



Left : Katharine Cornell, famous American actress, best known for her performances in Michael Arlen's *The Green Hat* and Rudolf Besier's *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*. Here she is shown in *Antigone*, the Sophocles tragedy, adapted by Lewis Galantiere from a French version of the play by Jean Anouilh, in which she appeared in New York in the 1945-46 season. Centre : Helen Hayes, well-known American stage and screen actress. One of her greatest successes was in *Victoria Regina* by Laurence Housman in the 1935-36 New York season. Right : Julia Harris, in her most recent role as Joan of Arc in Jean Anouilh's *The Lark*, presented in New York in the 1955-56 season

The Greats of the American Stage

Left : Edwin Forrest, a leading tragedian of the American stage, as Spartacus in Robert Montgomery Bird's drama *The Gladiator*. Edwin Forrest (1806-72) was famous for his *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *Richard III*. Right : Edwin Booth (1833-93), one of the most famous actors on the American stage, as *Hamlet*. In 1864-65 he performed this role in New York for hundred consecutive nights—a record run at that time for a Shakespearean play



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Lionel Barrymore, Ethel Barrymore and John Barrymore, three of the outstanding theatrical personalities of this century in America. Ethel, the only living member of the trio, was recently honoured by the City of New York with an extensive exhibition: "Ethel Barrymore and Her Career". The Barrymores and their progenitors, the Drews, have figured prominently in the American theatre for well over a century. The only time the three Barrymores, Lionel, Ethel and John, appeared together professionally was in one of the earliest talking motion pictures, Rasputin and the Empress. John Barrymore (1882-1942) was in his time the most highly praised "Hamlet" on the American stage. Lionel Barrymore died in 1954 at the age of 76

At Right: Lynn Fontanne and her husband Alfred Lunt in the comedy The Pirate, adapted by S. N. Behrman, author of many sophisticated comedies, including Brief Moment, Biography, End of Summer and No Time for Comedy







Right: Maurice Evans, American actor, famous for his appearances in Shakespearean plays, and Judith Anderson as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as they appeared in New York during the 1941-42 season. The production ran for 131 nights. Left: Orson Welles, American stage and screen star. Here he is shown in his own adaptation of Shakespeare's Macbeth for a Negro cast, which was presented in New York during the 1936-37 season, with great success

During a rehearsal of Shakespeare's Love's Labour Lost at the Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon. Ashland, a community of 8,000 persons in the foothills of the mountains of southern Oregon, is famous for its presentation of Shakespearean plays



his quick, youthful success brought him was extremely stimulating and markedly alert to the currents of popular favour.

This ingredient of popular success is a peculiar attribute of the American theatrical arts. It results in the fact that new modes may quickly succeed and thereby spread. Or, as has been the case with such opera composers as Marc Blitzstein, Gian-Carlo Menotti or the late Kurt Weill, their work may have only an *avant-garde* success, with a tentative lapse of time before their metier is either accepted or rejected.

With Gershwin, the novelty was close to popular acceptance. His reach into symphonic composition—such as *Rhapsody in Blue*, *An American in Paris* and the Concerto in F—proved instantly popular. His short life—he died in 1937 at the age of 38—allowed him only one real try in the “folk opera” field he saw as his future medium, *Porgy and Bess*, which initially had nothing like its present wide appeal. Much as Gershwin thought of *Porgy and Bess* as “folk opera”, which strictly speaking it was not, the public, rightly feeling its way towards a more accurate description, thinks of it as “a musical play”, hence, “a musical.” In short, along with the works and spirit of traditional opera, American audiences also have translated the word opera itself. For the old word (opera) suggests a foreign tongue and foreign setting.

Shortly before Gershwin's prime, in 1927, the gifted, less drivingly ambitious Jerome Kern had recreated the early Mississippi River days in his *Show Boat* score, perfectly reflecting Edna Ferber's earthly American characters in such throbbing songs as *Old Man River*, *Bill*, *Can't Help Lovin' That Man* and *Make Believe*.

In short, the composer was now on the path of furthering the story through his songs, not holding up the action for mere divertimento.



The writers delved further into stories

and character, taking into account the American pulse and contemporary events. Before their plans were fully revealed, Mussolini and Hitler were mocked in 1938 in *Pins and Needles*, with music and lyrics by Harold J. Rome. Moss Hart used the new psychiatric couch as springboard for one of the first popular successes to meld story, music and dance in *Lady in the Dark* (1941), with music by Kurt Weill.

Meanwhile, the term “dance director” was rising to the exalted rank of “choreographer”. George Balanchine spun along the plot of *On Your Toes* (music by Richard Rodgers) with a strictly American ballet, *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*. A year later in 1938 he lured the German dancer Vera Zorina from Ballet Russe for a long dance sequence developing the story line of fantasy *I Married an Angel*, to which Richard Rodgers has written the music.

When *Pal Joey* arrived in 1940, the combination of sophisticated story, witty, plot-wise songs and dance comment was achieved. John O'Hara's setting of Chicago high and low life, and Lorenz Hart's precise lyrics gave Richard Rodgers scope for sharply witty music and allowed Robert Alton's choreography to combine classical dance and popular stage dancing.

But it was a less sophisticated musical three years later which set a style that is felt: *Oklahoma!* Here was a tale of grandfather's pioneer days in cowboy territory, a sunny, energetically firm story which summoned from the fruitful Richard Rodgers and his new partner, the writer Oscar Hammerstein II, a parade of fine songs, richly orchestrated by Robert Russell Bennett, a leading symphonic authority. Each song did something to further plot, character or setting: *Oh, What a Beautiful Morning*, *People Will Say We're in Love*, and *Out of My Dreams*. (The originality of the piece and its breeziness won it a special Pulitzer Award.)

Out of My Dreams introduced ballet for its greatest stride in American musicals. It was created by Agnes de Mille, niece of Cecil B. de Mille, the film director, who had never achieved her ambitions to become a major classical dancer. Inspired by a ballet she had devised for the American Ballet Theatre, *Rodeo*, (music by Aaron Copland) she set forth in 20 minutes of pure dance the conflict within the mind of the heroine of *Oklahoma!* It was a new approach, unmistakably new in form, melding the positions of classical dance into the cowboy dance hall girls of the traditional West.

Its effect was remarkable. For years the choreographer and hundreds of classically trained young dancers were a *sine qua non* in musicals. For 12 years *Oklahoma!* was played across America, introducing pure dance to millions who, in ignorance, had scorned it. Miss de Mille followed with others, tracing the Civil War in *Bloomer Girl* (1944, with music by Harold Arlen); with a fantasy in legendary vein set in Scotland, *Brigadoon* (1947, with music by Frederic Loewe); and with the story of a carousel barker and the simple girl who loves him in spite of his faults, in *Carousel* (1945, by Rodgers and Hammerstein, based on Ferenc Molnar's classical *Liliom*).

While the choreographic trend has slowed down in the past several years, its effect is now carried out by the stage directors. No longer is the chorus treated as a solid mass. Each individual actor, singer or dancer has become an individual. The audiences for *Porgy and Bess* in Europe, South America and Russia have recognised this in Robert Breen's direction. Joshua Logan used the same choreographic direction for the Rodgers-Hammerstein musical *South Pacific* (1949) and also in the newer *Fanny* (by S. N. Berhman and Joshua Logan).

The economics for musicals merits attention. To fuse these theatrical areas of writer, composer, choreogra-

pher as well as the subsidiary but vital departments of stage designer, lighter and kindred specialists is very expensive. Because so many efforts necessarily fail—or are ahead of their time—personnel demand and get high salaries to protect them against unemployment. To bring the curtain up on a major musical play costs about \$300,000. To keep it running means weekly expenses between \$30,000 and \$40,000.

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II are the current success kings. Both are 30-year veterans in the field. Rodgers' flow of melodies is capable of fitting the highly varied styles of his lyric-writers. His early partnership with the late Lorenz Hart was marked by sophisticated skill. Now, linked with Oscar Hammerstein, the man who gave the book and lyrics to *Show Boat*, he has adapted to Hammerstein's more sentimental tone.

These two have stirred other composers and writers. Irving Berlin, most popular of Broadway's dance-and-song writers, composer of romantic musicals since 1914, is not as active as he once was. But his score for *Annie, Get Your Gun* embraced songs relative to plot and character. This musical told the story of sharpshooting Annie Oakley, her employment in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and her rivalry in marksmanship with the man with whom she falls in love. Another composer who supplies his own words, Cole Porter, has never varied in his silken sophistication, but the brilliant score he did for *Kiss Me Kate*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, has been very favourably received recently even by the traditional stronghold of operetta, Vienna, and in several German cities. His latest musical work *Silk Stockings*, based on Melchior Lengyel's comedy *Ninotchka* has proved to be almost as colourful and witty.

Finally, the variety of subject matter is notable. The pure sentiment of

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THE PUPPET THEATRE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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lity and rich inventive imagination of this mature artist.

In the industrial town of Gottwaldov, there are two groups of puppet film workers: one is led by State Prize Laureate Hermina Tyrlova, and the other by Karel Zeman. Tyrlova worked in this branch of film production long before World War II, but at that time she had to confine herself to film advertisements. Special interest was aroused both at home and abroad by her post-war film, *The Revolt of the Toys*, which combined living actors and puppets and re-enacted events which took place during the Nazi occupation. Her greatest success was her film for the smallest film-goer, *Misfit Doll*, for which she was awarded the title of State Prize Laureate. Loved alike by children and grown-ups are her earlier films *Lullaby* and *Nine Chickens*. One of Hermina Tyrlova's latest productions is a fairy tale by State Prize Laureate Jiri Marek, *Tale of a Dragon*.

Karel Zeman, who produced his first combined puppet and acted film, *Christmas Dream* in 1945, soon won great popularity with his comic puppet figure, Mr. Prokouk, the central character of a series of satirical films dealing with topical problems. Notable too are *Inspiration*, in which he employed specially designed figures of blown glass, and *King Lavra*, based on a version of the King Midas legend by the Czech classical writer, Karel Havlicek Borovsky. New technical means combining the puppet and the animated cartoon film were successfully employed by Karel Zeman in his artistically daring film, *Treasure of Fird Island*. The most recent of his films deals with the earth's pre-historic age and acquaints the young film-goers with extinct fauna and flora in the course of the adventures of school boys, played by living actors, while the pre-historic

animals are represented by puppets constructed in accordance with the latest results of scientific research.

The Czechoslovak puppet theatre, with its old tradition, and the Czechoslovak puppet film, which is now building up a tradition, have a common aim—to be a pleasing and effective means of education for both children and grown-ups, of making life happier and people more receptive to truth and for all that is noble and beautiful in human endeavour.

The American Theatre

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Carousel, the cynicism of *Pal Joey*, the wit of *Kiss Me Kate*, the satire of *Silk Stockings*, the romanticism of *Brigadoon*, the sunshine of *Oklahoma!* are as clear—and accepted—as the realistic fantasy of *Guys and Dolls* (Music by Frank Loesser).

The European operettas were created for their own audiences and staged for the same reason American musicals are staged—to please the audiences. What is new is the blend of music, dance, words, realism and timeliness and, perhaps most of all, the fast tempo of our times, reflected in the action.

But the theatre does not stand still. If its ingredients are the structure, evolution is its lifeblood. The movies have embraced some of the major musical plays, vulgarizing them somewhat, but leading the public into new experiences which, in turn, will demand more resourcefulness, more change.

For, first in the theatre comes the audience. Having sensed the effectiveness of these potpourris of theatrical arts, who is to say they will not demand a yet more mature musical stage?

This is why America's modern musical may be a valuable contribution to traditional opera.

