

CLASSICS OF Rodgers & Hammerstein



LIVE BENEFIT CONCERT!

Join us for a fun-filled event with orchestra, chorus, and soloists. Performing music from

**OKLAHOMA! – CAROUSEL – THE SOUND OF MUSIC
SOUTH PACIFIC – THE KING AND I – STATE FAIR**

Sat., March 25, 7:30 p.m.
and

Sun., March 26, 2:30 p.m.

Historic Will Rogers Auditorium
3909 East 5th Place, Tulsa, Oklahoma



Brad Henderson



Kelly Ford



Susannah Brooks



Cathy Venable



Elliott Wulff



**WILL ROGERS STAGE
FOUNDATION™**
Nonprofit 501(c)(3) Public Charity

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Corporate Address (donations)

Will Rogers Stage Foundation, Inc.
2840 East 51st Street, Suite 205
Tulsa, OK 74105
Tax ID: 88-2246506

Physical Address

Will Rogers College High & Middle
School
3909 East 5th Place, Tulsa, OK 74112

With Gratitude

Dr. Deborah A. Gist, Superintendent
Tulsa Public Schools
Cindy Largent-Williams Principal
Nicolette "Nikki" Dennis,
Immediate Past-Principal
Will Rogers College High & Middle
School

The Will Rogers Stage Foundation, Inc., is organized under the provisions of the Oklahoma General Corporation Act and operated exclusively for charitable and educational purposes, as set forth in its articles of incorporation. It has received a Letter of Determination as a nonprofit public charity under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended. The foundation is also organized pursuant to 70 O.S. § 5-145, which encourages the formation of "local foundations" as supplements to basic school district programs publicly funded. The foundation is registered with the Oklahoma Secretary of State pursuant to the Oklahoma Solicitation of Charitable Contributions Act, Title 18, Section 552.1a of the Oklahoma Statutes.

Howdy!

Once again, we are pleased to bring another spectacular show to the greater Tulsa community, allowing the public to enjoy the splendor of this Art Deco masterpiece listed on the National Register of Historic Places, U.S. Department of the Interior.

One feature of this venue that makes it unique is the new 3-manual, 42-rank Allen theatre organ, which is providing music played by Bill Rowland while the audience arrives and leaves. We are thankful to Rudy Geissler, president of the Sooner State Chapter, American Theatre Organ Society, for their involvement in this production.

We are indebted to our sponsors of this concert, the Ron and Carole Woods Foundation and the Oxley Foundation, plus patrons Gene and Carol Ann Schmidt and Don and Anna Lea Brixey Seago. By having the resources of their donations available, we are able to bring you a live orchestra and chorus, and four outstanding soloists each with impressive credentials.

If you or someone you know is interested in sponsoring one of our next productions, please contact me: dickrisk@yahoo.com.



Richard B. Risk, JD
Executive Producer

PROGRAM

WELCOME

Dick Risk, Founder and President
Will Rogers Stage Foundation, Inc.

GREETINGS

Cindy Largent-Williams
Principal
Will Rogers College High and
Middle School
Dr. Deborah A. Gist
Superintendent
Tulsa Public Schools

CONDUCTOR

Brad Henderson

SOLOISTS

Kelly Ford, tenor
Susannah Brooks, soprano
Cathy Venable, mezzo-soprano
Elliott Wulff, baritone

PRODUCTION

Dick Risk, Executive Producer
Brad Henderson, Music Director
Karen Miller, Stage Manager
Jacci Zabienski Harris, Logistics
Robert Risk, Marketing
Jennifer Lawrence, Stage Director
Melody Garrett, Concertmaster
Jeff Elkins, Chorus Master
Ed Morse, Music Librarian
Bill Rowland, Allen Theatre Organ

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Back cover photos of school exterior and stage
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Organ prelude

National Anthem

Overture

The Carousel Waltz

State Fair

It's a Grand Night for Singing

The King and I

I Have Dreamed
We Kiss in a Shadow
I Whistle A Happy Tune
Shall We Dance?
Hello, Young Lovers

Carousel

June is Bustin' Out All Over
If I Loved You
Mister Snow
Soliloquy
You'll Never Walk Alone

Intermission (15 minutes)

Entr'acte (orchestra)

South Pacific

Younger Than Springtime
This Nearly Was Mine
A Wonderful Guy
There is Nothing Like a Dame
Some Enchanted Evening

The Sound of Music

The Sound of Music
Do-Re-Mi
My Favorite Things
Climb Every Mountain

Oklahoma!

Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'
Out of My Dreams
People Will Say We're in Love
Oklahoma

Organ postlude



WILL ROGERS STAGE FOUNDATION™

The foundation's primary purpose is as a non-profit corporation operated exclusively for charitable and educational purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code. It will achieve this by producing theatrical events by live performers or by video presentation in the auditorium of Will Rogers High School (its traditional name) and other venues for attendance by the general public.

This will provide a unique teaching opportunity for students who aspire to careers in the performing arts, as they will be able to observe professional performers, stage crews, lighting designers, and sound technicians at work. All students in general may be exposed to aspects of the performing arts that they would not normally experience in their lives. The revenue generated by these productions may fund improvements and special equipment purchases for the stage and auditorium and provide scholarships to students pursuing careers in the performing arts.

Will Rogers High School was completed in 1939, during the Great Depression, with taxpayer dollars and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is an art deco masterpiece, the crown jewel of Tulsa Public Schools. However, the public rarely gets to see the splendor of the interior because the campus is normally closed for the security and protection of students and staff members. These productions will allow for scheduled public access and will create a safe performing arts venue alternative for the Tulsa community that is free of smoking (including vaping), alcohol consumption, drug usage, and possession of weapons. The performances will enrich the public's appreciation of the performing arts.

Will Rogers Stage Orchestra & Chorus

Brad Henderson, Conductor and Music Director

As a grade schooler, Brad Henderson sang alto in the church choir in Fort Gibson, Oklahoma, where one of the members taught him to read music and sing harmony. He learned to play the piano observing his grandmother giving lessons. Once her students were gone, he would try to reproduce their material.



He joined the *Up With People* touring program as a bass player, then served as musical director, sound engineer, and show manager.

At Northeastern State University (NSU) in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, he was responsible for booking the school's Jazz Lab, handling contracts and arrangements for and backing up national jazz artists.

He also served many years as pianist/arranger and musical director for the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame, including inductions of David Gates, Patti Page, Vince Gill, and many more.

He is a worship associate at First Baptist Church in Tulsa and conducts the Oklahoma Baptist Symphony. He has arranged for other ensembles including Signature Symphony and the Bartlesville Symphony. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Education (Instrumental Music) from NSU and a Master's of Music in Composition from the University of Arkansas. He is married to Mary Kay.

ORCHESTRA

Violin 1: Melody Garrett (concertmaster), Dina Litvinova, Laura Duncan, Elena Gavrilov, Rachel Hay, Rhonda Carr; Violin 2: Izzy Potts, Haley Hanzel, Micah Neely, Nick Bashforth, Carol Lehman, Helena Singleton; Viola: Ethan Landis, Kyleigh Taylor, Sarah Carr; Cello: Erica Parker, Shelby Fields, Pam Almack; Bass: Dean Demerritt; Drum Set: George Toumayan; Percussion: Tim Brandt, Becky Tupper; Flute/Piccolo: Reid Bennett; Oboe/English Horn: Julie Mitchener; Clarinet: Christy Foster, Ed Morse (librarian); Bassoon: Dayna Smith; Horn in F: Marsha Wilson, Pei Thompson, Bruce Thompson; Trumpet: Ben Hay, Kade Goforth, Bill Gable; Trombone: Rich Fisher, Danny Arthurs, Rod Clark; Piano: Holly Sisks; Harp: Lorelei Barton.

CHORUS

Soprano: Tracy Crone, Debbie Greener, Sarah Clemmons, Dru Esau; Alto: Karen Miller, Judi Thorn, Maribeth Dean, Jill Lingle; Tenor: Jeff Elkins (chorus master), Phil Armstrong, Garrett Abel, Austin Jones; Bass: Tony Bacher, Brad Colvard, David Curry, Dick Risk.



KELLY FORD

The inspiring voice of Kelly Ford has graced the ears and souls of America's leaders in churches, concert halls, and even Walt Disney World.

Kelly served in the U.S. Navy for three years before studying Vocal Performance at Oklahoma City University with the renowned voice teacher Inez Silberg.

He was recruited by Oral Roberts University his junior year, and performed with the famed ORU TV Singers.

Kelly appeared on *Star Search* in 1992 and went on to sing with the Voices of Liberty at Disney World's EPCOT Center.

Kelly performs the National Anthem at professional sporting events, entertains at national corporate meetings, and appears as soloist with orchestras, including the Ohio Valley Symphony, Tulsa Signature Symphony, and the Bartlesville Symphony.



SUSANNAH BROOKS

Susannah Brooks loves performing! Some of her favorite roles include, Marinka in *The Bartered Bride*, Semele in Handel's *Semele*, Casilda in *The Gondoliers*, and Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*.

She has sung with Tulsa Opera, Bay Area Summer Opera Theater in San Francisco, New England Conservatory in Boston, Sound of America European Tour, Cimarron Circuit Opera Company, University of Oklahoma Opera Theater, Theater Tulsa. Soprano soloist for Signature Symphony and Chorale's *Messiah* and is a soloist for First Methodist Church in Tulsa.

Susannah holds a Bachelor's of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of Oklahoma and pursued her graduate training at the New England Conservatory in Boston with a master's in Vocal Performance. She studied with Norma Newton in New York City and Patricia Craig in Boston. Opera was her extensive study, however musical theater has always been a joy to sing.

She currently teaches private voice at the Bart Center for Music in Tulsa.

Susannah is honored to be mom to her two athletic teenage boys and wife to husband Steve.



CATHY VENABLE

Cathy Venable is a Tulsa-based mezzo and pianist once again, after touring the U.S. from 2015-2020 as associate conductor for the national tours of *The Sound of Music*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and *Frozen*. From 2003 to 2014, Cathy was rehearsal/pit pianist in New York City for 13 Broadway shows. She appeared as vocal soloist in New York with Amore Opera, St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, Church of the Incarnation, the What a Neighborhood New Composers Series, and in Tulsa with the Tulsa Philharmonic, Signature Symphony, Tulsa Oratorio Chorus, Tulsa Chorale, Council Oak Men's Chorale, and Boston Avenue Methodist Church.

Her theater credits include Maria in *The Sound of Music*, Sarah Brown in *Guys and Dolls*, Guinevere in *Camelot*, Winnifred in *Once Upon a Mattress*, and Buttercup in *HMS Pinafore*. Cathy serves as pianist for Harvard Avenue Christian Church, Tulsa Chorale, Tulsa Symphony, and Bartlesville Symphony. She received her bachelor's degree in Piano Performance from Northwestern University and her master's degree in Accompanying from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music.



ELLIOTT WULFF

A native of San Diego, California, Elliott Wulff moved to Tulsa in June of 2018, and is currently an outreach artist with Tulsa Opera. Additionally, he teaches voice lessons at Tulsa Community College, where he holds an adjunct faculty position.

His operatic roles have included Speaker in *Die Zauberflöte*, Polyphemus in *Acis and Galatea*, Kecal in *The Bartered Bride*, Dulcamara in *L'elisir d'Amore*, Captain Corcoran in *HMS Pinafore*, Figaro in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Gianni Schicchi in the opera of the same name. Elliott has also appeared with Heartland Opera Theater in Puccini's *La Boheme* in the roles of Benoît and Alcindoro. He has also been seen throughout the greater Tulsa area as a soloist and recitalist, both as a singer and pianist.

He holds a Bachelor's of Music degree in Vocal Performance and Keyboard Collaborative Arts from Chapman University, in Orange, California, and a master's in Opera Performance from Arizona State University. Elliott is a first year cantorial student at the Academy for Jewish Religion California.



State Fair was the only Rodgers and Hammerstein musical written directly for film. It opened August 30, 1945, at the Roxy Theater in New York City, introducing such popular songs as "It's A Grand Night for Singing" and "It Might as Well Be Spring," which won the Academy Award for Best Original Song.

It was a musical adaptation of the 1933 film starring Janet Gaynor and Will Rogers, itself an adaptation of the 1932 novel by Phil Stong.

Dick Haymes and Vivian Blaine were well known big band singers of the time who did their own singing. Jeanne Crain's singing voice was dubbed by Louanne Hogan.

Dana Andrews's singing voice was dubbed by radio singer and announcer Ben Gage. The studio was unaware that Andrews was a trained singer. He later explained that he didn't correct the oversight because he figured the ghost singer also needed to earn a living and he didn't want to deny his colleague employment. Ironically, despite his training, in a film career that lasted three decades, Andrews never displayed his singing voice on screen.



The King and I opened March 29, 1951, at the St. James Theatre in New York City. It was based on a 1944 novel by Margaret Landon called *Anna and the King of Siam* about a true episode in Siamese history.

When it was made into a movie in 1946 starring Rex Harrison and Irene Dunne, Gertrude Lawrence, saw it and decided she wanted to play the part of Anna in a musical adaptation. The prospect of writing a musical for the legendary actress was irresistible to Rodgers and Hammerstein.

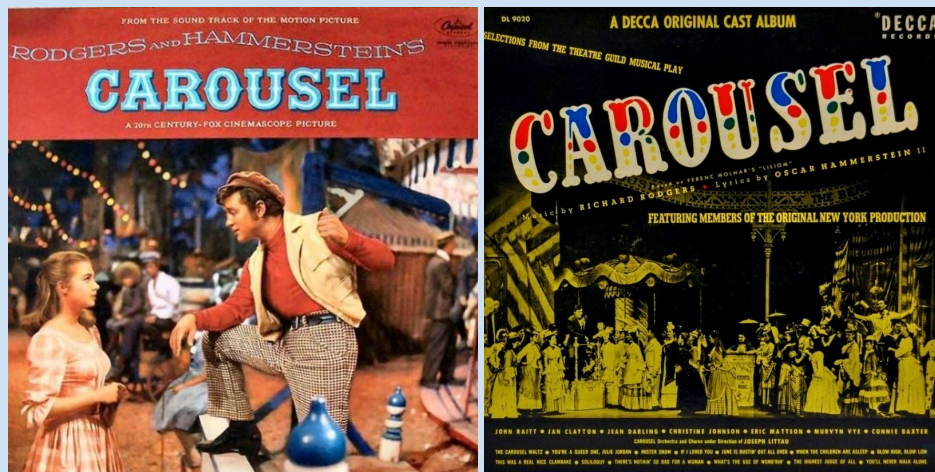
The show played for nearly three years in New York, 1,246 performances, and Lawrence remained in it until her terminal illness forced her to leave.

At his audition, Yul Brynner's Oriental appearance and regal bearing were impressive. "*There's our King,*" Hammerstein told his partner. Rodgers agreed.

Brynner won two Tony Awards for his Broadway role, and later an Academy Award for Best Actor for the film adaptation.

Reprising his Broadway role in the movie, Brynner pushed for Deborah Kerr to be cast as Anna. As she had done for other non-singing stars in other films, Marni Nixon dubbed Kerr's singing in the film,





Carousel opened April 19, 1945, at the Majestic Theatre in New York City. It ran 890 performances, closing on May 24, 1947. It was based on Ferenc Molnár's 1909 play, *Liliom*, as adapted by Benjamin F. Glazer. It was the second collaboration by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. Theresa Helburn, who had suggested the story idea for *Oklahoma!*, came up with the idea for making a musical of *Liliom*, which the Theatre Guild had produced successfully in 1921.

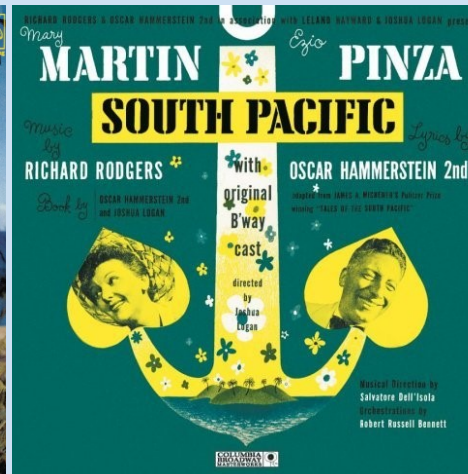
The story revolves around carousel barker Billy Bigelow, whose romance with millworker Julie Jordan comes at the price of both their jobs. He participates in a robbery to provide for Julie and their unborn child. After it goes tragically wrong and Billy is killed, he is given a chance to make things right. A secondary plot line deals with millworker Carrie Pipperidge and her romance with ambitious fisherman Enoch Snow.

The original cast included John Raitt (Billy), Jan Clayton (Julie), Jean Darling (Carrie), Eric Mattson (Enoch Snow), Christine Johnson (Nettie Fowler), Murvyn Vye (Jigger), Bambi Linn (Louise) and Russell Collins (Starkeeper).

After closing on Broadway, the show went on a national tour for two years. It played for five months in Chicago alone, visited 20 states and two Canadian cities, covered 15,000 miles, and played to nearly two million people. The touring company had a four-week run at New York City Center in January 1949.

At first, Rodgers and Hammerstein were not fond of Helburn's proposal, thinking *Liliom* too tragic. They solved that problem by changing the ending. When Molnár visited a rehearsal of *Carousel*, the duo feared he wouldn't like the liberties they had taken with the story. But, Molnár was delighted, especially with the new ending. The original setting of *Liliom* was Budapest, which was thought unsuitable for *Carousel*. New Orleans was considered, and *Liliom* would have been written as a Creole, but Rodgers came up with the idea setting it as a coastal town in 1873 Maine, with clambakes, lobster pots, and a salty sea breeze. And, of course a carnival with a carousel run by Mrs. Mullin, a "painted woman."

The 1956 movie starred Gordon MacRae as Billy and Shirley Jones as Julie, both of whom had also co-starred in *Oklahoma!*, released just a few months earlier.



South Pacific opened in Broadway's Majestic Theatre April 7, 1949, and ran for 1,925 performances. It was the third collaboration of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. Unlike *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel* before it, which were adaptations of books. James Michener's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Tales of the South Pacific*, provided the inspiration for an original play. Hammerstein and director Joshua Logan used some of Michener's characters and incidents but added plots and created situations of their own, crafting a new story of drama, romance, and comedy. *South Pacific* takes place during World War II on an island in the South Pacific, where a detachment of Navy Seabees is stationed. A dangerous reconnaissance mission on Japanese forces provides the drama.

The play's romance involves two couples. An attractive young Navy nurse, Nellie Forbush, and a middle aged French planter, Emile de Becque, living in exile and whose late wife, a native, had borne his two children, fell in love. When Nellie realizes her planter is the father of the two native children she had come to adore, she doubts she can accept her racial differences with the children as their step-mother. In the other romance, a young Marine lieutenant, Joseph Cable, finds love with an even younger native girl, Liat, whose mother is an old woman who lives on a nearby island. Bloody Mary, as she was nicknamed by the Seabees, often visits the camp to sell local souvenirs such as grass skirts, shrunken heads, and boars teeth to the sailors. When Cable realizes their differences in race and background, he refuses to marry Liat. He decries the injustice of racial prejudice, "It's not born in you! It happens *after* you're born." The underlying theme in these two love stories was bold and controversial for its time.

The antics of the Seabees provide comedy with their entrepreneurship. They offered a rustic shower for the nurses, ran a laundry service, and made "souvenirs" for Bloody Mary to sell to unsuspecting troops.

The casting of the famous Metropolitan Opera baritone, Ezio Pinza, and Mary Martin, an established star of the stage, was a first for Rodgers and Hammerstein, as both *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel* had opened with no stars. The 1958 film cast movie star Mitzi Gaynor as Nellie and Italian actor Rossano Brazzi as Emile, whose singing was dubbed without credit by Metropolitan Opera bass Georgio Tozzi.



The Sound of Music premiered at New Haven's Shubert Theatre where it played an eight-performance tryout in October and November 1959 before another short tryout in Boston. The musical then opened on Broadway at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre on November 16, 1959, moved to the Mark Hellinger Theatre on November 6, 1962, and closed on June 15, 1963, after 1,443 performances.

The *Sound of Music* is a musical with music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, and a book by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse. It is based on the 1949 memoir of Maria von Trapp, *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers*. Set in Austria on the eve of the Anschluss in 1938 (Annexation of Austria into the German Reich), the musical tells the story of Maria, who takes a job as governess to a large family while she decides whether to become a nun.

The original cast included Mary Martin as Maria, Theodore Bikel as Captain Georg von Trapp, Patricia Neway as Mother Abbess, Kurt Kasznar as Max Detweiler, Marion Marlowe as Elsa Schröder, Brian Davies as Rolf, and Lauri Peters as Liesl. The show tied for the Tony Award for Best Musical with *Fiorello!* Other awards included Martin for Best Actress in a Musical, Neway for Best Featured Actress, Best Scenic Design (Oliver Smith) and Best Conductor and Musical Director (Frederick Dvorchak).

The musical premiered in London's West End at the Palace Theatre on May 18, 1961, and ran for 2,385 performances. It was directed by Jerome Whyte and used the original New York choreography, supervised by Joe Layton, and the original sets designed by Oliver Smith.

On March 2, 1965, 20th Century Fox released a film adaptation of the musical starring Julie Andrews as Maria Rainer and Christopher Plummer as Captain Georg von Trapp. It was produced and directed by Robert Wise with the screenplay adaptation written by Ernest Lehman. The film won five Oscars, including Best Picture. Two songs were written by Rodgers specifically for the film, "I Have Confidence" and "Something Good." Oscar Hammerstein died of stomach cancer nine months after the Broadway premiere. *The Sound of Music* was the last musical written by Rodgers and Hammerstein.



Oklahoma! opened on Broadway March 31, 1943, at the St. James Theatre. It ran 2,248 performances, which set the record for years to come.

A combination of fortunate circumstances brought composer Richard Rodgers and lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II together. The Theatre Guild in New York was in financial trouble, and its producers thought a musical show might be the answer to their problem. They thought the Lynn Riggs play *Green Grow the Lilacs*, which the Guild had produced in 1931, could be made into a successful musical. When Rodgers was contacted, he expressed interest but concern that his partner and lifelong friend, Lorenz “Larry” Hart, was declining in health from alcoholism and wouldn’t be able to do it. Hart urged Rodgers to find another lyricist. Meanwhile, Hammerstein had also been considering the musical possibilities of *Green Grow the Lilacs*, but his collaborator, Jerome Kern, wasn’t interested. Rodgers and Hammerstein met for lunch in New York City one day in 1942 to discuss what eventually became *Oklahoma!* They clicked immediately.

Hammerstein preferred to write a complete lyric before it was set to music, and Rodgers preferred to set completed lyrics to music. But, in his previous collaborations with Hart, Rodgers had always written the music first, since the unfocused Hart needed something on which to base his lyrics. Hammerstein’s previous collaborators, including Rudolf Friml, Vincent Youmans, and Kern, all wrote music first, for which Hammerstein then wrote lyrics. The role reversal in the Rodgers and Hammerstein partnership permitted Hammerstein, who also wrote the book, to craft the lyrics into a fundamental part of the story so that the songs could amplify and intensify the story instead of diverting it.

One important innovation in *Oklahoma!* was the use of a ballet in the development of plot and character. The 15-minute dream ballet, directed by Agnes de Mille, was an integral part of the play.

The first title given to the show was *Away We Go!* which opened for out-of-town-tryouts in New Haven’s Shubert Theatre on March 11, 1943. Two significant changes made before the show went to Broadway were the addition of the show-stopping musical number, “Oklahoma,” and the decision to retitlle the musical after that number, adding the exclamation point to the show’s title.

How 'Oklahoma' Became State Song

By Dick Risk

Hardly a soul alive has not heard Oklahoma's state song. But very few Oklahomans know how we got it.

In the spring of 1943, a show opened on Broadway that would change forever the way Broadway musicals were written. Two well-established musicians in their own right had collaborated for a musical adaptation of a play called *Green Grow the Lilacs*, written by Claremore, Oklahoma, native Lynn Riggs while studying in France on a Guggenheim fellowship. For the first time the songs fit the story line.

Richard Rodgers, who had teamed with Lorenz Hart for many successful shows, wrote the music. Oscar Hammerstein II, a Broadway veteran who had teamed with Sigmund Romberg and others, wrote the lyrics. This show became the longest consecutive running musical in the history of theater, American or anywhere in the world. It ran for 2,212 consecutive performances on Broadway. It has been made into a movie, and it continues to be one of the most popular shows performed by professional and amateur theater groups throughout the world.

Tunes from *Oklahoma!* were hummed all over the world in the 1940s and reached their peak of popularity in Paris, France, while that city was being liberated from the Nazis. In the liberating forces were many Oklahomans, proudly telling about the greatness of their home state.

George Nigh, a high school teenager in McAlester, Oklahoma, listening to the radio in bed on a Saturday night in 1943, heard the title song performed as the number one song on the "Lucky Strike Hit Parade," a popular weekly show of its era. He was enraptured by it, thinking it would be the perfect state song to counter the disparaging "Okie" image created by John Steinbeck in *Grapes of Wrath*. Little did he know then that he would be the person to make that happen 10 years later.

Now the state already had an official song, adopted in 1935. School children for years had been taught the words of "Oklahoma (A Toast)." I can still recall the lyrics:



Native Oklahoman Ridge Bond with his leading lady on Broadway "watch a hawk makin' lazy circles in the sky."



Playwright Lynn Riggs



"Songwriters write songs for people to sing and nothing makes them happier than to know that their song is being sung. Mr. Rodgers and I are very proud that our song has been adopted by your State. Play it and sing it loud and long and often!"

— Oscar Hammerstein II

*Oklahoma, Oklahoma, fairest daughter of the west.
Oklahoma, Oklahoma, 'tis the land I love the best.
We have often sung her praises
But we have not told the half.
So, I give you Oklahoma, 'tis a toast we all can quaff.*

Young State Representative George Nigh finally had his chance. He introduced a bill to realize his dream. Who would want to give up such enthralling lyrics? At least one member of the legislature opposed doing away with the old song, and he even walked around the floor of the House with a tear in his eye as he sang the old song. It would be an uphill battle to replace such poetry with a song whose lyrics begin:

*Brand new state, brand new state, gonna treat you great.
Gonna give you barley, carrots and pertaters.
Pasture fer the cattle, spinach and termayters.
Flowers on the prairie where the June bugs zoom.
Plen'y of air, and plen'y of room,
Plen'y of room to swing a rope.
Plen'y of heart and plen'y of hope.*

Listen to
Governor
Nigh's
account of
song
adoption.



George Nigh

Nigh had a plan. He got the vote delayed one day. Another fellow from his hometown, a guy named Ridgely McClure "Ridge" Bond, had gone to Broadway and had taken over the lead role of Curly in the show *Oklahoma!* in the tradition of such notables as Alfred Drake, John Raitt, and Howard Keel. Bond eventually played the role of Curly some 2,500 times on Broadway, in the National Touring company and in Europe until the show closed. He settled in Tulsa. His hometown friend called upon him to come to the state capitol and sing, along with the Oklahoma College for Women's Glee Club, the title song from the Rodgers and Hammerstein hit, *Oklahoma!* The plan worked, and on May 11,

1953, Oklahoma had both a new state song and state anthem.

Nigh went on to try his hand at band leading. On the evening of the day his bill was adopted, he went back home to where he taught history at McAlester High School and talked the band director into handing over the baton during the band's annual spring concert, where he conducted the first public performance of the Broadway show tune in its official status as Oklahoma's state song. He later served four terms as lieutenant governor and two terms as governor.



WILL ROGERS STAGE

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