

the musical examples within it are referenced clearly and directly. The introductory material in the MUSA volume also includes three plates from Ornstein's manuscript, revealing the composer's neat, spacious hand. Something of these qualities is echoed in the presentation of the MUSA score itself, which is crystal clear and easy to follow.

Broyles and Von Glahn's biography of Leo Ornstein and their critical edition of his Quintette are both welcome contributions to U.S. music scholarship. The former provides an account of Ornstein's life with a previously unavailable level of detail and demonstrates his place within the context of cultural activity in this country during the twentieth century. The latter presents us with a large-scale musical work that exemplifies Ornstein's pianistic virtuosity as well as his stylistic pluralism. It offers an insightful analysis of the music and an incisive summary of many of the key issues presented in the longer biography. Taken together these two volumes make a compelling argument for yet another—and lasting—renewal of interest in Ornstein's life and music.

Christopher Bruhn



*Journal of the Society for American Music* (2012) Volume 6, Number 3, pp. 383–389.

© The Society for American Music 2012 doi:10.1017/S1752196312000247

*Jerome Kern*. By Stephen Banfield. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006.

*Frank Loesser*. By Thomas L. Riis. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008.

*Kander and Ebb*. By James Leve. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009.

*To Broadway, To Life!: The Musical Theater of Bock and Harnick*. By Philip Lambert. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

The introduction of Yale University Press's "Broadway Masters" series in 2003 was a rewarding moment for scholars of American musical theater, many of whom had long experienced academic indifference or even hostility toward their work. At last a major scholarly press demonstrated respect for the genre and its creators, as well as for those whose interest in musicals reached beyond the latest cast changes in *Wicked*. Geoffrey Block, the general editor of the series, was an early pioneer of serious scholarship on the musical and one of only a few appropriate choices to head the project. His book on Richard Rodgers was a highly satisfying debut for the series.<sup>1</sup> Neither a biography of Rodgers nor a biography of his works, the volume focused instead on two representative musicals created with each of Rodgers's principal collaborators (*A Connecticut Yankee* and *The Boys from Syracuse* with Lorenz Hart, and *South Pacific* and *Cinderella* with Oscar Hammerstein II). Block also provided the finest, and fairest, consideration to date of Rodgers's post-Hammerstein collaborations. In short, the series was off to an impressive and, for many, a gratifying start.

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Block, *Richard Rodgers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

Nonetheless, Block's Preface to the volume and, therefore, to the series, raised some mild concerns. The goal of providing "both general reader and students" with monographs on "major figures in Broadway theater" was inarguably on track, as was the aim to produce books "written in a lively, nontechnical manner." But the identification of those "major figures" was somewhat problematic in light of the highly collaborative nature of the musical: Block clearly stated that most of the proposed volumes in the series would be about composers. Although he suggested that other creators might receive attention, his presentation of this idea raised some doubt. After noting the prevalence of composers in the series, for example, he went on to state that the series hopes "to find room for a representative sample of masterful lyricists, librettists, directors, and choreographers who also richly deserve scholarly consideration . . ." <sup>2</sup> Alas, not much room has been found so far for the non-composers: of the seven existing volumes all but two are about men who wrote only music. <sup>3</sup> The two exceptions, one on the team of John Kander and Fred Ebb and one about Frank Loesser, who wrote his own lyrics, are considered later in this review. The collaborative artists listed in Block's preface have received no consideration beyond that found in books about the composers with whom they wrote. Some of that consideration—Block on Lorenz Hart's lyrics, for instance—is very good indeed, but a book on Hart or Otto Harbach is not on the horizon from the series, and this is a major disappointment, especially considering Block's suggestion that such considerations were in the works. On the other hand, his comment about "finding room" for these artists suggested that their absence from the series should not be a surprise. Moreover, the presence of the word "masters" in the series title indicated an approach not far removed from the idea of an established canon within the genre, an approach at least as problematic as the absence of lyricists, librettists, directors, and choreographers. These collaborators are also important and, indeed, often "masterful" authors, as has been pointed out elsewhere, and they deserve inclusion in any series. <sup>4</sup>

Seven years after the appearance of the Yale series, Oxford University Press introduced its own "Broadway Legacies" series. (Disclosure: my book *South Pacific: Paradise Rewritten* launched the Oxford series. <sup>5</sup>) Oxford persuaded Block to head this series and he, as well as Oxford, has cast a much wider net. For example, the first four published books in the series include a multidisciplinary study of a single musical (my book on *South Pacific*), a long-needed assessment of the contributions of lyricist Dorothy Fields, a study of the legendary songwriting team of Jerry Bock

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ix; my added emphasis.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to Block's *Richard Rodgers*, and three of the books reviewed in this essay, the other volumes published in the Yale Broadway Masters series include John Snelson's *Andrew Lloyd Webber* (2004), William A. Everett's *Sigmund Romberg* (2007), and Larry Starr's *George Gershwin* (2010). Yale has also published works on the musical theater that are not a part of the series. See, for instance, Tim Carter, *Oklahoma! The Making of an American Musical* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Jim Lovensheimer, "Authors and Texts," in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, ed. Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 20–32.

<sup>5</sup> Jim Lovensheimer, *South Pacific: Paradise Rewritten* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

and Sheldon Harnick, and an examination of Irving Berlin's musicals.<sup>6</sup> Further, the word "legacies" suggests a broader range of interests than "masters," and readers can hopefully look forward to works about artists outside the confines of music and lyrics: a volume on producer Harold Prince, for instance, or choreographer Bob Fosse, would be two welcome possibilities. This more inclusive approach is not surprising: in 1994, well before the inception of its Broadway Legacies series, Oxford published Frederick Nolan's *Lorenz Hart: A Poet on Broadway*.<sup>7</sup>

One year before Nolan's study of Hart, Stephen Banfield published an essential text, *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals*, which placed him in the forefront of scholars writing about musical theater.<sup>8</sup> This work raised the bar for studies of the genre, and Banfield's often inventive and always-brilliant analyses of Sondheim's music and lyrics rewarded those readers with enough musical savvy to understand them. Banfield's book was unapologetically for scholars, and his serious approach is again demonstrated in his book about Jerome Kern, the second volume in the Yale series. This means that, of the books in the series, as well as of the books considered in this review, Banfield's is the least accessible to "general readers and students," as Yale describes its ideal audience. And yet its first chapter, a biographical and critical overview titled "Introducing Kern," would be quite appropriate for an initial encounter with Kern as well with critical literature about the musical. Banfield explains terms such as "diegetic" and "finaletto," for instance, as well as introducing key figures such as the influential orchestrator Robert Russell Bennett and important moments in the development of popular song. For the most part, Banfield holds off using what he refers to as his "shorthand for musical notation" (xiii), which is based on the numerical representation of scale degrees and arrows for ascending and descending intervals, and is not for the musically untrained, until later chapters.

The second chapter marks the beginning of a more focused methodology. Examining the pre-*Show Boat* musical comedies that Kern wrote, including the famed "Princess Theatre shows," Banfield delivers a veritable tour de force of musical and dramatic analysis. Whereas many considerations of musical comedy are almost condescending in the care they take to render the genre frivolous and ephemeral, Banfield, while acknowledging that musical comedies are great fun, supplies a much deeper context. Noting that, generally, "musical comedy plots reflect social change as well as social stability" (69), he goes on to reveal that, in 1920, *Sally* depicted immigrants "as a political or economic necessity" (70) and that many of the early musical comedies that featured mistaken identities, socio-economic differences, and vexed marriages often solved these problems "in terms of accommodation (or not) between classes, nationalities, and lifestyles" (71). In the midst of this

<sup>6</sup> In addition to my book, and Philip Lambert's study of Bock and Harnick reviewed here, the other two books in Oxford's Broadway Legacies series include Charlotte Greenspan, *Pick Yourself Up: Dorothy Fields and the American Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Jeffrey Magee, *Irving Berlin's American Musical Theater* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Frederick Nolan, *Lorenz Hart: A Poet on Broadway* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Banfield, *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

discussion, Banfield provides a superb overview of lyricist P. G. Wodehouse, an essential member of the Princess Theatre creative team and a key figure in the development of early twentieth-century musical comedy.

Banfield's subsequent chapters deal with specific shows (*Show Boat* prevalent among them), the collaborations with Oscar Hammerstein II, and Kern's Hollywood years. The chapter on Hammerstein is particularly impressive. Banfield notes the closely similar aesthetic goals of Hammerstein, Kern, and Harbach, and he goes so far as to suggest that the influence of each on the other was such that "we cannot assume that a breakthrough attributed to Hammerstein did not originate with one of his partners" (200). This statement should not be read as lessening Hammerstein's role in the partnership; it instead indicates the close creative relationship desired by many but attained by few. Such insights abound throughout this book, which, like his work on Sondheim, again confirms Banfield's status in the field.

The next book under consideration, Thomas L. Riis's *Frank Loesser*, was the second in the Yale series. In acknowledging Loesser's lasting contributions to the American musical stage on the penultimate page of this excellent and accessible study, Riis notes that, although Loesser might have written fewer hits than some (even if *Guys and Dolls* was, and remains, so popular that it probably should count for two or three hits) or made less of an impact on the genre than others, he stood out for at least one other important reason. From his first endeavors to his last, Loesser "took himself and his friends seriously as creative popular musicians. He avoided the rhetoric of the cultivated concert world, not because he disliked operas or classical music, but because he saw nothing wrong with popular music" (259). This egalitarian approach to the musical allowed Loesser to write highly sophisticated music—"My Time of Day" from *Guys and Dolls*, for instance, or the entire score to *The Most Happy Fella*—without worrying about its status as "high," "low," or "middlebrow" art. The importance of this observation to Riis's assessment of Loesser is notable: the title of the chapter on *The Most Happy Fella* is "Just Don't Call It Opera," and later in the chapter Riis observes that, "No musical, *even a well-knit operatic one*, could achieve significant popular approval without a handful of infectious melodies" (150; emphasis added). An "operatic" musical, Riis implies, is not an opera, nor should it aspire to be considered one. Being "just" a musical is quite all right. And countless fans of mid-1950s popular song probably did not care whether or not the source of "Standing on the Corner," a major hit song from the show, was an opera or a musical; they simply recognized it as a good tune.

Like Banfield's opening chapter, Riis's final chapter on Loesser's legacy is an outstanding overview of the man, although "legacies" might have been more to the point. Riis admirably examines Loesser not only as a gifted and accomplished composer-lyricist; he also discusses other often-overlooked aspects of Loesser's career that have an ongoing impact. In particular, the section on Loesser's business acumen is brief but to the point. Noting that Loesser "studied all facets of song-writing, including the economic and social ones" (234), Riis establishes how and why the business aspect of his career informed the artist. In short, Loesser "saw no contradiction in doing good work that made a profit" (234), and he was especially smart about protecting his art through forming his own publishing company and retaining control of his work. Moreover, he was supportive and often protective of

young talent, always preparing them for the business as well as the artistic challenges of surviving in the commercial theater. The chapter also considers Loesser as a collaborator, his relation to the media and censorship, and his enduring aesthetic. Like his entire book, Riis's final chapter is elegantly written, persuasively argued, and packed with information and observations that are found nowhere else.

James Leve's *Kander and Ebb* is the only book in the Yale series about a songwriting team, and it contains what are some of the best discussions of lyrics in the literature. Leve wastes little time establishing what he sees as an essential element of the teams' creations: he calls it "the contradictory nature of their collaboration" (19). The two men were of different temperaments and personalities (Ebb died in 2004 and is survived by Kander), and this tension propelled and often defined their work. Kander was the quieter of the two, and his music is often, as Leve calls it, "sentimental and lyrical" (19). Ebb, on the other hand, was a performer, and his lyrics are often edgy and cynical. Leve beautifully and, often, succinctly demonstrates how these opposite personalities worked together to perfect effect. Early in the book, for example, he describes in a single sentence how the collaboration worked memorably in the song "Maybe This Time": "the melody striving to go higher and higher and the forward momentum of the harmonic progression force the singer to deny the possibility of failure even though the lyric and physical exertion required to perform the song create a sense of desperation" (19). Surely this is the kind of writing Geoffrey Block had in mind when he wrote in his preface to the series' first book that he hoped the forthcoming books would "wear their scholarship lightly."<sup>9</sup> Although Leve's study is firmly rooted in deep and extensive research and analysis, it is perhaps the most accessible and, for that, the most successful volume in the series thus far.

Indeed, the clarity and restraint of Leve's musical analysis in particular is exemplary. Examples are plentiful, and readers with only modest backgrounds in music theory will understand nearly all of Leve's discussions of musical details. Yet the passages about Kander's music almost always return to considerations of Ebb's lyrics and their seemingly inevitable connection to the music. The chapter on *Cabaret* is probably the best demonstration of this approach, and the comparatively lengthy section, "The Score of Cabaret" (49–67), is where Leve shines. Deftly exploiting musical examples, descriptive musical analyses, and analyses of the lyrics, Leve provides both a history and a consideration of the score that is as good as anything in the literature. Pointing out the extensive trials and errors of the creative process, as well as musical influences such as Friedrich Hollaender's German cabaret songs, Leve not only constructs the development of the score but also shows how it demonstrates a kind of codification of Kander and Ebb's style. He spends almost as much time on the subsequent scores, including, in a chapter titled "Flops and Second Chances," those that met with less success than the now legendary score to *Cabaret*.

One other aspect of this study distinguishes it and suggests that it might appeal to an even broader audience than other books in the series. Because Kander and Ebb are

<sup>9</sup> Block, *Richard Rodgers*, ix.

or were out gay men, their work often reflects a gay sensibility. This is sometimes subtle and sometimes overt, but Leve deals with this aspect of their work with impressive even-handedness. As early as page 21, Leve refers to the team's "gay sensibilities and a desire to assert their [gay] identity." Nearly every chapter returns to this theme, from the slow evolution of Cliff's sexual identity in various versions of *Cabaret* to the explicit depiction of gayness in *The Kiss of the Spider Woman*, much of which was also contributed by librettist Terrence McNally. The latter show is singled out for its unprecedented positive treatment of a central gay character as well as its honest depiction of violent homophobia, and Fred Ebb was especially proud of its accomplishments compared to what he thought was the artificiality of earlier gay-themed shows such as *La Cage aux Folles* and *March of the Falsettos*. The recurrence of this theme, and Leve's dignified presentation of it, earn the book a special place on the bookshelf alongside other important works by John Clum and Stacy Wolf, among others, concerned with issues of gayness and musical theater.<sup>10</sup>

The final book to be considered here is the only representative of Oxford's new "Broadway Legacies" series, and it is as strong a contribution to the literature as any of the excellent Yale volumes. Phillip Lambert's *To Broadway, To Life! The Musical Theater of Bock and Harnick* is a meticulous consideration of a team that has created, among other shows, the long-running masterpiece, *Fiddler on the Roof*; *Fiorello*, one of only three musicals to win the Tony, the Pulitzer, and the New York Drama Critics Circle awards (*Rent* and *How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying* were the other two); and *She Loves Me*, a gem of a show that is among a handful of the most highly respected and appreciated musicals to sustain popularity without ever accomplishing a long run. Lambert's chronological consideration of the team's development and eventual dissolution is insightful and often reveals much about collaborators that, despite creating some of the musical theater's great achievements, never drew much attention to themselves outside the theater.

Early in the book, Lambert points out a little-known aspect of the team that explains much about why their collaboration often seems unusually seamless: Harnick, the lyricist, was a trained and accomplished musician. Although he played the violin often and well, his early interest in writing poetry and comedy sketches eventually won out and his career as a lyricist started to blossom. Meanwhile, composer Bock found early inspiration in music, although his formal studies on the piano soon gave way to "unrestricted improvisation" and eventual composition (7). Yet Bock was equally interested in writing prose and poetry, editing his high school paper and eventually publishing a few poems. Only when he became a music major at the University of Wisconsin did his calling begin to crystalize. The dual talents of each man allowed an informed and fluid collaboration, although both became masters of their respective arts. Harnick, for instance, demonstrated the influence of Oscar Hammerstein II by his skill "to work within a dramatic context, to use a song to develop themes and enrich characterization" (45), and Bock, unsurprisingly, reveals the influence of Hammerstein's partner Richard Rodgers.

<sup>10</sup> John Clum, *Something for the Boys: Musical Theater and Gay Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); and Stacy Wolf, *A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

In the second chapter, Lambert provides a consideration of Bock's early stylistic characteristics that applies to nearly all Bock's subsequent works.

When Lambert turns to Bock and Harnick's efforts for the Broadway stage, beginning with *The Body Beautiful* in 1958, he simultaneously analyzes music and lyrics. Yet he tends to use the lyrics to support the musical analysis, and, as he moves through their oeuvre, Lambert seems to lapse into a music-dominant perspective. Indeed, by his discussion of *Tenderloin* (1960), he comments that "Bock and Harnick wrote vital, interesting music" (98), when perhaps the word "score" would have been more appropriate than "music" when referring to the result of their joint collaboration.

The chapter on *Fiddler on the Roof* is the most substantial and enlightening. Lambert follows the genesis of the work through its creation and production, and he closes the chapter with an assessment of subsequent productions and of the work's lasting value. His study of the score alone is twenty-four pages long and includes a fascinating discussion of Bock's use of modes prevalent in Jewish folk music. Lambert also brings in Jack Gottlieb's analysis of American popular music's Jewish roots and argues for the influence of Yiddish as well as Russian-Jewish songs on the score.<sup>11</sup>

Only toward the end of the book, when he deals with the dissolution of the partnership, does Lambert's grip on his subject seem to slacken. For instance, although he writes of the "tensions and difficulties" (238) in the development of *The Rothschilds* (1970), he does not convincingly demonstrate why or how those tensions were any greater than those that accompanied the opening of other shows, several of which were no more successful. The mixed critical reception might be one reason, but Lambert does not explain the root of whatever "tensions" led to the separation of the two. Nonetheless, the book remains satisfying, and the chapters on *She Loves Me* (1963) and *The Apple Tree* (1966) wonderfully explore shows that are both much loved and problematic.

All four books considered here are well produced and well edited, with ample illustrations, musical examples, and in-text charts and lists. They are carefully and thoroughly documented and indexed, and all contain useful and informative appendices. Although Banfield's writing is perhaps a bit less engaging than the other three authors', it is clear and, with the exception of his musical analysis, accessible. Yet his analysis is fairly smooth sailing for trained musicians. Both the Yale and Oxford series mark a new and exciting acceptance of musical theater scholarship, and the prestige of both publishers adds respectability to the work. Students, scholars, and fans of the musical theater should be very grateful: their interest has gained a legitimacy that was denied it not very long ago.

Jim Lovensheimer

<sup>11</sup> Jack Gottlieb, *Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish: How Yiddish Songs and Synagogue Melodies Influenced Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, and Hollywood* (Albany: State University of New York in association with the Library of Congress, 2004).