role of the Riviera, Harms.)*
- 4. Twinkle-Toe Twenties ← *Just for Fun - Early Rodgers*
- 5. Thoughtful Thirties ← *Plus Some Satire*
- 6. Fabulous Forties ← *The Golden Years*
- 7. Fitful Fifties
- 8. Split Sixties
- 9. Strident Seventies
- 10. The Age of the Flying Frying Pan

THE GREAT MUSICALS

Show Boat

Of Thee I Sing

Lady in the Dark

~~Oklahoma ?~~

South Pacific

Guys and Dolls

My Fair Lady

West Side Story

The King + I

Fiddler on the Roof ?

Maybe -

Annie Get Your Gun

Kiss Me Kate

Finian's Rainbow

The King and I

INNOVATIVE - Oh, Boy, Good News

Strike Up the Band

Pal Joey

On Your Toes

Oklahoma

GREAT SCORES

Anything Goes

Carousel

REVUES

Band Wagon

Three's A Crowd

As Thousands Cheer

GOOD "NEW" MUSICALS

Your Own Thing

RECIPE FOR A MUSICAL COMEDY - Shake Well Before Opening
Tribal Customs of Broadway - Then and Now

Twinkle-Toe Twenties

Thoughtful Thirties

Fabulous Forties

Fitful Fifties

Split Sixties

Strident Seventies

Just for Fun

Plus Some Satire

The Golden Years

The Age of the
Flying Frying Pan

TURKEYS - AND WHY

Miss Liberty (Irving Berlin, Robert Sherwood, Moss Hart)

Two-by-Two

Via Galactica

THE COMPOSER-LYRICISTS

Irving Berlin

Cole Porter

Frank Loesser

Stephen Sondheim

Sylvia Fine

COMPOSERS and BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MUSIC

LYRICISTS (How to Write Lyrics)

STARS - Who They Are and What ~~M~~akes Them

PRODUCERS - Then and Now

SCENIC DESIGNERS

COSTUME DESIGNERS

DIRECTORS

CHOREOGRAPHERS

THE AGE OF THE CHOREOGRAPHER-DIRECTOR

RELATIONSHIP OF MOVIE MUSICALS TO THEATRE - People Who
Have Combined Both

HOW AMATEURS BECOME PROS

PERSON TO PERSON - Interviews and Reminiscences

Irving Berlin

Jerome Kern

Oscar Hammerstein

Ira Gershwin

Lee Gershwin

Max Gordon

Noel Coward

Howard Dietz

Arthur Schwartz

Lindsay and Crouse (Dorothy and Anna)

Cole Porter

Moss Hart

Kitty Carlisle Hart

Richard Rodgers

Harold Arlen

Dorothy Fields

Yip Harburg

Harold Rome

Lerner and Loewe

Styne, Comden, and Green

Frank Loesser

Stephen Sondheim

Bock and Harnick

Etc.

9

THE GREAT MUSICALS

Show Boat

Of Thee I Sing

Lady in the Dark

Oklahoma ?

South Pacific

Guys and Dolls

My Fair Lady

West Side Story

Fiddler on the Roof ?

Maybe -

Annie Get Your Gun

Kiss Me Kate

Finian's Rainbow

The King and I

INNOVATIVE - Oh, Boy, / Good News

Strike Up the Band

Pal Joey

TURKEYS - AND WHY

Miss Liberty (Irving Berlin, Robert Sherwood, Moss Hart)

Two-by-Two

Via Galactica

THE COMPOSER-LYRICISTS

Irving Berlin

Cole Porter

Frank Loesser

Stephen Sondheim

Sylvia Fine

COMPOSERS and BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MUSIC

LYRICISTS (How to Write Lyrics)

STARS - Who They Are and What Makes Them

PRODUCERS - Then and Now

SCENIC DESIGNERS

COSTUME DESIGNERS

DIRECTORS

CHOREOGRAPHERS

THE AGE OF THE CHOREOGRAPHER-DIRECTOR

RELATIONSHIP OF MOVIE MUSICALS TO THEATRE - People who
Have Combined Both

HOW AMATEURS BECOME PROS

PERSON TO PERSON - Interviews and Reminiscences

Irving Berlin

Jerome Kern

Oscar Hammerstein

Ira Gershwin

Lee Gershwin

Max Gordon

Noel Coward

Howard Dietz

Arthur Schwartz

Lindsay and Crouse (Dorothy and Anna)

Cole Porter

Moss Hart

Kitty Carlisle Hart

Richard Rodgers

Harold Arlen

Dorothy Fields

Yip Harburg

Harold Rome

Lerner and Loewe

Styne, Comden, and Green

Frank Loesser

Stephen Sondheim

Bock and Harnick

Alb. Burrows

Etc.

C H A P T E R S

1. THE GENEALOGY OF MUSICAL COMEDY.
Its antecedents - shows, producers, performers
George M. Cohan, Harrigan and Hart, Music Hall,
English Comic Operetta, etc.
 2. RECIPE FOR MUSICAL COMEDY.
SHAKE WELL BEFORE OPENING
What makes a musical subject.
Functions of lyrics and music.
When, Why and How of Choreography.
All the factors that go into the writing and production
of the musical as we know it.
 3. TRIBAL CUSTOMS OF BROADWAY - Then and Now
From the "Private Club" of writers to the Marketplace.
 4. EMERGENT ERA 1915/22
Transition from operetta and spectacles to
Musical Comedy
Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern
Kern, Gershwin, et al Come to Know Harms
Princess Theatre Shows
 5. Twinkle-Toe Twenties
Just For Fun
Early Rodgers and Hart
Early Gershwin, Youmans
Early DaSylva, Brown, Henderson
Early Cole Porter
 6. Thoughtful Thirties
Plus Some Satire
 7. Fabulous Forties
The Golden Years
 8. Fitful Fifties
 9. Split Sixties
 10. Strident Seventies
The Age of the Flying Frying Pan
- N.B. All Shows from 1915-'73 will be annotated and/or discussed
in chronological order, - including any pertinent anecdotes,
opening night reviews compared with latter day evaluation
as well as plot, score, stars, etc.

THE GREAT MUSICALS

Show Boat

Of Thee I Sing

Lady In The Dark

South Pacific

Guys and Dolls

My Fair Lady

West Side Story

King and I

Fiddler On The Roof

Maybe -

Annie Get Your Gun

Kiss Me Kate

Finian's Rainbow

INNOVATIVE

Oh, Boy

Good News

Strike Up The Band

Pal Joey

On Your Toes

Oklahoma

GREAT SCORES

Anything Goes

Carousel

REVUES

Band Wagon

Three's A Crowd

As Thousands Cheer

GOOD "NEW" MUSICALS

Your Own Thing

TURKEYS - AND WHY

Miss Liberty (Irving Berlin, Robert Sherwood, Moss Hart)

Two-by-Two

Via Galactica

THE COMPOSER-LYRICISTS

Irving Berlin

Cole Porter

Frank Loesser

Stephen Sondheim

Sylvia Fine

COMPOSERS AND BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MUSIC

LYRICISTS

The difference between theatre lyrics and pop lyrics.
Which performers gets what lyrics and why.
The basic principle of rhyming.
Some dos and don'ts.

STARS - Who they are and what makes them

PRODUCERS - Then and now

SCENIC DESIGNERS

COSTUME DESIGNERS

DIRECTORS

CHOREOGRAPHERS

THE AGE OF THE CHOREOGRAPHER-DIRECTOR

RELATIONSHIP OF MOVIE MUSICALS TO THEATRE

One Night Of Love

Gigi

Writers who have successfully done both.

HOW AMATEURS BECOME PROS

PERSON TO PERSON

Interviews and reminiscences

Irving Berlin

Jerome Kern

Oscar Hammerstein

Ira Gershwin

Lee Gershwin

Max Gordon

Noel Coward

Howard Dietz

Arthur Schwartz

Lindsay and Crouse (Dorothy and Anna)

Cole Porter

Moss Hart

Kitty Carlisle Hart

Richard Rodgers

Harold Arlen

Dorothy Fields

Yip Harburg

Harold Rome

Lerner and Loewe

Styne, Comden, and Green

Frank Loesser

Stephen Sondheim

Bock and Harnick

Abe Burrows

ETC.

If someone were to push a microphone into your face on an odd Tuesday afternoon and ask you what an ice-cream soda, a hot dog, and a musical comedy have in common, I wouldn't want you to be stuck for an answer. In the first place, they are all absolutely, incontrovertibly, and also without a doubt indigenously American. That ice-cream had been known before the ice-cream soda, that sausage was on the scene before the hot dog, that musical shows were in the theatre before musical comedy is true; but the ancestry, though apparent, is not real.

This brings me to my second point, which is where I was headed in the first place. More subtle, but perhaps more important, is the curious fact that even though valiant attempts have been made in other countries to carefully reproduce every ingredient, no one has been able to capture the whole; the seed, the invisible string, the magic is missing. And what the magic is - or was - is what this book is about.

Curiously enough, even though you can get a great hot dog or ice-cream soda any place within the continental United States, the great "X" quality that makes magic true magic of the American Musical Comedy (there isn't any other) is never quite captured except in that mythical little area called Broadway, on the small island of Manhattan.

But, unlike the first two, Musical Comedy is no longer with us. Born in 1915 at the Princess Theatre, it passed quietly away in the mid-60's - so quietly, that most people don't even know it's gone. The generic term, in the last eight or ten years, has been cheerfully misapplied to a form of theatre rooted in Marlowe and briefly touched by the genius of Brecht and Weill. Actually, Brecht and Weill were writing what they fondly thought was musical comedy, but what was essentially a musical version of the Morality Play. One can almost date this "new" kind of American musical theatre by the off-Broadway musical German cabaret version of The Three Penny Opera in 1955-61.

I find the "new" musical as unrelated to Musical Comedy as was the Operetta of the far-fetched libretti, languishing lyrics, and Vienna-before-the-War music. To me, Sigmund Romberg and Stephen Schwartz have a lot in common. What they have in common is as much understanding of what made a Musical Comedy as an African aborigine of Noel Coward's wit.

Let me note in passing that what distinguished Musical Comedy from Operetta was music, written in the current idiom, plus, most importantly, contemporary lyrics of wit, literacy, and style. Ever since Rock became the music of today, it's been tossed into the theatre as if the theatre were a discotheque - fully amped and camped - and with no variety in the music at that.

I will expand on such story substitutes as no scenery, trampolines, and singers in various stages of sweat and undress marching through the audience. (It's like going to see a show in which every single number is a samba. After the third samba, it would be impossible to tell one melody from another, since the beat over-rides all.) So with Rock - with the added hurdle of electronic assault - the melody and lyrics have become unimportant. Even if they were good you couldn't hear them - not even a dog could. And, for the most part, - in the language of the theatre, - the lyrics are dogs. The only way you can tell a love song from a protest song is that you can occasionally hear the word love shouted in the former, and the word hate shouted in the latter. And if by any chance the lyricist decides to use a poetic line, it's repeated eight times to assure the fact that eventually it will be understood.

As for the music being contemporary, - Kern, Gershwin, Rodgers et al never put the equivalent of "Tiger Rag" in a show. The great over-riding Jazz triumphs - Ellington, Basie, Goodman, etc. - were for the band-stand and not for the theatre. Not all contemporary music is theatrical. All good theatre is, and should be, highly selective. One doesn't wear a bathing suit to a ball nor a ball gown to go swimming. Except, of course, to the Under Water Ball.

As the result of a passing joke (since I sometimes give funny answers when a straight one will do), I found myself last year teaching a course in "The History and Analysis of Musical Comedy" at U.S.C. - not to be confused with U.C.L.A., which has a great basketball team. I found myself explaining that the art and craft of writing and producing Musical Comedy were just about dead and that the so-called musical theatre of today had about as much in common with it as a motorcycle with a Bentley. This met with not at all surprising resentment at first; but thorough understanding and agreement ensued in rather short order. I had been warned that today's college students thought in a different idiom and spoke in a different language, but by the second or third week they were all into my world with both feet. I'll never know what really got them, but I think it was a combination of my passionate but irreverent approach, and of explaining in detail the difference between a lyric and just rhyming lines, of demonstrating why the music and lyric must breathe as one. For instance, most tyros don't seem to realize that the punctuation and the emphasis for a lyric is provided by the music, e.g., a famous song from "One Touch of Venus," which, on opening night I thought was "speak low when you speak love." As the song proceeded, I found myself puzzled by some of the lyrics and couldn't figure how or why someone had to speak very quietly of love. Thin walls? Too many people in the room?

Some days later I looked at a copy of the sheet music and found to my surprise an all important comma, and that the title read "speak low when you speak, love." The music, however, didn't supply the comma - thus the confusion.

I then explained that the only true ancestors of American Musical Comedy were Gilbert and Sullivan, although their works were called comic operettas. Gilbert took the first step away when he wrote lyrics so witty, of such high quality, and so related to the plot that they became for the first time as important as the music. Sullivan, for his part, set the lyrics so that they were heightened and brightened, with tunes so lilting and so irretrievably bound to the lyrics that people who couldn't ordinarily rhyme cat with brat were happily singing "opportunity and impunity." (For some insane reason there was then a lapse of about thirty-five years before this was transposed to an American idiom by three British writers - one of them Jerome Kern, (who was born in England but brought up in America,) P.G. Wodehouse - he of the famous Jeeves - and Guy Bolton.)

I then proceeded to the history and analysis of musicals by tape, film and illustrations at the piano. Since Musical Comedy, like Topsy, was something that just grew, and could never have a master blueprint, I found that telling actual stories of Ira Gershwin, Cole Porter, Moss Hart, etc., in the preparation and out-of-town tryout stages made the process come alive best. And that is

And that is where the heart of this book will lie.

I think it was because of this background that my students didn't rise up and stone me when I announced that in my opinion "Hair" was not only not a musical comedy, but wasn't very good. (It was a formless Rock ballet, the dialogue being few and far between.) In that case, they wanted to know how I explained the fact that "Hair" was universally acclaimed and was one of the greatest hits the musical theatre had ever produced. Well, let's consider. It opened in 1965 at just about the time that the generation over thirty decided to bridge the generation gap by invading the discotheques, wearing Love Beads, and generally pretending not only to understand the younger people but to love everything they loved. They were determined to prove they wouldn't be shocked by the nude scene nor by the staggering smell of pot in the theatre. What it got down to was that they didn't dare not like it. Actually, it was the "Emperor's New Clothes" of its day. I speak, of course, of its opening run on Broadway. After a while it became a tribal routine for the more daring members of the audience to leap up on the stage tearing off some part or all of their clothing, and to join with the cast in an impromptu love fest - the "in" thing, so the critics loved it too. (I noticed, with amusement, this fall that the scathing notices on "Dude" objected to exactly the same approaches and ambiance that were hailed in "Hair".) "Hair" did have a couple

of smashing songs, but it was really impossible to tell that in the theatre and they were revealed only later when they were recorded and/or sung on television. "Hair" was formless which the Musical Comedy was not.

But it's extremely interesting to note that the final form of almost every good musical was not apparent in its first draft. Musical Comedy much less so than straight plays don't emerge from writers' heads like Minerva out of Zeus'. Let's take "The Rain In Spain" from "My Fair Lady." Lerner and Loewe were busily writing away one afternoon, when Fritz Loewe suggested that "the rain in Spain falls mostly on the plain" might make a good song. Alan suggested that Fritz was crazy. "What kind of lyric is that - the rain in Spain? It's the silliest thing I ever heard." Fritz persisted, but Alan just wouldn't buy it. A couple of weeks later they went to Herman Levin's office to play three new songs they'd written, with which everybody was delighted. They jumped up and down, congratulated each other, opened champagne, etc., and in the spirit of celebration, Fritz went to the piano and dashed off the by-now famous tango strain, singing "the rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain." Moss Hart jumped up and said, "That's great! Why don't you write it"? Alan sheepishly allowed that it was, he did, but brilliantly.

And the song, as everyone knows, lifted the audience about four feet out of their seats where they stayed happily for the rest of the show.

Not too long ago, Kitty Carlisle Hart asked me why, in my opinion, "The Rain In Spair" had such a kinetic effect on the audience night after night all the years it ran. I thought it was a mandatory release both for the characters AND the audience and in an enchanting off-beat way, it took the place of a love song. The audience was dying to see some emotional connection between Higgins and Liza. Just before the song, he, for the first time, speaks to her as a human being and not a "thing". He finally touches her and reaches her, and for the first time she responds after hours and days and nights and weeks of remaining maddeningly deaf.

The unexpected response or capitulation, of course, was emotional because Higgins reached her by emotion rather than by reason. And that's one of the best possible reasons for a song in a musical.

The characters have to explode emotionally and the audience wants them to, and the release of the music and the genius of having the rigidly British Higgins break into a tango sent the audience into a paroxysm of joy.

After that, the atmosphere absolutely required Liza to sing "I Could Have Danced All Night," which was as deft a way of telling the audience that she is in love with Higgins as could ever be found.

That sort of divine accident, I always say (when I'm not busy saying something else), only happens when the moon is shining. Other people say, "when you're lucky," "when the stars are right," but as far as I'm concerned "when the moon is shining" covers all good theatrical accidents. When the scenery doesn't work or the costumes don't arrive, or you open in San Francisco on the first day of Lent -- then the moon is definitely not shining.

B I O G R A P H Y

Since, of the comparatively few books on the history of Musical Theatre none has ever been written by anyone who has actively worked in the creative end, I believe that the book I propose to write would be unique. And hopefully revealing, colorful and amusing.

True, Ira Gershwin and Oscar Hammerstein each wrote a book on his own lyrics. But the eight or nine books extant were done by what I call "bystanders", - i.e., critics, musicologists, and one conductor.

What qualifies me? I have written and produced in the theatre, in movies and television for over 30 years. I came in at the tail end of one era and the beginning of another, - and I have known intimately and on a shop-talk basis, most of the greats, on both sides of the footlights. In addition, I have had the advantage of two prospectives--having been married and worked with one of the most talented and versatile performers of our time.

Briefly, just for the record, - I was a child prodigy pianist and started to write lyrics at the age of 10 and have my B.A. in music. I am also a pretty good cook.