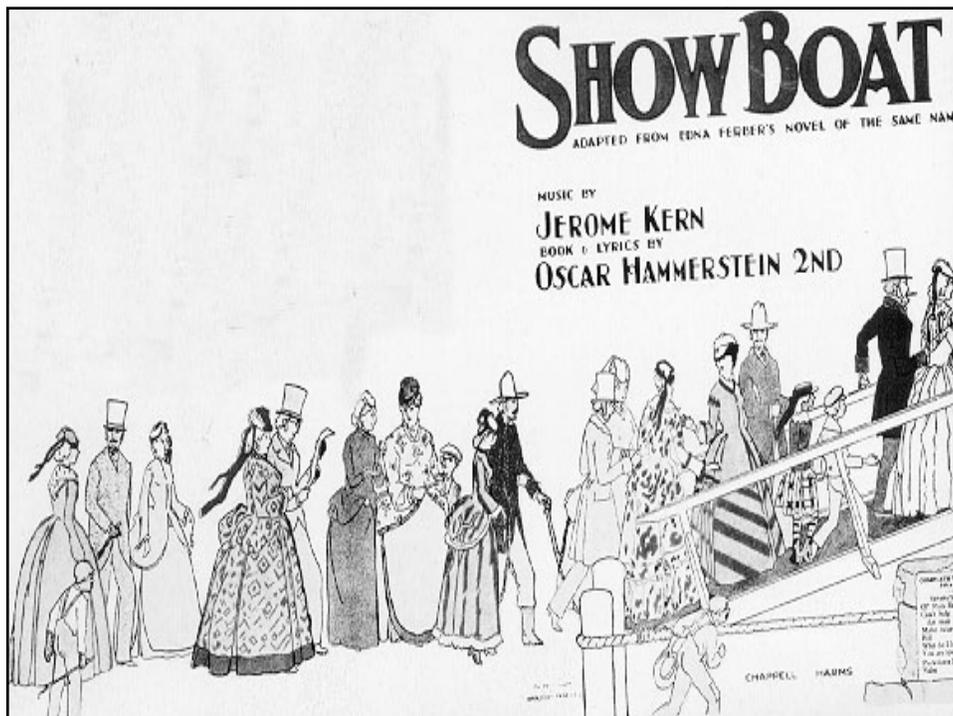


# Show Boat

and the American Musical

*A presentation for  
The Guild of Mercury Opera Rochester  
by Robert Martin Ferris*



## Influences on the American Musical

- English Comic Opera (Gilbert & Sullivan)
- Minstrel Show
- Revue (*Ziegfeld Follies*)
- Vaudeville and Burlesque
- Musical Comedy
- European Operetta (*The Merry Widow*)

“*Show Boat* marked the initial effort to make of musical comedy an integrated artistic creation, to fuse the disparate elements--song, dance, comedy and production numbers--so that each emerge naturally, even inevitably, from the play’s context.”

“Before *Show Boat*, plot, characters and setting had served merely as hooks on which to dangle song, dance and musical routines. With *Show Boat* the dramatic text and musical score acquired scope and breadth, a concept which generated a long lineage, including such notable musicals as *Pal Joey*, *Carousel*, *Oklahoma!*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, *West Side Story*, *My Fair Lady* and *Man of La Mancha*.”

*The World of Flo Ziegfeld*

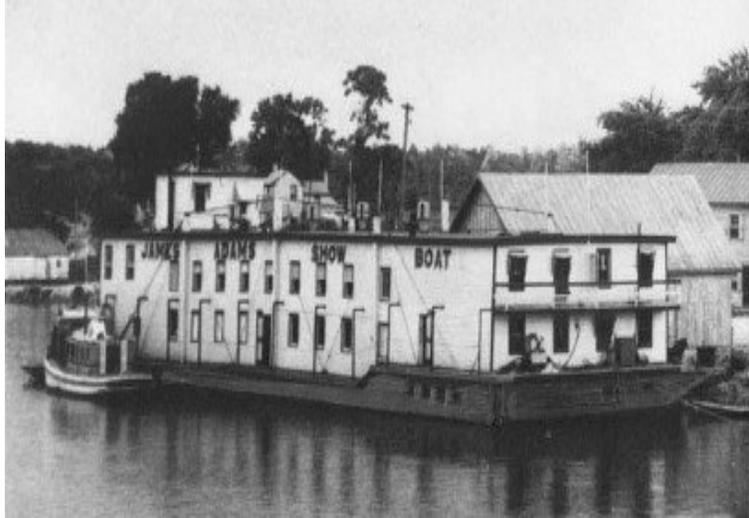
Randolph Carter (1974)



## Edna Ferber

1885-1968

- American novelist and playwright
- Member of Algonquin Round Table
- Novels include  
*Show Boat, Cimarron, Saratoga Trunk, Giant*
- Plays (with George S. Kaufman) include  
*The Royal Family, Dinner at Eight, Stage Door*
- Pulitzer Prize in 1924 for *So Big*
- Novels usually feature strong female protagonist
- Spent several weeks on a show boat to soak up “atmosphere”



# SHOW BY EDNA

## THE TIME:

From the gilded age of the 1870's, through the '90's up to the present time.

## THE SCENE:

The earlier parts of the story take place on the *Cotton Blossom Floating Palace Theatre*, a show boat on the Mississippi. The background aboard *The Cotton Blossom* is panoramic. Twice a year the unwieldy boat was towed up and down the mighty river and its tributaries; it was a familiar sight from New Orleans to the cities of the North, from the coal fields of Pennsylvania to St. Louis, and stirring presentations of "East Lynne," "Tempest and Sunshine," and other old dramatic favourites, by the actors and painted ladies of the *Cotton Blossom* troupe, are still remembered in Paducah, Evansville, Cairo, Cape Girardeau, Natchez, Vicksburg, Baton Rouge, and in many other river towns and cities.

Following the fortunes of the Hawkes-Ravenal family, the story then carries us to the notorious "Gambler's Alley" of earlier Chicago, and then to the modern theatrical centre of America, the Times Square district of New York City.

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# BOAT FERBER

## THE PLAYERS:

CAPT. ANDY HAWKES  
Mississippi River steamboat captain and  
owner of the *Cotton Blossom*

PARTHENIA ANN HAWKES  
His wife

MAGNOLIA RAVENAL  
Their daughter, later a famous actress  
on the variety stage

GAYLORD RAVENAL  
Gambler, gentleman of fortune and sometime  
actor. Husband of Magnolia

KIM RAVENAL  
Daughter of Gaylord and Magnolia. Now  
the famous Kim Ravenal of the  
New York stage

JULIE, ELLY, STEVE, SCHULTZY, AND

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE  
SHOW BOAT TROUPE

HABITUÉS OF  
OLD SOUTH CLARK STREET  
IN CHICAGO

ACTORS AND DRAMATIC CRITICS OF THE  
PRESENT THEATRICAL WORLD OF NEW YORK CITY

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"The music mounted, and I give you my word my hair stood on end, the tears came to my eyes... That was music to outlast Jerome Kern's day and mine."

*Edna Ferber*



## Jerome Kern

1885-1945

- American born, European trained
- Princess Theater musicals (1915-1917)  
in collaboration with Guy Bolton and P.G.Wodehouse
- Collaborations with Oscar Hammerstein II
  - Show Boat* (1927)
  - Music in the Air* (1932)
  - Very Warm for May* (1939)
- Collaborations with Otto Harbach
  - The Cat and the Fiddle* (1931)
  - Roberta* (1933)
- Later career as film composer
  - Swing Time* (1936)
  - Cover Girl* (1944)

## Songs from Broadway shows and film scores:

- Smoke Gets in Your Eyes
- Yesterdays
- The Song is You
- Lovely to Look At
- The Way You Look Tonight
- A Fine Romance
- All the Things You Are
- Long Ago (and Far Away)

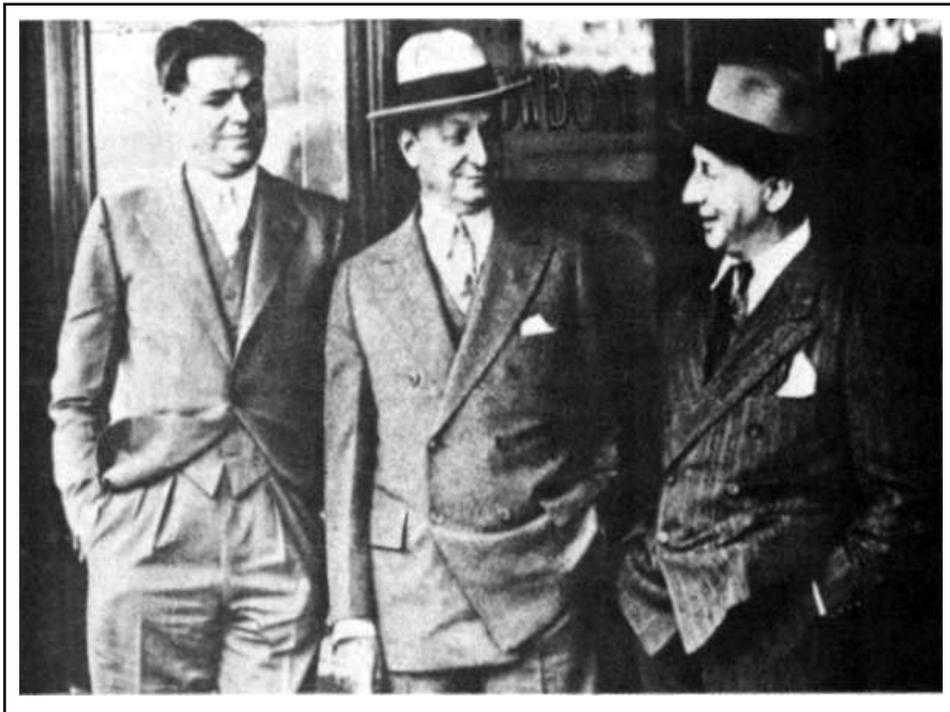
“It is my opinion that the musical numbers  
should carry the action of the play  
and should be representative of the  
personalities of the characters who sing them.”

*Jerome Kern*

## Oscar Hammerstein II

1895-1960

- Born into prominent theatrical family
- With co-lyricist/librettist Otto Harbach, collaborated with prominent composers
  - Rudolph Friml (*Rose Marie*)
  - Sigmund Romberg (*The Desert Song*)
  - Jerome Kern (*Sunny*)
- Fruitful collaboration with composer Richard Rodgers
  - Oklahoma!* (1943)
  - Carousel* (1945)
  - South Pacific* (1949)
  - The King & I* (1951)
  - The Sound of Music* (1959)
- Neighbor and mentor of Stephen Sondheim



## Florenz Ziegfeld

1867-1932

- *Ziegfeld Follies (1907-1931)*
- featured performers included Will Rogers, Eddie Cantor, Fannie Brice, Bert Williams, W.C. Fields, Ed Wynn
- Commissioned over 500 songs from composers such as Victor Herbert, Jerome Kern and Irving Berlin
- “A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody” (1919)
- Ziegfeld Theater opened in 1927,  
designed by Joseph Urban

I AM KEEN ON DOING SHOWBOAT ON ACCOUNT OF YOUR  
MUSIC BUT HAMMERSTEINS BOOK IN PRESENT SHAPE  
HAS NOT A CHANCE IF HAMMERSTEIN WILL FIX THE  
BOOK I WANT TO DO IT OR ALLOW SOMEONE ELSE TO  
COME IN IF NECESSARY IF NOT YOU RETURN THE  
ADVANCE AS YOU YOURSELF SUGGESTED IF  
HAMMERSTEIN IS WILLING TO WORK WITH ME TO GET IT  
RIGHT LET'S DO IT TOGETHER ALL WE WANT IS SUCCESS

*Telegram from Florenz Ziegfeld to Jerome Kern*

*March 3, 1927*



## Production History of *Show Boat*

- **1927 Premiere**  
Cast includes Norma Terris, Howard Marsh,  
Helen Morgan, Jules Bledsoe, Charles Winninger,  
Edna May Oliver
- **1936 Motion Picture** (Universal; B&W)  
Directed by James Whale  
Cast includes Irene Dunne, Allan Jones, Helen Morgan,  
Paul Robeson, Charles Winninger, Hattie McDaniel



- **1946 Revival**

Cast includes Jan Clayton, Buddy Ebsen,  
Charles Fredericks, Carol Bruce

*Became standard performing version for the  
next 50 years*

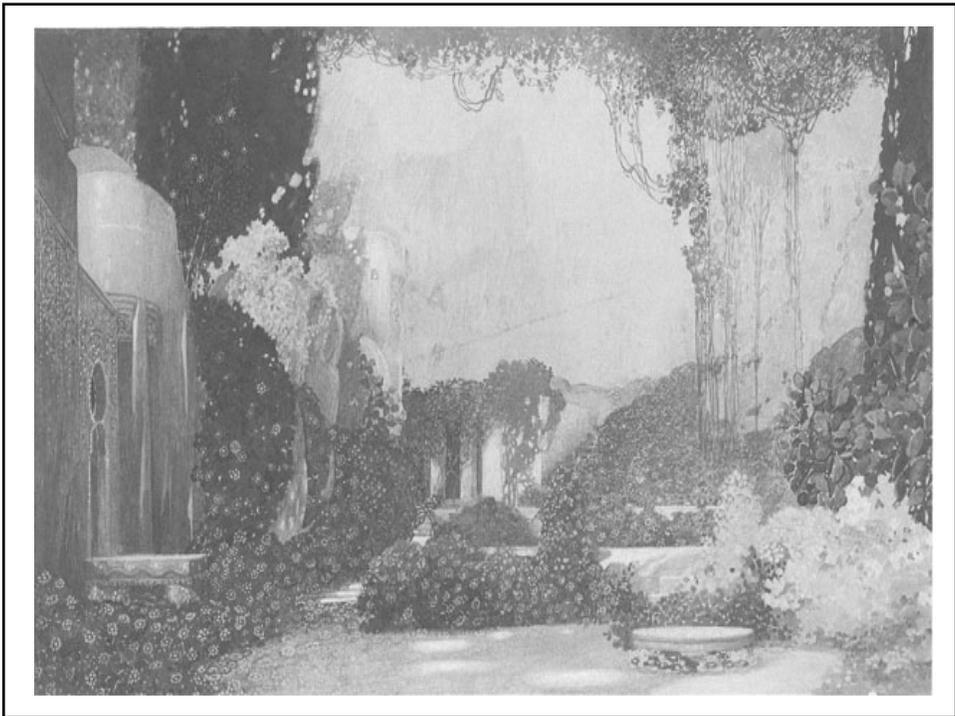
- **1951 Motion Picture (MGM)**

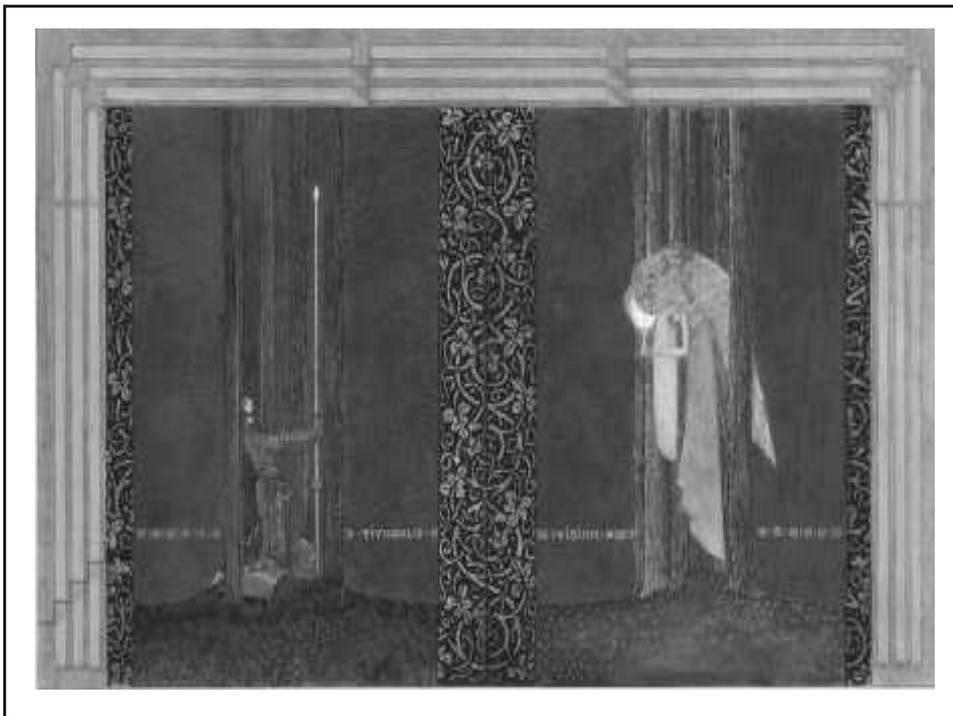
Directed by George Sidney

Cast includes Kathryn Grayson, Howard Keel,  
William Warfield, Ava Gardner, Joe E. Brown,  
Agnes Moorhead, Marge and Gower Champion



- 1954 Enters repertoire of New York City Opera
- 1977 *Show Boat: The Story of a Classic American Musical*  
by Miles Krueger
- **1988 Studio Recording** (EMI)  
Conducted by John McGlinn  
Cast includes Frederica Von Stade, Jerry Hadley,  
Teresa Stratas, Bruce Hubbard  
*Complete recording of all extant versions*
- **1994 Broadway Revival** (Toronto, 1993)  
Directed by Hal Prince  
Cast includes Mark Jacoby, Rebecca Luker, Lorette McKee,  
John McMartin, Michel Bell, Elaine Stritch, Gretha Boston  
*Version to be performed by Mercury Opera Rochester*







## “Cotton Blossom”

Cotton blossom, cotton blossom,  
Love to see you growin' free.  
When they pack you on the levee  
You're a heavy load to me!

Cotton blossom, cotton blossom,  
Love to see you growin' wild!  
On the levee you're too heavy  
For this poor black child!

*Cotton Blossom, Cotton Blossom,*  
Captain Andy's floating show!  
Thrills and laughter, concert after,  
Everybody's sure to go!

*Cotton Blossom, Cotton Blossom,*  
Captain Andy's floating show!  
Thrills and laughter, concert after,  
Get your girl and go!

## “Old Man River”

Ol' Man River  
Dat Ol' Man River  
He mus know sumpin'  
But don't say nuthin'  
He just keeps rollin',  
He keeps on rollin' along.  
He don't plant taters,  
He don't plant cotton,  
An' dem dat plants 'em  
Is soon forgotten,  
But Ol' Man River,  
He jes' keeps rollin' along.



## “Ol’ Man River” (Reprise)

New things come,  
‘N old things go  
But all things look the same to Joe--  
Wars go on, and some folks die,  
The rest forget the reason why.  
I keeps laughing  
Instead of crying,  
I must keep living  
Until I’m dying,  
But Ol’ Man River,  
He just keeps rolling along!





Mercury Opera  
Rochester

will present

**Show Boat**

at the  
Eastman Theater

on

June 1 & 2, 2007

## Audio Cuts

# Show Boat And the American Musical Stage

Rob Ferris

Track	Title	Time
01	Overture.....	5:38
02	Cotton Blossom - Niggers all work on de Mississippi.....	4:55
03	Mis'ry's Comin' Aroun' - Mis'ry's comin' aroun'.....	6:10
04	Mis'ry's Comin' Aroun' (Hal Prince Production).....	4:15
05	You Are Love - 'That you, Nola'.....	8:02
06	It's Getting Hotter in the North.....	8:59
07	Why Do I Love You.....	4:13
08	Nobody Else but Me.....	6:48

TT 49:00