



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1985 Volume II: American Musical Theater

Introduction

This seminar dealt with ten musicals that exemplify the development of this distinctively American theatrical form. In assessing the qualities of each musical, we compared it with its literary or dramatic source. Our common reading and listening included *Showboat* (together with Edna Ferber's novel), *Porgy and Bess* (with the Heywards' *Porgy*), *Oklahoma!* (with Lynn Riggs's *Green Grow the Lilacs*), *Street Scene* (with Elmer Rice's play), *Guys and Dolls* (with Damon Runyon's stories), *Kiss Me, Kate* (with Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*), *My Fair Lady* (with Shaw's *Pygmalion*), *Candide* (with Voltaire's tale), *Fiddler on the Roof* (with Sholom Aleichem's stories), and *Cabaret* (with Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* and John Van Druten's *I Am a Camera*).

The curriculum units developed by the Fellows moved in three quite different directions—and involved more than the usual amount of collaborative work. Four teachers at Conte Arts Magnet—Diana Doyle in Humanities, Janet Melillo in Drama, Mattie Long in Music, and Donna Lombardi in Dance—shaped complementary units that might culminate in a shared theatrical presentation. Two English teachers at Roberto Clemente oriented their units toward concerns with individual counselling, Rosemary Hamilton focusing on ways to help students cope with loss or grief and Elizabeth Lawrence focusing on the need to develop self-esteem in the special education classroom. And two teachers at Sheridan—Richard Canalori in History and Joyce Listro in English—shaped the collaborative unit that introduces students to American history by way of the musical theater. In their various ways, these units suggest the curricular possibilities of what is in some respects the liveliest sector of American theater.

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