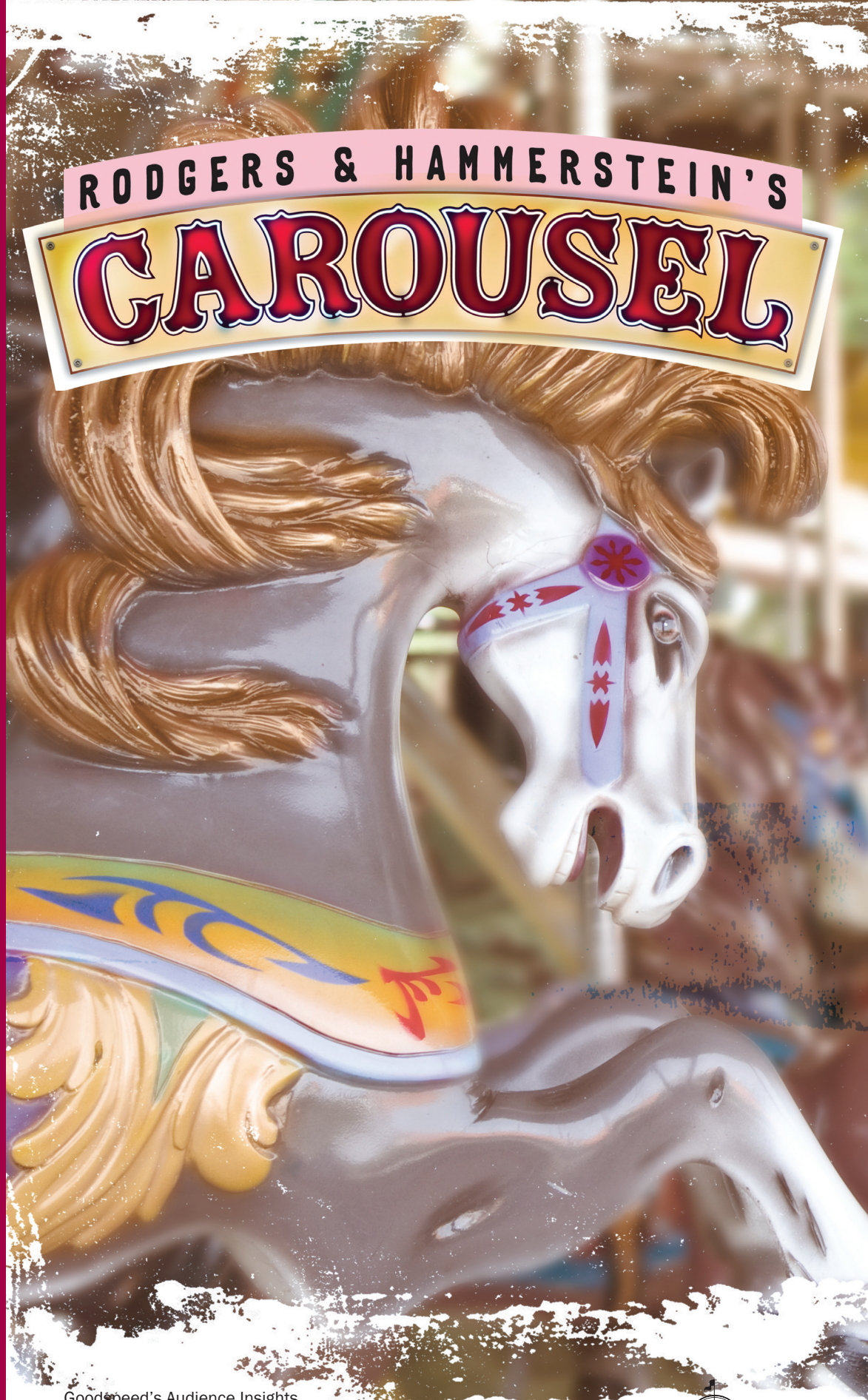


# GOODSPEED MUSICALS

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GOODSPEED  
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The Max Showalter Center for  
Education in Musical Theatre

## CAROUSEL

Goodspeed Opera House  
July 13 -Sept 23, 2012

MUSIC BY  
**RICHARD RODGERS**

BOOK AND LYRICS BY  
**OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II**

BASED ON THE PLAY *LILIOM* BY  
**FERENC MOLNÁR**  
AS ADAPTED BY  
**BENJAMIN F. GLAZIER**

ORIGINAL DANCES BY  
**AGNES DE MILLE**

LIGHTING DESIGN BY  
**JOHN LASITER**

COSTUME DESIGN BY  
**ALEJO VIETTI**

SCENIC DESIGN BY  
**MICHAEL SCHWEIKARDT**

CHOREOGRAPHED BY  
**PARKER ESSE**

DIRECTED BY  
**ROB RUGGIERO**

PRODUCED FOR GOODSPEED  
MUSICALS BY  
**MICHAEL P. PRICE**

# RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN'S CAROUSEL

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[www.goodspeed.org/pages/guides](http://www.goodspeed.org/pages/guides)

Audience Insights for *Carousel* was prepared by  
Joshua S. Ritter, M.F.A, Education & Library Director  
and Christine Hopkins, M.A, Education & Library Assistant

# SHOW SYNOPSIS

## ACT I

In 1873, Billy Bigelow, the handsome and swaggering barker for Mrs. Mullin's carousel in the local amusement park, meets Julie Jordan in a small fishing village on the coast of New England ("Prologue: The Carousel Waltz"). Julie, a young girl who works for the nearby mill, and her friend Carrie Pipperidge are enjoying the carnival when Billy notices her. Despite his boss's opposition, Billy pursues Julie and is consequently fired and leaves the scene. Carrie playfully accuses Julie of being attracted to Billy ("You're a Queer One, Julie Jordan") and mentions that she has found a man of her own ("When I Marry Mister Snow"). Billy returns to the scene, encourages Carrie to leave, and takes the opportunity to flirt with Julie ("If I Loved You").



*Teal Wicks (Julie) and James Snyder (Billy) in Goodspeed's Carousel.*

Although everyone warns them against it, Julie and Billy fall in love. The townspeople caution Julie against loving a carnival barker and Billy's boss, Mrs. Mullin, suggests that Billy should not pursue Julie any further. Billy and Julie ignore the warnings and choose to get married.

Time has passed and the town prepares for a clambake ("June is Bustin' Out All Over"). Julie and Carrie discuss the men that they love and Julie confides in Carrie about her marital problems. She forgivingly explains that Billy is bitter and angry as a result of being out-of-work. Julie tells Carrie that Billy has also taken to bullying her with domestic violence. Carrie comforts Julie to the best of her ability and tries to make Julie smile with happier news—she and Mr. Snow, the man that she had met not too long before, will be getting married ("When the Children Are Asleep").

As the town continues to prepare for the clambake, several sailors get into a brawl. One sleazy whaler, Jigger, tries to interest Billy in a robbery that they could pull off during the clambake. Billy is reluctant, but since Julie excitedly informs him that they will be having a baby, he becomes desperate to provide for the coming child and decides to participate in the robbery ("Soliloquy").

## ACT II

As everyone rests from the afternoon's clambake and prepares for the treasure hunt ("A Real Nice Clambake"), Jigger catches sight of Carrie and pretends to show her some self-defense moves. After Jigger gets Carrie into a compromising position, Mr. Snow unexpectedly comes in and is infuriated by what he sees. He walks out and leaves Carrie behind ("Geraniums in the Winder"). Simultaneously, Billy heads off with Jigger for their planned robbery, despite Julie's protests. Julie and Carrie lament on their lack of power in their marriages ("What's the Use of Wondrin'?").

Jigger and Billy's robbery attempt fails. Jigger gets away but Billy is caught by the bank owner, Mr. Bascombe, who vows to turn Billy into the police with the prospect of spending the remainder of his life in prison. Terrified for Julie, their unborn child, and seeing his whole life as a failure, Billy kills himself. The townspeople arrive with Julie, she sees her dying husband, and cradles Billy as he dies in her arms. Her cousin Nettie sits beside her to comfort her ("You'll Never Walk Alone").

Billy journeys to heaven's gate and is approached by the Starkeeper, who informs him that he cannot be admitted into heaven until he redeems himself from his sordid life. The Starkeeper allows Billy to return to Earth for one day under the condition that he must perform one good deed to make amends for his mistakes. During this discussion, Billy learns that time passes much quicker in the afterlife and that 15 years have gone by.

Billy returns to Earth and gets a glimpse of Louise, his resentful and lonely fifteen year old daughter ("Ballet: Pas de Deux"). As he approaches her for their first meeting, he offers her a star as a gift. Louise is reluctant to accept the gift from the stranger and declines. Feeling helpless to articulate his feelings to his daughter, Billy slaps Louise to get her attention ("If I Loved You (Reprise)"). Louise takes the star and goes home. She tells her mother, "There was a strange man here and he hit me—hard—I heard the sound of it—but it didn't hurt, Mother! It didn't hurt at all—it was jest as if he—kissed my hand!" Julie sees the star and instinctively understands what her daughter felt.

Billy still needs to perform his good deed, and the slap should have been the last straw, but he persuades the Starkeeper to give him one more chance.

Billy attends Louise's high school graduation and observes her self-doubt. Invisibly and spiritually, Billy reaches out to her and urges her to be confident in herself and watches proudly as he sees a sudden change in her. Billy then goes to Julie and invisibly whispers to her, "I loved you, Julie. Know that I loved you." Julie, somehow hearing Billy, joins Louise and the rest of the townsfolk in singing "You'll Never Walk Alone," as Billy heads toward Heaven.

# CHARACTER SUMMARY

**JULIE JORDAN:** A reserved and thoughtful mill worker. Despite his flaws, she marries Billy Bigelow but just as the townspeople warned her, their union ends with great tragedy.

**BILLY BIGELOW:** A handsome carousel barker who falls in love with and marries Julie Jordan. A brash and troubled man, Billy makes many mistakes in his life. Ultimately, Billy redeems himself by spiritually conveying the love that he could not previously communicate to his wife and daughter while on earth.

**CARRIE PIPPERIDGE:** A comical, naïve, and forthcoming mill worker who attends the carnival with Julie. She falls in love with Enoch Snow and expresses her desire to marry him someday.

**ENOCH SNOW:** A wealthy fisherman who is determined to make his fortune in sardines. He falls in love with and marries Carrie Pipperidge.

**NETTIE FOWLER:** Julie's emotionally and financially supportive cousin. She owns the sea-side spa and is a respected member of the community.

**JIGGER CRAIGIN** A sleazy villain and whaler who manipulatively befriends Billy to get what he wants. Ultimately, Jigger deserts Billy and is unsuccessful in his venture.

**MRS. MULLIN:** The widowed owner of the carousel who is secretly in love with Billy. She becomes jealous of any girl who pays attention to Billy and treats him more like a piece of property than her employee.

**DAVID BASCOMBE:** The owner of the mill and richest man in town. He is a respected gentleman in the community.

**LOUISE:** Billy and Julie's daughter who has had a difficult childhood because of the questionable life that her father led.

**STARKEEPER:** A spiritual being who offers Billy guidance and allows him to return to Earth to help Louise so that he can redeem himself.

**HEAVENLY FRIEND:** Takes Billy to Heaven's gate and tells him some difficult truths that he needs to hear.

**ENOCH SNOW, JR.:** Carrie and Enoch's oldest son.



*Teal Wicks (Julie) and James Snyder (Billy) in Goodspeed's Carousel.*

# MEET THE WRITERS



“Whenever I get an idea for a song, even before jotting down the notes, I can hear it in the orchestra, I can smell it in the scenery, I can see the kind of actor who will sing it, and I am aware of an audience listening to it.”  
– Richard Rodgers

**RICHARD RODGERS** (*Music*) was born in New York City on June 28, 1902. His early career began in 1920 and included a series of musicals for Broadway, London, and Hollywood. He wrote these musicals with lyricist Lorenz Hart. Among their greatest were *On Your Toes* (1936), *Babes in Arms* (1937), *The Boys from Syracuse* (1938), and *Pal Joey* (1940). The Rodgers & Hart partnership came to an end with the death of Lorenz Hart in 1943.

Earlier that year Rodgers had then joined forces with lyricist and author Oscar Hammerstein II. *Oklahoma!* was their first piece and also the first Rodgers and Hammerstein musical of the new genre, the musical play. It combined Rodgers' talents for musical comedy and Hammerstein's talents for operetta. It also marked the beginning of the most successful partnership in Broadway musical history, and was followed by *Carousel* (1945), *Allegro* (1947), *South Pacific* (1949), *The King and I* (1951), *Me and Juliet* (1953), *Pipe Dream* (1955), *Flower Drum Song* (1958) and *The Sound of Music* (1959). Together, Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote one movie musical, *State Fair* (1945; adapted to the stage, 1995), and one television musical, *Cinderella* (1957; remade in 1965 and 1997). Collectively, the Rodgers & Hammerstein musicals earned 34 Tony Awards, 15 Academy Awards, two Pulitzer Prizes and two Grammy Awards. In 1998 Rodgers & Hammerstein were cited by Time Magazine and CBS News as among the 20 most influential artists of the 20th century.

Despite Hammerstein's death in 1960, Rodgers continued to write for the Broadway stage. His first solo entry, *No Strings* in 1962, earned him two Tony Awards for music and lyrics, and was followed by *Do I Hear a Waltz?* (1965, lyrics by Stephen Sondheim), *Two By Two* (1970, lyrics by Martin Charnin), *Rex* (1976, lyrics by Sheldon Harnick) and *I Remember Mama* (1979, lyrics by Martin Charnin and Raymond Jessel). Richard Rodgers died at home in New York City on December 30, 1979, at the age of 77. On March 27, 1990, he was honored with Broadway's highest accolade when the 46th Street Theatre, owned and operated by the Nederlander Organization, was renamed The Richard Rodgers Theatre.

**OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II** (*Book and Lyrics*) was born on July 12, 1895 in New York City. Hammerstein began his theatrical career at the age of 19 while a law student at Columbia University. He began as a performer for the Columbia University players and later wrote some of his first lyrics for the Columbia University Varsity shows. Some of his earliest musical comedies were in collaboration with Columbia undergraduate student, Richard Rodgers. Hammerstein withdrew from Columbia Law School after his second year to pursue a career in theatre and took a job with his uncle as an assistant stage manager.

In 1919, Hammerstein was promoted to production stage manager and his uncle produced Hammerstein's first play, *The Light*. The play, however, only lasted four performances. Hammerstein refused to be discouraged and continued to write for the musical theatre. Hammerstein's first success, *Wildflower*, was written with Otto Harbach, Vincent Youmans and Herbert Stothart in 1923. Hammerstein also wrote eight musicals with Jerome Kern, including *Sweet Adeline*, *Music in the Air* and their most famous and groundbreaking work, *Show Boat*. Following *Carmen Jones*, Hammerstein chose to exclusively collaborate with Richard Rodgers. The Rodgers & Hammerstein partnership began with *Oklahoma!* (1943), representing a milestone, blending comedy and operetta into a musical play.

Following *Oklahoma!*, the successful team unleashed some of the most memorable shows in Broadway history, including *Carousel*, *Allegro*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, *Me and Juliet*, *Pipe Dream*, *Flower Drum Song* and *The Sound of Music*. Rodgers & Hammerstein wrote one musical for the cinema, *State Fair*, and one for television, *Cinderella*. (Continued on p. 6)



[CLICK HERE to hear a 1960 interview with Rodgers & Hammerstein](#)



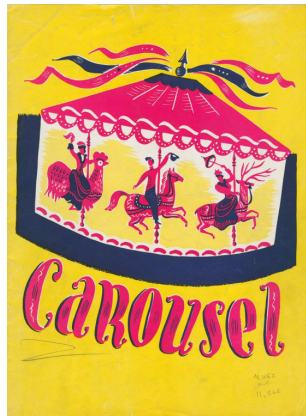
# MEET THE WRITERS

(Continued) Producers, Rodgers & Hammerstein were dedicated to presenting promising works by other artists. Such works included Anita Loos' *Happy Birthday*, Irving Berlin's *Annie Get Your Gun*, the national tour of *Show Boat* and six of their own musicals. They once had five of the highest grossing shows running on Broadway at the same time! They also founded their own music publishing firm, Williamson Music. Oscar Hammerstein II was a member of the many professional organizations, including the Dramatists Guild and the Screen Writers' Guild. He received many awards including five honorary degrees, two Pulitzer Prizes, two Academy Awards and five Tony Awards. His final musical was *The Sound of Music*, which was written with Richard Rodgers in 1959; his last song was "Edelweiss." Oscar Hammerstein II died at his farm in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, on August 23, 1960. On September 1, 1960, the lights of Broadway were extinguished at 9pm to honor the "man who owned Broadway."

## THE MUSICALS OF RODGERS AND HAMMERSTEIN



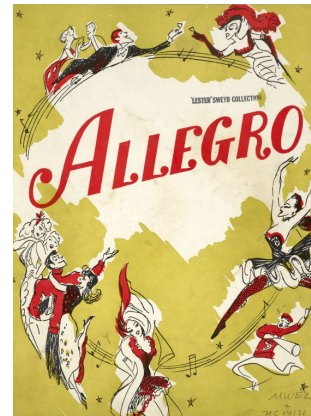
1943 *Oklahoma!*



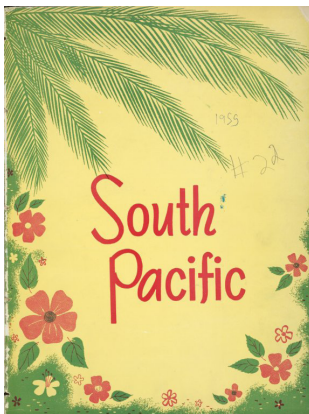
1945 *Carousel*



1945 *State Fair* (film)



1947 *Allegro*



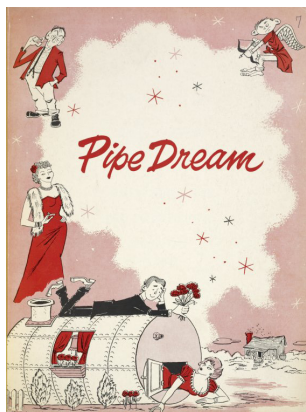
1949 *South Pacific*



1951 *The King and I*



1953 *Me and Juliet*



1955 *Pipe Dream*



1957 *Cinderella*  
(made-for-television)



1958 *Flower Drum Song*



1959 *The Sound of Music*

# BEHIND THE SCENES

## Carving the *Carousel* Horse

by Katherine Griswold

What do you get when you mix the muscular body of a Clydesdale with the triumphant tail of an Arabian, the defiant face of a Thoroughbred and the sparkling oversized eyes of My Little Pony? You get Brent E. White's rare breed of carousel horse, concocted especially for the Goodspeed stage.



Jo Mielziner's carousel horse sketches from the original Broadway production of *Carousel* (1945).

Brent White and his family moved to Moodus, Connecticut about three years ago. Because Brent's wife is a huge fan of musical theatre, they decided to become Goodspeed Members. When Brent, a master carousel horse craftsman, saw the 2012 season announcement, he thought to himself, "Wouldn't that be cool if I could do a carousel horse for *Carousel*?" So Brent took a shot in the dark and sent an email to Goodspeed asking if they needed someone to build a horse for the set. As fate would have it, Goodspeed replied with a yes.

Brent began discussing the look of the horse with *Carousel*'s creative team, who wanted it to be defiant with an "in your face" attitude. The demeanor should be a little wild, but not scary or menacing. Brent began sketching and eventually came up with the perfect blend, or as he describes it, a "montage of different styles – even different horses." Brent was less concerned with realism than having the horse give off the right impression.

Once the specifics of the design were pinned down, Brent enlisted the help of Jacob Myjak, a student at Epoch Arts, to start building the horse. Epoch Arts in East Hampton is an organization dedicated to helping young people learn to communicate, collaborate, create and celebrate by experiencing the arts hands-

on. Brent had become a mentor at Epoch the year before when he and some of the students built a number of giant mushrooms for one of their plays. Remembering that Jacob had taken particular interest in the mushroom project, Brent asked to use the Epoch facilities to build the carousel horse which would allow him to mentor Jacob in his craft. Not only did Jacob demonstrate talent as a craftsman, but Brent remarked that "he truly cared about it, worked hard and has the vision," – something that is extremely hard to come by in a sixteen-year-old. With Brent's guidance, Jacob worked on most of the tail along with the mane and the hooves.



Early stage of White's carousel horse.

After the basic carving was done, Brent moved the horse to The Learning Center, an alternative school for students from East Haddam and East Hampton. Many of the Learning Center students are in great need of a positive male role model, so Brent worked with four of them to complete the detail work, including sanding down the horse and transferring patterns. (Cont. on p.8)



The *Carousel* horse, signed by Brent White and Jacob Myjak.

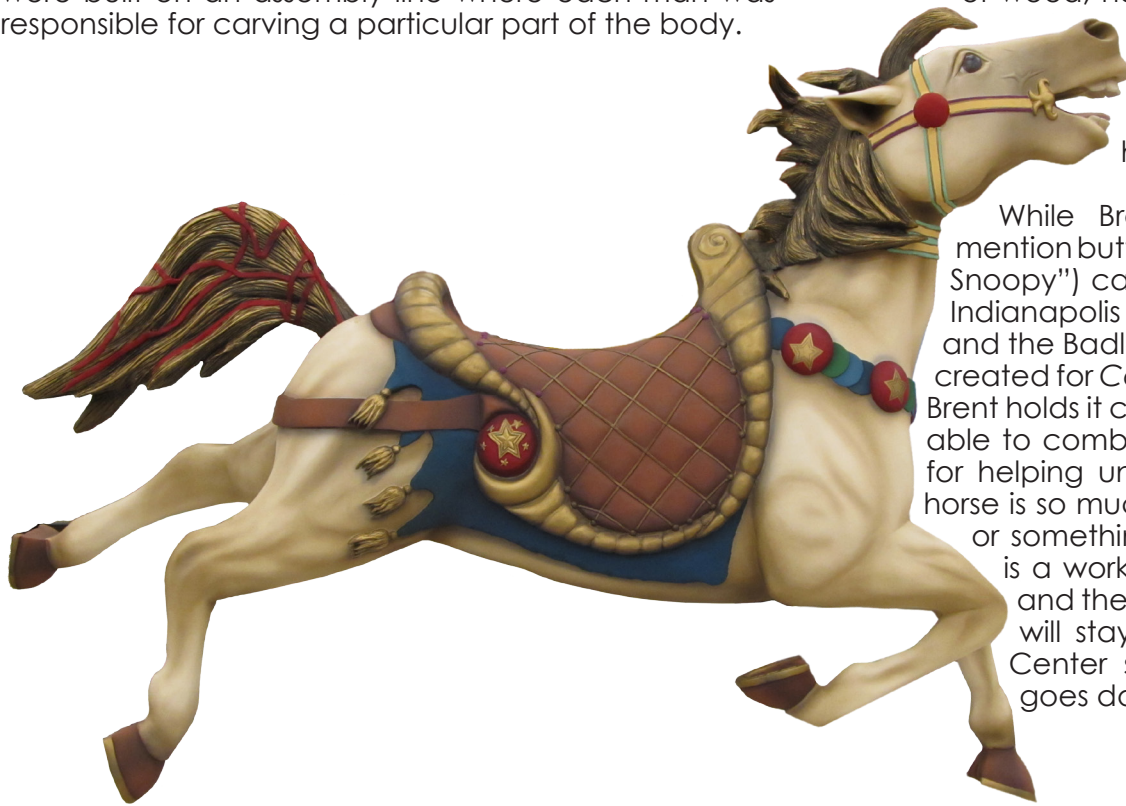
# BEHIND THE SCENES

## Carving the Carousel Horse

by Katherine Griswold

(Continued) When most people think of building a carousel horse, they picture one man intricately carving away at a solid block of wood. In fact, nothing about that picture is true, not even in the heyday of the carousel at the turn of the 20th century. The horses were built on an assembly line where each man was responsible for carving a particular part of the body.

The most important part, the head, was carved by the "headman," thus the term is still used in factories today. Brent's horses aren't built on an assembly line, but he does use chainsaws, grinders, band-saws and other power tools whenever he can. Along with multiple types of wood, he uses bondo auto body filler to build the horse. Although Brent utilizes a number of modern conveniences, the end result is just as beautiful as it was over a hundred years ago.



While Brent's carousel horses (not to mention butterflies, seahorses and a "Rocking Snoopy") can be seen in such places as the Indianapolis Zoo, the Charlie Brown Museum and the Badlands National Park, the horse he created for *Carousel* is truly something special. Brent holds it close to his heart because he was able to combine his "hobby" with his passion for helping underserved youth. The *Carousel* horse is so much more than a set piece, prop, or something pretty to look at on stage. It is a work of art created by five students and their mentor. It is an experience that will stay with Jacob and The Learning Center students long after the curtain goes down on closing night.

### The History of Carousels

The word carousel comes from the Italian word *carosello*, meaning "little war." *Carosello* was a 12th century game played by the Arabs and Turks, on horseback, in which the horsemen would toss scented balls to each other. If someone missed a catch he was readily identified by the perfume released by the ball as it broke on impact.

Later, *carosello* was adopted by the French into an exhibition of horsemanship and competition. One such competition included spearing a ring suspended from a tree branch while riding at full speed. In order to practice for this competition, a machine was created comprised of a series of legless wooden horses that were attached to a rotating platform.

By the late 18th century numerous carousels similar to the training machine were built solely for amusement throughout Europe. Although the early carousels

were powered by animals walking in a circle or men pulling a rope, the first steam-powered carousel was built in 1861, changing the industry forever.

The true Golden Age of the carousel lasted from about 1880 to 1930 in the U.S. During this time, there were numerous carousel manufacturers with master carvers whose companies bore their name. Each master carver, such as Dentzel and Illions, had a distinct style. Out of the thousands of hand-carved carousels built during the Golden Age, less than 200 have survived. Connecticut's own 98-year-old Bushnell Park Carousel in Hartford was built during the Golden Age. The 96-year-old carousel at Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven is also of the Golden Age.

Many historic carousel horses can be seen in the New England Carousel Museum in Bristol, Conn. Visit their website to learn more: [thecarouselmuseum.org](http://thecarouselmuseum.org)



# “THE THEATRE: NEW MUSICAL IN MANHATTAN”

*Time Magazine*, Monday, April 30, 1945

*Carousel* (music by Richard Rodgers; book & lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II; produced by the Theatre Guild).

All *Oklahoma's* horses and all *Oklahoma's* men have put another charmer together again. But *Oklahoma's* and *Carousel's* Composer Rodgers, Librettist Hammerstein, Choreographer Agnes de Mille, Director Rouben Mamoulian, Costume Designer Miles White have not repeated themselves. *Carousel* strays pretty far from *Oklahoma!*, just as it shies completely away from Broadway. A reworking of Ferenc Molnár's *Liliom*, it is not a musicocomedy but a lovely and appealing “musical play.”



Oscar Hammerstein, Agnes de Mille and Richard Rodgers in rehearsal.

*Carousel* has moved *Liliom* from 20th-century Budapest to 19th-century New England, and renamed the swaggering, bad-tempered barker Billy Bigelow. It has also, to its loss, reduced his swagger and taken away his Continental, scamp-like grace. But it tells much the same story and weaves much the same mood. Billy acts tough for fear of seeming tender, beats his wife lest he reveal he loves her. He commits a crime for his unborn child's sake, dies, leans carelessly against the bar of Heaven, returns to Earth for a day to try to do a good deed.

If Librettist Hammerstein has not given *Carousel* the full flavor of Molnár, at least he has given it all the interest of a true play. His script is always simple, sometimes touching, never flashy, only here and there a little cute. And Composer Rodgers has swathed it in one of his warmest and most velvety scores. More than a succession of tunes, the music helps interpret the story; it has operatic climaxes, choral fullness, choreographic lilt. But it is still in tunes that Composer Rodger's real magic lies—whether the tender “If I Loved You,” the light, murmurous “This Was a Real Nice Clam Bake,” the

full-throated sweetness of “June Is Bustin' Out All Over.” And Hammerstein has caught their spirit with his lyrics.



Richard Rodgers conducting a rehearsal of *South Pacific* (1949).

Jo Mielziner's sets and Miles White's costumes splash *Carousel* with color, and Agnes de Mille's dances—particularly a fine lively hornpipe—give it a pulse as well as a heart.

Oscar Hammerstein II could pretty nearly justify his title of No. 1 U.S. librettist just by pointing to the two best-loved of all modern musicals—*Show Boat* and *Oklahoma!* But he has also written the libretto or lyrics (or both) for such hits as *Rose Marie*, *The Desert Song*, *The New Moon*, *Carmen Jones*; his are the words of “Ol' Man River,” “Lover Come Back to Me,” “Stout-Hearted, Men,” “Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'” and—the only song he ever wrote for himself and not for a show—“The Last Time I Saw Paris.”

As a lyric writer, Hammerstein has never equaled Lorenz Hart for inventiveness or Cole Porter for sophistication. But he is always serviceable, often scintillating. He gets more meaning, character and humanity into his book-writing than most of his rivals. One reason may be that many of his librettos were discerningly adapted from fairly full-blooded material. Another likely reason: Hammerstein lacks the typical Tin Pan Alley taste and the blatantly Broadway mind. He is ruefully conscious that the librettist is the whipping boy of musicocomedy, the first to be blamed for a failure, the last to get credit for a success. In musicocomedy, however, the whipping boy's wages are a fair compensation. Hammerstein's current earnings are well over \$300,000 a year. Don't mention Opera. Hammerstein was born 49 years ago into a great theatrical tribe. His father, William, produced vaudeville; his Uncle Arthur produced musicals; his cousin Elaine became a screen star in silent days. But it was his grandfather, bearded, cigar-mauling, top-hatted Oscar I, the most spectacular impresario of his time, who made the name Hammerstein a near-synonym for Broadway. Oscar I was said to have

# “THE THEATRE: NEW MUSICAL IN MANHATTAN”

*Time Magazine*, Monday, April 30, 1945

occupied more newspaper space during his heyday than any other American except Theodore Roosevelt. A reckless and rambunctious man, Oscar I made millions in vaudeville and operetta, lost them on grand opera. “The word opera,” says Oscar II, “was a nightmare to everyone in the family.” Unlike his other grandfather (who used to take little Oscar on rambles and give him whiskey punch before breakfast and Guinness’ Stout after supper) ripsnorting old Oscar I never paid the slightest attention to his namesake.

The family did not want young Oscar to follow in its footsteps. But while studying law at Columbia he got involved in college dramatics, soon found himself working for Uncle Arthur. After a couple of minor musicomedies tries, Oscar clicked with *Wildflower*, went on to write — during the 20s — a half dozen of the best-known musicals in Broadway history.

What Goes Up ... In the 30s Hammerstein went into a tail spin. Called to Hollywood when sound pictures started up, he helped turn out some very unsound ones. Back on Broadway, he had one or two mild successes and a string of flops. And then came *Oklahoma!*

Beyond being Hammerstein’s biggest plum, *Oklahoma!* may have started his greatest partnership. He and Composer Rodgers have a second smash in *Carousel*; as Broadway producers, they are cleaning up on John van Druten’s *I Remember Mama*; under the title of Williamson Music Inc. (both their fathers were named William), they are highly successful music publishers; Hollywood is excited over the forthcoming cinemusical they have made of *State Fair*; and they have plans afoot for another Broadway show.



Oscar Hammerstein II and Richard Rodgers looking at script of *South Pacific* [1949].

Modest, methodical Oscar II has a collaborator’s temperament, as well as talent. If he quite lacks his grandfather’s color (“I am rather uninteresting”) he also lacks the old man’s cholera. His private life also lacks the gaudy touch. “I guess I have never been young enough,” he confesses, “to enjoy night clubs. I don’t understand what goes on after 1 a.m.—but I doubt if anything very profound is said.” A family man (he has been married twice), he does not smoke, seldom drinks, spends as much time as possible on his Doylestown, Pa. farm, where he grows wheat and alfalfa and raises Aberdeen-Angus cattle. His one eccentricity is that he writes standing up. But even that is based on logic: he paces so much when working that it saves time not to sit down at all.

## Carousel Facts

- Rodgers, who had suffered from a wrenched back injury, was forced to watch the opening night performance of *Carousel* backstage propped up on a stretcher and dosed with morphine.
- “This Was a Real Nice Clambake,” from *Carousel*, was originally written for *Oklahoma!* and was titled, “This Was a Real Nice Hayride.”



**CLICK HERE to watch “This Was a Real Nice Clambake” from the 1957 *Carousel* film.**

- The Theatre Guild repeated their strategy that was used for *Oklahoma!* and chose to cast unknown actors for *Carousel*. This cast included Murvyn Vye, Jean Darling, Eric Matson, Jan Clayton, and John Raitt.
- Richard Rodgers frequently expressed that *Carousel* was his favorite written score.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF CAROUSEL

## THE TRAGEDIES OF RODGERS AND HAMMERSTEIN

After the success of *Oklahoma!*, Rodgers and Hammerstein became an acclaimed and distinguished team in the American Musical Theatre. The successor to *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, had supported and proved their talents for integrating songs and musical background into the plot. Similarly, through both *Carousel* and *Oklahoma!*, their effective writing collaboration was characterized by musicals that defied convention. During the early 1900s, audiences were accustomed to seeing romantic comedies but Rodgers and Hammerstein were introducing stories with cantankerous and tragic subjects such as a villain being killed on stage and a hero committing suicide. This would ultimately prepare audiences for later Rodgers and Hammerstein tragic musicals such as *The King and I*, which ended with a death scene.



Jean Darling (*Carrie Pipperidge*), Murvyn Vye (*Jigger Craigin*) and Eric Mattson (*Enoch Snow*) in *Carousel* (1945)

## A DIFFERENT TYPE OF MUSICAL

Rodgers and Hammerstein created nine musicals in just sixteen years. Within those years they also created the original score and book to the film *State Fair* and to the original television musical, *Cinderella*. When integrating music and dialogue, they aimed to maintain focus on character development. While many of their musicals focused on romance, the team felt that each character had to be fully developed before they could connect romantically. Hammerstein was concerned; however, that he would reveal the story's romance too early through the dialogue or the lyrics to Rodgers' songs. Thus, Hammerstein came up with a specific type of song, known as the not-yet-in-love song. This song type existed in many of his shows including *Show Boat* ("Make Believe"), *Oklahoma!* ("People Will Say We're in Love"), and *Carousel* ("If I Loved You"). During the early to mid 1900s, audiences were used to seeing lovers quickly fall into each other's arms and show no reservations in their feelings and intentions. Again, Rodgers



John Raitt (*Billy Bigelow*) and Jan Clayton (*Julie Jordan*) in *Carousel* (1945)

and Hammerstein defied convention by creating characters that showed aspects of human nature, such as flaws, stubbornness, pride, and uncertainties in their feelings.

Thirty-four Tony Awards, a Pulitzer Prize, fifteen Academy Awards, and two Grammys later, Rodgers and Hammerstein continued to defy convention and build their legacy after creating such musical theatre accolades as *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, *Flower Drum Song*, and *The Sound of Music*.

## LILIOM TO CAROUSEL

Following *Oklahoma!* Rodgers and Hammerstein began searching for a second collaboration piece. They were approached by the Theatre Guild, who had long wanted to do a musical based on Ferenc Molnár's play, *Liliom*, which premiered in 1909 at the Gaiety in Budapest after World War I. The Theatre Guild explained to Rodgers and Hammerstein that Molnár had declined the idea for years but had recently seen *Oklahoma!* and agreed to a musical adaptation of *Liliom*, only if Rodgers and Hammerstein were the ones to work on it and only if they promised to keep the spirit of the play intact. The writers, however, did not accept the project right away. They were concerned about many things, including the Hungarian setting and the dark tone of the play. It was a major risk, but Rodgers and Hammerstein felt that, despite the difficult subject matter of the story, it was a project worth taking on.



**CLICK HERE to read Ferenc Molnár's *Liliom*.**

When adapting *Liliom* to a musical, Rodgers and Hammerstein aimed to highlight deeper and darker human emotions than they had in *Oklahoma!*. The writers wanted to expose the most personal thoughts of the title character, Billy Bigelow. In the musical adaptation, he used the inner monologue or, as the song is titled, soliloquy.

To ensure a successful transfer of *Liliom* to a musical, the Theatre Guild and

# THE IMPORTANCE OF CAROUSEL

Rodgers and Hammerstein used as much of the same staff from *Oklahoma!* as they possibly could. The director, Rouben Mamoulian; choreographer, Agnes de Mille; and costume designer, Miles White all came from *Oklahoma!* to join the *Carousel* team. Also joining the team was Jo Mielziner to design the scenery.

## CAROUSEL ON BROADWAY

*Carousel* opened on Broadway in 1945 at the Majestic Theatre. When audiences exited the Majestic Theatre, they weren't sure what to make of *Carousel*. Most audience members had already seen, or at least heard about, Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* and were familiar with its upbeat and overall positive tones. *Carousel* was a much different Rodgers and Hammerstein show. When it first opened on Broadway, audiences were accepting of the piece but they were also skeptical of how long it would last as they weren't accustomed to seeing such explicit examples of human nature on the stage. Additionally, audiences were used to hearing an overture at the opening of



a theatrical piece. Rodgers and Hammerstein chose to forego the traditional overture that audiences expected and instead wrote a prologue which was set to the music.

*Carousel* played directly across from the St. James Theatre, which had *Oklahoma!* on its stage. This caused many reviewers to compare the two Rodgers and Hammerstein productions and, suddenly, they found that they were competing against themselves. Although it

did not run as long as *Oklahoma!* most of these reviews were positive and agreed that *Carousel* was one of the greatest contributions of all time to the American Musical Theatre.

## Dance to the Piper & And Promenade Home by Agnes de Mille

Chapter XIV R. and H.

In March 1945 Rodgers and Hammerstein once more collaborated with the Theatre Guild management, Theresa Helburn and Lawrence Langner on a musical version of Molnár's *Liliom* to be called *Carousel*. The staff that had produced *Oklahoma!* resembled Reuben Mamoulian, Miles White and myself. The only addition to our group was Jo Mielziner replacing Lemuel Ayers as scene designer.

I had the barest acquaintance with Dick and Oscar when I signed up for *Oklahoma!* but during the rehearsals afterwards our friendship deepened. By the winter of 1944-1945 I was going to Oscar not only for professional advice but personal reaffirmation. Since every man in my life was far away and unavailable



Agnes de Mille teaching a dance for Allegro.

for comfort or council, I began to turn to him as big brother on many nontheatrical occasions. The relationship grew to be one of the joys of my life. He had talked for over a year about his plans for *Liliom* and I looked forward to the opportunity of working on a second R. and H. production as the happy reward for being a good girl.

Plans ripened in spring. While the snow fell softly outside his Pennsylvania farm house, Oscar talked as only he can, transforming the material of our common craft into hopeful and lyric enchantment.

There have been few lasting collaborations in the history of the theatre even though the theatre is in essence collaboration. The difficulties involved in sharing responsibility and effort, the trial of work conditions, the apportioning of recognition and rewards proved more than most friendships could encompass. Preservation of equilibrium implies a restraint rather more subtle than that required, for instance, in marriage. Such a relationship obviously presupposes mutual respect and absolute loyalty, consideration, and steadiness of nerve. Rodgers and Hammerstein have worked together in a team that has lasted longer in friendship (if not yet in business association) than Gilbert and Sullivan. They have been able to do this because they recognize their need of one another and because they practice discipline. I had a ringside seat at their first joint effort and witnessed their great, their unprecedented triumph. I saw them work in three productions; I was privileged to work beside them.

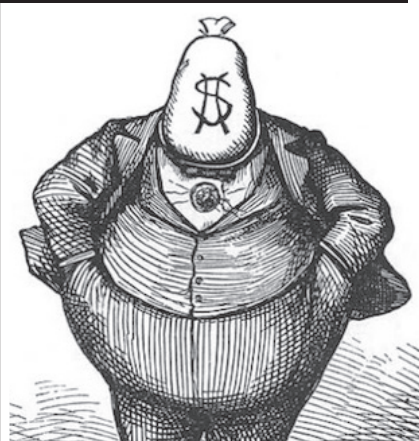


**CLICK HERE to watch Agnes de Mille's "Louise's Ballet" from the 1957 *Carousel* film.**

# SOCIAL CLASS DURING THE GILDED AGE

*Carousel* takes place during a time period known as the Gilded Age. Set in New England, 1873, the musical explores the challenges that Americans faced as economic, technological, and political advancements were rapidly occurring. In *Carousel*, audiences see the lives of characters as they fight their way through social and economic struggles in the midst of significant industrialization.

With new factories, technology, and a higher demand for goods, workers had to put in more hours for very little pay. Also, those who did not already have jobs struggled to find employment. As the American economy quickly grew, the wealthy reaped the benefits, but the number of labor jobs decreased or were eliminated, leaving many workers unemployed.



## THE GILDED AGE

The Gilded Age, a term coined in 1873 by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, editor of the *Hartford Courant*, occurred roughly from the late 1860s through 1896. Characterized by major changes in social class, it was also a period of rapid industrial growth. Twain and Warner used the word “gilded” in their book *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* to identify America as a society that was similar to gilt metal, or a type of cheap metal that is lined with a thin layer of gold. Thus, as a result of industrial corporations dominating small companies, society was viewed as having a shiny surface while being corrupt on the inside.

## SOCIAL CLASS

The social class system had always played a major role in American society, but during the Gilded Age there was a significant change in societal structure. As had always been the case, the upper-class was determined by wealth, but during the Gilded Age the way a family acquired its fortune and how long they had possessed it became more important than how much money they were actually worth. Both the upper and middle-class benefitted from the Gilded Age because the new products and technologies

were creating a more comfortable lifestyle for those who could afford them. The lower-class, however, suffered greatly during the Gilded Age.

## SOCIAL CLASS AND CAROUSEL

Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel* is structured around the social classes of the Gilded Age. During a time of economic struggle for the lower class and the constant fight for equality, *Carousel* introduces many characters who face the struggles of the Gilded Age. Billy Bigelow, for example, struggles with unemployment. He has lost his job, is unskilled and untrained for anything other than carnival barking and attempts to acquire economic security for his family. In doing so, his disparity and poverty become apparent when he tries to rob Mr. Bacombe, a member of the upper class. Similarly, Julie Jordan has her own social class battles. She is an employed woman when she meets Billy Bigelow but, later in the musical, she is a married woman and finds it socially unacceptable to work so she can help support her family. As a result of the Gilded Age, Julie is not only considered to be lower class because of her marriage to Billy, but is also seen as unequal because she is a woman. Additionally, when the musical opens, Billy is shown in contrast to the obviously wealthier Mr. Bascombe. Bascombe, who is clearly a member of the upper class, is attending the carnival with his son while Billy is a laborer at the carnival; more specifically, he is a carnival barker, a position that was not viewed as being particularly reputable.

*Carousel* explores the many struggles of the lower, middle, and upper classes during the Gilded Age. *Carousel* is an example of Rodgers and Hammerstein's effort to illuminate the social class struggles of past, present, and future generations in America.

 **CLICK HERE to read *The Gilded Age* by Mark Twain and Charles D. Warner**



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