

Well, now. Good evening one and all. How is everyone who was sick, better?

I thought I would gather you here tonight for the first half of Gershwin. I don't think we can cover Gershwin in one night and I don't want any more to keep you all those hours. I don't think you can absorb all that and I think I ran out of steam too, principally, my voice fades or something. Before I start on Gershwin, I was wondering to myself on the way down here, do you all feel that you are sort of floating learning composers and not learning enough about musical comedy as we go? Because I can take time out to talk about the structure of musicals if you like or I can wait until after I finish Gershwin. Now which would you like? ..... Your only getting part of it, that was my worry.

I got an advance copy, through the great industry of my sister really, who is the head of contracts for one of the big publishing firms in New York -- I called her and asked her when the book is coming out, it's not coming out for a month

or two -- called either "Words With Music" or "Music With Words", one or the other, by Lehman Engel who is a conductor. He conducted a lot of shows, a lot of first-rate shows and he talks principally from the composer's viewpoint, as I leafed through it, and he gives credit or blame to the composer for the quality of the book, the weight of the songs and it's kind of putting the shoe on the wrong foot. And I was wondering when I was coming down here, whether you were getting that same ~~impression~~ impression. So, anybody want to tell me before I say anything, what are the necessary ingredients for a musical. ....Music, the most important. No, because we have had several examples of shows that had first class music, and with no-good anything else, as for instance, "Very Warm For May," which had a beautiful Kern score and had "All The Things You Are" for instance and some other great stuff and actually rather good lyrics, but the lyrics are hampered by the book remember.....That's what you would call the libretto if you were talking about an operetta, but it's the story, the play, really.

.....Well maybe I can give you another example too. There have been several shows and the one that comes to my

mind first was a glaring example of this. Ethel Merman did a show, and I'm stalling because I can't remember the title to save my soul -- anybody got the Ewen book here. No, that won't help us, we need a year by year chronology. Ethel Merman and what\*s-his-name -- movie actor, Spanish, South American -- Fernando Lamas -- what show was that? In the forties or fifties? It will come to me next Friday, I guess.....

You see two fellows came in and played a score for Ethel and she thought all the numbers were just great, so they called in Lindsay and Crouse, who are very, very good book writers, to do a book around the score and it just plain didn't work. The songs were good but they had a nothing book. The biggest joke of the show was that the name of the Lamas character was Jaime, and she thought it was Hymie. And this is the big joke of the show. That was about it. The songs they had, was it "Let's Say, Let's Be Buddies" or that other thing, oh, "We Have A Mutual Admiration Society" came from that show. (Student mentions "Philadelphia Story"). Oh no, that was a solid story ....that was a movie, and that was called "High Society" -- totally different. "Mutual Admiration Society" comes from the

Merman show. I can't remember the names of the boys who wrote the show because they never appeared again. Actually, what they were, they were just pop songs, they sounded good to Merman and it was good enough for her and good enough for the producer, but the show didn't go at all. And they even had Abe Burrows in to direct it and help doctor the book, and it just didn't help. It didn't start out with anything.

I wrote almost a complete score in 1965. It was an original story and the idea and the structure was mine..... (right, the Merman show was "Happy Hunting").....I did as much of the score as I could and what it was was a study of three generations of rebels, a grandmother, a mother and a granddaughter. This trio appeared about a couple of years later in "Forty Carats" but in a totally different relationship. Never mind what the story was, it was fairly solid, but it was a very badly written book so I won't tell you who wrote it because you'd know the name of the book writer. I wouldn't even go into rehearsal with it because with a bad book, you can forget it all, because nothing relates and nothing holds together. So the first thing that comes in a

musical is the concept. The first thing is the idea, will the idea hold. A beginning, a middle and an end. Now that sounds primitive, but you'd be surprised how many people don't know this. In the Hungarian playwrights, there are great beginnings and pretty good middles but their ends are non-existent. All the great jokes about Hungarian playwrights were about third acts, they didn't have a third act and they went to sleep and dreamed there was a third act, or whatever. Those are all the Hungarian playwright jokes which could take an hour. But a lot of people have great beginnings, you'll see pictures which begin great. Or you will see shows that have a great first act and the second act goes nowhere, it just goes away.

Whereas the second act of "My Fair Lady" built on a very solid story, just gets better and better because it's built on the construction that has a beginning and a middle and an end. It's a story about a very arrogant profession, a specialist in languages who says he can make a duchess out of a cockney guttersnipe, and he goes to work on her. The cockney guttersnipe who does not understand what he wants to do, just thinks he's bugging her and making life difficult, and scrubbing her up and whatnot. Her idea of heaven is to

sit with her feet up some place and not worry about food and chocolate. And the middle of the show is his trying to do it and trying to do it and he thinks he about has her, which is towards the end of the first act when he takes her to Ascot to show her off to his mother. It turns out she speaks perfect English but she doesn't know about what to speak, she talks about her mother and getting gin and dying of it when she had the flu, and you remember that famous speech from Shaw, and so-and-so (what-ever the horse's name) "move your bloody ass." That's the way the thing goes. Well then, he has to go back and teach her what really makes a ~~duthass~~ and then he takes her to the ball, and this all comes off, and still that isn't enough of an ending for a musical comedy. This ~~wasn't~~ wasn't enough of an ending for a musical comedy because it left two characters split, because the man lost interest the minute he won his bet. Which ~~for~~ Shaw was good enough, for a play it will work. But you've got to have some end for a musical because it either has to all blow up, in other words, they have a terrible fight and go off some place, and they couldn't contradict Shaw and do a clinch at the end just make it a boy meets girl, boy gets girl story. That wouldn't

work, so they had to leave you a ~~lady~~ or a tiger ending, and give you hope that this was going to work out because she was so much in love with him, and because he didn't know what he felt for her except that he missed her when she wasn't there. At least they pointed you in the right direction, so you walked out either laughing, crying, happy, outraged but anything but puzzled. You cannot leave a musical feeling puzzled, it won't work. An awful lot of people have tried it and tried to get away with it, in all kinds of ways, no matter how you think you can beat it out, it just won't work.

Now I covered something else in talking about the fact that the concept has to have an idea that will hold -- a beginning, a middle and an end. What I didn't say and I suppose you all know, anyhow, it doesn't matter in what order they're told because flashback has been used as a device and very well. There may be new forms coming up we never heard of. They can tell the end, the beginning and then the middle, but at least when you leave that theater you've got to have straight in your head what the structure of those relationships were. The other thing is, of course, that it has to have room for music and lyrics. Now this is where an awful lot

of neophytes and an awful lot of non-musical producers make their mistake. If it can be told just as well without musical lyrics you're making a mistake to pick it as a musical. And that's silly. Now there's no question about the fact that, and it's a good thing I picked "My Fair Lady" because that's a very good example, "Pygmalion" did great as a play and had done great for many, many years, and there were an awful lot of people who thought that Fritz and Alan were absolutely crazy to do this as a musical, it could not be helped. By the way, the same time that Fritz and Alan were trying to get this for Broadway, over at Paramount we were trying to get this for Danny and Audrey Hepburn, and we started about a week later than they did so there was a kind of a fight about it and finally they went back to the date that the first cables had been received and that's how they got it. And I think it's better that they did, because it made a great show and it would not have been nearly as good done first as a movie because a movie cannot hold as much by way of original music and lyrics as a show can because people don't come into the movie to listen to lyrics. It's a totally different atmosphere.

Now, what they found -- would anybody like to say what you think they found to do with "Pygmalion". Because I think it's kind of obvious if you think about it. What did the lyrics and music do for it that the original story didn't have for instance?.....Well, Shaw's great fault as a dramatist was that he didn't flesh out his people.....(Why Can't The English".) It tells you a lot about him which bears that out, it tells a lot about his character. It tells you something else though which I think is the main thing..... (color) Well you can always say that, that's a good one.

Well, I'll tell you one of the things that helped this. It has nothing to do with what I'm going to tell you about music and lyrics but it has a lot to do with writing the book which we'll get around to. That is, they did not use Shaw's play as a basis for this (and remind me to talk about this again before I get off the subject, which is the contribution of a single individual, unifying influence in a musical). They used Shaw's screenplay which he wrote much later, when he himself was more mellow, when he himself would round the characters out more. Not that he was ever a really mellow man, in those terms. But comparatively speaking, for

Shaw, he was not quite as ~~didactic~~ and he was not quite as didactic and even if he was, it was kind of mock, you know, it was a lot of bluster. But by the time he was in his 70's he was a little more human.

I'll tell you what I look for, if somebody says to me why don't you make a musical out of, whatever. I have to ask are there things to talk about to make points about in the show, does it cover subjects that can be extended beyond the action of the show itself. Because what a lyric can do, the dialogue can't do, or if it can do, shouldn't do because it would take too long, is to give almost a dissertation on a whole related field. As for instance in "Why Can't The English", he talks about the speech habits and patterns not only of the English but many other countries and people. He talks about the importance of speech, the importance of writing. He takes you into the whole world of semantics and that's covered in that song and if it were never referred to again in the show, you would have a pretty thorough study of that.

Now when he gets to "I'm A Reasonable Man" you get his whole character, his attitude toward women since the day he

was born, which you cannot do in dialogue unless you have him in an analyst's office and he's busy telling the analyst what his attitude toward his mother was and what kind of a baby he was and what he thinks about women, mothers, maids, girls, flowergirls, anything, it's all in that. And the fact that he gets roaring, raving, lunatic mad and then says "but I'm a reasonable man", his picture of himself, how he holds himself in relation to the rest of the world, is in that song. And then when they get right after that, to the "Rain In Spain" and make it into a tango, that was absolutely inspired because the thing that you would least expect from Henry Higgins is to go into a tango or a bullfight, or a mock bullfight, shows you the degree of -- what the devil is the word I want, it means the next stage of happiness you'd be in an institution -- how euphoric he's gotten because she finally got it and it's almost like cheering for a touchdown at a football game. Just four people in a room were able to accomplish this musically because of the way it was done. And then Moss, and this is quite by accident, they didn't have a choreographer and that's a long story, he staged it himself and he staged it as simply

as he could with just four people , it was the high point of the show, no matter who was in it, no matter how it was done, it gave an aura of excitement and accomplishment that they never, never could have gotten in a straight play. As wonderful as "Pygmalion" was you never get that kind of joy. The feeling of the father in "Just a Little Bit Of Luck" tells you exactly what his attitude toward life is but it also tells you something about the customs of the time, what they consider funny, what they consider lucky, what they consider a good thing to have. Her song "Wouldn't It Be Lovely" tells you exactly what that cockney girl wants out of life and how far -- let's say life is lived on three levels, well she was sub-level to the level, the super third level, but she finally gets to it by the end of the show, after being educated by Higgins, because underneath the grime, underneath the dirt, underneath the stage make-up, whatever it was, you had an amazingly intelligent, bright, able sort of an intellectual girl buried under the crushing kind of circumstance that was present in England then -- the class consciousness, she was way back, at the bottom of the ladder. She had no way of knowing that this kind of thing existed. Her world existed between her

flowerstall, getting her father out of the nearest pub and getting home and putting her feet up. And you can tell from that song "Wouldn't It Be Lovely" until she gets to "Just You Wait Henry Higgins" you know, when she drops back into cockney, that her mind is awake by then and the retribution she will call down on his head. And the kind of lovely moment she has when she sings "I Could Have Danced All Night," tells you for the first time she has been touched by something way above her world. In it she has affection, she has a kind of girlish excitement, she's given up the jaded kind of happy attitude of the cockney girl who didn't want much and was satisfied with very little and she's beginning to get a more complex view of the world and finding delight in something she didn't know existed.

We could go on about this about any good score, it happens to be one of the best scores ever written for the theater, but we started out with a play and you say, well how can you make that better and these are all the ways that it's made better, and many more ways, but we'll get to "My Fair Lady" in time, and I don't want to spend too much time on it tonight.

So we get to the next ingredient which is why you make it a musical is whether music and lyrics will explain it, expand it, stretch the emotion or make comments, which is very, very important. So what have we got there. We have necessary for a musical, the concept, a story that can be bettered by the use of music and lyrics and then, extremely important, and again this is going to sound terribly simple, but very difficult to get through the heads of people who want to write musical comedies including some very well-known producers. The audience has to care about somebody or something in the show. Now that doesn't mean that it always has to be a love story except in a musical it's better if there's some human relationship that you're considering. In "Fiddler On The Roof" for instance, you care about the human relationships but it also tells you what the feeling is of any minority, in any country, and that I think is why -- although in his book Lehman Engel says that the thing is it tells a story of a generation gap and that's why it's a great success in Tokyo -- I don't believe that. I believe it tells the feelings of a minority. And sometimes a minority can be one person in a

classroom, it can be anybody who is discriminated against or feels discriminated against. You can be a minority of one, you can be a minority of 200,000, you can be a minority of 3 million, depending upon what stage you pick (by stage I don't mean a theater stage, I mean the world stage) whether you're thinking about a set, a country, the world, a classroom or a park. Because you can do a musical that doesn't move out of one square block. As a matter of fact "West Side Story" didn't move a great deal out of certain blocks in Manhattan yet the story was full of explosive human relationships and there again, there was a minority story and it was very powerful. And you'll be surprised at the number of people that come to you -- I guess between us, in my family, we've had ~~had~~ had scripts submitted to us for one thing and another, you know, either for Danny to perform in or for me to write the score to than I could possibly count. And I would say that 99 out of 100 of them don't have these simple, very, very simple requirements in mind. They'll tell a story that's no story, they think it's about something but it isn't, it's a joke. One joke doesn't make a story. Just because a scene is funny -- that scene may make a sketch, as we were talking

about last week, -- it may just take two lines and a lyric and that's the end of that. You have to begin to know the size and feel of jokes if you're going to do a funny one -- if you're going to do a musical comedy comedy. Then you have to find out whether you have something which is funny enough and gives birth to enough smaller ideas that will hold for a whole show. Because sometimes you have a joke which will do for a blackout and that's all, like the Hymie joke, you know, it's not going to go for a whole night. It just won't. "No, No Nanette" is a very simple-minded early musical, not as good as some other musicals that were done at about the same time, which is 1925, but "No, No Nanette" has enough in it that will last. Do you know the story of "No, No Nanette"?

When are you fellows going to start to read the Ewen book?

.....I'm sorry, it is in alphabetical order, but why don't you do what I did. When I got the Ewen book I looked at it kind of hopelessly because I started to read and I figured my mind was zig-zagging from one era of theater to another. But go to the back of the book and take it chronologically. Someday maybe I'm going to have to write a chronological book. Nobody does. It's insanity, but there it is. I think

at the end of the Ewen book they have the years and they have the shows that were done in those years. I would follow them in chronological order if I were you because it's silly to sit here and start to tell you plots of all the musicals, you know we can't take up all our hours that way and you could do it much better by yourselves. I wish you'd start to read them and I'm disappointed that so far you all haven't come in with more questions. I would figure you'd be just a jump ahead of me on some things. You know you're being awfully nice and I appreciate it. But I wish you'd start to read some of these books and ask me how come they went when they sound so stupid. Maybe there are reasons, maybe they were very well written, maybe they were played with people who had magic which makes a great difference.

The story of "Call Me Madam" for instance is a very simple story. It's Perle Mester who becomes an Ambassador to Luxembourg (is what it really is) anyhow, she's an Ambassador to a small country and on very intimate terms with Harry Truman. Well, there are some good Truman jokes in there, but the story is principally about how she equates being an ambassador with being a great hostess, which is what she did

in Washington. In a small country like that, of course, it doesn't matter. The relationship -- having an ambassador in Luxembourg is a courtesy unless we ever decide to challenge their tax laws, then we'll get into trouble, and a lot of people with Luxembourg corporations will get into terrible trouble. But that's really the only international claim to any kind of importance that Luxembourg has, otherwise, it's a tiny country, it's a Graustarkian country, really. So, she gets busy arranging the love life of her secretary, or it's her first assistant, and some girl or other, and that's pretty much the story of "Call Me Madam" except ~~that~~ there is a starring vehicle for a lady who is coarse off-stage but magic on-stage, a great score, and marvelous theater songs although they're not the best music or the best lyrics ever written. Very effective theater and the scenes were written so that they played. Strangely enough, we haven't talked about how you put a musical book together yet have we, because I'm on the big thing. Somebody keep me on the track here. I have too much to say tonight, things ~~that~~ you should know.

What else is required for a book do you think? Well, that's about it, and the ability to believe it. It must be

believable at the level on which it is presented. For instance, "Guys And Dolls" is fable, very black and white, two-dimensional characters, very famous characters, they're Runyon characters actually since they are so to speak types you can fill in ~~with~~ the rest of their personalities are like whether it's "Harry the horse" or "Nathan Detroit"; they're all kinds of small-time goniffs -- do you know what a goniff is? They're small-time thieves, goniffs, gamblers, whatever, and they live in their own fairyland which is located on -- bounded on one side by Lindy's Restaurant, on the other side by the race track, and the other side by a floating crap game. And if you accept the world of "Guys and Dolls" and you accept them on their terms, then it's up to the people who write the book and the people who write the score to make you care about them in those terms. And the first book they got, I remember, happened to be a very no-good book and Frank had written most of the score and sat in New York for a year doing nothing but play the score for his friends and himself to cheer himself up looking for a good book.

Jo Swerling had written the book and he was a pretty good screenwriter but he just didn't have the idiom of the

theater in his pencil or in his head and so they finally got a master constructionist, Mr. George Kaufman, and they got Abe Burrows who, at that time, was still kind of an undisciplined wild joke man, he did some very, very funny radio shows, but it was George that trained him. And sometimes you find a person who is a wonderful catalyst for you and takes all your unchanneled talents or notions, whatever, and channels them for you and suddenly makes a sleek working apparatus out of your mind for that purpose. And so, the combination of Kaufman and Burrows, and their talents went wonderfully with Frank, although you would never think if you knew George Kaufman and you knew Frank that they would ever get on. But Frank was an extremely tough talking little character and he was little, and he couldn't stand not being the center of the conversation for more than five minutes, and you'd hear Frank say "hey, listen", then everybody would shut up and then Frank would have to wait and think of something to talk about. He just couldn't bear to be left out. George on the other hand, had a very wry kind of sense of humor and George's lines would sneak up on you as he bent down to get a thread from the carpet, he'd say something

absolutely devastatingly funny. And Abe Burrows was sort of the bridge that brought them both together. He could operate with both of them. He'd long been a very good friend of Frank's and he also makes -- Abe makes a business of talking like an uneducated kind of half east side, tenth avenue speech. He says "lissen, dose songs are not too gud." But actually, he knows more about words, their derivation than almost anybody I know. He is absolutely the best educated man I know and his English is marvelous and when he doesn't look out, you know, you hear it. But when he's on, he speaks Damon Runyonese. That's Burrows, that's his front. So between Burrows and Loesser and Kaufman you got the combination that made "Guys And Dolls" one of the best musicals ever written beyond a doubt. It was all a piece, all the scenes told you something, they told you about things you've never heard of, but most of all, the first two minutes of that show you took those characters to your heart and you accepted them on their level.

Now, if you saw the movie, forget it because that had absolutely nothing to do with how that show was presented, nothing at all. Before the picture was made it had about

five casts that I know of and Goldwyn, who when he makes a mistake makes a big one, decided to go with Marlon Brando as Sky Masterson. Now Marlon is probably one of the best actors we have ever had -- but a two-dimensional character -- Sky Masterson was a gambler, period. That was his character in this. These were all characters with labels. Frank Sinatra was not Nathan Detroit -- because Frank -- Nathan Detroit was Sam Levine, it couldn't be anybody else. Sam couldn't sing a note and so "Sue me, Sue me" -- that's all Sam could sing -- and they coached him and they coached him and they coached him and at the end of the song he had three notes to sing "I love you", right? He used to look at the conductor and he'd go "I -- love -- you", but that was Nathan Detroit. He was kind of a, not obviously coarse, but obviously uneducated, highly put-upon, very small-time gambler, kind of tin horn, and that was his character. Now, whatever Frank has, Frank is not first and foremost an actor. Frank is one of the most complex and one of the most magic personalities in entertainment; if he plays somebody like himself, he plays it very well, but unlike our definition of a great actor. For instance, Sam Levine couldn't play "Macbeth", I really don't think so, but

neither could Frank. But, anyhow, the casting was wrong because there is in Frank, there is that sex quality, that great sex quality that he can't put under wraps which Nathan Detroit cannot have. Now, it's absolutely wrong because Nathan Detroit shouldn't be able to borrow money from anyone, no matter what -- he's the one who's always in trouble and has to go to one of his friends to eke out something and he's a cheap tin horn and it should never have been Frank Sinatra. And so on down the line with that cast.....Jean Simmons..... which was a brilliant piece of casting because no one can play a New York Salvation Army girl like a British girl. It was altogether great comedy casting and I won't run the picture no matter what because it will absolutely belie one of the great theatrical experiences I have ever had. That evening at the theater was like being in Lindy's at its best. You know, like being -- like walking down Broadway when it was a great street, before all the flea circuses came on to it. It was Broadway, it was the essence of Broadway in the thirties which is a marvelous, heady kind of thing. It was an other world thing though. Because in Lindy's you could walk in the front door, and all the gamblers were right up front and

nobody went near their tables. The gamblers were here, the theatrical people were here, the visiting socialites were there, and the crumbs were there -- and that was the pecking order at Lindy's. And the gamblers table, they were always funny, because they were always jumping up and running to the phones, and you could tell them from the way they dressed. Now, all the jokes about race touts' clothes, they were all at Lindy's and that all went on that stage and they didn't try to make them look like anything else. And they all had great -- it was a fairytale.

Now another fable done by Frank Loesser and Abe Burrows of all people, was "How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying". He told you at the beginning of the show that he was going to get to the top using this handbook on how to succeed. They didn't use it as an opening gimmick and forget it, which is what most shows do, they get tired of it and then forget to bring the book back, but all through the show his next step was outlined in that book and that was a fable, too. And you accepted it on those terms, otherwise the show ~~could~~not have been done in this crazy ~~kind~~ of black and white, two-

dimensional way again because -- what was the name of the secretary, she's played by the girl who played Thunderation Jones.....Stupifying Jones in L'il Abner.....a big tall, long drink, enormous.....well, any~~h~~ow she was the secretary and Bobby Morse was this big and the secretary was that big and you took for granted he could get whatever he wanted because that's what the book said. So they didn't bother to develop character, the character was what they said. Now, it's a great trick to be able to make an audience accept your terms. That takes a great deal of doing, it's not that simple. It's much easier to write something on a believable level so before anybody attempts anything like that they'd better be very sure of their ground.

.....We're on story at the moment, that's all. I'm telling you what kinds of stories there are and what's necessary for a story and I said you had to care about the people and you have to believe it and then I cited the offbeat ones where you would think you don't necessarily believe it, but they would not have been hits if you didn't believe it. Now, there have been a lot of flops that closed out of town that tried this trick and it just didn't work.

What else do you think a musical comedy needs to be a musical. Somebody. Anybody. All right. It's got to have style and the style has to be followed through. You know, what I was just talking about was style in a way. But every one of them has to have a style for they just become bits and pieces and, do you remember our session on "Gigi", now there was a picture with style. It had a stamp. While Louis always objected to my using the word stamp, when I say it has a stamp I mean it's like a St. Laurent dress has a stamp, a Givenchy suit has a stamp, a Chanel suit has a stamp. What I mean is you can tell by just looking at it who did it or if you don't know exactly who did it, then you certainly know whether it was a first-rate designer, whether it's a seventh avenue copy of a first rate designer, or whether the fabric has quality too. If the design has quality and the fabric has quality, then you're beginning to get a first class piece of work, and that's what you have to go for in the theater too. Whatever kind of thing you want to do, when I say something must have a stamp, if the stamp is squalor you'd better have first rate squalor -- what I mean is, you can't pretend that it has squalor, you can't jump.

"West Side Story" was a perfect example. When they all meet in the gym and when they meet at the fire escape, it all has to smell, and when I say smell I mean your theatrical nose tells you that they're in the same neighborhood, they're the same kind of people, they haven't suddenly moved to Park Avenue because the designer feels like putting up something he had left over from another show. People make these crazy shortcuts and they show. They say, oh, the audience will never know the difference. Well maybe the audience doesn't know the difference but I'll tell you that that's what was wrong with it; they'll sure know there was something wrong is all they'll know. It's like I was telling you about rhymes. You know do first class rhymes, don't get away with second class rhyming.

.....(Student question about shows that cut corners.)

I never heard of a first class management who ever did that. Maybe when it went on the road but not on Broadway. Because once the show starts, the unions -- well we haven't been talking about money but, all right -- the unions will establish a certain basic crew that you must have and a certain number of

musicians that you must have and a certain number of lighting men you must have, so if you start out with that you might as well use it, if you already have the scenery it's just as cheap to use as not to use.....It must have been a road production. You can't cut corners in a show while it's still running in a first class, what is called a Broadway house. Those are the union rules. I never heard anybody get anything off. The only way they get anything off, by the way, is going to the writers to cut their royalties, that's the first thing. They'll say, if you take half royalties, the show can continue. Then they go to the cast to take cuts. The crew never takes a cut. The first show I ever did I played the piano in the pit because I knew that salary I was going to get every week. Even though I'd written three-quarters of the show the Schuberts came to me for a half-cut the second week because they knew I was very young and what the hell, you know.....No, it's not possible. Now, if they took it on the road they can do anything they like. If they get into Chicago, San Francisco even Los Angeles, they might make those cuts knowingly, and then of course it costs so much less to run on the road, which is an appreciable difference, but not in the same house.

Anyhow, on style. (And it's a good point because the audience will be able to smell the difference. They may not know what it is, but they will be able to tell something's not right.) Did any of you see the production of "Candide" here last year.....you're all very lucky. Well, one of the things that was terribly wrong with it was the scenery. The scenery and the costumes were just god-awful, and had absolutely nothing to do with the quality of the score or the kind of show that it was. Now, I didn't think it was a great show when I saw it originally in 1956, but by god, you could almost count the seed pearls that Irene Sharif (?) sewed by hand. The costumes were so elaborate and the scenery was so elaborate and so well done and here they had nothing else.

Danny did a show last year that was one of the worst things I ever saw in my life. And I went to the opening in New Haven to see "Two By Two" and I couldn't believe what I was saying. I'm talking about the scenery now, I'm talking about the look of the show. It looked as if Dick Rogers' grandson on a bad day -- I'm not kidding now, I'm not exaggerating at all -- had put the set together. The costumes, I have never seen such terrible costumes in my life and the audience hated the show

from the minute the curtain went up. They thought surely the scenery was going to change any second. This happened to be the choreographer's conception.....disconcerting, it's god awful. I went down from Boston -- I had been begging Dick Rogers to throw the sets out and Issaid I'd rather see you do it in front of a cycl with lights than have this terrible looking stuff that's pretending to be scenery and I flew down from Boston to see "Rothschilds", although I never like to see a show before it opens because I don't think it's fair to see a preview. But I went to see it and I came back and they asked me what I though and I said well, it has everythingtthis show has not got, it doesn't have anything it has, but it has everything you don't haven't got. And Dick Rogers says to me what have they got and I said scenery, costume, good production, a choreographer, and Dick said, oh, that's nothing. Well, as far as I know "Rothschilds" is still running.

.....The set is not the most important thing. That was "Ilya Darling" when they made "Never On Sunday" a show. Julie Dassin who was really a movie director inisted on the first set looking like the harbor in Piraeus, the same as the

first set had been in the picture, well not the first set, but the harbor. Well, that goddamn ship was so big you know, you couldn't see the actors for it. And nothing else mattered, all he wanted was for Melina to dive into the water in a bikini and nobody could convince him that nobody cared in the theater whether she dived into the water in a bikini or not because they could barely see it anyhow. Because it was the action that was important, ~~the~~ was the songs, it was all that, not the scenery

I saw a show that was totally ruined by scenery. This is a straight play but it was done by Moss Hart -- I'm getting ahead of myself but I'll tell you the show. It was called "Christopher Blakk". I went to the run-through just before they went to Boston and it was a very, very touching show -- it was about divorce and the effect of divorce on a child and the various hearings and the custody thing and whatnot. I went up to the opening night in Boston -- those were still in the days when everybody's friends always came up to help, ~~they~~ don't do it ~~very~~ much any more, but in the theater up until the fifties I would say, everybody used to go by the request of the authors and sometimes just friends who heard

about it and they'd all automatically go to the writers' room in the local hotel and sit down and start, either says it's marvelous, don't touch it, or whatever they thought, and it was the job of the writers, the director, the producer to try to sift out the good criticism from the unhealthy criticism from the things that are useless to talk about like throw ~~it~~ ~~the~~ book and start all over, you know, that kind of lovely advice. But I saw this thing with scenery, it had a very heavy show, it had turntables, it had all kinds of imaginative scenery because Moss was primarily a showman and he did it in almost as heavy a show as he did for "Lady In The Dark" and it was a terrible flop. And I kept telling him it was the scenery and Danny kept kicking me because Danny explained to me later he said Moss will never take out the scenery, he loves it, he loves the turntables and you're wasting your breath. But that's what killed it. The whole poignancy of the story got drowned in the elaborateness of the sets, but that's sometimes just a mistake in judgement.

I'll tell you who did something about it, something like that. Mike Nichols did three musical pieces called "The Apple Tree" and he did something, that Alan Lerner and I

have been Maston and Alfonsing each other on for ten years because it's something I always wanted to do and something Alan always wanted to do and we turned around and there they had done it. It was "The Diary of Adam and Eve" written by Mark Twain. Now it's a marvelously funny and touching and wonderful thing and they had a very heavy set for it in Boston, and Mike Nichols threw it right out because it was just ruining the simplicity, and they just had a ladder and a couple of little trees.....(Student re lyrics coming out of the Twain book.) That wasn't brilliant, that's easy; what was brilliant was Mike Nichols taking the scenery out when he knew that it was destroying it. People sink money into something -- they had a big heavy set.....(fire hazard) but there was another reason that he took it out, it might have helped but I heard Mike on the subject before he went to Boston. He said he though it was a mistake, a terrible mistake. Maybe he put something on it that would go up in flames because I know he wanted to get rid of the set. It was absolutely ruining the simplicity of the Adam and Eve diaries.

A lot of times people make the mistake of having sunk a lot of money into something and they say, my god, I can't take it out look at all that money. What happens is the show closes and they lose a lot of money whereas if they just gave up the

fifty to a hundred thousand dollars that it cost for the set, they'd make it back three times over if the show is a hit, and that's a kind of shortsightedness.

Don't let me lose where I was, where were we. I had just gotten to all the ingredients required in a musical book. We finished style. Now style has to be picked up and carried on in every single department. In other words, if your story has style and your score has a style, then the direction must have a style that's compatible with that style. What I mean for instance, to go back to "Two By Two" for a minute because that's a very recent example, and also the Adam and Eve diaries, is "Two By Two" was originally written as a show with many sets, many scenes, whatever, when we read the book. Joe Leyton came in, Peter Hunt was supposed to direct it, and they delayed so long that he had to go on to another commitment, so they got Joe Leyton. Joe Leyton is essentially a choreographer and not a director but he wants to be a director and so he immediately changed the whole concept of the show. Now, somebody must know in his head what that show is about and what it's supposed to be like in order to say when a director says we are going to throw out all the sets and we are going to

build the Ark on stage from the wood in the house -- somebody's got to say to him, Joe that's a very good idea but what happens to all the scenes, what happens to the change of pace, what happens to showing the animals, what happens to showing the Ark, what happens to the development of character while they're busy carrying the word and they haven't got time to talk, and it sounds very good Joe but it's not going to work, why don't you use that in a ballet some day. But nobody said that to him because everybody's grasping at straws and they ~~don't~~ have a producer. Dick Rogers decided to be his own producer. Now, when Oscar Hammerstein was alive Oscar happened to be a good producer and, therefore, Dick always having worked with him thought he was a good producer. Now these are all friends of mine and if any of you tell, I'll kill you. In order to teach you I've got to say this. There wasn't a strong man around who didn't have to live and work as Dick as the composer had to live and work with the lyricist, with the book writer, with the director, whatever. There had to be somebody off saying listen fellows this was not the concept and it all sounded good two weeks ago but we made a mistake and lets go back to the sets. Even before they got to

Boston somebody could have told you that that was not going to work. Danny came home and said, you know Joe is going to do something brilliant -- we're going to rehearse with knives and forks but then we're going to eat without them, it's going to be a pantomime. I said what are you putting on a kindergarten play, is this actors studio, what is it, what's the point? Well, I finally ~~beat~~ that out and it was a fight believe me. But that wasn't the point in "Noah", the point of "Noah" was not to have a set, and they had a play to go by, they had the Odets play which is a flawed play but never mind, the Odets play had far more than the musical had. It was telling the story of Noah as if it were a present day family, that is, to treat them not as if they were haloed and hallowed bible characters but people, and what it would be like if a family were ~~suddenly~~ faced with the fact that they would be the only surviving family in the world and if they had to preserve ~~two~~ of every kind of ~~family~~ and insect, what it would be like for them to live through this experience. That all got lost because the most important thing then became how are we going to get the wood off the top of the house in order to make the bow of the ark. You know, and

there was nobody there to tell him and therefore, I say, and as far as I'm concerned you say, that a extremely important element in anything theatrical, but particularly in musical comedy where there are so many diverse elements that have to be put together, you're dealing with not a single playwright, you're dealing with a bunch of very tender egos and some very aggressive egos and there's an awful lot of infighting, in a musical, because you have a composer, a lyricist, a choreographer and a director you should have because when the choreographer and the director is one and same you usually run into trouble again, therefore, there has to be somebody to preside over this to be sure that nobody is not paralyzing somebody else in another department in order to satisfy his ego, which was the Joe Leyton concept.

.....("She Loves Me") Well, the one who broke the ground for that (staging) was Moss in "My Fair Lady" but I hear it was very good, I didn't see it but I hear it was very good. When Hal Prince comes here, and he'll come to do a class some time between March 19th and April 4th, you can talk to him about "She Loves Me" and all the other shows he's done. I'm sorry I didn't see that one but I hear it was very well

done and I know it was Hal Prince's favorite and he's very sorry that it never quite made it. If I had seen it I might have tried to explain why it didn't make it. But I didn't see it so I don't know.....If the audience is not for it, there's something wrong with it, there's something missing.....

Well, "Rothschilds" is running on what's-his-name's ego..... it's very flawed, very flawed.....you're all very interesting but you're going to get me off my subject and you're never going to learn about musicals.

.....He's (producer) the head of the state department is what he is. I thought we had talked about that in one of our early sessions, but I'll be very happy to talk about it again. What a producer does is determined mostly by who the producer is. Like everything in the theater, or it happens in business too. If you have the head of a business who himself is a very creative man, if you have the head of a big aeronautic business a man who was himself a pilot he'll run it one way, if he was himself a designer he'll run it another way, it all depends upon what his original interest was. If he is just a businessman, then it is his function to get the best everybody. If he is holding the company back, then he

should be fired. He's got to do one or the other, he's got to either be able to contribute this himself or get the people who will contribute it and then get out of those people their best work. That's where being the head of the state department counts. If you want to call it part public relations man, that's what the ideal secretary of state is supposed to do with countries and that's what the producer has to do and we haven't even mentioned the cast. I can't tell you how many times Rex Harrison quit "My Fair Lady". He kept saying I don't like musical comedy, I don't trust musical comedy and I never liked it and I never trusted it and I'm not going to do it, and he walked after opening night in Boston -- in New Haven, and he said he was never going to play it again. He almost walked in Philadelphia one night when everybody knew it was going to be a smash success because he refused to do "Why Can't A Woman Be More Like A Man". He said he was not going to learn one more number and he didn't understand the number and he didn't know why they needed it and it was too much of a strain to learn it, and why didn't they go away and stop bothering him and he was going to quit and he meant it. You have no idea the temperament.

.....Getting a producer to say he's going to do it and getting the writer to start to prepare it is only the very little beginning of doing a musical.....The moving force, the man who single-handedly really made "My Fair Lady" was Moss Hart. Now, you never hear about him in connection with "My Fair Lady" because Moss died the next year or two years later, actually, and from the day he died everybody else has been taking the credit while he was alive they all kept quiet. That happens sometimes. What I was going to say is that in the theater almost any function can overlap any other function because you're dealing now with people of talent. And sometimes you find somebody who is just a single talent, like just somebody who can write a great melody, period. Or a lyricist who can just write lyrics and I'm always suspicious of people like that because usually theatrical talents overlap one into another. A producer will have a smell of what's a good song and what's not a good song and if he doesn't, if he's a good producer and he stays in business, then he knows it and he gets a director who does. You must have somebody who rides herd on creative people and that goes for me as well as

anybody else. Now I'm a pretty good producer but I don't like to be the producer when I'm writing. When I'm writing I like somebody to run to and say what do you think of this or where does the verse go wrong. And if the producer can't answer me, I go to the director, and if they both can't answer me I go to my cook. But everybody has to have a sounding board, but you'd better have not just a paperhanger. Sammy Cahn and Julie Styne always referred to paperhangers: they're sitting and writing a song in the studio and there's a man painting the wall or hanging paper or something, and they're having a fight about a line you know, and Sammy will say I like this line and Julie will say, it's a terrible line and the paper hanger looks down and he'll say I think that line's better. They take his version because it's easier and they go on from there. They have an outside opinion because most creative people are both too sure and not sure at all when they're writing. You're absolutely crazy about what you're writing and you look at it the next minute or the next day, and you say, well gee, well maybe that isn't very good after all and then you need somebody to go to. You're best off, a whole show is best off, when you get that in a person like

a producer. Those are the best run shows, or if the director... now Moss Hart was a rare bird because he was trained in the Borscht Circuit. And in the Borscht Circuit which I am going to get into tonight or we'll never get to Gershwin and I'm beginning to think we never will. In the Borscht Circuit you had to be able to do everything. You had to be able to be part showman, part writer, part scenic designer, part actor, part prompter. As far as I was concerned, I also played in the pit. You always have to.....you bring them a lyric and they say well what is this, and you say well the lines are not supposed to be funny but this is the business that goes with them that makes them funny. So I have to be part director in my head to know how it's going to go. So you find most of the people like Moss like Gar Kanin like strangely enough Arthur Schwartz and Larry Hart, who were counsellors at children's camps which in a funny way are like the Borscht Circuit, because you have to do the same thing. You have to improvise you have to have a talent for improvisation and for fitting your talents into the limits of what the kids can do or whoever was going to do it and so you learn not to be a single functioning talent and you learn to work with people

which is a big help. People like that in the theater are of enormous help to the producers.....It exists, but not in the same way. It has become big business. Do you know anything about the history of the Borscht Circuit. I learned about it by osmosis because my husband was on the Borscht Circuit and a lot of his friends and Gar Kanin and Moss Hart was and Dore Schary, and so I absorbed it from them and it's pretty funny so remind me one of these nights and I'll give you a whole dissertation on the Borscht Circuit. Terribly funny.....I forget whether in "Act One" he ever told the story about himself and Dore Schary doing the British sketch. This was their greatest flop and they could never understand what happened to it. They were missing a sketch for the Saturday night show and something hadn't worked so either Dore or Moss said let's do a British sketch. They didn't have time, this was about an hour before the show and they said well, what will we do and they said let's get the costumes first and then we'll see. So they got the costumes, one was a butler and the other was the master, I suppose, with a silk dressing gown that they borrowed from a guest, and they had to have a telephone on stage, and they finally got to it, and

Dore said well what are we going to say and Moss said of course I'll be the master because I have the silk dressing gown (he was the one who borrowed the dressing gown) and he said you get on the phone and talk the kind of British that nobody understands and I'll get on and nobody'll understand me and it will be very funny. Now if the moon had been shining, they might both have said very funny things, it might have been a great sketch, but nothing happened that night. They didn't understand each other, the audience didn't understand them, none of the jokes worked, nothing. But that would happen too but at least they.....

When Danny and I worked at the Martiniere which is -- I came from Brooklyn to work in show business. I didn't know where I was at and I wrote the things -- we worked in a nightclub which is three shows a night, and an hour a show, and after a while we were a great smash hit or something, well we were, and got bored doing the same things. So I'd say to Danny let's do an opera number because we'd gone to a Sunday night concert at the Metropolitan Opera and singers are terribly funny, at least they strike me funny -- the opera singers who take a deep breath and part from each other to sing an the

faces they make when they sing and the way they look and I said you tell the story and I'll improvise music and I'll follow you or you follow me. Well, it worked out, it worked out just great and we developed this opera number over a series of nights and I think -- well I never worked in the Borscht Circuit but I'd worked in adult camps in the summer although I started as a counsellor in a kid's camp is where I really started to learn this. You're brave enough to improvise and particularly if you're musical, if you're playing the piano or if you're singing, if it isn't going anywhere, you segue into something that you know will go somewhere, so your're pretty safe, you know you can finish up with something good and in the meantime you have the courage to improvise around and find your way and maybe you find like one night Danny said this -- you know we get to where the oboe has a passage, now the whole audience screamed at this and we never knew why, and we finally figured that it was dirty but it didn't seem -- anyway we get to this point in the opera where the oboe has the passage and the audience screamed so, okay, the oboe stayed in, and the musical direction on this is "molto, molto, andante molto, chocholo molto" Danny said, so I fall down, it's pretty funny

so I played some chords after that and then I started to improvise what would be an aria and he picked it up and we did the whole story of an opera and I developed it from there into a number for, much later on, for "Wodder Boy" for Danny and a soprano and this worked out. Now if you get someone with that kind of background in the theater, they're an enormous help.

(Break) Okay, can I talk while you eat because we have a lot of ground to cover. I know I haven't asked for your parodies yet, I will. And if I don't get to them this week I'll get to them next week. But it's a good thing -- I just thought of this coming down in the car, the fact that we had not yet done form in musical comedy and I wondered if you missed it, and since you said you had, this is not what I had planned to do tonight at all but there we are. Steve Albert just asked me to do something. He said that he could not entirely follow what I was saying. Would anyone else like a review of this quickly.....The reason that this is erratic is because I'm taking my cues from you as much as from me and I stop to listen to what you want to know and I stop to listen to what you have to say and I also get a feeling from people

as I'm sure you do, I just had the feeling last week that we had been talking too much about composers and music and we had devoted some time to lyrics that night at my house, but we had never talked about the musical comedy as a whole. Now one of the reasons this is erratic this semester is because I really should have put a year aside to do a course like this. I thought i'd say everything I had to say in three lectures and wondered what we were going to do the rest of the time, really. When I first looked at it I found (I've said this before but it's true) I found that a group of you who had not seen any musical theater or very few of you have seen any musical theater so I had to start in a completely different way than I had planned to start. And I had planned to coordinate every show, score, book, everything. But just today I was able to get out of print editions of musical books. The only one I know who really printed musical books was Bennet Cerf, and to my sorrow because he's my friend, he died this year, and this is the only one who could have put his hand in and said "here". Now you have to go through a whole chain of command, Phyllis isn't there any more, she doesn't work at Random House. A

lot of these were printed for Bennet's pride in just a few copies to say he published the authors. I'm also looking at the Samuel French things and I have got a call into the Rogers people to see what they had done about their books. I also put into a call to ASCAP because of something you asked for last week. I remember when there was a time when I saw sheets of printed lyrics sold the way comic books have been sold for the last ten or fifteen years but I have a terrible feeling that they were all pop tunes that they weren't show tunes. You can't blame us all but we're like thieves, everytime they print them --

Somebody called me last week to do quotes from the lobby number for a speech to the Advertising Council of America and I said fine until I found out that the speech was going to be reprinted and sent all over the country and my lawyer said I couldn't do that because I have held the lobby number as an unpublished number and an unperformable number and I can't give it as some kind of public dedication as a kooky kind of xerox of some advertising executive's speech. So you run into these snags, you're paying fees-- now, I don't know now where to

get all those lyrics. I just don't know. Unless I have volunteer typists in this room and if I hand you all a bunch of sheet music and books with lyrics because if you will all volunteer to type up lyrics from certain shows is the only way you're going to get them.....Really, oh boy, next week I'm going to bring in sheet music and hand it out all over the place, or for instance, can I have that, just the "Oklahoma" and "Sound of Music" -- I have as many as I could collect of whole scores from shows. Now, you don't get many of them before "Oklahoma" but they did print them for operettas and I have got "Lady In The Dark" some place and probably I can get my hands on "Pal Joey.".....Have you got "Rio Rita" because I might not have it.

Anyhow, contained in these scores are all the lyrics which you can't get in sheet music because you have all the reprises here, you have the second choruses, the third choruses and if everybody will take a book then we'll have lyrics for you to follow. Because I have four secretaries on full time pay now, I want you to know, so my average salary list for secretaries alone for this class runs about \$900 to \$1000 a week and I can't afford that for very much longer.

It's really out of whack, but one of the reasons that this is erratic is that you cannot get these things, they're just not all put together. You can get some of the music from some place, you can get some of the lyrics from some place, you can get scores if you know the composers, you know, up to a point. And that's why I'm trying to organize a library and when I finish it I'm going to give it to the library for the performing arts so people will be able to research it in the future.

A lot of what I got to talk about and I have been very kind to you and I haven't played very much, because I don't play well any more and this is a terrible piano, I might add. But it jumps around because we have an awful lot of ground to cover and I'm trying to cover as much as I can before the end of this semester. And what I plan to do after I talk about musical comedy tonight, if we get to any Gershwin and if we don't we won't, and after we get through Gershwin and after we get through Rogers and Hart and Cole Porter. No, those are very important, we are going into a very -- the richest period of American musical comedy was between about 1924 and 1946 or the end of the forties, let's say. That's when if you look at a book you will see 20 to 30 to 40 shows produced

musical comedies produced in a year and you look at the Broadway lists now, the ones that are actually produced, if you find 5 or 6 a year you're lucky, sometimes 10. But they're very scarce and most of them are not very good. So we are running into very rich ground here and I hate to neglect shows but what I'm going to have to do is just arbitrarily pick certain key shows and use them as examples. But what I have been trying to do now is give you a feeling of how the music and lyrics started to develop into an American form and that's why I went through Gilbert and Sullivan and that's why I went through some of Berlin and that's why I went through Kern, who was maybe the most important and the next most important now coming up is Gershwin, and then will come Rogers and Hart.....(discussion about scheduling classes.)

Now, where was I -- musical comedy -- we have gone through what one has to consider when one does a musical. You need a concept and a style, and the style has to be followed through in every department, and the taste, of course one hopes that everybody has taste. Now when it comes to style what we were last talking about is that functions overlap and you may find a producer who himself cannot do these things that he's

required to do, as with "My Fair Lady" Herman Levin found Moss Hart, but he's usually the strongest man. And the most difficult things about musical comedy which are the things that don't appear on paper, they're the intangibles, like everybody's egos, the fact that it's so difficult, so complicated, like the fact that decisions have to be made on who is going to do the scenery, who is going to do the costumes. You can pick a great scenic designer but if his style is not suited to the style of this piece you'd better find somebody who is no matter what his name is, and you shouldn't pick somebody's cousin or somebody's favorite designer to do the costumes because that doesn't work either. Now if you think that that doesn't happen and happen often you're very much mistaken. And to find out who did what, who really did what, you have to know it from the beginning. For instance, we're back to Lhman Engel's book which started me off on this. He puts this all on the composer. He said Gershwin should have found, Irving Berlin should have found -- very often the composer is not the one who gets the idea although that sometimes happens. I don't bar composers from getting ideas and I'm a composer myself, but I don't think I get the ideas as a

composer, I think I get them because I'm a sort of a trained showman, producer and I'm a lyricist and I deal in words and concepts and usually the ideas will come from the lyricist or a combination of music and lyric and lyricist, because if they write together long enough they're like a team and if they talk to each other long enough, they're like a team, and they talk to each other in shorthand, which is very important. And these days the most difficult thing to find is a book writer.

This is where economics come in today and this does not affect the kind of shows we were talking about then. Because money is very hard to come by because a show that should cost \$50,000 to put on now costs about \$400,000 and a show that should cost about 100,000 now costs \$800,000. And it's just Guild prices, it's just union prices and that's how it is, there's nothing you can do about it and as a matter of fact some of them are quite fair because actors have to get rehearsal money and they didn't use to, and they get overtime which they didn't use to get, and nobody's going to get them down anyhow. That's how off-Broadway started by the way. Off-Broadway did not start because they wanted to work in small theaters, the economics drove them to off-Broadway. It's a very interesting

problem right now about the off-Broadway shows because since most of them are down in houses which are very small that means that the stages are very small, that means that you're right back to the Princess Theater. You're back to the problem to the invention of the musical comedy, which is how can you do, manage to do something with a small proscenium, a small stage, not very much room for an orchestra pit and no room in the theater and therefore in people's ears, for a large orchestra, and although a lot of off-Broadway shows look like amateur shows, to me it's a very valuable place and I wish to god that the first string critics wouldn't feel constrained to cover them immediately as they open. I wish they would give them a chance to breathe a little and to declare their own opening nights for critics because it's one of the few places they've got to learn. Otherwise, you've got to go to summer theaters, summer camps and even in the summer theater they're putting on stock things. They're putting on things to which they have the rights, which are not too expensive, and in which the sets aren't too heavy, and which won't be too much of an economic burden and they don't bother too much with original things any more. It's very hard to get training and for musical

theater you need training almost more than any other place. In musical theater you have got to learn to mesh your talents with the other people's talents, particularly if you're a creative talent. The book writer cannot on his own create a book and go away, it's impossible. The ideal way to do a musical comedy is for everybody to agree on the concept ~~from~~ the idea and the kind of show it's going to be. Let's say it's -- anybody name a subject and see if we can build a musical around it.....(religion, pest control)....that's the point you can't just pick anything, you have to -- you're going to have to knock out pest control because that's a little difficult to do as a musical.....women's lib.....okay, that's a very good theme. You can do a serious study on this in which one of the women wind up killed for this, or you can do a comedy.....all right, let's do a comedy, by all means.

I must put in here, if we are not going to spend the next fourteen hours on this, we are going to have to make some very arbitrary decisions. I'm just trying to tell you how you go about putting a musical together. So it's women's lib, therefore, everybody says would'nt it be great to do a musical about women's lib -- now somebody has got to get the idea, the concept -- women's lib is the subject, now what is the concept?

.....That has stale echoes, that sounds as if it has been done in every college in the world -- you have to think of something fresher than that. But this is what you go through. Then you're finally going to have to agree on what angle of women's lib you're going to attack and about whom. In other words, it can't just be about women's lib. It either has to be about, and I'm making this very arbitrary, about a suburban housewife who's extremely stepped on and something, some accident gets her into women's lib, that's a very convenient comedy device, or whatever, and she becomes the great heroine of women's lib unknowingly or you can do a very knowing thing. Like Gloria Steinham who took herself off New York magazine and the other magazines which made her her name and is now forming MS. We could be doing the story of what happens to Ms. We could be doing, let's say it's about a magazine about women's lib. Okay, who do you think can write a book about women's lib.....no, you say okay Gloria Steinham writes great pieces but she's never written for the theater, I wouldn't trust her.....now you go through this.....

Okay fellows, cut off this discussion because this is just a sample of what goes on for weeks in a producer's office.

Everything you've said and many things you haven't thought of yet are going to be said until somebody calls up and says how about Rthh Gordon and Gar Kanin, let's say. And then somebody will say, well they caused nothing but trouble on "Funny Girl" and they had to take him off and get Jerry Robbins or whatever happened, and you go through that until you finally get the book writer.

Now don't let -- the only thing a musical composer and lyricist can say to the book writer that won't tie him hand and foot to begin with and might help ~~him~~, is to say I've got a great idea for an opening, we open it ~~at~~ an international convention in London and so and so and so and so and you give a very fast picture in lyrics and music of what the state is of women's liberation around the world and what they think of eachoother for instance. And the book writer says either that's a terrible idea, I would rather begin it in a kitchen in a house in Westchester and so they fight that out, or whatever it is, but beyond that the book writer should be free to go home and write the play, the outline of a play and maybe even some scene to show how he's going to develop the characters and have occasional meetings with the producer

and the composer and the lyricist to see if he is staying with the idea or he'll call one Tuesday afternoon at five o'clock and say hey I've got a sensational idea that throws everything we were talking about down the drain, can we meet at 6 o'clock at Sardies or in your office or whatever and let me tell you what it is because this may change the whole thing. It's not about women's liberation at all, it's about doctors in the Philippines, but this is how ~~to~~came to it. Now, sometimes shows get switched and if his idea is a better one they might all take it or they say, well, you know, recover, down boy, and back to women's liberation because it's not too good.....(question if composer and lyricists are doing any writing) No, it's foolish because the characters haven't been developed yet. They don't know what characters the story will have, what course the story is taking and what form the story is going to be told in. This relates back to what I told you about the Ethel Merman score, you know, when she picked out the songs and they wrote the book around it. It's much better to wait until there is an outline at least of the first act and preferably with some scenes and dialogue so you have some notion of how the character is developing because what

is going to have to happen ~~because~~ the music and lyrics are going to have to be in the same style as the book, they're going to have to develop character, they're going to go to the book writer and say, you know, this whole love scene you have here which is kind of awkward and it will take a heavy set to do it, and a scene change which is not very good; we can do that in a song, like "Embraceable You" (I'm taking that out of thin air) or "Someone Like You" say is the name of a song (I think there was a song called that). Something like that that can tell you that there's an emotional situation developing between the two of them without having to go into dialogue, in other words, is going to bridge it quickly for you and we need a number at this point. So they get woven together after the book writer has the outline of his play and has his characters established. Now the composer and lyricist and the producer may get into a slug fest with the writer and say you wenttup to here very well but here you went off and this was not what we intended to tell so why don't you go back and do this over but save this scene if you can, because this is an awfully good scene.

This is wh~~at~~ takes a year, you see. Everybody wonders why you can't write a musical comedy in two months. If

you're lucky, it can be done in three months but I haven't heard of it lately, lately being the last twenty-five years. But usually you sweat them out and very often when the composer and lyricist do get to it, to get the 12 to 16 or 17 songs, you might want them may have written 30 or 40 until you finally select out the ones that are good for the show, the ones that aren't good. There are some songs that are awfully good songs and just stop the show cold and get no place.

I want to say, talk a minute about the dialogue, about writing a book.....Everybody does it a different way. There are no hard and fast rules in the theater unfortunately. I myself given the choice would never bring a director in until the writing is pretty much finished. Because most directors are frustrated writers and they can't wait to get their hand into the book. And if you haven't got a clear idea of where your book is going or where you want it to go, or how you want it to be, to repeat the way it was said best, forever, by Shakespeare, "The play's the thing." Because unless you have that you have nothing. Unless you have a firm structure for the director, for the choreographer, for the scenic designer, for the costumerdesigner, to go and

embellish and move along theatrically, if they start to get their hands on the play which in the case of a musical incorporates music and lyrics too, before that is in pretty good shape, they're liable to tear it apart before it even gets finished.....They hassle all the way up to opening night in New York. There are very few musicals on which there haven't been a couple of classical knock down, drag out fights. ....The Writer's Guild now has laws and this goes for the book writer, for the lyricists and the composer, where nobody can change anything without their permission. Like any other viable thing, unless they're open-minded and unless they throw it out on the table to be discussed and only make a firm point of it when it has been discussed out as about as much as it can be discussed out, then everybody has a great deal to lose. If you run into a stubborn writer who's just plain stubborn, who hates the director. Unless you've run into a director who wants to change for the sake of changing to get his stamp on it or to get his name on it as co-author of the book. I'm sorry to tell you there are people like that too, who come in as director, then bring it before arbitration to the Authors League and demand a collaborator's

credit and they sometimes change for the sake of changing because then they start to count words and he says well I wrote 50% of it and all he actually did was change "you" to "the" or whatever and that's considered a change. It's unfortunate but there are small minded people in every business. And that's why the guilds have made these various rules, is to protect against the exception rather than the rule. Then when the previous ~~gewel~~ is finished, then you call in the director and then he has a lot to say, and you either agree with him or you don't agree with him and you slug it out or whatever it is.

Now when they called in Moss Hart as director of "My Fair Lady", I'm picking a particularly clear example of this because you all know that "My Fair Lady" was one of the best musicals that was ever done and how did it get that way. You never saw it any of you did you? Did you see it on the stage? On Broadway? Because forget the picture, because again, the picture didn't have the remotest resemblance to the excitement and the fine quality of the play, it didn't have the first rate quality that the play had. Moss came in and Herman Levin was the producer and Herman is principally a theatrical lawyer

and a businessman with a feeling for the theater and a feeling for theatrical people although he himself is not a creative man. And having gotten the book by Alan and the score by Fritz and Alan, he then called in Moss and they were all very happy about it, and as time went on they got happier. Moss took one look at the script and Moss was a very gifted director and by that I mean that he managed to get the best out of everybody without making anybody feel small or cheap or overly lectured. He was a great actors director, he would take actors aside and work with them for days and nights if necessary away from the company so that they wouldn't be self-conscious. He had a meeting with Alan and they went down to Atlantic City for three weeks and he got Alan to go back to Shaw's screenplay because Alan had rewritten a great deal of the Shaw play because a lot of the Shaw play wouldn't work at all, it was kind of stiff, but Moss remembered that the screenplay flowed much better and had a much better feeling for a musical than the play did. So they went back to that and he used to run it on a movieola for Alan. But more than that, the first time I heard the score I went outside with Alan and I said, this is a great, great score and nothing you

and Fritz have ever done before has prepared me for this; you wrote "Brigadoon" and it was charming and it was lovely and marvelous but you're like in another world. How did it happen? He said, Moss. He said Moss threw out thirteen songs from the original score that we had brought in and made us write eight others, eight totally new songs and he told me what they were and I'm not going to go into that. But then it was Moss who made the decision to bring in Cecil Beaton to dress the show and Oliver Smith to do the scenery and it was Moss who made the decisions on which sketches would do and which sketches wouldn't do. In other words Moss being an experienced showman, being a playwright himself took over the function of what would have been a creative producer's function. But this you see he and George Kaufman had done for Sam Harris for years. And Sam Harris was a great producer he produced for George M. Cohan and he got older and the theater grew past him but at least he had the sense to gather unto himself the people who were with it and could help him and let them go. But Sam was a good gambler and when he needed to risk his money, he would risk it. They never had any trouble, well of course everybody had trouble with everybody, but Sam

was a very kind, nice man but he was a marvelous gambler and if Moss said this is a gamble Sam, but it's worth it, it's going to cost money, but it's worth it, Sam would take his word for it. And then George and Moss did this for Max Gordon after Sam Harris died. So by the time they got to "My Fair Lady" when they bought a director in Moss, they were really buying a built-in everything, almost. And when they couldn't get a choreographer that they wanted (they wanted Jerry Robbins and Moss was a very close friend of Jerry's and Jerry just was busy; he had gotten a grant from the ballet to do something in the ballet, I don't remember what) and he couldn't get Michael Kidd although Michael Kidd suggested the style of the "Ascot Gavot", that they all be absolutely immovable and that their lips move and nothing else and just their attitude change. Moss decided the hell with it, he was going to direct all the scenes himself, he didn't need a choreographer and he was quite right because he did something quite marvelous in that which other director's have tried to emulate but they can't. One of the reasons being that Moss' Borscht Circuit background, the other thing being that he was a totally frustrated singer.

It was because of Moss that I know as much Gershwin that

I know because he loved all of Gershwin's songs and when we got to a party all Moss wanted was to get on and sing. He even wanted to perform and, of course, at parties you love it when people who do it whose business it isn't.

Now, Moss knew how these things are moved and he had done it in the Borscht Circuit and he had done it in the mountains and he knew that he had a rich enough book and a rich enough score and it was long enough and contained enough character and enough color and everything, that he would do much better to do it himself. And that's how the tango got into the "Rain In Spain" -- that was Moss.....Well, it had been invented (tango) but it was not popular in the western world until 1925. It was South American but it came to Paris as a great fad in 1925.....actually it was Moss who said this was the kind of a thing that Harrison could do and it was a kind of celebration you would hardly expect from him and from Bob Coote, you know, who played the other professor, they're kind of out of character and he managed that. He finally had Hanya Holm do one ballet at the end of the show which I think the show could have done without, it was very good in the show but also the show could have done without

it and that was "Get Me To The Church On Time". I'll give you Fine's rules for choreography, whatever the choreographer brings in, cut it in half, then look at it again because you might have to cut it again. Choreographers can't help it, they're creative people and they can think of twenty-five different ways to keep on moving a dance and they do unless they're checked and they just have to stop at some point or another.

And so we come to the choreographer. The choreographer has to be, has to work in conference with the director because he cannot -- I think I'm going to have a choreographer come and talk to you one night because I think this deserves a whole night. And Herb Ross is here in Beverly Hills and he's very good. My other choreographer friends are all in New York so they can't do this. I can give you a brief history of choreography in the musical comedy but I'd rather save this for another night because it's a whole other subject and will take all night. Just let me say that the choreographer has to be very carefully planned. If you're going to use it some of it must move the story forward, it must complement it, it must give it its lift when it needs it. It can't run out of proportion, it can't be contradictory to the spirit

of the style of the show.

Have I left any department out?.....Lighting, of course is enormously important but that's part of the director's function except in some elaborate productions when they call in men like Hassard Short, or they used to, whose specialty is lighting and the show looks it, usually, and there are some very talented lighting men around now like Jules Fischer, Feder -- but they have to work together with the director because they like to get great effects that sometimes destroys something in the show. The effect may be great but the feeling of the scene may be totally changed.

Now, have you got a fairly good (I feel very pedantic tonight, I mean I feel as if I have been) have you got a fairly good view of how you create a musical comedy? Anybody says no, can say no.....I left out casting. That's a problem. Now you will note as we go through the theater that in the twenties and the very early thirties, before the movies became talking pictures and then musicals, you used to have great casts on Broadway but the money moved to movies and it became more and more difficult to get people. They'd have a success in a show and off they went to Hollywood and you just

could not get them again. It was almost impossible. There are always exceptions. And then a few people who did very well on Broadway, but something about the camera, something about the medium of pictures just didn't pick up or suit their personalities. I give you Mary Martin, Ethel Merman -- they never did well in movies and they went back to Broadway and I'm sure there were some men like that -- Bill Gaxton of course, would never do well. There were people like that. It gets harder and harder and harder to cast things and stars get a great deal of money and should because they bring people into the theater for one thing and ~~unless~~ day of high costs there is a terrible, terrible custom of selling the show out to benefit audiences even before it opens. This insures the backers of their money, this also insures the creative people of a run and the producer of a run, but very often kills the show. Because benefit audiences are the worst audiences that you can possibly imagine in the theater. Indificually, ~~if~~ they go to the theater like two at a time, four at a time, six at a time, then they may be all right, they behave like human beings. But when they come in as a group like the B'nai Brith comes in - well the B'nai Brith kind of floats in like the

Queen Mary in full sail, or the dentists' convention or anybody like that. They're like the opening of "Band Wagon" -- do you know the opening lyric of "Band Wagon" -- "it better be good, it better be funny," -- they did the show with the audience in bleeches on the stage facing the audience and they were just like this and they all sit there singing "it better be good". And some of them have hated the show from the minute their wives told them that they had to buy the tickets, \$100 to see who? And they come in and they are furious, it's their polker night and they're not feeling well or they should have stayed at the office to take inventory and besides which they're dressed up in black tie and they don't like it. So half the audience hates whatever is there. They're also there for each other's benefit. All the women have to see what the other women are wearing and they talk to each other during the show, they come late and invariably they're all clustered in the lobby to see who's coming and what they're wearing and who bought tickets. Do I have to go on? They're the worst audience in god's world. You can be playing in a smash hit show and you walk into that theater and you know there's a benefit audience and if you have any sense you

walk out. You don't see the show that night because you can see the actors gradually deflated. Because their timing is all off, because they're all ready for audiences who laugh, or who react or who cry and all of a sudden, there's nothing out front. It's like they're playing in the desert, nobody's there, or a hostile group of Indians is out there or something. There's just something missing in the chemistry of the theater. This is sometimes true of the casting. They will sometimes cast a big star who does not fit the part. Now, this happens in movies too. Rex Harrison after he was cast in "My Fair Lady" -- and before that, for about eighteen years he was considered box office poison and nobody would put him in anything. That's because an actress killed herself in the early 1940's and he was involved and he was considered box office poison and he couldn't be cast and after "My Fair Lady" there was not a picture he wasn't put into. He was in every script that came along. Then there was a time when Jack Lemmon was in everything that came along but Jack Lemmon was versatile enough and could manage almost everything that came along, although sometimes other people might have been better.

Any time you get anything where there are calls for

somebody who is British or not, these days that's Richard Burton. If you can't get Richard Burton, then who?.....  
Yes, Michael Caine. Kirk Douglas became a star on the parts that Burt Lancaster wouldn't take. I don't say that Kirk couldn't have become a star anyhow, but that's how that built. They tried to get Burt Lancaster, if they couldn't get Burt they went to Kirk. There's always a pecking order. Somebody was telling me about the kind of actor Humphrey Bogart was before he came to the movies and before he did "Petri-fied Forest" in the theater and he was a kind of a second string matinee idol, believe it or not but that's what Humphrey Bogart was. And he was the one they cast if they couldn't get somebody else, and I won't tell you who.

I'm giving you pictures as examples only because you're more familiar with pictures than Broadway shows. People get very restless and let's say they could get somebody who was right for the part but would have to wait six months, well somebody wants to go on and do something else or somebody doesn't want to be held motionless for six months or whatever it is, so they do compromise casting. And the terrible thing

in any theatrical venture whether it's in the theater or movies, and the theater is more tragic because if a show doesn't go everybody starves unless they're very rich to begin with but if a show doesn't run, you get no money. But a picture, if you sign to do a picture you get something, even if it's a flop. Well, you might have a very good show that's cast very badly and the show will flop. Nobody's going to take the time out to say that was really a very good show but ~~it~~ was cast badly. Now, I'll give you a most recent example I can think of. It doesn't exactly fit that but it makes my point.

When they did "Coco" they cast Kate Hepburn, now Kate Hepburn who is a dear friend of mine and who is a very good actress was about as suited to play Coco Chanel as I am suited to play King Kong. I'm not tall enough, let's put it that way. Let's say perfect casting for "Coco" was probably some unknown that they didn't bother to audition or they couldn't take a chance on with their investment; or if a known performer, Claudette Colbert came the closest in physical requirements to Chanel and who understood her. Now this came by of a very,

very curious thing, they were having a meeting with Chanel in Paris and originally Freddie Bissson who produced it wanted his wife Roz Russell to play Coco but she, of course, didn't look at all like her and she didn't have the look of her at all and Chanel didn't think that was right. And so, they said to her who would you suggest and she said Hepburn. Now she meant Audrey Hepburn -- this is not apocryphal, this is true -- they figured she meant Kate Hepburn and that's how Kate Hepburn got into it.....I don't think so, I think it would be a very cruel thing to tell her and I don't think you're going to ring her doorbell and tell her this.....

(General discussion). I hear some unrest down there. I don't take unrest tonight because I'm talking full steam here. I don't this kind of a session any more than you do. But we had to get down to the nitty-gritty some night and tonight was it.....

Alan got himself absolutely killed for that show. Now he wrote an original book and he did not depend on anything else. Some of it was hilarious for which he got no credit, Hepburn got the credit for it when it was good. Some of the

lyrics were marvelous. Well there were twin faults on that, one is that the Previn music was not really good theater music to set off lyrics, the other was that Kate really doesn't even have a sense of rhythm and the p.a. system had to be turned up so high to accommodate to her voice because she was so scared. Now Kate normally has the voice of a sargeant-at-arms, but she really was as frightened of the music as Rex Harrison was frightened of the songs in "My Fair Lady" and so being terrified the p.a. had to be up so high that they couldn't really hear the lyrics. And opening night, you know, the reviews of opening night Alan Lerner was absolutely roasted and shouldn't have been and forever that show will be stamped as a show without a very good score or without a very good book that was sustained purely by Kate Hepburn's personality. Now maybe it might just be that if they had found Audrey Hepburn, I mean a Audrey Hepburn, I don't mean Audrey Hepburn herself, as they found her for "Gigi" when she was totally unknown, when she wasn't a known star, when she wasn't a known quantity to the audience. If they had found somebody like that with that kind of quality, I don't mean Audrey's quality, I mean a French quality, who also had style but

could also sing, which Audrey cannot, but if they had bothered, if they had been brave enough to find somebody they might have had a show that ran for as long as "Fiddler."

.....They were desperate, so sometimes star casting is a mistake. On the other hand, star casting -- what happened in the Princess Theater shows, now I'll get back and relate this to some of what we have been doing. When Kern and Wodehouse and Bolton did a Princess Theater show they had some star or well-known people in them and the shows did very well but the shows were important because it was the first time that anybody had tried to make the kind of sense of a musical that we are trying to make here tonight. It was the first time that anybody ever tried to coordinate the book, the lyrics, the music, the dancing, the sets, the sound of the orchestra, accommodate it to the theater and to the concept of the show. We are all used to it by now so we don't think it's remarkable looking back but it's like "Sacre du Printemps" -- Rites of Spring -- I hate it, you know, sitting and listening to it, I hate it, it gets on my nerves and drives me crazy, but I do recognize that in Rites of Sprigg, Stravinsky set the pattern for everything we know

as modern music, everything we know of modern orchestration. It was his use of percussions and his use of rhythms that started a whole, birth of a totally new kind of writing. Now "Sacre du Printemps" is old by now and I can afford to say that it annoys me, I heard it a lot and it's not very melodic and it's really like a school lesson but for what it accomplished what came of that made it historically very, very significant in the history of music. So, the Kern shows although we look back and they seem primitive to ~~auand~~ the books don't seem to be about much, so it's very hard for us to realize that before that time nobody tried to get American music to which you could dance, which we demonstrated some of last week, that were in tempo, in 4/4, about an American subject, with American lyrics, with the sound of street language -- I don't mean gutter language, I mean the speech that people use instead of "thou hast not sent me my wreath today" saying "hey, what happened to the flowers you sent me." That was all new, and while we might be very bored to sit through a performance of "Oh, Boy" or "Leave It To Jane" or something, it did serve the same purpose as Rites of Spring served for music.

Now what we are going to get on to tonight -- I'm going to have to say more about casting another night, because I'm

watching the clock for you tonight. Casting is a whole other subject. It's simply that the performer makes an enormous difference because this is theatrical, this is nothing to be read in your house, this is nothing to be read to each other across the table, this is a theatrical performance and no matter how good the book is, no matter how good the lyrics are, no matter how beautiful or funny or whatever the quality the music has, unless there is somebody there to properly project it, you haven't got anything. So I don't care if they're stars or not stars, because they will be stars eventually, or good supporting players because some people are generals, and some people are lieutenants, and some people are privates. Some people are great chorus people, some are good great first leads, some are great second leads and they sort of fall into that unless something comes along as things evolve, as the moview have become now, in which things which used to be considered character roles are now starring parts, as the form changes. And then people who were once considered just character actors now become stars because the character actor is the star of the piece. As I said, there's an awful lot of convenient casting and money has a lot to do with it, unfortunately.

.....(Question about "West Side Story.) I think they didn't have enough faith in themselves. I think you're right. "West Side Story" is an anomaly by the way, it stands all by itself. It doesn't teach anybody anything except what a great concept can do. Now, this was a choreographer's concept, this was Jerry Robbins' concept.

END -TAPE 1-SIDE 2

(West Side Story) was primarily a choreographic masterpiece in the theater and what Jerry did was absolutely right theatrically. He cast dancers because that was the most important thing to him and he cast dancers who could carry a tune and if he could get a dancer who not only could carry a tune but could sing, if they were first-rate dancers, then he cast them, and somehow he got enough out of them as singers and performers ~~who~~ he wanted primarily dancers. It's when a choreographer casts the show like, well when Gower Champion did "The Matchmaker" and turned it into "Dolly". He was thinking in terms of movement, in terms of production numbers and the comedy went right down the drain, because that wasn't his attack on it. That's what I meant by casting a director to what your play is, to what your musical is. When Pearl Bailey did it and all the other singers, when Cab Callaway played Mr. Vandergelder instead of Davie Burns who is marvelous, who is great and marvelously funny, but he wasn't a musical personality and he wasn't a singer. Well, everybody

in the Pearl Bailey version was a singer-dancer, they were just wonderfully talented and you suddenly heard a whole score which you though wasn't there before.

I must take time out to tell you this on myself, and it tells something. We went to see "Harvey" -- have you seen "Harvey" -- when it first opened in New York with Frank Fay and Josephine Hull. Goldwyn wanted Danny to make it as a picture, and I went to see it and came out and said it's the oddest show I have ever seen. Here is a show in which two parts are well-written and all the other parts are terrible, just terrible. They don't go any place, the scenes don't go any place, just the Frank Fay and Josephine Hull parts are great and everything else could have been written by somebody else. I then went to see it when it came out to Los Angeles and Frank Fay was still in it but Josephine Hull wasn't. All of a sudden there was only one well-written part. It's because they did marvelous casting on the leading male character, the leading woman -- in this case two character people, but the others were very cheaply cast, they got anybody to do it. So what they had was a play with the most furious dicotomy. Whenever Fay and Hull were on the stage

the thing came alive and sounded well-written, when the other characters were there it kind of crept and was crippled, and just, you know, didn't move at all. Then when I saw the movie I thought nothing was well-written. It's very peculiar. But this happens to musical shows and songs that you think are no songs sometimes it's because there's no performer, and sometimes you'll hear a song that you think is a great song -- now I was going to read to you out of Ira Gershwin's book tonight about some stuff but we haven't got the time for that ~~that~~ tone that I remember which applies to this is "The Man I Love", which became a great classic but which was thrown out of three different shows. It's true. They tried it in three different shows and it wound up out of the show every time. They wrote it for Adele Astair and you will hear her sing on some stuff I have on "Lady Be Good" and "Funny Face". Adele Astair was primarily a dancer but she had a very kind of, for the time, lovely light soprano musical comedy kind of voice and when she sang "The Man I Love" it was kind of a sweet but not -- well, that's about all -- and it never got any place and Ira says in this, that if Libby Holman had sung it maybe or somebody like that, and in all

the other shows they didn't have anybody who could really sing it. The last show it was put in was for Marilyn Miller and Ira says that he couldn't even remember if she rehearsed it or not, she was so busy learning dances; but it never got sung on stage by a proper person so it never stayed in a show and it's one of the best known Gershwin songs. When you hear Ella Fitzgerald sing it, it's a great song and a lot of Gershwin's style is in it.

I'm going to have to switch over to Gershwin at this point because I have some numbers to run from "Rhapsody in Blue" and I don't think I can get it again next week and I hate not to use it.....Well, we're going to have to do without my playing these tapes until next time because it's just going to take too long and you want to get out of here.

Let me tell you very quickly just the musical history of Gershwin and let me tell it rather than illustrate it with tapes. I'm not going to go into his personal history or his education. The only thing is that Gershwin was the least educated of all the composers, the least educated musically, he did study the piano, he did study theory and harmony for a year. Much later, in the middle twenties, he went to

Paris to study orchestration before he wrote "An American In Paris." But when "Rhapsody In Blue" was written, he did the piano and Grofe did the orchestration. Now the people he admired most, Jerome Kern most of all because of his very fresh melodic structure and approach. You probably didn't hear enough Kern last week -- have you listened to any of it in between, since -- ~~when~~ you begin to recognize a Kern song if you heard it? Well for instance, if somebody's playing a record or something's on the radio or something and I cannot remember the name of it, I will say, it sounds like Tchaikovsky, no it sounds like Brahms, a little Wagner in there, it must be Cesar Franck. You know, you sort of go that way -- can you get a Kern tune -- Kern tunes go like this, they're round and they have a swoop, and he has a range, and they're usually very rangy, and he has a great melodic structure and underneath it a very fresh and good harmony, because he was a very accomplished musician. He was the first of the American composers who had a very good background, who was a very good musician, who had this great melodic gift that he made into a totally American gift, after a while. Remember he made a switch from operettish music to beginning to do

musical comedy and we just haven't played enough of it -- we'd have to do an extra semester to get all of this in. Anyhow, Gershwin started out by admiring profoundly, and did until the end of his life, "Alexander's Rag Time Band". Now do you remember the record of that I played for you at home? That sound -- well it was that kind of rhythm that kind of exciting rhythm that got Gershwin, and the melodic structure of Kern.

Now the first hit that George did that was really well-known, came about as a result of -- it was an accident, but Jolson sang it, it was "Swanee." You all know "Swanee" but did you ever hear "Yankee Doodle Blues"? That's very funny, it has a feeling of "Swanee" but it's even a little funnier because it was patriotic and George Burns used to perform it at parties and it sounded great, he did it with saluting and god knows what, and Danny thought it was going to make the best opening number he ever heard so he had it orchestrated and he called an extra session at Warner's so we could hear it, and he went around singing it to taxi drivers to hotel doormen and everything. He opened with it at the Roxy Theater at eight in the morning, and it was the worst

egg he has ever laid in his life because the audience was not yet ready, we had not yet gotten into nostalgia. But you would immediately know that it was of a vintage and why it's funny to us and why it's funny to us in a living room, but the audience was not yet ready .....I'll do it for you next week or something, I just don't want to take the time out to start and play the piano now.

He wrote some other nice things but nothing of very great moment. He was beginning to be very well considered\* and he followed the same kind of career of Kern and he consciously followed that, he got a job as a song writer with Max Dreyfus at Harnes and he became a pianist so he could interpolate things in shows. When he wrote "Rhapsody In Blue" in 1924 it marked the change in his style. Now the strange thing is -- and I did want to do this for you on the piano but it will take too long tonight, but remind me to do it next week, but I will do this one thing for you. We were talking about "The Man I Love". Now a lot of the things that got oohed and aahed over in Gershwin's work and a lot of these things are the results of things like those that nobody ever thinks of. Gershwin was a first-rate

pianist and he loved to play the piano and I never knew George, he was before my time, but I know from all his other friends and from his brother, that an evening with Gershwin was an evening with Gershwin and nobody else.....The famous story is that he attended a party for Ravel in Paris and it wound up a Gershwin night, he just played the whole night and everybody loved to have him play. People would give dinner parties for him because they knew he would sit down at the piano immediately after dinner and play until five in the morning when they dragged him away from the piano ..... I think it was Oscar Levant who loved Gershwin and wouldn't miss a note that he played but they all made cracks at each other and a lot of people have said that an evening with Gershwin was an evening with Gershwin.

A long time ago I bought the Gershwin song book and any pianist is welcome to use it if you want to. In the song book are the Gershwin songs and then Gershwin's piano arrangements after them. So last night I decided to look at some of them and I'm sorry to tell you I can't play these well any more, this gave my ego a terrible glow, but I haven't played the piano for about ten years now and I

noticed something about them. The sone "The Man I Love" is really stated very simply, like this.....piano.....now I want you to tell me when I play the Gershwin arrangement, I'll just play a little part of it, tell me what this sounds like to you.....piano.....what is it (Rhapsody In Blue")..... this is part of his piano style.....He didn't have any basic orchestration, he talked the thing over with Grofe and he gave a sketch to Grofe, and Grofe orchestrated it, and what George didn't have finished was his own piano part and he wrote it on the train but he improvised, he improvised a lot of the piano.....the cue would say 'nod' -- the cue on the musicians sheets, as a matter of fact, it was such a personal performance, the directions on the sheets to the musicians, the parts weren't marked trumpet, they were marked Joe, Eddy, Dan, and their cue was nod from Gershwin, because even Whitman didn't know what he was going to improvise..... piano.....well, if you all know it, I don't have to bother with it too much.....now more than that, his style of playing "The Man I Love", you know what that comes from.....what does this sound like to you.....that's that style that came from Tchaikovsky.....now he takes the style of "The Man I Love"

and it becomes.....piano.....now that's the same style as the Tchaikovsky piano concerto. I used it in ballet music and everybody thought it was very fresh because you just put it into a different context but but whenever you write something for piano, it's almost inevitably that you will go to some of the devices used in concerti, they just swing that way. And so Gershwin got his style both from the fact that he had played the piano as a classical pianist, that he dug the blues, and was a Russian Jew -- no, a lot of that came from that. Did I ever tell you the story about Cole Porter and George Gershwin? Well Cole wasn't getting very far and he had just made a success with "Let's Do It, which was his first big hit, but for about twenty years before that he couldn't get anywhere. He did very well on the cocktail circuit and he lived in Europe and they gave great parties and they were famous in Paris as the "Coleporters" (that's all one word -- as I'm Madame Dannykaye and it was always Coleporter and they gave great parties and he used to sit down and play the piano a lot. Well, finally he made a hit over here and he met Gershwin and he said to George, how is it you do something marvelous, you go from major to minor and back to major with almost no

perceptible change and it gives your sons a wonderful quality, you know, why can't I do that. And George's answer, and I have this from Ira that it's true, he said well Cole, you see, it's because you're not a Russian Jew. Now Cole was a very, very bright man and a very nice man, and I liked him enormously. He went out and he got all those Russian folk songs he could get his hands on, all the Jewish folk songs he could get his hands on and you listen to "Night And Day" or listen to "I Love Paris In The Spring" -- you know them -- it's like a Jewish wedding song and Cole got those all down very well and that became the Cole Porter style too. There are several sharp changes that came in George's life from ragtime and Kern into developing competence in his own adaptation of American musical form which was in "Rhapsody In Blue" which he had been doing on piano at parties, which nobody had ever really been conscious of because he takes these songs that were played rather ordinarily and then makes all these enormous piano arrangements and he had all these chords. It's like Mozart by the way who was first and foremost, as far as he was concerned, a great pianist and

that's how he made his money, but in many of his concerti other people have written down the credenzas because most likely he'd play a different one every time, so a lot of things he wrote came from his ability as a pianist and a lot of Gershwin's improvisations were used later in things like "Rhapsody In Blue", "Concerto In F", "American In Paris" but then he suddenly began to realize that that was his style, it wasn't just because he played the piano, but it was because he heard that way. So you will hear in "Lady Be Good" which he wrote in 1924 after "Rhapsody In Blue" and then as he wrote his other shows and then came the very sharp differences after he educated himself, in "American In Paris", "Strike Up The Band", "Of Thee I Sing". They show much more the influence he was getting from his training as a musician and his ability to adapt and then, of course, "Porgy" and if he had lived longer, he died when he was very young, I believe he was 38, god knows what he would have done.

So we can now go to hear some Gershwin tunes in the picture "Rhapsody In Blue" but don't take the story of the picture too seriously and I have asked Aubrey instead of putting "Rhapsody In Blue" at the end which is where it

normally comes in the picture, to put it in the period of time in which he wrote it so that you can hear what happens to the rest of the music after he did that.

And then, I guess, we'll have to take up Gershwin again next week. Also bring your lyrics next week because I want to give you a chance to perform them yourself.