



Rodgers & Hammerstein Encore!

Class 2 • *Oklahoma!* (1943)

OLLI Summer Term 2020 • Alan Teasley, Instructor



Today's Opening Number

[3:04]

From your introductions . . .

- At least one person mentioned each of the five shows as a favorite
- There are a few “cockeyed optimists,” some “problems like Maria,” a few fearful whistlers, and more than a few are “washing a man right out of your hair” (!)
- Thanks for your participation!

Feedback: What you value . . .

- Mix of lecture, slides, video clips (with no major glitches)
- Clear objectives, organization
- Historical background
- Having lyrics for the songs
- “Pretending we’re actually in class”

Suggested Improvements (“What would make it even better?”)

- Deal with volume differences of clips within the presentation
- Remove onscreen appearance of chat feature
- Clarity about the class website
- Being in the same classroom listening to *Oklahoma!* (sigh!)



Course Web Site:
www.musicals-101.com

Preferred email address for questions:
alanteasley@yahoo.com

Questions from Class 1

- Can I show closed-captions?
- How did Hammerstein's work aid the transition of African-American talent into lead roles during the civil rights period? [\[link\]](#)
- Did *Show Boat* inspire *Porgy and Bess*?

Goals of the Course



You will:

- Be familiar with **five** Rodgers and Hammerstein stage musicals (and be able to hum at least one song from each!)
- Know about the careers of these men before and after their partnership
- Understand the innovations that made this team's shows revolutionary in the 1940s and 1950s
- Enjoy Rodgers and Hammerstein's many contributions to the Great American Songbook

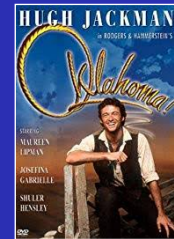


- Integrated song, story, and dance “as never before” (Purdum)
- Owned their own publishing house and the rights to all their shows
- Built an extensive casting and producing organization
- Pioneered recording of original cast albums

Using the **Participant** button at the bottom of your screen, **raise your hand** if you watched some of either *Oklahoma!*



North Carolina School of the Arts' 2011 "Restoration" on YouTube



National Theatre (London) 1998 Revival (filmed 1999)

Today's Focus



You will have:

- Increased knowledge of and appreciation for *Oklahoma!*

You will understand:

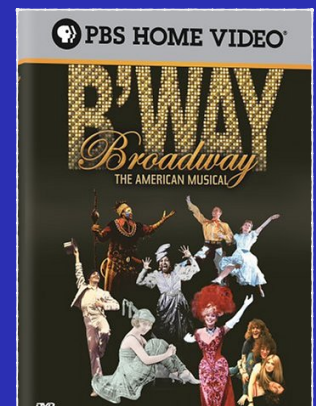
- Why *Oklahoma!* embodied such a watershed moment in musical theater history
- How a recent revival managed to be both faithful to and questioning of its meaning

Oklahoma!

Broadway: The American Musical (PBS, 2004)

from Episode 4:
“Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin’ (1943-1960)”

[10:49]

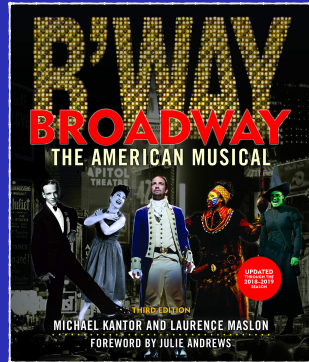


Also available as a companion book:

***Broadway:
The American
Musical***
(3rd ed., 2020)

by Michael Kantor &
Laurence Maslon

(paperback, list price \$44.95)



**To recap . . . *Oklahoma!*'s
innovations included—**

- “Score follows story” (rather than vice versa)
- No numbers just to showcase a star
- No songs written just to become popular hits
- Opening number went “against the grain”
- Dance used as part of story-telling, not just a diversion (e.g., 2nd act dream ballet)

**You can't focus on everything,
so let's look at . . .**



- That Opening
- The Act I Character Songs
- The Love Duet
- Act I, Scene 2: Jud & Curly
- The Dream Ballet
- The Resolution & Finale
- Mordden's “R&H Handbook”

That Opening



Hugh Jackman as Curly, Maureen Lipman as Aunt Eller
“Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'” (National Theatre, 1998)

**Characters: Traditional Musicals
Usually Have First & Second Couples**

R&H observe this pattern, too:

- Julie & Billy
- Nellie & Emile
- Anna & the King
- Maria & the Captain
- Carrie & Mr. Snow
- Lt. Cable & Liat
- Tuptim & Lun Tha
- Liesl & Rolf

***Oklahoma!* has not one,
but two love triangles:**

Curly <-> Laurey <-> Jud

Will Parker <-> Ado Annie <-> Ali Hakim

Will everyone end up with the right person?

Act 1, Scene 1: Each Character Gets a Song



Gloria Grahame, 1955

- “The Surrey with the Fringe On Top” (Curly)
- “Kansas City” (Will Parker)
- “I Cain’t Say No” (Ado Annie)
- “Many a New Day” (Laurey)
- “It’s a Scandal! It’s An Outrage” (Ali Hakim)

Act 1, Scene 1: Each Character Gets a Song



Ali Stroker, 2019

- “The Surrey with the Fringe On Top” (Curly)
- “Kansas City” (Will Parker)
- “I Cain’t Say No” (Ado Annie)
- “Many a New Day” (Laurey)
- “It’s a Scandal! It’s An Outrage” (Ali Hakim)

The (not quite) Love Duet



Gordon MacRae & Shirley Jones

The (not quite) Love Duet

Laurey: Why do they think up stories that link my name with yours?

Curly: Why do the neighbors gossip all day behind their doors?

Laurey: I have a way to prove what they say is quite untrue; Here is the gist, a practical list of “don’ts” for you:

Don’t throw bouquets at me,
Don’t please my folks too much,
Don’t laugh at my jokes too much—
People will say we’re in love!

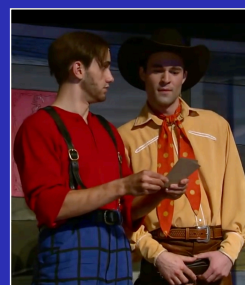
Gordon MacRae & Shirley Jones

The (not quite) Love Duet



Jesse Green: “Listen to the Sound of Love Reinvented in *Oklahoma!*”
(New York Times, July 10, 2019)

Jud’s Songs Come in Scene 2, But the Dialogue Dominates the Scene



- “Pore Jud Is Daid” (Curly starts, Jud joins in)
- “Lonely Room” (Jud’s Solo)

Braxton Molinara & Kyle Guglielmo
as Jud & Curly
2011 NC School of the Arts “Reproduction”

Act 1, Scene 2 (2019)



The Dream Ballet (1955 film)



The Dream Ballet (2019)



The Dream Ballet (2019)



Oklahoma!'s Resolution & Finale



- A Wedding
- An Anthem (coming!)
- A Fight
- A Death
- A Trial
- Anthem (reprise)

Oklahoma! in Context



The Typical Aarons & Freedley Show of the 1920s*

1. Get top stars.
2. Use the stars' personas to create the script and score.
3. Get a top score with a contemporary sound.
4. Embody a “racy, wacky, absolutely twenties world view.”
5. When the plot thins, “have someone don a disguise.”

*Ethan Mordden, *Anything Goes: A History of American Musical Theatre* (2013)

The Rules in Ethan Mordden’s “R&H Handbook”*

1. Develop each story’s community background, culture, mores.
2. Write about people whose lives have meaning.
3. Start uniquely.
4. Anchor the score with character traction.
5. Change your genre from show to show.
6. [Don’t have rules.]
7. The second act should last half as long as the first act with twice as much action.

**Anything Goes: A History of American Musical Theatre* (2013)

Will a Song from *Oklahoma!* Make It Into Your “Top 20” Project?

- By the final class, compile a list of (at most) 20 Rodgers and Hammerstein songs you would include on your own “Essential R&H” playlist, album, concert, or revue.
- Guess which one will probably make mine!

Homework Opportunity



Kelli O'Hara & Nathan Gunn
NY Philharmonic Concert
Performance

(Live from Lincoln Center, 2013,
streaming on Amazon Prime)

Preview [0:30]

Use the **Chat** feature to share your feedback on today’s class



What worked for you as a learner?

What would make it even better?

To play us out . . .



“Oklahoma!”
NC School of the Arts
2011 Restoration

[3:15]