

Jerome Kern and Jule Styne on Stage and Screen



Class 1: Kern's Early Life and Career; The "Princess Theater Shows"

OLLI at Duke • Spring Term 2025 • Alan Teasley, Instructor

Today's Opening Number



[2:47]

Goals of the Course: You Will . . .



Be familiar with:

- The musical theater works and film scores of composers Jerome Kern and Jule Styne and the distinctive contributions of the many lyricists they collaborated with.
- Many old, familiar songs you may not have known as works of Kern or Styne, as well as many that are new to you.

You will appreciate:

- The place of Jerome Kern and Jule Styne in the history of American music, theater, and film.

Immerse yourself in:

- Delightful, funny, moving, unforgettable music.

Outline of the Course

Jerome Kern

- Class 1 Stage Shows, London and Broadway, 1904-1919
- Class 2 Stage Musicals, 1920-1939
- Class 3 *Show Boat*, 1927
- Class 4 Movie Scores and Songs, 1929-1946

Jule Styne

- Class 5 Movie Scores and Songs, 1926-1951
- Class 6 Stage Musicals, 1947-1958
- Class 7 *Gypsy*, 1959
- Class 8 Stage Musicals, 1960-1993

Today's Focus



You will have:

- An introduction to the format of the course

You will know:

- The landscape of Broadway in the 1900s and 1910s: types of shows, major creators, and social influences.
- Facts about Jerome Kern's early life and career.
- Several Kern songs from this period that demonstrate his range of styles.

You will understand:

- The distinctive nature of the "Princess Theater Shows" Kern wrote with Guy Bolton and P. G. Wodehouse.

You will enjoy . . .

- . . . Some great American songs from the early 20th century.

Jerome Kern (1885-1945)



1934

ACCOLADES

On hearing two songs from *The Girl from Utah* at his Aunt Kate's wedding in 1914, George Gershwin—fifteen at the time—noted that Kern was "the first composer who made me conscious that popular music was of inferior quality, and that musical-comedy music was made of better material."

Gershwin later noted that Kern's *Show Boat* score was "the finest light opera achievement in the history of American music."

—quoted in Isaac Goldberg, *George Gershwin: A Study in American Music*, 1931

Jerome Kern (1885-1945)



1934

ACCOLADES

“When I saw my first Jerome Kern show [*Very Good Eddie* in 1915], the Kern score captivated me and made me a Kern worshiper. . . . It was all his own—the first truly American theatre music—and it pointed the way I wanted to be led. . . . The lyrics floated out with clarity, and there was good humor as well as sentiment in the use of instruments.

“Actually, I was watching and listening to the beginning of a new form of musical theatre in this country. Somehow I knew it and wanted desperately to be a part of it.”

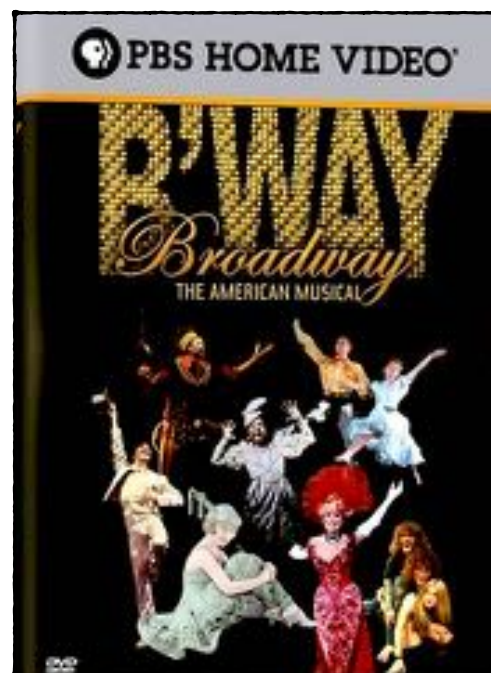
—Richard Rodgers, *Musical Stages*, 1975

“Florenz Ziegfeld”

Broadway: The American Musical (PBS, 2004)

from Episode 1:
“Give My Regards to Broadway
(1893-1927)”

[5:01]

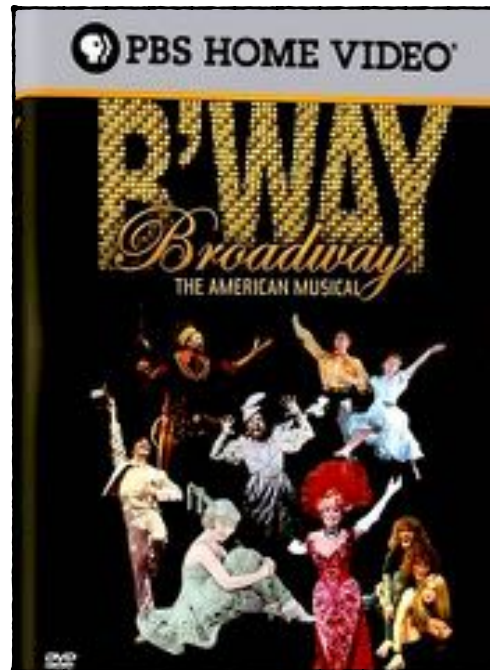


“My New York”

Broadway: The American Musical (PBS, 2004)

from Episode 1:
“Give My Regards to Broadway
(1893-1927)”

[4:55]



Jerome Kern (1885-1945)



1918

EARLY LIFE & CAREER:

- Born in New York City to a middle class family
- Father was a stabler and later a furniture salesman; mother taught him to play piano.
- He fell in love with musicals at age 10.
- In high school he wrote music for school productions.
- Attended New York College of Music at age 17
- Worked as an accompanist for vaudeville and Broadway stars
- Studied in Germany and spent a lot of time in London's West End attending theater

Jerome Kern (1885-1945)



1918

CAREER DEVELOPMENT:

- Resisted going into the family furniture business (and after an incident with a load of pianos, his father agreed)
- Continued his work as a rehearsal accompanist and song-plugger for Tin Pan Alley
- Began writing songs for interpolation into imported British shows.
- His father and mother died in 1907 and 1908, which affected him deeply.
- Later, on a trip to London, he met Eva Leale, marrying her in 1910.

Kern's Collaborating Lyricists, 1904-1919*

- Edward Laska
- M. E. Rourke (Herbert Reynolds)
- James O'Dea
- Paul West
- C. H. Bovill
- Percival Knight
- Frederick Day
- Edward Madden
- Bessie McCoy
- Matthew Woodward
- Sydney Rosenfeld
- John Golden
- Anne Caldwell
- Robert B. Smith
- Clifford Harris
- Arthur Pinero
- Rida Johnson Young
- Harry B. Smith
- Schuyler Greene
- Elsie Janis
- Gene Buck
- P. G. Wodehouse
- Guy Bolton
- Edgar Allan Woolf
- B. G. DeSylva

* over 48 shows

Jerome Kern: Shows 1904-1912

1904 London—individual songs interpolated into British scores:

An English Daisy, Mr. Wix of Wickham

1905 First song interpolated into a Broadway show: “How’d You Like to Spoon with Me?” in *The Earl and the Girl*

1906-1912 Songs interpolated into several shows including: *The Rich Mr. Hoggenheimer, Fascinating Flora, The Dairymaids, The Girls of Gottenberg, Fluffy Ruffles, Kitty Grey, The Girl and the Wizard, The King of Cadonia, The Echo, Our Miss Gibbs, The Hen-Pecks, La Belle Paree, Ziegfeld Follies of 1911, The Siren, The Kiss Waltz, The Opera Ball, A Winsome Widow, The Girl from Montmartre, The “Mind the Paint” Girl*

1912 Kern’s first complete show: *The Red Petticoat*

Jerome Kern: Shows 1913-1916

1913 *The Doll Girl*

The Marriage Market

Oh, I Say!

1914 *The Girl from Utah*

1915 *90 in the Shade*

1915 *Nobody Home* (first of the “Princess Theatre Shows”)

A Modern Eve

Cousin Lucy

Miss Information

Very Good Eddie

1916 *Ziegfeld Follies of 1916*

Miss Springtime (Bolton & Wodehouse)



BABES IN THE WOOD.
Fox Trot.
From the successful musical production.
"Very Good Eddie" Jerome Kern.

Moderato.

Piano.

In a steady marked rhythm.

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Hugh Panaro • Rebecca Luker • A Jerome Kern Treasury
London Sinfonietta • John McGlinn, conducting • [3:50]

THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE ME
CHARLES FROHMAN PRESENTS
THE GIRL FROM UTAH

SONG INTERPOLATIONS BY HARRY B. SMITH AND JEROME D. KERN

VOCAL

INSTRUMENTAL

T. S. HARMS
FRANCIS, DAY & HUNTER

Portraits of Julia Sanderson, Donald Brian, and Joseph Cawthorn are included.

THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE ME
Song
Lyric by HERBERT REYNOLDS Music by JEROME D. KERN

Andante moderato

VOICE

PIANO

Like to watch you all the day.
May have been, well, who can say!

And it cer-tain-ly seems fine just to think that you'll be
Things just hap-pen-an-y

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Excerpt from a BBC documentary about "They Didn't Believe Me" • [4:26]

Jerome Kern: Shows 1917-1919

1917 *Have a Heart* (Bolton & Wodehouse)

Love o' Mike

***Oh, Boy!* (Bolton & Wodehouse)**

Ziegfeld Follies of 1917

***Leave It to Jane* (Bolton & Wodehouse)**

***Miss 1917* (Bolton & Wodehouse)**

1918 *Oh Lady! Lady!!* (Bolton & Wodehouse)

Toot-Toot!

Rock-A-Bye Baby

Head Over Heels

1919 *Zip, Goes a Million* (closed out of town—songs recycled)

She's a Good Fellow

Kern's Collaborations with Bolton & Wodehouse: "The Princess Theatre Shows"

1915 *Nobody Home* (Kern & Bolton)

***Very Good Eddie* (Kern & Bolton)**

1917 *Have a Heart*

Oh, Boy!

Leave It to Jane

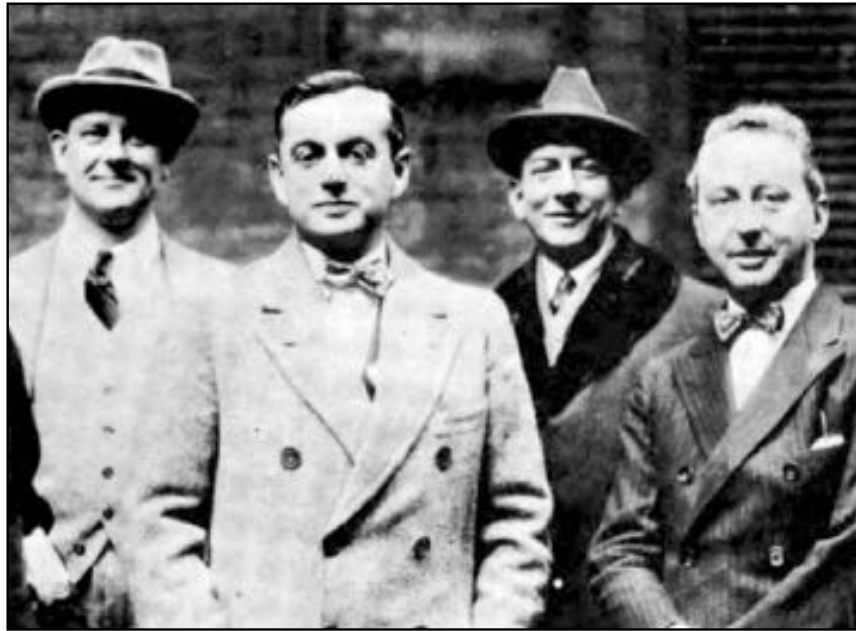
Miss 1917

1918 *Oh, Lady! Lady!!*

1920 *Sally*

1924 *Sitting Pretty*

Key Creators: The Princess Theatre Shows



P. G. Wodehouse, Guy Bolton, Ray Comstock & Jerome Kern, 1917

Key Creators: The Princess Theatre Shows

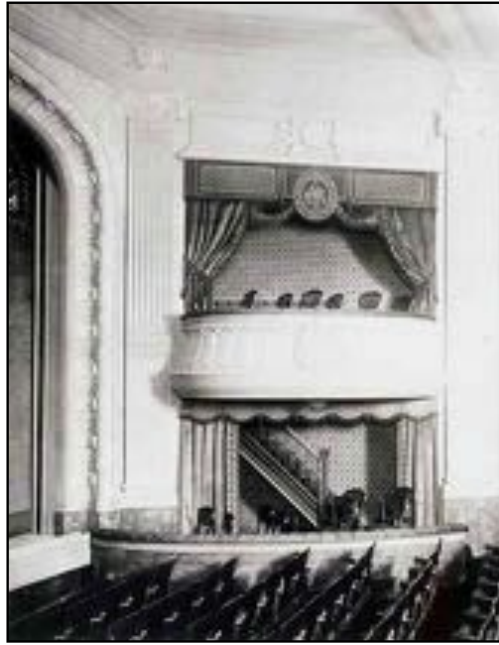


Elisabeth ("Bessie") Marbury



Marbury & Elsie de Wolf, 1923

The Princess Theatre

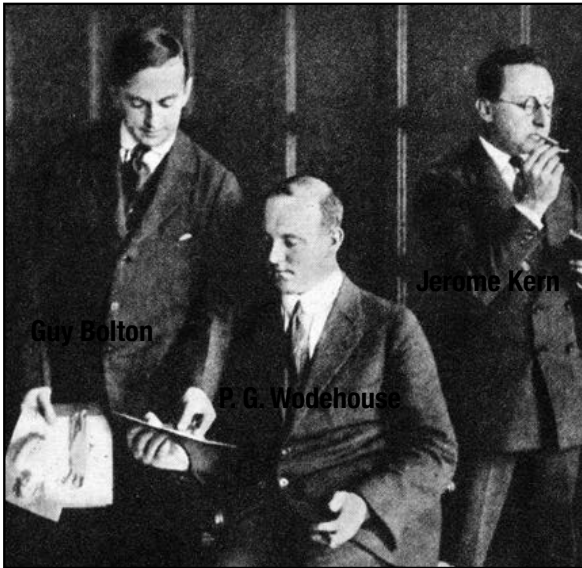


The Princess Theatre



Oh, Boy! • 1917

Key Creators: The Princess Theatre Shows



This is the trio of musical fame,
Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern:
Better than anyone else you can name,
Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern

Nobody knows what on earth they've
been bitten by,
All I can say is I mean to get lit an' buy
Orchestra seats for the next one that's
written by
Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern.

—attributed to George S. Kaufman

Guy Bolton (1884-1979)



EARLY LIFE & CAREER:

- Born in England to an American father, who moved the family to New York City in 1893.
- His mother died when he was young, and he was convinced that his distant father hated him.
- Tried engineering, but didn't like it.
- Got a degree in architecture, later applying these skills to stage design
- Wrote stories for magazines, selling his first one in 1904
- Began writing plays in 1910
- In 1915 he wrote his first musical libretto: *90 in the Shade* (music by Jerome Kern, lyrics by Harry B. Smith)

Guy Bolton (1884-1979)



CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Was introduced to P. G. Wodehouse by Jerome Kern in 1915
- Guy and “Plum” worked well together and became lifelong friends.
- Often they wrote together the book and lyrics for the musicals, but the more common arrangement was Wodehouse’s lyrics aligned with a Bolton libretto.
- With Kern they wrote ten musicals, including those known as the “Princess Theatre Shows.”
- Wrote more than 50 stage works including seven musicals with the Gershwins (*Oh, Kay!*; *Lady, Be Good*; and *Tip-Toes*)
- With Wodehouse, wrote the book for Cole Porter’s *Anything Goes*

P. G. Wodehouse (1881-1975)



EARLY LIFE & CAREER:

- Pelham Grenville Wodehouse (nickname “Plum”) was born in England to parents who put him in a boarding school at age 2.
- Saw his parents every six or seven years, though he did spend time with his grandparents.
- Began writing stories at a young age.
- Had a very successful school career, saying it was “like heaven” to him.
- Though he tried working in a bank, he didn’t like it; in 1902 he quit the bank and set out to be a full-time writer
- Later created the popular Jeeves, Psmith, and Blandings series of comic novels

Jerome Kern: Songs 1917-1919

- “Till the Clouds Roll By” [*Oh, Boy!*, 1917]
- “The Land Where the Good Songs Go” [*Oh, Boy!*, 1917]
- “Bill” [*Oh, Lady! Lady!!*, 1918]



Till The Clouds Roll By
Words by S. P. O'Roaurke
Music by Jerome Kern

Moderato - 4/4

Sheet music for the song "Till the Clouds Roll By". It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked "Moderato" and the time signature is "4/4". The score includes lyrics and musical notation for the first system.

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Hugh Panaro • Rebecca Luker • *A Jerome Kern Treasury*
London Sinfonietta • John McGlinn, conducting • [4:40]



The Land Where the Good Songs Go

from the musical revue "Miss 1917", 1917

Lyrics: P. G. Wodehouse (1881-1975)
(Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse)

Music: Jerome Kern (1885-1945)
Arranger: Scott S. Stewart

Moderato

Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass
Piano

S.
A.
T.
B.

On the oth - er side of the moon.

Ann Hampton Callaway & Chorus • *Ben Bagley's Jerome Kern Revisited, Vol. III*
London Sinfonietta • John McGlinn, conducting • [3:17]



"Bill"

Original Version from
Oh, Lady! Lady!! (1918)

Music by Jerome Kern • Lyrics by P. G. Wodehouse

I used to dream that I would discover
The perfect lover someday.
I knew I'd recognize him
If ever he came 'round my way.
I always used to fancy then
He'd be one of the godlike kind of men,
With a giant brain and a noble head
Like the heroes bold in the books I read.

Refrain:

But along came Bill
Who's quite the opposite
Of all the men
In storybooks.
In grace and looks,
I know that Apollo
Would beat him all hollow,
And I can't explain,
It's surely not his brain
That makes me thrill.
I love him
Because he's wonderful,
Because he's just old Bill.

Kate Baldwin • *The Land Where the Good Songs Go: A New Revue*
Music Direction & Arrangements by David Loud • [3:19]

The Princess Theatre Shows: A Contemporary Account

“Well, Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern have done it again. Every time these three gather together, the Princess Theatre is sold out for months in advance. You can get a seat for *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* somewhere around the middle of August for just about the price of one on the stock exchange.

“If you ask me, I will look you fearlessly in the eye and tell you in low, throbbing tones that it has it over any other musical comedy in town. But then Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern are my favorite indoor sport.



Dorothy Parker

The Princess Theatre Shows: A Contemporary Account

“I like the way they go about a musical comedy. . . . I like the way the action slides casually into the songs. . . . I like the deft rhyming of the song that is always sung in the last act by two comedians and a comedienne. And oh, how I do like Jerome Kern's music.”

—Dorothy Parker *Vanity Fair*, 1918

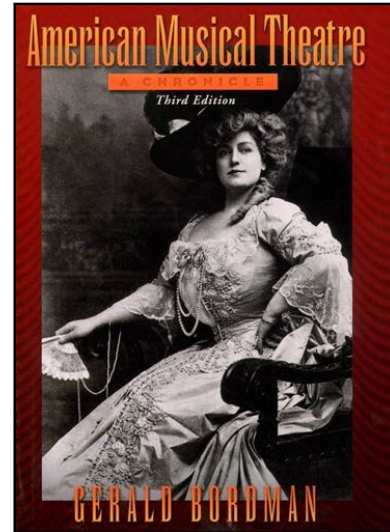


Dorothy Parker

The Princess Theatre Shows: A Scholar's View

“These shows built and polished the mold from which almost all later major musical comedies evolved. As they all dealt with the smart set, they were stylishly mounted—sometimes with settings by the fashionable Elsie de Wolfe. . . .

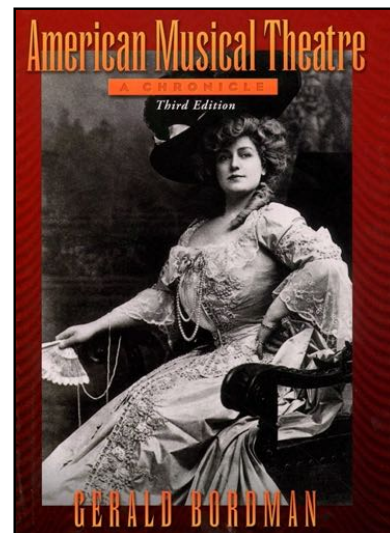
“The characters and situations were, within the limitations of musical comedy license, believable and the humor came from the situations or the nature of the characters. Kern's exquisitely flowing melodies were employed to further the action or develop characterization. [This] integration of song and story is periodically announced as a breakthrough in musical theater.”*



*Gerald Bordman,
The Musical Quarterly (1985)

The Princess Theatre Shows: A Scholar's View

“Early musical comedy was often guilty of inserting songs in a hit-or-miss fashion. The Princess Theatre musicals brought about a change in approach . . . and the team of Bolton, Wodehouse, and Kern had an influence which can be felt to this day.”*



*Gerald Bordman,
The Musical Quarterly (1985)