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Oklahoma!: The Making Of An American Musical



Synopsis

Oklahoma! premiered on Broadway in 1943 under the auspices of the Theatre Guild, and today it is performed more frequently than any other Rodgers and Hammerstein musical. In this book Tim Carter offers the first fully documented history of the making of this celebrated American musical. Drawing on research from rare theater archives, manuscripts, journalism, and other sources, Carter records every step in the development of Oklahoma! The book is filled with rich and fascinating details about how Rodgers and Hammerstein first came together, the casting process, how Agnes de Mille became the show's choreographer, and the drafts and revisions that ultimately gave the musical its final shape. Carter also shows the lofty aspirations of both the creators and producers and the mythmaking that surrounded Oklahoma! from its very inception, and demonstrates just what made it part of its times.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The first collaboration of famed music-and-lyrics team Rodgers and Hammerstein, Oklahoma! still has "more than six hundred productions per year," but, according to University of North Carolina music department chair Carter, the musical has never received a "scholarly" treatment. This meticulously researched, soundly reported tome covers much of the same territory as Max Wilk's 1993 title, *OK! The Story of Oklahoma!*, but instead of calling on the testimony of cast and crew, Carter delves into the archives of Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein and the show's producer, the Theatre Guild. Taking from letters, newspapers, drafts and business records, Carter puts

together a comprehensive record of the writing, casting and financing process, a challenging 11-month trial (shockingly swift in today's era of endless development workshops) that shaped the final show through inspired teamwork and heated quarrels. The history includes enlightening tables that chart the evolution of script and songs from one draft to another and a concise timeline of the show's inception. Also amusing are the some-things-never-change concerns of the 1942 Broadway machine: would Oklahoma! be too serious and unspectacular to woo the masses? Would stars draw in the crowds? Deanna Durbin as Laurey? Groucho Marx as the Peddler? Though Carter can overwhelm with a surfeit of details, devout musical theater fans will applaud the minutiae. Photos. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Carter's book is full of new and very significant and exciting discoveries, many of which contradict firmly entrenched mythologies, half truths, and even fascinating calculated falsehoods."â "Geoffrey Block, General Editor, Yale Broadway Masters, and author of Richard Rodgers (Geoffrey Block)"Carter's book. . . [is a] useful contribution to current scholarship on musical theatre."â "Diana Calderazzo, Theatre Journal (Diana Calderazzo Theatre Journal)"With meticulous archival research, Carter recasts the musical, debunking many of its myths while upholding others. . . . [An] engaging book."â "Pamella R. Lach, Register of the Kentucky Historical Society (Pamella R. Lach Register of the Kentucky Historical Society 2007-09-01)"Intriguing. . . . Carter's virtuosic handling of archival material, forming the basis of an astonishingly detailed narrative account, sets his study apart."â "Elizabeth A. Wells, Journal of the American Musicological Society (Elizabeth A. Wells Journal of the American Musicological Society)

All you ever wanted to know, not just about how Oklahoma came to be, and continues to be, but also a marvelous study of how any successful musical progresses from seed to full bloom.

Mr. Carter takes us back to the early 40s when Oscar Hammerstein and Richard Rodgers first embarked on the creation of the watershed musical, Oklahoma!. Using original music and lyric manuscripts, he paints an informative picture of the writing process. With materials from The Theatre Guild, he takes us back to the show's rehearsals, out of town tryouts and legendary opening night. This is a wonderful book for anyone interested in the musical theatre!

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