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Building from the Structure of the Golden Age Musical: Spring of '45

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Abstract

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Building on previous research on the Golden Age of American musicals, this work expands both the research and analysis tied to the structure of classic musicals. In addition, this thesis furthers the use of these structural elements and demonstrates how they can be adapted and used in contemporary musicals through the working draft of a musical.

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Building from the Structure of the Golden Age Musical

Margaret Higginbotham

While the Golden Age of musical theater largely sits between the 1940s and 60s, both the works and their legacy are just as prominent as ever in today's theatrical world. With the dynamic *Oklahoma!* revival that garnered historic Tony Award wins (Daniel Fish's 2019 production won the tony for Best Musical Revival against its sole competitor, *Kiss Me, Kate* and Ali Stroker was the first wheelchair-user to win Best Featured Actress for her Ado Annie) and the lively 2019 *Kiss Me, Kate* and 2017 *Hello Dolly!* productions that left Broadway to sell out theaters all over America, Golden Age musicals have become mainstays in the musical theater canon from community theaters to professional companies and everything in between. Not only are these productions maintaining their influence through recurring stage productions, but the structural elements developed during these blossoming years of musical theater are still seen in new works of today. With these foundations, including everything from thematic songs (such as the conditional love song or the worldbuilding number) to archetypal characters (like the Earth Woman or the Comedic Relief characters that are generally followed in the B plot of a show) the modern day influence of Golden Age shows is evident – and can be seen through elements developed, transformed, and popularized in the musicals *Oklahoma!*, *Brigadoon*, *Kiss Me, Kate*, and *She Loves Me*—these shows will be analyzed throughout the following.

While the 1940s is considered the start of the Golden Age of musicals, centered around the popularization and increased creation of the integrated musical, the journey to this artistic boom begins in the late 20s. Premiering on Broadway on December 27th, 1927, *Show Boat* is widely regarded as the first successful example of the integrated musical. Celebrated for including three-dimensional characters, an epic narrative, and a good score that infuses itself with the book, Kern and Hammerstein's masterpiece is similarly famous for its lack of attention to the unities. In fact, it is partially this choice to let the plot span wide portions of the characters'

lives that assists the very three-dimensionality of Magnolia and Ravenal (two of the main characters).

While *Show Boat* found a great deal of success—running for 572 performances—many of its qualities can be found in similar works of the time. The most notable of these is *Deep River* written by Frank Harling and Laurence Stallings, produced by Arthur Hopkins. The show had a short run, only lasting at the Imperial Theater from October 4th – October 30th, 1926.

Perhaps earlier than any other advanced musical. . . *Deep River* coalesced highbrow elements in an artistically enlightened collaboration. . . Like *Show Boat*, Stallings's libretto for *Deep River* had a colorful historical southern setting (and 1835 New Orleans ball), white and black characters, interracial romances (between Creoles and quadroons), and melodrama...¹

Perhaps the difference between *Show Boat*'s long running success and *Deep River*'s blip on the musical theater radar lies in *Show Boat*'s inclusion of “showbiz hoofing”² and their divergence in endings. While *Deep River* ends in tragedy, Kern and Hammerstein's musical is concluded by seeing the main love interests (Magnolia and Ravenal) reunited after 20 years and still just as in love as ever. These are not the only options for the differences the shows saw in success, however. Jerome Kerns and Oscar Hammerstein had experience writing shows such as *Show Boat*, and were undisputed definers of the developing form, whereas *Deep River* was Stallings's one and only attempt at the style. While both shows contained elements of race relations, *Show Boat* also focused on a more mainstream love story that appealed to audiences. Conversely, *Deep River* focused on the Creole culture found in Louisiana, with elements of Voodoo, which was harder for its audience to relate to. Finally, Kern and Hammerstein included

¹ Mark N. Grant, *The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical*, (New Hampshire, Northeastern University Press, 2004), 60.

² *Ibid.*, 60.

popular music of the time that pleased audiences. This American sound (such as jazz) brought with it a vital familiarity, and perhaps contributed to its success.

Still, the question of what made *Show Boat* such a success compared to the competitors of its time is one discussed today, and one that *The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical* author Mark N. Grant must turn to a fellow musical theater critic and historian to answer:

In the words of Cecil Smith, *Show Boat* was and is by consensus the first American musical “to achieve a dramatic verisimilitude that seemed comparable to that of the speaking stage.” . . . prior to *Show Boat*, librettos dispensed not only with the classical unities of time, place, and action but with playwriting itself: logic, coherence, and narrative were optional.³

Ultimately much of the show’s innovations are attributed to Oscar Hammerstein II, who struggled after *Show Boat* was produced. While he continued writing throughout the years, (*Sweet Adeline* in 1929, *Three Sisters* in 1934, etc.) Hammerstein didn’t find *Show Boat*’s level of success again until he partnered with Richard Rodgers on *Oklahoma!*, which opened in 1943.

If *Show Boat* is considered the first successful attempt at an integrated musical, what then is the integrated musical exactly? According to Scott McMillin in his work *The Musical as Drama* he states,

The theory is that of the “integrated musical,” according to which all elements of a show – plot, character, song, dance, orchestration, and setting – should blend together into a unity, a seamless whole. . . This is the great secret of the well-integrated musical play. It is not so much the method as a state of mind or rather a state for two minds, an attitude of unity.⁴

It is worth noting that while the abbreviated definition of the integrated musical usually refers to simply a merging of the music and book (or more specifically, the book and lyrics), this integration also refers to the notated music itself. The analysis of music often reveals meaning or thematic design echoed throughout the piece; in *Show Boat*, we see this integration through the

³ Ibid., 62-3.

⁴ Scott McMillin, *The Musical as Drama*, (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2006), 1.

inclusion of situational specific songs. As one character explains to another that sometimes you can't choose who you love and you certainly can't stop loving them, she sings, "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," and as the main romantic couple makes plans to marry at the end of Act 1, they sing an appropriate love song: "You Are Love." This can be seen in *Oklahoma!* as the waltz figures can be seen throughout the show. In fact, Rodgers and Hammerstein's groundbreaking musical serves as an example of a number of integrated parts, with its iconic combination of lyrics, score, book, and dance.

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein first began their famous collaboration when they independently decided to work on transforming *Green Grow the Lilacs* by Lynn Riggs into a musical and their previous collaborators (Jerome Kerns for Hammerstein and Lorenz Hart with Rodgers) fell through for various reasons. While this project may have been their first together, it certainly wasn't the end of their partnership – in fact, it launched what has since been deemed The Rodgers and Hammerstein Revolution: "It has become something of a commonplace for critics and writers on musicals to refer to the "Rodgers and Hammerstein Revolution. . . Still, it is no exaggeration to call 1943 to 1959 "The Rodgers and Hammerstein Years."⁵

The influence that solidified these two previously successful artists as musical theater legends is Lynn Riggs's stage play, *Green Grow the Lilacs*. First staged in 1931 and following the love triangle between Curly McClain, Laurey Williams, and Jeeter Fry, Riggs's piece only ran for 64 performances at the Guild Theater before catching the attention of both Rodgers and Hammerstein. Despite his prolific writing career, which included a multitude of poems, one-act plays, and 21 full-length dramas, Riggs has largely since faded into a footnote found in playbills and soundtracks featuring *Oklahoma!* Despite this overshadowing, there has been a recently

⁵ John Bush Jones, *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theatre*, (New Hampshire, Brandeis University Press, 2003), 140.

revived interest in his work, and he will always be known as the creator whose work launched the collaboration that changed the face of musical theater forever.

Stanley Green sums up the 1943 premiere of *Oklahoma!* in his book *Broadway Musicals: Show by Show*:

The simple tale is mostly concerned with whether the decent Curly McClain (Alfred Drake) or the menacing Jud Fry (Howard Da Silva) will take Laurey Williams (Joan Roberts) to the box social. Though in a fit of pique, Laurey chooses Jud, she really loves Curly and they soon make plans to marry. At their wedding, there is a joyous celebration of Oklahoma's impending statehood, Jud is accidentally killed in a fight with Curly, and the newlyweds prepare to ride off in their surrey with the fringe on top.⁶

Oklahoma! got its first run on Broadway at the St. James Theater in 1943, for 2, 212 performances. Produced by the Theater Guild, Rodgers and Hammerstein were joined by fellow collaborator Agnes de Mille as the show's choreographer. De Mille, who is a formidable name in musical theater in her own right, pioneered the integration of the dream ballet into this new era of musicals. While dream ballets themselves were not new, their integration – just like many other elements – into the show as a whole had largely been untouched or unsuccessful until this production. Speaking on this iconic dance number, Ethan Mordden writes in his book *Beautiful Mornin': The Broadway Musical in the 1940s*, "Here at last was the reason all those ballet people had been choreographing musicals: to do in dance what the script and score could not do in words and music."⁷

In the same vein, Mordden also notes, "For once, in "Many a New Day," the dance following the vocal was not decoration but extrapolation, the women styling in movement the feminist independence that Laurey had been singing about."⁸ This statement is important for two

⁶ Stanley Green, *Broadway Musicals Show by Show*, (Wisconsin, Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2014), 119.

⁷ Ethan Mordden, *Beautiful Mornin' The Broadway Musical in the 1940s*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999), 77.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

reasons: the first being the acknowledgement that not only was this dance seamlessly woven into the fabric of the show, but it actually took the initiative to further the plot, letting the audience watch in physical form Laurey's mind change as she settles on not needing the love of a man—a change that launches the audience in to Act Two. Mordden's second observation of note is the feminist independence found in the piece. Throughout this dance the audience notes a persistent dancer who chooses to dance by herself, in her own way. This is indicative of Laurey's "radical" independent thinking for her time, as she touts the virtues of not focusing solely on relationships. Agnes de Mille herself believed that showcasing a choice that Laurey makes of her own volition, which ultimately lets her decide her own fate, is a feminist statement for the time in which this influential piece was choreographed. This forward thinking, combined with her foresight to rethink the way dance was traditionally included in a show, propelled both de Mille and *Oklahoma!*'s integrated dance into musical theater canon.

Another notable integrated element of this 1943 musical is the lyrics. One of their primary distinctions is that they are both situational and conversational, Mordden also addresses this aspect in his book: "The conversational nature of such first lines as "I got to Kansas City on a Frid'y", "Sposin' 'at I say 'at yer lips're like cherries", "You'll have to be a little more standoffish" is something that only Hammerstein of all lyricists ever employed before, and sparingly, in *Oklahoma!* he exploited it."⁹ Part of what makes these lyrics so strikingly conversational and allows them to carry this specific familiarity is the dialect employed. Hammerstein leans into the regional accent of Oklahoma during the time, grounding it in the setting and bringing in a relatable, authentic feel—allowing this use of dialect to become one of the governing forces of the show. Mordden mentions the beginning of the song "Kansas City". In

⁹ Ibid., 72-3.

this number, Will Parker (a fellow cowboy featured in the show's B plot) shares his adventures with the townsfolk around him, as if telling a story. Will recounts the various marvels he saw in the city, "I counted twenty gas buggies goin' by theirsels / Almost ev'ry time I tuk a walk," and interacts with his peers just as one would in a conversation, responding as they implore, "What next?" with more descriptions of his adventures in Kansas City. In this way, the lyrics are laid out as if Will simply had a conversation that happened to be set to music, automatically imbuing the song with a familiarity and authenticity that flows throughout the entire piece and serves to integrate the lyrics with the dialogue completely. This simultaneously enhances the excitement Will displays.

Not only are the lyrics throughout *Oklahoma!* conversational, they are also highly specific to the time and place of the musical. One excellent example of this is Curly's simultaneously boastful and tender number "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top." Here the audience listens with Laurey as Curly describes the carriage he would rent to take Laurey to the picnic, listing highly specific details that carry with them an indication of the setting such as "The wheels are yeller, the upholstery's brown, / The dashboards genuine leather, / With isinglass curtains y' can roll right down." Today's audience doesn't need to know that isinglass curtains were a semi-transparent sheet that could be attached as a form of weather protection for a surrey's passengers for them to understand this reference is to some type of extra-feature window that would have cost Curly a pretty penny. This cowboy from the early 1900s is trying to impress the beautiful young woman next to him, and thanks to the casual specificity of Hammerstein's lyrics, listeners of all times can understand that intent. This specificity, too, is another notable contribution of a Rogers and Hammerstein element that *Oklahoma!* brought into the mainstream—this specificity isn't seen, for example, in the previous *Show Boat*. In contrast to

the 1943 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, *Show Boat* employs general lyrics: “Why do I love you? / Why do you love me? / You’re a lucky boy, I am lucky, too.” (*Show Boat*, “Why Do I Love You”)

While *Oklahoma!* was busy establishing trends in lyric writing and dance, it also made time to explore what would soon become several character archetypes seen throughout musical theater. Included among these different types of characters are that of the Earth Woman, the Young Lovers, and the Comic Relief. The Earth Woman is defined as the wise elderly woman, usually unwed and much older than the main romantic interests of the show, who uses her sagacity to guide the main characters. This character can sometimes include a mystical or enigmatic element, although this feature develops after the Golden Age. The Earth Woman in *Oklahoma!* is Laurey’s Aunt Eller, who sees that Curly and Laurey are in love before anyone else in the show – including the lovers themselves. She is also a proponent of facing the difficulties in life head on and being “hardy” as she tells Laurey, “You can’t deserve the sweet and tender in life unless’n you’re tough.”¹⁰

The next archetype found in *Oklahoma!* is the Young Lovers. Usually slotted as the romantic interests in the A plot, the Young Lovers hold the highest stakes and face the biggest obstacles on their journey to find love with each other – and they almost always (certainly during the Golden Age) find their happy ending. In fact, during the 40s to 60s, it was very rare for the Young Lovers to not find happiness. More specifically within the Young Lovers is the Ingenue. The Ingenue is the young and beautiful woman that serves as the romantic ideal for her counterpart, and sometimes for the villain as well. She embodies innocence, femininity, romantic

¹⁰ Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, *Oklahoma!*, (California, Twentieth Century Fox, 1999).

desire, and matches the cultural ideals during the time in which the show was written (consequently, this part is almost always a soprano—sometimes even operatic as in *Oklahoma!*).

The last archetype *Oklahoma!* includes is that of the Comic Relief. Found in the B plot of a show (Will Parker and Ado Annie), this character (or in *Oklahoma!*'s case, couple) injects levity and humor in between the tension and drama of the A plot. As with the couples in *Kiss Me, Kate* (discussed below) the humorous element can extend into the main couple, but the romance cannot be reciprocated in the comedic characters – the comedy is their romance. They are genuine in their humor, and an element of the comedy surrounding them usually encompasses their own personal obstacles, which are never funny to them but only to the audience: “In *Oklahoma!* Ado Annie’s certainty that something terrible in her nature prevents her refusing a man’s attempts to kiss her is, to her, a serious matter.”¹¹ Ado Annie is also a great example of how a Comic Relief female can vocally oppose the Ingenue, adding more texture and musical variance to a show. Ado Annie is an alto, and a harsh, untrained one at that. She isn’t meant to have a lovely, smooth, and lofty voice like her friend Laurey. Instead, the Comic Relief female often has a more “character” voice, which can be sharp, belt-y, and more earnest than technique-heavy. This character or characters balance out the high stakes struggle of the lead characters, and often interact with the main plot as bystanders to or supporters of the central action.

Finally, Rodgers and Hammerstein’s musical also includes the now hallmark A plot and B plot structure. The A plot follows a young, beautiful couple as they navigate their love story. This journey is often dramatic – sometimes tragic – but ultimately ends happily and traditionally, and serves as the main plot for the show. In *Oklahoma!*'s case, the A plot tracks the relationship

¹¹ Lehmen Engel, *The Making of a Musical: Creating Songs for the Stage*, (New York, MacMillan Publishing, 1977), 57.

of Laurey and Curly as they go from denying their love to getting married and ushering Oklahoma into its newfound statehood. But with every A plot comes a B plot to serve as the lighter, comedic moments in between the romantic moments of strife. Usually following a second couple with lower-stake problems, Will Parker and his fiancé Ado Annie momentarily lighten the mood with songs like “I Cain’t Say No” and “All Er Nothin’” (Green describes this as “a comic secondary plot. . .with a romantic triangle involving man-crazy Ado Annie Carnes. . . cowboy Will Parker. . . and peddler Ali Hakim”¹²). In the case of *Oklahoma!*, this secondary plot serves to parallel the main romantic entanglement—occasionally even dipping into parody through Ado Annie’s caricature-like representation of Laurey’s confused sexual awakening.

It’s worth noting as well that the concept of two or more contrasting plots making up the plot of a single show is not a new concept founded for the Golden Age. This idea of a multi-tiered plot can be seen in Shakespeare’s day, the era of commedia dell’arte, and beyond. However, these musicals borrow from a storytelling tradition that is hundreds of years old and solidify these many stories into a packaged, parallel plot structure. A plot format seen in shows to this day, the two-plot structure comes with many variations fleshed out throughout the Golden Age, popularized by the explosive success of the first “official” Golden Age musical, *Oklahoma!*

Another influential musical from the Golden Age that showcases these new and evolving musical elements is *Brigadoon* by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, inspired by the combining elements from the German myth Germelshausen, a town that reappears once every 100 years after being cursed to sink down into the Earth, and the Scottish landmark Brig O’ Doon, a real bridge featured in a poem by Robert Burns. While these two mythic elements ground the plot of *Brigadoon*, it is clear something else influenced Lerner and Loewe while

¹² Green, *Show by Show*, 119.

writing this piece: “*Brigadoon*, interestingly enough, was the work of men who had failed and dialed will they went into the Rodgers and Hammerstein camp.”¹³ Widely accepted as this duo’s response to *Oklahoma!*, *Brigadoon* has several interesting connections to the former.

The biggest connection outside of *Brigadoon* serving as a response and counter proposal to *Oklahoma!* is choreographer Agnes de Mille. Once again choreographing a ballet (as she did in *Oklahoma!* with the piece “Laurey Makes Up Her Mind”—albeit *Brigadoon*’s piece does not take place in a dream, instead serving to present a picture of real time mourning and defiance, which ultimately leads to the main crisis of the show), this one entitled “Ballet”, she also brought with her several dancers and artists from the Rodgers and Hammerstein to the original production of *Brigadoon*. First running at the Ziegfeld Theater for 581 performances in 1947, Lerner and Loewe’s classical musical is described as,

about two American tourists, Tommy Albright and Jeff Douglas (David Brooke and George Keane), who stumble upon a mist-clouded Scottish town that, they eventually discover, reawakens only one day every hundred years. Tommy, who enjoys wandering through the heather on the hill with a local lass, Fiona MacLaren (Marion Bell), returns to New York after learning of the curse that has caused the town’s excessively somnolent condition. True love, however, pulls him back to the highlands¹⁴

by Stanley Green in his *Broadway Musicals: Show by Show*. Green also notes, as do many of the critics of this work, that the success of this musical can largely be attributed to the legendary work of its choreographer: “The tale was made believable not only through the evocative score but also through Agnes de Mille’s ballets, especially the emotion-charged “Sword Dance” performed by James Mitchell during a wedding ceremony and the anguished “Funeral Dance” performed by Lidija Franklin.”¹⁵

¹³ Mordden, *Beautiful Mornin’*, 170.

¹⁴ Green, *Show by Show*, 134.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

This quotation emphasizes one of the important historical impacts of this piece – its confirmation of Golden Age musical elements. Notably some of these confirmations include integrated and purposeful dance, the A plot/B plot structure, and the villain serving as a threat to love. However, this securing of these now-established structural elements doesn't mean innovation didn't also occur in Lerner and Loewe's 1947 piece. Several notable components separate *Brigadoon* from the show that inspired it. For example, while this musical included the two-plot structure seen in *Oklahoma!* – “The two romantic leads, as a rule, were good-looking and sang beautifully, but they were usually not funny, so another subsidiary couple was used to handle the comedic elements of the story”¹⁶—the love triangles so prominent in the former do not occur in the later. Instead, Lerner and Loewe chose to expand the structure popularized by Rodgers and Hammerstein form focusing on two couples to three (Tommy and Fiona, Jeff and Meg, and (here is where a love triangle is present) Charlie and Jean versus Harry).

This third C plot including the love triangle with the villain Harry Beaton addresses another important parallel and later diversion. Here Harry directly mirrors *Oklahoma!*'s Jud Fry in that he is in love with the soprano ingenue of the A plot and is later killed due to this unrequited desire. However, there are several important differences here. Jud is killed by his direct romantic rival, Curly McClain, whereas the B plot character Jeff accidentally kills Harry after tripping him. Jud, also, is a direct threat their small community at large, and is notably an outcast with no real ties to the town that surrounds him; on the opposite end, Harry has a family in town with him, and his own love interest devoted to him in the beginning and mourning him in the end: Maggie Anderson. While Harry's threat to the show is also one to the town, it is almost the exact opposite of Jud's danger. It is Jud's very presence and involvement that puts the

¹⁶ Allen Cohen and Steven L. Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 62.

characters of *Oklahoma!* at risk, however it is the oath Harry makes to leave the village which puts Brigadoon at risk of disappearing forever – where Jud’s presence represents an active threat, it is Harry’s potential lack of presence that endangers those in *Brigadoon*. These variations found within the romantic-villain parallel simultaneously solidify this plot structure (both in the dual plot and in the Golden Age villain trope) as a mainstay, while proving that the basic format is a ripe field for innovation, improvisation, and originality.

Similar to the other elements from *Oklahoma!* that *Brigadoon* expanded upon and altered are the character archetypes. While the Young Lovers and the role of the Ingenue largely remain the same across the two shows, here the idea of the Earth Woman begins to differ. The most obvious change between Aunt Eller and *Brigadoon*’s Earth Woman is that, here, the role is taken over by a man. Throughout the musical, Mr. Lundie offers advice, relates the history of the town, and serves as both a representation of the mythic elements of Brigadoon and the wisdom of the town itself. Here, too, the Earth Woman takes on a more literal mythical trait, as Mr. Lundie is deeply entrenched in the magic that keeps Brigadoon alive, at one point saying, “Well, for me, ‘tis like bein’ carried away on shadowy arms to some far off cloud, an’ there I float ‘til mornin’! An’ yet, sometimes I think I hear strange voices.”¹⁷

Notably, the creators of *Brigadoon* enhanced the structure of the show by purposefully employing various modes of music and expression across characters.

However, note the very odd distribution of talent in the dramatis personae: Tommy and Fiona are a romantic operetta duo, but Jeff is a non-singing comic and Meg a belt soubrette. Charlie only sings, and Jean and Harry only dance. There is also Mr. Lundie, the village schoolmaster, and Jane, Tommy’s fiancée back in New York, both also speaking roles only. Just four singers and the chorus for the entire score? I call this pure Rodgers and Hammerstein: unusual story, unconventional choices in the telling of it, de Mille, unclear genre. . .It’s a show that hadn’t been done before, and that was its power.¹⁸

¹⁷ Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, *Brigadoon*, (California, Turner Entertainment, 2005).

¹⁸ Mordden, *Beautiful Mornin’*, 171-2.

Similarly, the only duets in the show belong to the operetta lovers, Fiona and Tommy, and not only does Charlie only sing, but he is an Irish tenor – straight out of vaudeville. These stylistic choices fold in together along with the score to help create the profound atmosphere throughout the show. This atmosphere helped distinguish *Brigadoon* from similar pieces such as *Finian's Rainbow*, and endeared it to audiences right away. Despite making choices never seen before—such as the folk song finale—which could have been a risk, all the elements melded together to give the show the mythic power it has become known for.

Just one year after *Brigadoon* premiered on Broadway, Cole Porter, Samuel Spewack, and Bella Spewack joined artistic forces to create the first show to ever win the Tony Award for Best Musical, *Kiss Me, Kate*. For Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate* was (similar to *Brigadoon* for Lerner and Loewe) his response *Oklahoma!*'s popularization of the integrated musical, and served to be his first show that featured a connected script and score. Incidentally, this musical is widely considered Porter's most successful, as it is his only production that lasted for longer than 1,000 performances on Broadway.

While the source material for *Kiss Me, Kate* might seem obvious at first glance – the musical centers around a production of a musical version of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* and Porter and Spewack's characters' lives largely parallel those of the roles they play – there is an intriguing hidden story behind the creation of this 1948 production that Ethan Mordden covers in *Beautiful Mornin': The Broadway Musical in the 1940s*:

First, a little backstage: there are two explanations of how the piece came about. Its co-producer Saint Subber says that he got the idea from Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne's 1935 staging of *The Taming of the Shrew*. This was a famously lavish and eccentric production, involving among other things two men in a horse suit, three acrobats, and four midgets. Working as production assistant on the Lunts' 1940s tour of the show (and others, to champion Finnish War Relief), Subber was enchanted by how the Lunts' turbulent relationship mirrored the war between wooing Petruchio and the ungovernable Kate, the at times sordid clash so at odds with the demented poetry of the staging. This

would be *Kiss Me, Kate*: a musical based not on Shakespeare but on the Lunts' production. Bella Spewack, who with her husband, Sam, wrote the show's book, recalls it differently. The original idea, she says was simply to turn *The Taming of the Shrew* into a musical. . . Apparently, no writer could figure out how to do it—update the action? Shift the setting? Use Shakespearean dialogue, modern dialogue, some compromise?—till Bella was brought on board.¹⁹

While Bella Spewack may have brought in the direction this struggling concept needed, the Spewacks were not immune to the marital strife that littered the creation of this show. During the writing of *Kiss Me, Kate* Bella and Sam Spewack fought constantly, and Sam eventually moved out. In fact, some speculate it was Bella's trouble with the songwriting that brought the pair back together as Bella eventually asked Sam to collaborate on the project. Created in a bed of marital turbulence both on the stage and off, *Kiss Me, Kate* first landed on Broadway at the New Century Theater in late 1948 for just over 1,000 performances. With a tight plot, covering only the afternoon to evening of the opening of a musical version of *Taming of the Shrew*, the plot is described as,

egotistical actor-producer Fred Graham (Alfred Drake) and his temperamental co-star and ex-wife, Lili Vanessi (Patricia Morison) fight and make up and eventually demonstrate their enduring affection for each other – just like Shakespeare's Petruchio and Kate. A subplot involves actress Lois Lane (Lisa Kirk) whose romance with actor Bill Calhoun (Harold Lang) is complicated by Bill's weakness for gambling.²⁰

Incidentally, Alfred Drake also starred in the original production of *Oklahoma!* – just another example of the show's long reach. Clearly *Kiss Me, Kate* does not escape the influence of that 1943 powerhouse and there are many exciting diverges and innovations this piece brought to the stage.

While Spewack and Porter's masterpiece maintains the two-plot structure, it finagles quite deeply with the separation of the two storylines. In the previous two works the various

¹⁹Ibid., 252-3.

²⁰Green, *Show by Show*, 141.

couples were interrelated and co-existed together in this same world; however, in this show each couple directly impacts each other. Fred and Lili are ex-partners, working in the same show as Lois, Fred's new pursuit. However, Lois is in a relationship with Bill, who is also in the show. Of course, the couples have their own separate story lines – the A plot focuses on the divorced couple reuniting despite mixed feelings and Lili's engagement to cattle rancher Harrison Howell while the B plot follows Lois and Bill as one struggles with gambling while the other chases men's affections for monetary gain. Despite this, their individual plots soon become quite entangled as Bill involves Fred in his gambling problems – thus introducing the comedic gangster villains of the piece – and Lili accidentally receives flowers from Fred meant to woo Lois. This intermingling of storylines is best surmised by Cohen and Rosenhaus in *Writing Musical Theater*: “In *Kiss Me, Kate*, both the lead couple (Frank and Lili) and the secondary (Bill and Lois) are comedic, though only the lead couple is also romantic.”²¹

This more substantial co-habitation of the two plot lines also introduces the audience to the antagonistic force of the show, the gangsters. Encompassing one of the biggest shifts from the previously established Golden Age musical elements, these two enforcers enter into the world of *Kiss Me, Kate* to collect money from the gambler Bill and subsequently Fred, bringing with them a different level of comedy and class. Whereas previous villains served as romantic love interests and true, unforgiving adversaries to the main characters, these gangsters make jokes and offer relationship advice before ultimately forgiving the debt and (albeit accidentally) joining the player characters on stage. In this way, the lack of true malice in the gangsters offers the first hint of the “villain” role being played by the main characters themselves, as they create their own obstacles. In this case, the secondary antagonistic force comes from Fred and Lili

²¹ Cohen and Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, 63.

themselves, as they bicker, physically fight, and pursue other people all on the path to getting back together.

The two gangsters also help highlight an interesting musical phenomenon found within the score. In this musical, the character's status in the production and in the world of the musical affects how the music that surrounds them sounds. For Fred and Lili, the A plot couple who are also two trained and successful stage performers, sing by and large in an operetta mode. This is seen in the duet "Wunderbar". Fred and Lili are the closest equivalent *Kiss Me, Kate* has to the Young Lovers, although there are some obvious problems with this. While these two are the main romantic couple of the plot, and their voices fit the common categories for their roles, the biggest deviation seen in this archetype is their age. Fred and Lili are no longer young, and therefore do not carry with them the naïve shine Young Lovers tend to have. They have experience, they know each other and know what it means to love each other and lose that. Ultimately Fred and Lili expand the Young Lovers archetype into one more accurately defined as the Main Lovers, and become an excellent example of how these shows continue to grow and build upon the elements handed down from show to show.

On the flip side of the romantic coin sits the B plot couple, Lois and Bill, filling the Comic Relief archetype. These characters are younger, more contemporary, and just starting out in their careers. This, partnered with their structurally comedic purpose, allows for a more modern sound, with much of their song and dance moments being fixed in jazz: "Always True to You in My Fashion" and "Why Can't You Behave". This difference is seen in the lyrics as well; throughout much of the show, the songs are characterized by clean rhymes, such as "The stars fill the sky / so in love with you am I" from "So in Love" sung by Lili. However, in "Brush Up Your Shakespeare", the only number the two gangsters have in the entire show, Porter included

instances of slant rhyme: “simply ravin” to “Stratford on Avon”, “flatter’er” to “Cleopatterer” and “bonus” with “Adonis”.

Dance also serves a much different purpose in this musical than it does in its predecessors. While Agnes de Mille’s integrated dancing and dream ballets served to further the plot and provide insight into the characters who perform them, *Kiss Me, Kate*’s choreography (choreographed by Hanya Holm, a German-trained choreographer with a focus in modern dance working on only her second Broadway show) offers largely two functions: entertainment and historical context. In a show about a show, it makes sense that a certain element of the musical needs to be entertainment, spectacle. Here we see this manifesting in tap and jazz numbers performed by various members of the cast, especially Bill and Lois. This function is not simply flashy movement, however – these characters are performers. Dance is a sort of language for these artists, and as they sing about their relationships and problems in one language, it makes sense that their second language would involve itself in that musical discussion. The inclusion of tap and jazz also helps to ground *Kiss Me, Kate* in its contemporary setting by utilizing the popular modes of the time. Not only is this style contemporary, it also draws on the classic Broadway style of showbiz hoofing – the very dance style *Show Boat* famously utilized. Holm’s uses this dance style to tell the audience something about the world the characters live in. While the main duo is incredibly Shakespearean throughout their romantic struggles in the show, their out of show/in-life numbers are equally operatic and formal–sometimes so much so it sometimes borders on humorous. However, songs such as “Too Darn Hot” and “Why Can’t You Behave” that illustrate the “real world” the characters live in include choreography that is both sexual and comedic–and largely contemporary. The “real world” style is markedly lower-brow than the slow, emotional, and dance-less ballads Fred and Lili share. This serves both to anchor the

audience to a time they can relate to, and to connect the centuries old story of *Taming of the Shrew* to the current battle of the sexes. In a new use of integrated dance, the lively numbers serve to establish characters and contextualize the meta-theatrical nature of the plot, engaging the audience in a new way.

Finally comes the 1963 musical *She Loves Me*. Straddling the line between first generation Golden Age musicals like the ones previously discussed and the second generation fostered from the success and popularity of those who came before them, this show, like the others, is based on previous work. The third adaptation of the 1937 Hungarian stage play “Parfumerie” by Miklos Laszlo was also the sixth collaboration for creators Sheldon Harnick and Jerry Bock, with book writer Joe Masteroff, and it first found its way to Broadway through the Eugene O’Neill Theater with a 301-performance run. Set in unnamed Budapest in the 1930s,

the tale is concerned with the people who work in Maraczek’s Parfumerie, principally the constantly squabbling sales clerk Amalia Balash (Barbara Cook) and the manager Georg Nowack (Daniel Massey). It is soon revealed that they are anonymous pen pals who agree to meet one night at the Café Imperiale, though neither knows the other’s identity. Georg realizes who Amalia is when he sees her waiting for him in the restaurant, but he doesn’t let on and the unhappy Amalia pours out her heart in a longing plea to her unknown “Dear Friend”. After she calls in sick, their relationship blossoms into love when Georg brings her ice cream; eventually, he is emboldened to reveal his identity by quoting from one of Amalia’s letters.²²

She Loves Me is a show filled with quiet, tender moments – and in fact closes on one such moment – that is seldom seen in today’s musicals. As Jack Viertel notes in his book *The Secret Life of the American Musical: How Broadway Shows Are Built*, “to do what. . . *She Loves Me*. . . [did] requires the creators thread the needle virtually perfectly and pierce the audience’s

²² Green, *Show by Show*, 202.

heart in one way or another. These kinds of shows often want the curtain to fall, leaving the audience in tears, even if the ending is happy.”²³

Similar to these other shows, *She Loves Me* includes several mainstay elements as well as some unique to this production. Some elements seen before include the double plot structure (Amalia and George versus Kodaly and Ilona); however, perhaps more so than any of the other shows mentioned, this musical contains many variations and innovations that make it drastically different. These newer parts include: quieter musical numbers, the lack of overall dance, a more intimate story, and the figure who serves as the villains throughout the piece. It is thanks to the work of Harnick and Bock that *She Loves Me* is allowed to capitalize so heavily on these milder and more tender moments.

Like virtually everything else in *She Loves Me* it doesn't announce itself or preen. It doesn't even draw attention to the fact that Harnick and Jerry Bock, the composer, have slyly substituted “dear friend” for “ice cream” . . . The weaving of musical ideas with the lyric swap does all the work necessary even if we're unaware of it. It expresses great tenderness and intimacy, and it is also startlingly efficient. . . It's a kind of writing that only happens in musical theater. No other form has any use for it, because no other form has the opportunity to do things that way.²⁴

Similar to *Kiss Me, Kate's* different use of dance, *She Loves Me* also steps away from the dream ballet – and almost steps away from dance entirely. Very few numbers in this musical include dancing, and most of those that do, such as “Days Gone By,” include dancing as a part of the natural, non-theatrical world. Maraczek is encouraging Georg to go out dancing with a girl, and while doing so takes it upon himself to teach Georg how to dance; the dance occurs naturally within the song with no “theatrical” agent pushing it forward. The only real break from this into

²³ Jack Viertel, *The Secret Life of the American Musical: How Broadway Shows are Built*, (New York, Sarah Crichton Books, 2016), 250.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 249.

dance for theater's sake comes from "A Romantic Atmosphere/Tango Tragique" in which the patrons at the Café Imperiale swirl and flip around Amalia as she waits for "Dear Friend."

She Loves Me also treads the line of both preserving and reshaping the classic archetype roles of the Young Lovers, the Earth Woman, and the Comic Relief. In the case of the Young Lovers, Amalia presents the biggest problem in terms of fitting the classic Ingenue ideal. Amalia is brash, determined, a little rough around the edges. The audience doesn't see her inner Ingenue come out until later in the show, when she starts producing lovelorn numbers such as "Will He Like Me?", "Dear Friend", and "Vanilla Ice cream" in soaring soprano. Similar to *Brigadoon*, *She Loves Me* sees a potential Earth Woman once again through a male character. Despite the lack of mythic elements, Mr. Maraczek, the shop owner, offers advice and runs the general work affairs of the small cast. He considers himself a mentor to Georg, giving him dancing lessons and telling stories of his own long past youth. This mentorship continues past Georg and onto the younger Arpad, which reinforces Maraczek's role as a guide to the younger characters at the end of the show. Finally, and perhaps ultimately the most complicated, the Comic Relief as usual sits in the B Plot characters, Kodaly and Ilona. These characters offer humorous moments amidst more tense scenes—such as "Ilona", "A Trip to the Library", and "Grand Knowing You"—but they also bring with them their own struggles that eventually become obstacles to themselves, each other, and the rest of the cast. This complexity surpasses the classic Comic Relief model, and is discussed in further detail below.

In a large diversion from its powerhouse predecessors, *She Loves Me* focuses on a smaller world and a more intimate story. Unlike *Oklahoma!* and *Brigadoon* which includes threats, changes, and preservations to/of an entire community, *She Loves Me* follows a much smaller cast of characters. Even *Kiss Me, Kate*, despite only focusing on one show and its

participants, covers a large production—both in the “show” and in terms of the ensemble it asks for. In contrast, Harnick and Bock’s adaption follows only a single shop with seven total workers, the boss included. The smaller, personal touch to this story is emphasized in the show through Sipos’s song, “Perspective”: “I am only one of / several in a rather small parfumerie / which is only one of several in this city.” This more insular world allows for the story to cover a range of moments people deal with in life, from the determined (“No More Candy”) to the much more serious, such as the latter part of Act One. Towards the end of Act One, we see a distraught Maraczek lock himself away in his office after receiving distressing news. Later, as Arpad comes in to say goodnight, he discovers his boss just as he is about to shoot himself. It is a somber, solemn, and surprising moment. This quaint world the audience is first introduced to in the World Building song “Good Morning, Good Day” is suddenly filled with the all too real pain and regret that riddles the “real” world. Perhaps just as jarring, the moment quickly breaks as the audience is thrown into the comedy-filled Café Imperiale. This brief look into the very real and painful consequences of love and loss thereof is only successful because of the focused and nuanced story of this small shop and its workers.

Lastly, *She Loves Me* makes unique use of the idea of the antagonist, almost tossing out the classic archetype entirely. In the A plot romance between Georg and Amalia, the two of them serve both as antagonist to each other and themselves. The two bicker constantly, blinded by their irritations and preconceptions of the other. However, the obstacle between them soon turns into halting their journey to love and a relationship, until Georg gathers the courage to reveal the truth. In the B plot, the “villain” becomes even more of a gray area. On first glance Kodaly is the obvious choice. He plays Ilona and treats her badly, dismissing both her feelings and her time—not to mention his affair with his boss’s wife. While this creates its own tension and problems

(most of which extend past the romantic entanglements and into the working of the shop itself), Ilona is not free of blame for her struggles. In her song “I Resolve” she admits that she creates a lot of her own romantic problems, and struggles to change her patterns to prevent future hurt. In this way *She Loves Me* once again uses characters to create their own obstacles, while also utilizing the Golden Age’s classic villain. But even here, with Kodaly filling the villain role, he breaks it. Kodaly does not chase anybody who doesn’t want to be chased, and he is not an outcast—on the contrary, he is an ingrained member of this shop’s microcosm, starting out just as much a protagonist as the rest of the shop workers.

This reinvention of the plot’s villains also highlights the delicate nature of the show and Georg and Amalia’s journey to love. *She Loves Me* invites its audience to see how precious and vulnerable love is. Love is threatened by Georg and Amalia’s own actions and blindness, it’s lost as even the longstanding, seemingly happy marriage Maracek boasts in the beginning of the show is revealed to be false, and it is mocked and warned against throughout the show by Ilona and Kodaly. In relation to the overall theme of love seen in the show, the B plot itself can be considered an antagonist. Georg and Amalia are surrounded by bad examples of love – a man cheated on, a player and womanizer who doesn’t consider who he hurts, and a caricature of the “dumb blond” who falls in and out of love at the drop of a hat, changing everything about herself for a man. It’s no wonder amidst this chaos (even the grounding Sipos displays the stresses of having to support his family and deal with his in-laws), love struggles along.

As discussed previously, the standard plot outline is the A plot/B plot structure, with multiple variations therein. The A, or main, plot typically follows the central romantic character with the highest stakes, with a complementary B/subplot: “The best subplots are tightly integrated with and compliment the main plot, sometimes thematically, and sometimes by

supplying what the main plot lacks – humor, a different age group, dancing rather than singing, a sad resolution rather than a happy one, and so on.”²⁵ Deeply entrenched with the plot structure is the obstacles the characters must face. Archetypal for the Golden Age is the outcast villain who makes unwanted and sometimes violent advances towards one of the A plot characters, and is usually shunned by society. As in anything, variations and disruptions are built into the fabric of creation, and this foundation laid out by early classical musicals lays out a standard to innovate around. Later on, towards the middle and end of the Golden Age of musicals, the obstacles characters face began to turn inward as the characters create or enhance the challenges they face during the piece. This evolution is seen when comparing the obstacles and villains first from *Oklahoma!* and then *She Loves Me*.

Among all these elements discussed sit several more classic features of musical theater established during the Golden Age. One of the most commonly noted features includes specific types of songs, made recognizable by particular subjects, forms, or purposes. The first of these song types is the Worldbuilding number, also known as the Ordinary World song. Julian Woolford remarks in *How Musicals Work*, “Not surprisingly, Ordinary World songs are often ‘opening numbers.’ They establish the very stability that is key to this stage and they ‘set the scene’, allowing everything that comes after to be a contrast to this opening number.”²⁶ Examples of Worldbuilding numbers from classical musicals include “I Put My Hand In” from *Hello, Dolly!*, “Another Op’nin, Another Show” from *Kiss Me, Kate*, “Good Morning, Good Day” from *She Loves Me*, and “Oh, What A Beautiful Mornin’” from *Oklahoma!*. In the case of *Kiss Me, Kate*, “Another Op’nin, Another Show” is sung by Hattie, Lili’s dresser and arguably

²⁵ Cohen and Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, 62.

²⁶ Julian Woolford, *How Musicals Work and How to Write Your Own*, (London, Nick Hern Books Unlimited, 2012), 149.

the Earth Woman of this production. Serving as the efficient assistant that gets things done, Hattie also introduces the audience to the world of the show and the lives of the characters. She sets the scene and the tone, and in this way becomes less of an advisor, and Earth Woman, to the characters and instead becomes one for the audience.

Another type of song established in classical musicals is the Conditional Love song. This form refers to songs sung by the romantic interests in the show in a “conditional” manner – that is, using the “if” technique. Popularized by Oscar Hammerstein, this idea of singing a song “if” they were in love allows for dramatic irony to develop as the audience is aware that the love the characters are singing about will develop before the characters themselves do. “If I Loved You” from *Carousel* is an example of a Conditional Love song, as is “People Will Say We’re In Love” from *Oklahoma!* Next is the Eleven O’clock number: referred to as such because they come late into the second act, usually around Eleven o’clock at night. These songs are usually the penultimate number, stopping the show and allowing one last chance for the actor to shine as their character comes to an important realization. Eleven O’clock numbers include “Rose’s Turn” from *Gypsy*, “Sit Down, You’re Rockin’ the Boat” from *Guys and Dolls*, and “She Loves Me” from *She Loves Me* (although some debate that “Vanilla Ice Cream” counts as an Eleven O’clock number as well).

Finally, the most common type of song in musical theater is the I Want song. Also referred to as an I Wish song, “these pieces can occur at any point in Act One, but is most common at the Call to Adventure or the Refusal of the Call to Adventure. . .The ‘I Wish’ song is about who the Hero is and what he wants.”²⁷ Similarly, Viertel states, “The I Want song is the mark of an active hero.”²⁸ I Want songs serve to both introduce what the character’s goals are,

²⁷ Ibid., 150.

²⁸ Viertel, *The Secret Life*, 53.

but also to activate the character themselves and let the audience know who's story the musical follows. I Want songs are crucial to clear and compelling shows, which is why this form is by far the most common song structure throughout the entirety of musical theater. These numbers are also extremely flexible, allowing the character to pursue and react to any topic in the mode best suited for them. With the Golden Age as an era of development and newly-minted canon, the I Want song does not begin to officially solidify until *My Fair Lady* and later *Fiddler on the Roof*, however the very beginnings of this song type can be seen throughout the beginnings of the classical musical era. Some instances of I Want songs in classic musicals include "Wouldn't It Be Lovely" from *My Fair Lady*, "Gimme Gimme" from *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and "If I Were A Rich Man" from *Fiddler on the Roof*.

All of these elements seen so prominently throughout the Golden Age of musical theater are still seen throughout the contemporary works of today. The roles of the Young Lovers can be found constantly, in shows such as *Legally Blonde* (with the love triangle between Elle, Warren, and Emmett), *Wicked* (in Elpheba and Fiyero), and *Something Rotten!* (between Portia and Nigel Bottom). Dance continues to serve many functions from illuminating character's thoughts and decisions (*Newsies*) to developing and physicalizing the world (*Come From Away*). "I'm Here" from *The Color Purple* has become a classic example of the Eleven O'clock number that comes from the early 2000s, and an excellent example of a Worldbuilding song comes from the 2012 musical *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* in "You're a D'Ysquith".

However, the legacy of the Golden Age doesn't just exist in pieces parceled up and reused in modern musicals. Revivals of these classic musicals are alive and well today. Community and regional theaters fill their seasons with shows such as *The Music Man* and *West Side Story*, and professional companies have remounted productions of *Hello Dolly!* and

Carousel to great success. Among popular revivals are the 2017 staged concert of *Brigadoon* and the 2019 revival of *Kiss Me, Kate* on Broadway. The 2016 revival of *She Loves Me* won a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Revival of a Musical, and perhaps the most popular in recent years has been the smash hit success of *Oklahoma!*'s 2019 revival, which garnered numerous Tony nominations and awards. Similarly, while these structural and theatrical elements are common and effective, the “rules” developed by the Golden Age are broken, remolded, and transformed all the time—just as they were during the very era that established them. Nothing classic is required and nothing canon is unchangeable. The basic Golden Age musical structure is just as elastic as it is evocative, and that’s part of its power.

Overall, the Golden Age of musical theater established key theatrical elements that profoundly changed musical theater forever and still influence innovations and originations today. From the two-plot structure and character archetypes like the Earth Woman to integrated dance and song formats like the patter song and conditional love songs, the legacy of 40s to 60s musical theater is alive and well, no matter the level of theater. Through the years these elements have been further developed, transformed, and subverted in exciting and meaningful ways sometimes mirroring these classic musicals exactly, and other times building upon the foundation to disrupt it in ways only possible because of the mainstay these essentials have become. Decade after decade the Golden Age is still present in theater whether through revivals or techniques – and that fundamental legacy is here to stay.

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SPRING OF '45

By: Maggie Higginbotham

CHARACTERS

RUTH – Mid to late 40s, bold, confident, and loving. Wife of Charles and mother to James. A leader.

CHARLES – Mid to late 40s, calm, self-assured, a family man. Husband of Ruth and father to James.

JAMES – late teens/early 20s, wants more than anything to do his duty and serve in the war. Son of Ruth and Charles.

ALICE – late teens/early 20s, fresh off the boat from England to escape the Blitz. Young, sweet, but strong. Soon to be fiancé to James.

HELEN – mid 30s, loud, flirtatious, and loves easily – whether than be her family or someone else. Wife of Henry and the mother of two young children.

HENRY – Late 40s, a World War I veteran, wheelchair bound after suffering an injury during the first war. Resilient, a family man, charismatic, husband of Helen and father of two young children.

FRANK – mid 30s, the factory foreman directly in charge of the main female characters. Sneezy, not very good at his job, and likes women – charismatic to some.

DOROTHY – late 20s, a homemaker, warm, hard worker. Works at the factory.

GLORIA – early/mid 20s, naïve, hopeful, kind. Works at the factory.

IRENE – mid 20s, works at the factory.

RICHARD – late 40s, Charles's right-hand at the war front.

INSPECTOR

MEN AT WAR

WOMEN AT FACTORY

CHILDREN

SETTING

Set in Savannah, Georgia. Starting after the U.S. enters World War II, through the end of the war.

SONG LIST

1. The Opening Number
2. The Draft Duet
3. James's Song Prelude into...
4. The New Love/City Tour Duet
5. The Work Song
6. The Gossip Song
7. The Leaving Song
8. The Cheater's Lament
9. The Cheater's Reprise
10. The Letter Song
11. Rosie the Riveter
12. The New Normal
13. The Leaving Reprise
14. The Gossip/Work Combination
15. The Song of Hope
16. The March Song
17. The Father's Lament
18. The Cheater's Trio
19. Rosie the Riveter Reprise
20. The Closing Number

ACT ONEScene One – Opening Dance

Lights come up on RUTH, center stage and alone. Behind her, the curtains are closed. As she speaks, the curtains slowly open to reveal a frozen picture of a bustling jazz club behind her. CHARLES, Ruth's husband, holds out his hand to her as if mid twirl.

RUTH

We'd all heard it before many times, and most of us accepted it – some of us believed it. Women belong in the home. We did women's work, and we brought up families and raised children and together we all put back society after the first World War. We were happy and hummed along to things going back to normal, until it wasn't. All of a sudden women's place wasn't in the home. It was in the factory, in the hospital, in the office, in the garden, and for some in the war. That's when they started telling us what we all knew all along. What we told ourselves every day during the hardship, and the struggle, and the adjustment to what our world looked like then. What we told ourselves when we lost, and what we shouted when we won. What every woman could tell you if, if you just asked:

We can do it.

*As Ruth speaks her last word she has backed up into the scene, and her hand snaps into Charles's. As soon as they touch big jazz music strikes up, and dance erupts onstage as they twirl into **this opening***

dance number. Just as the song reaches its most exciting climax, at the very height of the song a young soldier bursts into the room. Dancers freeze mid twirl and lift as they hear:

SOLDIER

The U.S. has entered the war!

The dancers slowly relax, in shock, upset, scared, as
Blackout.

Scene Two – Draft Duet/New Love and City Tour Duet

Lights up on a bustling port as families and soldiers say goodbye to one another all around. Ruth, Charles (in uniform), and their son JAMES say goodbye.

RUTH

I wish we didn't have to do this.

CHARLES

I know. It will all be over soon.

RUTH

You're going to be safe, right?

CHARLES

Ruth...

RUTH

I need you to promise me.

CHARLES

I will do anything I need to to get back to you.

They share a pause.

CHARLES (CONT.)

James. I would say take care of your mother but –

JAMES

She can take care of herself.

CHARLES

And you can take care of *yourself*. I'm proud of the man you've become. If I...

A dad trying not to cry.

JAMES

You don't have to say goodbye, I'm going to see you soon.

CHARLES

I'll be home to you and your mom as soon as I can.

JAMES

No, I'm going to enlist. I'm going to join you.

RUTH

No, you're not.

CHARLES

Absolutely not. I'm not enlisting, James. I've been drafted. It's not a choice I have.

JAMES

If you really want me to be a man you can be proud of –

RUTH

Then you'll stay here and make the best of things. Wars like this aren't won by enlisted men pining for their loved ones back home. There is so much we can do here.

CHARLES

Your mother is already hanging one star in our window. There is only one way she will hang two stars, and that will not be because she's lost you to the war front.

RUTH

Don't even think about that. That's not going to happen, okay?

*Ruth and Charles sing their **Draft Duet**:*

RUTH

I'LL THINK ONLY GOOD THOUGHTS WHILE YOU'RE AWAY

CHARLES

ONLY GOOD THINGS WHEN YOU'RE FAR FROM ME

RUTH

I CAN'T HOLD MY BREATH UNTIL YOU'RE BACK BECAUSE IN MY HEART YOU'LL
STAY

(CHORUS:)

BOTH

FAR IS NEAR AND NEAR IS FAR

AS WE GAZE UPON THE STAR

RUTH

IN THE WINDOW

CHARLES

IN THE SKY

BOTH

I'LL HAVE YOU IN THE TWINKLE OF MY EYE

AND YOU'LL BE BACK BEFORE THE MOON IS LOW

(END CHORUS)

RUTH

I COULD NEVER WORRY WHEN IT COMES TO YOU

CHARLES

THE THOUGHT OF YOU WILL ONLY EASE ME

RUTH

TOGETHER WE WILL SEE THIS THROUGH

CHORUS

RUTH

ALTHOUGH, PERHAPS, I'LL COME TO SEE

CHARLES

SOMETIMES YOU'LL WORRY BECAUSE OF ME

AND IN THAT MOMENT I'M FRIGHTENED TOO

RUTH

BUT STILL WE MUST FIND HOPE ANEW

CHORUS

As they sing, the scene shifts to follow James as he sneaks off.

As James winds his way around the dock, he almost bumps into a young man his age, in full uniform.

JAMES

Ah, sorry. Nice...uniform. Must be nice to wear it and, everything. Must be nice to make a choice about your future and actually make a difference. Pretty soon I'll be the only one left. All along while my friends actually fight...then what do I do?

*James launches into **his song**:*

JAMES

HERE! I'M STUCK, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN HERE

STAYING IN MY OWN LITTLE SPHERE

PERFECTLY SAFE AND SOUND SO I HEAR

OH, EVERYONE AROUND ME IS LEAVING

TO FIGHT IN THE WAR

LIKE ALL MEN SHOULD

LIKE MY FATHER, MY FRIEND, MY NEIGHBOR, MY COUSIN-IN-LAW

BUT BECAUSE OF MY MOTHER MY NAME WON'T BE DRAWN

and soon a second voice intertwines with his. We soon see that this is ALICE. While they don't see each other their duets simply parallel. Towards the

end the two bump into each other, and they sing together for the first time.

BOTH

AND I'M HERE

JAMES

SO I'M STUCK –

ALICE (AT THE SAME TIME)

NOW I'M HERE –

JAMES

Hi.

ALICE

Hello. My name's Alice.

JAMES

Oh, J- James. My name's James.

ALICE

It's nice to meet you James. You're the first American I've ever formally met.

JAMES

Happy I could oblige. You don't know anyone here at all?

ALICE

(shakes her head)

My family sent me over to escape the Blitz. I was supposed to meet up with an old family friend but we got word just before I left they couldn't take me in anymore.

JAMES

What are you going to do?

ALICE

I'm sorry, I don't know you – I'm not really sure why I told you that. Just feeling a little alone, I guess.

JAMES

But you're not alone. You've got your first American friend now.

ALICE

Looks like I do.

JAMES

I could show you around, if you'd like. I grew up here so I know all the best places.

ALICE

Sounds like a gas. I'm not pulling you away from anyone, am I?

JAMES

I said goodbye already.

ALICE

To anyone in particular?

JAMES

Just someone who's leaving. I wanted to go with him...but I may have found a reason to stay.

New Love/City Tour song:

JAMES

IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU

ALICE

IT'S LOVELY TO SEE YOU

JAMES

I HOPE YOU'VE BEEN SWELL

ALICE

YOU'RE LOOKING WELL

JAMES

I'VE MADE A NEW FRIEND

ALICE

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?

JAMES

AS LONG AS IT'S YOU

ALICE

I QUITE LIKE YOU TOO!

BOTH

I DON'T KNOW WHY IT IS, BUT IT'S ALMOST AS IF I KNOW YOU

IT'S ALMOST AS IF I KNOW YOU

JAMES

LOOK TO YOUR RIGHT

ALICE

I'M FLYING AS HIGH AS A KITE

JAMES

SEE THAT OVER THERE

ALICE

LOOK OUT! I THINK I'M WALKING ON AIR

JAMES

I USED TO BE BEREFT

ALICE

WHAT'S THAT ON THE LEFT?

JAMES

BUT DON'T YOU SEE

ALICE

IT'S ALL BRAND NEW TO ME!

I THOUGHT I'D BE ALL ALONE

IN A NEW CITY I'D HAVE TO ROAM

BUT MAYBE NOW I'M NOT ON MY OWN

JAMES

YOU'RE NOT ON YOUR OWN

WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER NOW

GOTTA MAKE IT THROUGH THIS SOME HOW

STAYING BY YOUR SIDE IS MY VOW

BOTH

I DON'T KNOW WHY IT IS, BUT IT'S ALMOST AS IF I KNOW YOU

IT'S ALMOST AS IF I KNOW YOU

IT'S ALMOST AS IF WE'VE MET BEFORE

They end at James's house.

JAMES

Come inside, I want to show you one more thing.

ALICE

What is it?

JAMES

Your new home.

Lights fade into

Scene Three

*Ruth, Alice, and James are all in the living room of
Ruth and James's home, a new "Son in Service"
flag hanging in the window.*

RUTH

It's lovely to meet you, Alice. You can stay here as long as you need.

ALICE

Thank you. I'm happy to help out any way I can.

JAMES

See? I told you it wouldn't be a problem.

RUTH

It's not a problem at all. Of course, I would love to know ahead of time in the future if my son decides to make a habit of boarding young women.

JAMES

It won't happen again, Mom.

Ruth takes a moment to size up James and Alice as a pair.

RUTH

I don't doubt it. James, if you don't mind setting the table – you're lucky I'm used to cooking for three.

An ever so slight pause from James and Ruth as they feel the absence of Charles in the room. It was meant as a joke, but...

RUTH (CONT.)

Alice, we've gotten used to listening our president during dinner, I hope that's alright. He's a great speech maker.

JAMES

FDR's Fireside Chats are something of a tradition in this household.

ALICE

I heard he makes speeches on the radio. I don't mind at all.

The three sit down to dinner as the radio comes alive, in the middle of FDR's 1941 Fireside Chat addressing the US entering the war. We watch as dishes are passed and food is consumed. After a few moments we hear in FDR's crackling voice: "The Axis Powers can never achieve their objective of

world domination unless they first obtain control of the seas. That is their supreme purpose today, and to achieve it they must capture Great Britain.” As FDR’s voice fades out, the trio encounter another small pause.

JAMES

We can turn it off.

RUTH

A little conversation might be nice to get to know our guest more.

ALICE

It’s alright. I’m well aware of the effects this war has had on England.

RUTH

Yes, I imagine you are. How is your family?

ALICE

We’ve been lucky. We’ve known others who haven’t.

JAMES

I’m sorry.

ALICE

Not exactly light dinner banter.

RUTH

For everything you could say about war, providing light dinner banter isn’t one of its qualities,

I’m afraid. And yet, we persist. More carrots, anyone?

JAMES

If there's enough.

RUTH

Plenty. There should be enough for lunches tomorrow as well. My victory garden has been quite successful – the other women at work are pretending they aren't jealous. Dorothy's garden isn't doing nearly as well.

JAMES

Poor Dorothy.

RUTH

Yes, her lettuce browned before it ever got a chance to green.

ALICE

Where do you work?

RUTH

At the munitions factory just outside of town. We make bullets for our boys.

ALICE

That's wonderful.

RUTH

There's a position open if you're interested.

ALICE

I don't know. Could I even get the job?

RUTH

Honey, I don't even have to put a full word in and you've got it. I'll bring you around tomorrow and introduce you to everyone.

ALICE

I would like that. Thank you.

JAMES

Barely in the country and she's already a riveter.

ALICE

(chuckles)

Finally, something to write home about.

Blackout.

Scene Four – Work Song and Gossip Song

Lights up on the factory floor. Tables cover the stage, lined with women packing boxes of bullets. Far upstage sits a set of stairs that lead to the Foreman's office. All the women are dressed in short sleeve boiler suits, some have their hair tied up in scarves. The Foreman (FRANK) leans lazily at the bottom of the stairs, "surveying" the women. Enter Ruth and Alice.

RUTH

Finally, we have the floor. That's my station over there, and you'll be right next to me. And this is Helen, Dorothy, and Gloria.

The three women on either side of Ruth and Alice's station wave at Alice.

HELEN

Frank mentioned we were getting another girl. Come sit down, it's pretty easy. You'll catch on quick.

Ruth and Alice take their seats. Work resumes as

Alice tries to follow along.

RUTH

Make sure they are all facing the same way.

GLORIA

You got it.

ALICE

What do I do when I've filled a box?

HELEN

Stack them at the end of the table. Here, I'll take yours.

ALICE

And this is all we do?

DOROTHY

All day, every day.

GLORIA

Women's work.

ALICE

What makes it a "woman's work?"

RUTH

It's work, and we're women.

Work song:

(WOMEN ARE VOCALIZING THE SOUNDS OF WORK, CONTRIBUTING TO THE SCORE)

(FIX. FILL. STACK.)

RUTH

HISTORY TELLS US WOMEN WORK

ENSEMBLE

WOMEN WORK IN THE HOME

RUTH

SOCIETY TELLS US WOMEN WORK

ENSEMBLE

WOMEN WORK IN THE WAR

RUTH

WOMEN WORK AT WOMEN'S WORK

IN THE HOME OR IN THE STORE

BUT WHEN THE JOBS ARE OPEN,

WOMAN WORK AT MORE

ENSEMBLE

WOMEN WORK AT WOMEN'S WORK

AND WOMEN'S WORK IS THE WORK WE DO

GLORIA

IN THE MORNING I MAKE BREAKFAST FOR MYSELF AND FOR MY MOTHER

IT'S WHAT I'VE ALWAYS DONE AND IT'S NEVER BEEN A BOTHER
BUT THEN I COME TO WORK WHERE WE ALL SIT TOGETHER
AND HERE I'M PROUD TO SAY I PACK THOSE BULLETS LIKE NO OTHER

(ENSEMBLE CHEERS)

ENSEMBLE

WOMEN WORK AT WOMEN'S WORK
AND WOMEN'S WORK IS THE WORK WE DO

DOROTHY

WHEN I'M HOME FROM WORK I FOLD THE WASH AND DO THE CLEANING
I BAKE AS WELL AND ALWAYS KEEP THE CASSEROLE FORM BURNING
BUT BEFORE THE CHORES WHEN MY WORK DAY'S JUST BEGINNING
SITTING WITH MY FRIENDS AND PACKING BULLETS GIVES ME MEANING

ENSEMBLE

WOMEN WORK AT WOMEN'S WORK
AND WOMEN'S WORK IS THE WORK WE DO

RUTH

HISTORY TELS US WOMEN WORK

ENSEMBLE

WOMEN'S WORK IS IMPORTANT WORK

RUTH

SOCIETY TELLS US WOMEN WORK

ENSEMBLE

ALL WORK IS WOMEN'S WORK

WOMEN WORK AT WOMEN'S WORK
AND A WOMAN'S WORK IS THE WORK WE DO

(FIX. FILL. STACK.)

FRANK

Alright, let's keep the pace. These bullets aren't packing themselves.

DOROTHY

That's Frank, the factory foreman.

GLORIA

Keep your eye out for him.

HELEN

What's that supposed to mean?

GLORIA

We all know his eye isn't the only thing that wanders.

HELEN

Don't talk about him like that –

RUTH

Ladies. We don't need to scare Alice on her first day, it's not even lunch. Frank tends to get a little...friendly. Just be aware and you'll be fine.

HELEN

He'd never actually try anything.

*A moment of silence as the girls try to figure out
why Helen is defending Frank.*

DOROTHY

I saw him eying Mary the other day.

HELEN

Well, knowing Mary.

DOROTHY

You're not wrong.

RUTH

Dorothy, how's your lettuce doing?

DOROTHY

Still brown, thank you for asking.

ALICE

Your soil might be too wet. Lettuce can't grow well in soil that's too moist.

DOROTHY

I'll try watering it less. Thank you.

RUTH

You didn't mention you gardened. I'll have to get you outside.

ALICE

We used to have a community garden.

RUTH

Well, you'll have one again soon.

GLORIA

Ida's out again.

RUTH

There's another star in her window this morning. *(to Alice)* We passed her house on the way in this morning.

GLORIA

That's so sad.

HELEN

Son or husband?

RUTH

I don't know, but with one son over there already, I can't imagine two.

DOROTHY

We should bring her over a casserole after work.

The group nods in agreement as Frank saunters over. His eyes look only at Alice.

FRANK

It's always nice to see a new girl on the floor. I could give you a tour of the place, if you like.

RUTH

I've already given her one, thank you though.

FRANK

If you ever need anything...

ALICE

Alice.

FRANK

Oh, she's proper. Well if you ever need anything, *Alice*, just come and see Frank. I'll take care of you. Helen, come see me in my office when you get a chance. There's something we need to discuss. And keep up the pace! The boss man wants our output double what it is now. No time to waste.

Frank climbs up to his office. Helen watches him as he leaves.

GLORIA

I don't think I could go any faster. And we only pack the boxes – imagine the mistakes that could get made if the women who stuff the bullets go any faster.

RUTH

Now that you mention it, I heard Frank say the other day that the factory was going to be inspected soon.

ALICE

Is that bad?

RUTH

Apparently, some bullets have been malfunctioning in the guns. It sounded bad and they need to know what factory the malfunctioning bullets are coming from.

DOROTHY

Well there's no way those bullets are coming from us. We would notice if we were packing bad bullets, right?

RUTH

I hope so.

GLORIA

What do you think Frank wants to talk to you about, Helen?

HELEN

I probably forgot to clock out yesterday. Silly me.

GLORIA

That's the third time he's called you into his office this week.

HELEN

Is it? I hadn't noticed. I'd better go see what he wants.

Helen stacks her boxes on the end of the table and makes her way up the stairs. As she does she touches up her hair, and adjusts her clothes before knocking on the door. After Helen enters the room, the women start to murmur amongst each other.

Gossip song:

WOMEN

DID YOU HEAR? DID YOU HEAR? DID YOU HEAR? HEAR? HEAR?

DID YOU SEE? DID YOU SEE? DID YOU SEE? SEE? SEE?

DID YOU KNOW? DID YOU KNOW? DID YOU KNOW? KNOW? KNOW? KNOW (X?)

WOMAN 1

I HEARD:

GLORIA

MOLLY MET MARK AT MIDNIGHT MIDWEEK, MEANWHILE MARK MOST
MISLEADINGLY MANEUVERED WITH MOLLY

WOMAN 2

HEATHER'S HUSBAND HARRY HIRED HELPING HANDS HORRENDOUSLY,
HEMORREDGING THE HORD INTO HAPPENSTANCES HORRIBLY

DOROTHY

PETUNIA PIONEERED PUTTING PEAS IN HER POTATO PATCH, PARALYZIING
PLETHORAS OF HER PLANT-PRODUCING PRODUCE BATCH

WOMEN

NOW WE KNOW, KNOW, KNOW. NOW WE KNOW, KNOW, KNOW. NOW WE KNOW,
KNOW, KNOW. KNOW(X?)

*Lights change as time passes. The women tidy up
their work spaces and start to get ready to leave for
the day. Boiler suits come off revealing pearl
necklaces and hair gets unpinned revealing perfect
curls. With the transition, **Leaving song:***

ENSEMBLE

GOOD BYE

GOOD DAY

SEE YOU AGAIN

I'M OFF TO HOME

PLEASE TAKE GOOD CARE // (GIVE MY REGARDS)

GOOD DAY!

*as the women leave the factory and head home,
into*

Scene Five – Cheater Lament and Cheating Reprise

*In Helen’s home, she is back from work and has
taken over the jobs of cooking dinner and watching
her two young children. She is frazzled. She talks to
herself as she mashes potatoes and chops
vegetables.*

*She begins to sing **the Cheater Lament:***

HELEN

I CHOP THE CARROTS

AND MASH THE POTATOES

I WASH AND CLEAN AND WONDER

WHERE THE DAY GOES

BUT WHEN I GET TO TAKE A BREATH

“MOMMY!”, “HONEY!”

WHAT MUST I DO NEXT?

OH, BUT SURE I LOVE MY HUSBAND

AND MY CHILDREN, I ADORE

BUT JUST THIS ONCE, MAYBE ONE MORE TIME

I WISH I COULD JUST CLOSE THE DOOR!

CHILDREN ARE MESSY, CHILDREN ARE LOUD
HUSBANDS ARE NOSY, HUSBANDS ARE PROUD
AND WIVES...
AND MOTHERS...

BUT ONCE A DAY – AND MAYBE TWICE
IF I KEEP MY EYES SHUT TIGHT
FRANKLY
I TAKE A BREATH
AND FRANKLY
HE'S GOT THE KISS OF DEATH

WELL IF THAT'S TRUE THEN ONE COULD SAY
I HAVE ONE FOOT IN THE GRAVE

BUT UNTIL THEN

I CHOP THE CARROTS
AND MASH THE POTATOES
I WASH AND CLEAN AND WONDER
WHERE THE DAY GOES

BUT WHEN I GET TO TAKE A BREATH

“HELEN”, “HELEN”

WHAT CAN I DO NEXT?

As she finishes, her husband HENRY enters. Henry is in a wheelchair. Helen gives him a quick kiss. The two kids immediately begin to climb all over him.

HENRY

Hey hey! You two get bigger by the second. What is your mother feeding you?

HELEN

The better question is what *your* mother feeds them while I’m at work. I came home today to two blurs instead of children.

HENRY

Did Grandmother give you sugar?

CHILDREN

No!

HENRY

Did she give you pie?

CHILDREN

Yes!

The children run off to play.

HELEN

There we go.

HENRY

She's doing us a favor. A little pie never hurt anyone.

HELEN

We'll see about that.

HENRY

They'll be asleep before dinner.

HELEN

I'm not sure that's a good thing, Henry.

HENRY

Then they won't. How was work?

HELEN

Long. Ruth brought a new girl with her today, from Great Britain.

HENRY

That was good of her.

HELEN

I suppose. Frank couldn't take his eyes off of her.

HENRY

Good for Frank.

HELEN

Henry!

HENRY

What?

HELEN

Just, don't say that. How was group?

HENRY

Good. Two more people showed up today. Who knew there were so many disabled veterans in the area?

HELEN

That's good. Well, not good but –

HENRY

It's good that they're finding us anyway. I might have to look for another group leader, I don't know if I can handle my circle getting any bigger.

HELEN

That's a good problem to have.

HENRY

It is. Anything else happen at work today?

HELEN

Nothing much.

HENRY

Do you think Frank and this new girl will hit it off?

Helen stills for a millisecond, Henry notices. He knows. This is purposeful.

HELEN

I have no idea.

HENRY

You didn't talk to Frank today?

HELEN

In passing. Why so many questions?

HENRY

I was just curious. Besides, you brought him up.

HELEN

I did.

HENRY

You did. It would be nice for him if they hit it off. Maybe he'll have a reason to get home and he'll stop asking you to stay late.

HELEN

He's only done that a few times.

HENRY

I suppose he asks everyone else to stay late too.

HELEN

I never said he didn't.

HENRY

Right.

HELEN

Something bothering you, Henry?

HENRY

No, just –

HELEN

Just curious. Great. Well I need to finish getting dinner ready.

HENRY

You want me to leave?

HELEN

Like I said, it's been a long day. Some peace might be nice.

HENRY

I hope you did talk to Frank. That way you're at least talking to someone, since you won't talk to your husband.

He doesn't leave. Silence. She stirs the potatoes.

Silence. She tries to cut vegetables. Silence. The

silence is unnerving.

HENRY (CONT.)

You really aren't going to say anything.

HELEN

I need some air.

Helen slams down the kitchen utensils and grabs

her coat, heading for the door.

HENRY

Where are you going?

HELEN

Out.

She's almost off the stage.

HENRY

Is that what we're calling Frank's house now? Because I thought we called that overtime.

*Henry shouts the end of his line as Helen is already closing the door behind her. Henry looks at the dinner and sighs. He struggles with the knife. The struggle prompts **Cheater Reprise**:*

HENRY

BUT ONCE A DAY AND MAYBE TWICE

IF I KEEP MY EYES SHUT TIGHT

FRANKLY

I PRETEND IT'S ALL FINE

AND FRANKLY

I PRETEND SHE'S STILL MINE

After the song:

HENRY

Kids, go across the street and ask your grandmother for more pie!

Blackout.

Scene Six – Letter Song

Roughly 6 months have passed. Ruth, James, and Alice sit in their living room. Ruth and Alice are knitting as they listen to FDR's Fireside Chats currently on the radio. James sits in the corner,

writing a letter. FDR's voice warbles throughout the room, as Ruth and Alice chat occasionally.

RUTH

You seem to be fitting in at the factory well.

ALICE

It's a great group of girls. I'm enjoying myself.

RUTH

Work isn't the only place you seem to be making friends. I know someone who is quite smitten with you.

Ruth nudges towards James, and Alice blushes.

ALICE

I don't know.

RUTH

I may be his mother but I have eyes. You two can't stop looking at each other. It's good for him.

ALICE

He makes me happy.

RUTH

I was worried how he was going to handle his father being drafted. The two were always so close and I knew if he wanted to enlist, I couldn't stop him. But the way you make him smile, thank you.

ALICE

For what?

RUTH

For keeping my son here with me. I know it's not fair, but having him here while Charles is...it just makes things better.

ALICE

I understand.

RUTH

Did James tell you we got a new letter from his father?

ALICE

About the promotion?

RUTH

Yes. It sounds like things are going well.

ALICE

Perhaps a higher station will keep him safe.

RUTH

Knowing my husband, it won't.

JAMES

What are you two talking about?

RUTH

Roosevelt.

ALICE

Women just swoon when we hear his voice.

RUTH

We can't help it. You might as well get used to it now, my son.

JAMES

Fine, fine. Don't tell me. I don't want to hear your gossip anyway. I'm not the least bit interested in the state of Dorothy's victory garden.

James smiles. By now, he is very used to the antics that occur when his mother and Alice pair off.

RUTH

If that's the case I won't tell you that her lettuce is finally growing in.

ALICE

Certainly don't tell him about her tomatoes.

RUTH

Oh, I shan't.

JAMES

Good! I don't want to know how good? Bad? (*he waits for an indication of the state of the tomatoes*) anyway. I have things to do.

James takes his letter and heads upstairs to his bedroom. Before he disappears out of sight, he lingers on the two women in the living room. He exits.

ALICE

Who knew gardening could involve so much intrigue?

RUTH

Honestly? I stopped caring about those lettuce heads a while ago.

The two share a contented laugh. A moment.

ALICE

FDR's voice is nice.

RUTH

I know.

In his room, James reads out the beginning of his letter, editing as he goes.

JAMES

Dear Mom, I'm sorry. I've enlisted in the army and I left this morning... I *had* to enlist in the army... Please don't be mad, but I couldn't stand by while others fought for my country any longer. (*mumbles, edits*) Please take care of Alice.

Alice, you know I love you... Alice, I love you, and I'll never stop. (*mumbles, edits*) My only regret is that I didn't get to say it in person, but will...

James finished out the letter mumbling the words to himself. At the end he signs the letter and begins to pack. Once he is done, he adjusts the letter on his pillow and slips out his window. Lights change as time passes. It is later that night. Ruth and Alice head up to bed.

ALICE

I'll see you in the morning. Sleep well!

RUTH

You too! I'm just going to check on James, it's not like him to go to bed so early.

Ruth knocks on James's door. When she receives no answer she cracks it slightly.

RUTH

James?

Ruth notices the room is empty and opens the door all the way. She sees the letter on the pillow.

RUTH

Alice?

*Ruth picks the letter off the bed as Alice enters the room. Ruth begins to read: **The Letter Song.***

RUTH (SPOKEN)

DEAR MOM,

RUTH(SUNG)

I'M SORRY

I HAD TO ENLIST IN THE ARMY

AND I'M LEAVING IN THE MORNING.

PLEASE DON'T BE MAD

BUT I COULDN'T STAND

BY WHILE OTHERS FOUGHT FOR MY COUNTRY

ANY LONGER.

PLEASE TAKE CARE OF ALICE.

(REPEAT UNDER NEXT PART)

ALICE (SUNG)

ALICE, I LOVE YOU.

YOU KNOW I LOVE YOU,

THAT WILL NEVER CHANGE.

AN OCEAN COULDN'T STOP US FROM MEETING,

A WAR WON'T KEEP US FROM LIVING.

I HAVE SO MUCH TO SAY

AND JUST ONE MORE THING TO DO.

MY ONLY REGRET IS THAT I DIDN'T ASK IN PERSON:

WILL YOU MARRY ME?

(BOTH PARTS CONTINUE REPEATING UNDER NEXT PART)

JAMES (SUNG)

I WILL MISS YOU BOTH DEARLY.

I'LL FIND DAD,

I'LL WRITE SOON.

YOUR SON,

YOUR FIANCE,

ALL

I'LL MISS YOU BOTH DEARLY.

JAMES AND RUTH

I'LL FIND DAD

JAMES AND ALICE

I'LL WRITE SOON

JAMES AND RUTH

YOUR SON,

JAMES AND ALICE

YOUR FIANCE,

RUTH AND ALICE

MY LOVE.

At the end of the song,

Blackout.

Scene Seven – Rosie the Riveter

Lights up on the factory midday, the women are deep in work – and conversation. Everything is humming along nicely.

GLORIA

Did you see the star in her window?

DOROTHY

Gold.

A moment of heavy silence.

HELEN

What do you think she's going to do now?

RUTH

What can she do? I imagine she'll take time off work.

DOROTHY

Working can help, sometimes. Keep your mind off of it.

ALICE

My mum always said staying busy helps.

RUTH

It can. Let's talk about something happier. How is William doing in school?

DOROTHY

He got first in his spelling bee the other day. He was very proud.

RUTH

That's nice.

DOROTHY

I didn't have the heart to tell him that everyone in the class "got first".

HELEN

They hadn't even had their wedding yet. He'd only just proposed.

RUTH

I thought we had changed the subject.

GLORIA

I can't even imagine –

RUTH

Then don't.

A sharper beat than expected. Alice stands.

ALICE

Excuse me for a moment.

Alice rushes out, passing Frank as he enters.

RUTH

James enlisted yesterday.

DOROTHY

I'm // so sorry.

GLORIA

I // shouldn't have...

HELEN

// We didn't know.

RUTH

He proposed to Alice in a letter he left behind.

Variations of "ahh" as the women put together why the conversation affected Alice the way it did. Frank takes the moment of silence to interrupt.

FRANK

What are my lovely dames talking about today?

The women reply in noncommittal mutterings, before

HELEN

Nothing much. Just our gardens.

FRANK

Must be nice to not have to worry about things.

DOROTHY

Right.

RUTH

What do you have to worry about?

FRANK

Ah – ah, probably shouldn't talk about it with the floor workers. The boss man wouldn't be too happy about that.

RUTH

Of course.

FRANK

Well, carry on then.

Frank makes eyes at Helen before heading off, upstairs to his office. As he does, he passes Alice stepping back to her seat.

FRANK (CONT.)

Get back to work.

Alice returns to her seat.

ALICE

Sorry about that.

GLORIA

No, we're sorry. We should have known.

ALICE

Really, it's alright. I'm just worried.

RUTH

We all are.

DOROTHY

What do you think Frank has to worry about?

GLORIA

You don't think they are laying people off, do you?

HELEN

No, we would have heard about that by now.

ALICE

I might know why.

RUTH

What do you mean?

ALICE

I overheard Frank in a meeting with the boss. It sounded like that inspector was delivering his final report. It's not good.

GLORIA

How not good?

ALICE

It's us. The malfunctioning bullets are coming from our factory.

HELEN

No.

ALICE

We've been pushing output and cutting corners. The formula for the gunpowder is off, it's blowing up the guns in the soldiers' hands. It's our fault.

DOROTHY

We're killing them.

RUTH

We have to do something.

ALICE

What can we do?

GLORIA

What if we killed someone we know? A husband or son – oh god my brother.

RUTH

This is not our fault.

DOROTHY

How could it not be? We're the ones who packed the bullets. We set aside the ones that look off, and clearly, we haven't been doing that. We've been packing bad bullets.

RUTH

The only thing any of us are guilty of is listening to the men who keep telling us to go faster, push production. We knew it was dangerous. We said it was dangerous.

HELEN

And we did it anyway.

RUTH

Now is the time to change that. It's time we take things into our own hands.

ALICE

But how?

RUTH

No one knows the floor better than us. We are Riveters, aren't we?

Rosie the Riveter song:

WOMAN #1

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY WHEN THERE'S WOMEN
MAKING THE BULLETS FOR OUR GUNMEN

WOMAN #2

WE'RE ALWAYS HERE WHEN THERE'S WORK TO DO
SO, IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION, LET'S REVIEW:

RUTH

WE CAN DO IT!

ENSEMBLE

WE CAN DO IT!

WOMAN #3

GARDENS ARE NOT OUR ONLY VICTORY
WORKING ALL DAY INSIDE THE FACTORY

ALICE

WHEN WOMEN ARE IN THE LEAD
YOU CAN BE SURE WE WILL SUCCEED

RUTH

WE CAN DO IT!

ENSEMBLE

WE CAN DO IT!

ROSIE'S GOT NOTHING ON US

WE'RE MORE THAN BOWS AND A BUST

WE'RE GOING TO FIGHT FOR OUR FREEDOM
AND WE'RE GOING TO SEE IT THROUGH

RUTH

SO, CAN WE DO IT?

ENSEMBLE

YES, WE CAN DO IT!

RUTH

NOW I'M LOOKING AT SUPERVISOR
MY SIGHTS ARE SET HIGHER AND HIGHER
WHEN I SAY IM A RIVETER
I MEAN THAT I CAN'T BE DETERED

I CAN DO IT!

ENSEMBLE

YOU CAN DO IT!

WE WILL DO IT!

IT'S TIME WE PUT WOMEN ON TOP
WORKING TOGETHER WE CANNOT STOP
UNTIL WE DO IT

WE CAN DO IT!

Blackout. End of Act One.

ACT TWOScene One – New Normal Song and Leaving Reprise

*Lights up on a series of women in their homes,
making breakfast and getting ready for the
day/work. We hear the **New Normal** song:*

WOMAN # 1

EVERY MONRING I WAKE UP AND COOK MY CHILDREN BREAKFAST
WITH EACH NEW DAWN MY MIND GOES BACK TO HOW MUCH DAYLIGHT HAS
PASSED

THE HOUSE IS QUIETER
HIS CHAIR IS EMPTIER

IT'S BEEN EIGHT MONTHS
AND THIS IS OUR NEW NORMAL

WOMAN #2

BEFORE I GO TO WORK I DO THE WASH AND HANG IT DRY
I'LL COMMENT ON THE WEATHER THOUGH THERE'S NEVER A REPLY

THE LOAD IS LIGHTER
THE BED IS COLDER

IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS

AND THIS IS MY NEW NORMAL

WOMAN #3

SOMETIMES ON MY FRONT MAT I'LL FIND AN ARMY LETTER

MY HUSBAND READS IT OVER COFFEE AND IT MAKES MY WHOLE DAY BETTER

HIS FRIENDS ARE GONE

THE STAR IS DRAWN

IT'S BEEN TOO LONG

AND THIS IS OUR NEW NORMAL

ALL

SOMETIMES IT'S ALMOST AS IF THEY HAVEN'T LEFT AT ALL

BUT WE'RE STILL HERE

AND AFTER EIGHT MONTHS/TWO YEARS/TOO LONG

IT'S NICE TO KNOW

AT LEAST WE HAVE A

QUIETER/COLDER/LONELIER

BRAND

NEW

NORMAL

The women move synchronously with each other within their own little worlds. By the end of the song all the women are ready to walk out the door and head to work. The song ends.

*We then go in to the **Leaving reprise**:*

ENSEMBLE

GOOD BYE

GOOD DAY

SEE YOU AGAIN

I'M OFF TO WORK

PLEASE TAKE GOOD CARE

GOOD DAY!

this time following the women clocking in to work and starting their days. When the song ends,

Fade to

Scene Two – Work/Gossip Reprise and Hope Song

Immediately into the factory floor, the women are all bustling with excitement, flitting from work place to work place, sharing news and probably not really

working at all. All the women are there, but Ruth is noticeably missing.

DOROTHY

Do you really think?

GLORIA

I hope it's true.

ALICE

I wonder what's taking so long...

DOROTHY

That has to mean it's something good, right?

HELEN

I don't know. It doesn't take long to give good news. Besides, what would happen to Frank?

ALICE

Who cares?

GLORIA

He'll probably be promoted; they always take care of their own first.

DOROTHY

But this time, our girl is getting taken care of. Finally!

HELEN

We don't know that yet...

*Somewhere in here, perhaps with a line or two before to tie it in, we get a **reprise of both the gossip song and the worker song:***

ENSEMBLE 1: (THIS REPEATS OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL LINES)

FIX. FILL. STACK.

ENSEMBLE 2: (SIM.)

DID YOU HEAR?

DID YOU SEE?

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

ENSEMBLE 1:

WOMEN WORK AT WOMEN'S WORK

ENSEMBLE 2: (OVERLAPPED WITH ENSEMBLE 1 MAKING THE SAME WORK NOISES AS
IN THE WORK SONG)

WOMEN WILL WARRANT WEIGHTY WORK WINNING REVERENCE.

MEN MAKE MISTKAES WHEN MISCALCULATING MATRONLY EXCELLENCE.

ENSEMBLE 1:

AND A WOMAN'S WORK IS THE WORK THEY DO

ENSEMBLE 2: (REPEATED THROUGHOUT THE NEXT FEW LINES)

NOW WE KNOW

NOW WE KNOW

NOW WE KNOW

ENSEMBLE 1: (SIM)

HISTORY TELLS US WOMEN WORK

SOCIETY TELLS US WOMEN WORK

WOMEN WORK IN THE WAR

ALL:

NOW WE KNOW (X?) // FIX. FILL STACK. (X?)

DOROTHY

Just imagine!

ALICE

It would be nice. It's about time, this already couldn't function without her. Really, they're just making it official.

HELEN

It would be nice to see a woman –

GLORIA

She's coming!

All the girls "Shhh" and shush each other, scrambling back to their places and trying to look casual. Naturally they fail, all too excited to focus on their work and pretend they don't know what's going on. Even so, it is suspiciously quiet as the girls pretend to be hard at work. Ruth enters, noticing the chaos brewing just underneath the surface. She says nothing. She takes her seat and begins to work. After a moment Frank enters, silently goes up to his office. A few beats later.

RUTH

I'm the new foreman.

*An eruption. A cacophony. All the women celebrate
and it takes a moment for things to calm down
again.*

GLORIA

Congratulations!

ALICE

You deserve it.

HELEN

You're really going to be good.

DOROTHY

I'm so excited!

RUTH

Alright, alright. Just know I won't go any easier on you! We're going to make this factory the best it can be before the men come home!

*Once again, a flurry starts to build with excitement
and mutterings.*

GLORIA

Sounds like someone already has a few ideas.

RUTH

Well we're going to start with quality inspections and a suggestion box and more breaks to ensure focus on the job and –

Ruth is cut off by the entrance of a uniformed soldier. The room falls silent as everyone notices and knows what it means. They are waiting to hear a name.

SOLDIER

Miller.

The crowd around Ruth parts as she slowly makes her way to the soldier, who hands her an envelope.

SOLDIER (CONT.)

Ma'am.

He salutes Ruth and then exits. Ruth opens the envelope and reads:

RUTH

On behalf of the Department of the Army it is my sad duty to confirm that your son, [Position] James [Last Name] is presumed to be Missing In Action. This presumption was...

Ruth stops reading. Perhaps she crumples. Perhaps she stills. Her worst fears are confirmed.

ALICE

No!

Silence. This isn't unfamiliar and still no one knows what to say. What can you say?

HELEN

Missing in action...

GLORIA

So soon.

DOROTHY

Hush.

ALICE

Missing isn't gone. I know he's *gone* but he's not...right?

DOROTHY

There's always hope.

HELEN

Ruth...

RUTH

Hmm? It's alright.

*Ruth balls up the letter and attempts to straighten
herself.*

GLORIA

(gently)

It's not alright.

RUTH

It's nothing other women here haven't dealt with. Alice and I will get through.

DOROTHY

You have us.

RUTH

I know.

HELEN

Ruth, we've always had you. You have us.

Hope song:

HELEN

IN TIMES OF DARKNESS

WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE YOUR WAY

LET US BE YOUR CALMNESS

WE ALL ARE HERE TO STAY

GLORIA AND DOROTHY

IN TIMES OF BLACKNESS WHEN YOU CAN'T FEEL WHAT'S TRUE

LET US BE YOUR BRIGHTNESS

WE WILL SEE IT THROUGH

HELEN, GLORIA, DOROTHY

BECAUSE WHEN EVERYTHING IS DARK

AND HOPE IS OUT OF SIGHT

LOVE IS WHAT UNITES US

OUR HEARTS WILL ALL SHINE BRIGHT

ENSEMBLE

THE FIRE IN YOUR SOUL WILL NOT GO OUT TONIGHT

THE STRENGTH YOU HAVE INSIDE WILL NOT BE LOST TONIGHT

THE PATH OUT OF THE DARKNESS MAY BE WINDING

BUT THE LIVES THAT LEAD THE WAY ARE BLINDING

BECAUSE WHEN EVERYTHING IS DARK
 AND HOPE IS OUT OF SIGHT
 LOVE IS WHAT UNITES US
 OUR HEARTS WILL ALL SHINE BRIGHT

RUTH AND ALICE

BECAUSE WHEN EVERYTHING IS DARK
 AND HOPE IS OUT OF SIGHT
 LOVE IS WHAT UNITES US

RUTH

LOVE IS WHAT UNITES US

ALL

OUR HEARTS WILL ALL SHINE BRIGHT

Blackout.

Scene Three – March Song

*An undetermined war front. Immediately, **the***

March song:

MALE ENSEMBLE

DON THE NEW OLIVE AND KHAKI
 FIGHT FOR THE OLD RED, WHITE, AND BLUE
 DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE TALL OR STOCKY

FIGHT FOR THE OLD RED, WHITE, AND BLUE

DEFEND YOUR COUNTRY

STAMP OUT THE AXIS

UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU TODAY

STRAIGHTEN YOUR SPINE AND SNAP YOUR CAP

FIGHT FOR THE OLD RED, WHITE, AND BLUE

TOGETHER WE CAN PUSH THEM BACK

FIGHT FOR THE OLD RED, WHITE, AND BLUE

DEFEND YOUR COUNTRY

KEEP THEM FIGHTING

UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU TODAY

MAN #1

HE VOLUNTEERED FOR SUBMARINE SERVICE

MAN #2

HE JOINED THE U.S. AIR FORCE

ENSEMBLE

UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU TO ENLIST TODAY

(OVERLAPPING)

JOIN US TODAY / X MARKS THE SPOT / WE CAN DO IT

THE WORD IS MUST / I'LL GIVE 'EM HELL / SECURE YOUR FUTURE

HE'S WATCHING YOU / IT'S A VICTORY JOB / DON'T BE FOOLISH

WHERE SKILL AND COURAGE// (COUNT)

MAKE EVERY MINUTE// (COUNT)

FIGHT FOR YOUR COUNTRY

TOGETHER WE WIN

UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU TODAY

FIGHT FOR THE OLD RED, WHITE, AND BLUE

Boasting of pride and nationalism: a march. There is marching. Obviously. After the song we transition into an ongoing battle, the American company in retreat. The stage is dark, smoky, perhaps it's actually hard to make out what is happening. We see an officer, Charles, helping an injured soldier off the battle field and to safety. He hands the soldier off to someone else, and they limp off together.

RICHARD

You can't go back, it's not safe.

CHARLES

There's only one more, I can do it.

RICHARD

We're retreating –

CHARLES

I'm fine, I'm still standing.

RICHARD

We're retreating for a reason, Charles! You're going to get yourself killed, and for what? Think about your son!

CHARLES

I am thinking about my son! What if that was him out there? That's someone's son out there, how can I just leave him to die? As long as I'm standing, I'm going to help him stand too.

As Charles begins to exit, RICHARD physically stops him, either holding him back or blocking him.

RICHARD

Think about your wife.

CHARLES

What good am I to Ruth if I don't –

RICHARD

What good are you to her if you're dead? You can't Charles, you just can't.

CHARLES

No, I –

RICHARD

You've done enough. More than any man here. Save yourself.

A riddle of gunfire intensifies, perhaps we hear an explosion. Charles and Richard duck offstage to safety. In the far corner we see a beaten and bloodied soldier drag himself onstage, clearly about to die. After a moment, the soldier dies. We see that it is James.

Fade into,

Scene Four – Father’s Lament

Back at the American camp, in Charles’ quarters. James’ body still lies in the corner. Richard enters.

CHARLES

Any news?

RICHARD

Sit tight and wait for orders. We’ll hear from the general sometime tonight.

CHARLES

So sometime tomorrow then.

RICHARD

That’s to be assumed.

A beat.

RICHARD (CONT.)

We’ve got the final report, if you want to see it.

CHARLES

So soon.

RICHARD

Death is one thing the army does on time.

CHARLES

Did the soldier...?

RICHARD

Probably.

CHARLES

Did you read it?

RICHARD

No. I'll leave it with you.

Richard leaves an envelope with Charles and exits.

*Charles contemplates the envelope. **The Father's***

Lament:

CHARLES

I HEAR THEM

CRIES ECHOING LOUDER THAN THE GUNFIRE

I HEAR THEM

I SEE HIM

HAND OUTSTRETCHED THROUGH THE SMOKE

I SEE HIM

ONE LESS SOLDIER LEFT TO DIE

ONE MORE SOUL HAS JOINED THE DAMNED
IF THERE IS STILL A GOD ON HIGH
HE MUST SEE THIS WORLD CONDEMNED

I LEFT HIM
I SAVED MY LIFE INSTEAD OF HIS
I COULDN'T SAVE HIM

HOW COULD I HAVE DONE THIS
THIS ONE I COULDN'T SAVE
ENLISTED MEN BECOME UNLISTED DEAD
AND NOW HE'S HEADING TO HIS GRAVE

SAVE THEM
MAKE IT ALL WORTH IT IN THE END
SAVE ME

As Charles finishes the last part of the song (and into the next part with Henry), an American flag waves onstage. James's body is picked up and placed on a pile of other bodies. Slowly, the flag is lowered and placed on the bodies. Magically replacing the previously waving flag, a tattered flag

appears and begins to wave as Henry sings his ending bit.

After Charles finishes singing (the music continues), he opens the envelope.

CHARLES (SPOKEN)

Oh, James!

*Charles exits and Henry replaces him, just as the tattered flag begins to wave. He finishes out Charles's **lament**.*

HENRY

ONE LESS SOLDIER LEFT TO DIE

ONE MORE SOUL HAS JOINED THE DAMNED

IF THERE IS STILL A GOD ON HIGH

HE MUST SEE THIS MAN CONDEMNED

Fade into,

Scene Five – Cheating Trio

A seamless transition as Henry finishes out the end of the song. After a beat he breaks down in tears. We notice Helen watching from the corner – for more than a moment she does nothing but watch. Helen enters to comfort Henry.

HELEN

Are you alright? What's going on?

HENRY

I'm fine, I'm fine.

HELEN

You aren't fine. Talk to me, tell me what's wrong. I'm here for you.

I've always been here for you, tell me what happened.

HENRY

I don't want to talk about it.

HELEN

Don't be silly. I'm your wife – who else would you talk to?

Henry clearly begins to get irritated. He struggles to stop crying and stay calm simultaneously.

He manages to laugh.

HELEN (CONT.)

What's so funny about talking to your wife?

HENRY

Thinking about who my wife talks to.

HELEN

Excuse me?

HENRY

Thinking about who you talk to. Is. Funny.

HELEN

I see.

HENRY

Do you?

HELEN

No, actually. I don't. I would ask you to explain yourself but you clearly aren't in the talking mood.

Henry is fully focused on his anger now.

HENRY

No, no. Let's talk about it – we might as well. Do you want to start or shall I?

Helen nervously falls silent.

HENRY (CONT)

I'll start then, not a problem. How long have you been sleeping with Frank?

HELEN

You're upset. You don't know what you're saying.

Helen tries to wheel him off the stage, but Henry grabs the wheels, stopping her cold.

HENRY

Don't deny it.

HELEN

I'm not –

HENRY

Just stop. Don't deny it, but I don't need you to confirm it either. I already know. I've known for a while.

A beat. Helen's silence confirms it.

HENRY (CONT)

Answer one question. You owe me that.

Is it because I'm in this chair?

HELEN

What? No! Of course not.

HENRY

I regret every single day being in this chair and not getting to fight alongside my fellow soldiers and men. I am *stuck* in this seat because 20-some years ago I did my duty, and now I can't do it again. I don't think that makes me less of a man. Do you? Because I struggle every day – I want to be there, fighting alongside them again - but at least I can home to a loving wife and two children who don't think less of me because I can't walk. At least I have that.

HELEN

I –

HENRY

It's over.

HELEN

What?

HENRY

I can't do this anymore.

HELEN

No.

HENRY

I don't want to do this anymore.

HELEN

Let's talk about this.

HENRY

I think we just did.

HELEN

Please, just listen to me. We can work through this. What about the kids?

HENRY

I'll take the kids to my mother's. She'll be thrilled.

HELEN

What about me?

HENRY

Seems like your foreman can take care of you.

HELEN

But I love you.

HENRY

I love you too, and that's the problem.

A very final beat. Both desperate and resolute.

HENRY (CONT)

I want you out of the house tonight.

HELEN

You can't do this.

HENRY

You didn't have to –

HELEN

Don't you dare kick me out! Where am I supposed to go?

*After a while of sadness, things are beginning to
heat back up again.*

HENRY

I don't care! You've lost the right to my concern months ago.

HELEN

Don't be an asshole. I'm still your wife and –

HENRY

You're not my wife anymore! Don't you get that?

Go to Frank. Maybe he can give you more overtime.

*Henry wheels off stage. A few seconds later a
suitcase is thrown onstage.*

HELEN

Bastard!

(to herself) Maybe I will go to Frank. At least he shows me he cares.

*A bit of a travelling montage as Helen gathers a few
of her essentials into the suitcase and sets out to
find Frank. She winds up on Frank's doorstep,
ringing the bell. Along the way, she has perked
herself up and found a rose. She readies it to
present to Frank when he opens the door. After a
beat, the door swings open. One of the young*

factory floor workers, IRENE, stands in the doorway.

HELEN

Oh.

IRENE

Can I help you?

HELEN

I'm sorry, I – I must have the wrong house.

IRENE

Helen, right? Two tables down at the factory.

HELEN

Yes. Yeah, that's me. I didn't know you lived in this area.

IRENE

Oh, I don't, Frank invited – oh! You must be looking for Frank.

HELEN

No, it's ok, you don't // have to...

IRENE

//Frank! Sweetie! You've got a visitor.

FRANK (OFF STAGE)

Who is it?

IRENE

Helen, from the factory!

A clatter of noise as something drops and steps run to the door. Frank appears.

FRANK

Helen.

HELEN

Frank.

FRANK

You're here.

HELEN

You've got company.

FRANK

I've got company.

HELEN

I'm here.

FRANK

Yes.

HELEN

I'll leave.

FRANK

Wait – *(to Irene)* could you give us just the tiniest moment, doll face?

Irene heads inside.

HELEN

So...

FRANK

Listen honey, you know we were never exclusive, right? You're great and all // but I like to keep things casual.

HELEN

I left Henry.

FRANK

Good for you.

HELEN

Well, I suppose he left me.

FRANK

What are you doing here? Is that a suitcase?

HELEN

I'm getting divorced. I've been kicked out of my house.

FRANK

What's that got to do with me?

HELEN

It's because of you! Henry found out, somehow, and now he's taking the kids and leaving!

FRANK

It's not my fault you couldn't manage your life.

HELEN

Frank...

FRANK

What do you want me to say here? I love you? Move in with me? I can't do that, doll face. I don't do serious.

HELEN

Doll face?

FRANK

You'll be alright.

HELEN

That's it then.

FRANK

If that's what you want. I need to get back to Irene.

HELEN

Wouldn't want to keep her waiting.

FRANK

No need to be mad, doll. We'll see each other at work.

HELEN

Swell.

FRANK

Hey listen, my office door is always open. Stop by if you want help feeling better.

*Frank saunters off stage, leaving Helen alone. She drops the rose and begins **the Cheater's trio**:*

HELEN

I CHOPPED THE CARROTS AND MASHED THE POTATOES

I WASHED AND CLEANED AND WONDERED WHERE THE DAY GOES

BUT WHEN I TRIED TO TAKE A BREATH

(beat) (beat)

WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

As the song continues, Frank and Henry enter for their parts. By the end of the song, the rose on the ground has been walked and rolled over, leaving it utterly decimated:

(ALL THREE SING AT THE SAME TIME.)

HELEN

WHAT DO I DO

NOW THAT I'M HERE

WHICH WAY TO TURN

WHEN THERE'S SO MUCH TO FEAR

WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY

WHEN EVERYTHING WAS FINE

WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY

WHEN I STILL CALLED YOU MINE

I WANTED TOO MUCH

I ASKED FOR SOME MORE

HIS LOVE WAS MY CRUTCH

HE LOVED ME BEFORE

JUST A TURN OF A CLOCK

TO SEE HOW IT MIGHT FEEL

NOW MY HEADS ON THE BLOCK

BUT WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES ITS REAL

HENRY LOVED ME ALWAYS

WE MADE IT THROUGH SO MUCH

FRANK LOVED MY BODY

I STILL CAN FEEL HIS TOUCH

BUT NOW I'M ALONE

NOW THEY'RE BOTH GONE

WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY

WHEN EVERYTHING WAS FINE

WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY

WHEN I STILL CALLED YOU MINE

JUST A LITTLE MORE TIME

(beat)

(beat)

TO BE LOVED

WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY

WHEN EVERYTHING WAS FINE

WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY

WHEN I STILL CALLED YOU MINE

HENRY

SHE CAME INTO MY LIFE

SHE WALTZED OUT THE DOOR

I GAVE HER MY HEART

BUT SHE WANTED MORE

WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY

WHEN EVERYTHING WAS FINE

WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY

WHEN I STILL CALLED YOU MINE

I LOVED HER TOO MUCH

WAS IT ME SHE ABHORED?

SHE WAS MY CRUTCH

NOW MY HEART'S ON THE FLOOR

JUST A TURN OF A CLOCK
TO SEE HOW IT MIGHT FEEL
NOW MY HEADS ON THE BLOCK
BUT WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES ITS REAL

I'LL NEVER FORGET FEELINGS OF HER ARMS IN MINE
I'LL ALWAYS FEEL HER SIGHS INTO MY SHOULDER
I LOST MYSELF IN WAR – WAS THAT MY CRIME?
IN THE LOVE WE COULD NOT LIVE WAS I THE BOULDER

BUT NOW I'M ALL ALONE
NOW THAT SHE'S GONE

WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY
WHEN EVERYTHING WAS FINE
WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY
WHEN I STILL CALLED YOU MINE

JUST A LITTLE MORE TIME

(beat)

TO HAVE LOVE

(beat)

WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY
WHEN EVERYTHING WAS FINE
WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY
WHEN I STILL CALLED YOU MINE

FRANK

IT WAS EASY IN THE BEGINNING
ACROSS THE ROOM WE LOOKED
IT'S ALMOST HARMLESS IN THE START
BUT WHEN I TOUCHED HER I WAS HOOKED

WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY
WHEN EVERYTHING WAS FINE
WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY
WHEN I STILL CALLED YOU MINE

IT'S NOT MY FAULT THE GIRL CAUGHT FEELING
I CAN'T SAY IT HASN'T HAPPENED BEFORE
MY MOVES ARE KNOWN TO SEND 'EM REELING
FOR LOVING, DOLLFACE, I'VE NEVER BEEN POOR

JUST A TURN OF A CLOCK
TO SEE HOW IT MIGHT FEEL

NOW MY HEADS ON THE BLOCK
BUT WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES ITS REAL

OUR PASSION WILL BURN ALWAYS
WE NEVER TALKED THAT MUCH
I'VE ALWAYS LOVED HER BODY
I CAN ALMOST FEEL HER TOUCH

BUT NOW I'M ALL ALONE
NOW THAT SHE'S GONE

WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY
WHEN EVERYTHING WAS FINE
WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY
WHEN I STILL CALLED YOU MINE

JUST A LITTLE MORE TIME
TO FEEL LOVE

(beat)

(beat)

WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY
WHEN EVERYTHING WAS FINE

WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY
WHEN I STILL CALLED YOU MINE

Blackout.

Scene Six – Rosie Reprise

A busy day at the factory, but there is a distinct air of efficiency on the floor. Movements are synchronized and precise. A man in a clip board stalks about the floor, and all the women's eyes follow him as he goes. Ruth walks beside him, confident and tall. She is being questioned.

INSPECTOR

How were you able to maintain the quantity while simultaneously slowing down the rate of output?

RUTH

We began to offer more overtime hours for the women already working here, and also hired a few more hands to spread the work load more reasonably across employees.

INSPECTOR

Sounds expensive.

RUTH

It was. But I understand that the damage we were doing under our previous system would have been far more expensive, not to mention deadly.

INSPECTOR

I see your point. You've accounted for quantity, but how do you ensure quality in such a massive operation? That was the initial problem, was it not?

RUTH

Ultimately, I believe that was why I was promoted and the original foreman is now supervising another, less crucial, area.

INSPECTOR

An unconventional choice.

RUTH

How do you mean?

INSPECTOR

Well because you're a ...in a supervisory...

Ruth looks on "innocently" at him until he feels uncomfortable, and gives up attempting to finish his sentence.

INSPECTOR (CONT)

Yes. Well. What other measures have you implemented?

RUTH

As you can see, the workers are now utilizing a new method of inspection, and are working together to double check each other's work and ensure a fluid line of work.

INSPECTOR

Everything seems to be in order.

RUTH

I agree.

INSPECTOR

My official report will be sent to the factory by the end of the week. I have to say, however, the *problem* has clearly been solved. As of today, it has been over a month since this factory has produced a maladaptive bullet, and that seems to be largely due to your leadership. Well done Mrs...

RUTH

Please call me Ruth.

INSPECTOR

Well done, Ruth. We couldn't have done it without you and your Riveters.

RUTH

We are happy to do it. Thank you so much, I look forward to reading your report.

The two shake hands and the inspector departs. Ruth waits for him to leave before cheering. All the women follow her cue and begin to celebrate.

RUTH

I was so nervous.

GLORIA

You didn't look it.

DOROTHY

You looked so professional and calm. He was impressed!

RUTH

I was impressed! The factory is cleared, all thanks to your hard work.

ALICE

Please, you *are* this factory. None of this would have been possible without you. None of it.

HELEN

Sure, but guess who will take the credit.

RUTH

That's not what matters to me. We're saving lives. That's what's important.

Rosie the Riveter Reprise:

RUTH

THE WORK WE DO HERE IS JUST AS VITAL

AS ANY MAN'S WHO HAS A TITLE

SOON OUR BANNER WILL BE UNFURLED

AND WOMEN WILL RULE THE WORLD

WE CAN DO IT!

ENSEMBLE

WE CAN DO IT!

ROSIE'S GOT NOTHING ON US

WE'RE MORE THAN BOWS AND A BUST

WE'RE GOING TO FIGHT FOR OUR FREEDOM

AND WE'RE GOING TO SEE IT THROUGH

GLORIA

WE CAN DO IT!

DOROTHY

BECAUSE WE'LL WORK FOR IT!

ENSEMBLE

WE WILL DO IT!

IT'S TIME WE PUT WOMEN ON TOP

WORKING TOGETHER WE CANNOT STOP

UNTIL WE DO IT

WE CAN DO IT!

Blackout.

Scene Seven

Alice and Ruth bustle about their living room, cleaning re-arranging Christmas decorations. It is Christmas, 1944. The two chat casually as they move about, wearing aprons. Gentle Christmas music plays from the radio.

ALICE

It's nice to have some time off of work.

RUTH

I almost don't know what to do with myself.

ALICE

You've certainly been busy lately.

RUTH

Being noticed by the big boss isn't all its cracked up to be.

ALICE

It never is.

A chuckle.

RUTH

I'm almost done putting together the training program.

ALICE

That's fantastic! I'm sure it will really help.

RUTH

The first two factories they've tested it at are running smoothly. Just a few more kinks to work out and they'll be implementing it in munitions factories across the nation.

ALICE

A woman touching the entire country.

RUTH

I can't believe it.

ALICE

You deserve it!

A timer goes off in the kitchen.

ALICE (CONT)

That will be the casserole.

Alice exits.

RUTH

Smells delicious.

The doorbell rings.

RUTH (CONT)

I've got it!

Ruth wipes her hands on her apron and turns off the radio. She opens the door to find her husband, standing with a letter in his hands and looking grim. His expression breaks for a moment as he looks at his wife for the first time in years. Ruth throws her arms around him as they embrace. Charles is stiff and unreceptive. After a beat he softens, and folds into the hug. This lasts for a while. Eventually, he pulls away and Ruth does the same. Ruth goes to speak before she sees the letter in his hand. She takes it from him and goes inside, sitting down. He follows and sits close next to her. Charles knows what the letter says, and he wants to comfort his wife as she goes through the same thing he did. After a beat Ruth opens the letter and reads: her son is dead. Shock. Disbelief. Despair. The two experience the loss of their son together and soon

melt into each other. Alice is just on stage, and understands what is going on. She has her own moment of reaction before Charles notices. He invites her into their grief. The three of them share a moment of intense and horrifying solidarity in their sadness, emptiness, etc.

Blackout.

Scene Eight – Closing Number

Just as in the opening, Ruth is once again onstage alone, in front of the curtain. As she nears the end of her monologue, the curtain slowly opens and we see the entire cast behind her. Instead of Ruth stepping back to join the scene, by the end of this monologue, the entire cast has stepped forward to join her. Perhaps, towards the end, voices begin to add to the monologue until everyone says the final phrase.

RUTH

An unnamed Rosie the Riveter once said, “The summer of 1945 was not a happy and glorious time. The summer of 1945 was a time of great loss and unabounding grief. A time of heartbreak and foreign places, a time of vanity and greed, a time of war and misfortune, a time of impulse and death. But most of all, the summer of 1945 was a time of change. Change that would one day shape the country into a great nation. But before such greatness could be achieved, much like the

ebb and flow of a tide, despair and destruction had to come first. Regardless of the pain it caused, without it, we could not adequately appreciate the simple moments of joy and beauty of life.

Without the summer of 1945 our lives would have never changed for the better.”

*Goes directly into **Closing song** – an amalgamation of several of the songs throughout the show, focusing primarily on **Rosie the Riveter**, the **Work Song**, and the **Hope song**.*

Fade out.

THE END

Additional Design and Production Notes

The following sections are a collaboration between Maggie Higginbotham and each respective designer, imagining what their contribution might look like were this piece to become a fully produced show.

Score – Connor Cochran

While not pure jazz, the overarching theme of this musical score would be “musical theater being jazz”, with jazz and big band styles clearly influencing the entire score, sans a select few numbers. As a composer, Connor would draw inspiration from both Billy Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald. Specifically, for the Work Song, Connor would look to “Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Duke Ellington Songbook”, and would ideally combine Fitzgerald’s joyful, hot jazz with a more determined sound.

Even as jazz and big band is the main influence for the score, the songs themselves have the opportunity to be a bit eclectic, and to dip into many different musical styles. Two examples of this discussed were Alice’s music having a more classical, Rodgers and Hammerstein-esque style as the Ingenue, and the March song taking on a John Philip Sousa style (but perhaps in a minor key). In addition to a stylistic overview of the score, we discussed in particular the Letter Song being in a minor third triad.

Choreography – Nate Snyder

Drawing from the musical style, the dance will largely be jazz and big band inspired, with some standard musical theater technique intermixed throughout. While some songs will have very specific, stylized, and synchronous choreography (such as the Work Song, Gossip Song, and the March Song), the majority of the pieces will be movement-focused with hints of

dance. This will be achieved by working with “casual dancers”, or actors whose primary training is not in dance, to create improvised dance that is solidified throughout rehearsals - this mode of dance will highlight the subtle and isolatable movements that jazz allows for.

In contrast to the more subtle use of dance, the Opening Number will be a dance spectacle that starts out as social dancing before narrativizing the choreography. This sort of spectacle will be used sparingly (and require trained dancers) throughout the show to emphasize the “real world” environment, and accentuate the technique and pizzazz when it does occur.

Costumes – Haley Williams

Overall, the costume idea for the entire show is to keep concrete, historical accurateness across characters, from uniforms to aprons. This means pants/overalls/boiler suits and bandanas in the factory, and skirts/dresses and aprons – and perhaps the occasional pant – at home. In terms of specific characters, Ruth’s style is conservative and practical, but not old. She is progressive and confident, and will wear pants the most out of the principle women. Depending on the actress, a strong blue or green would be a good color palette for her. While Ruth is derived from Rosie the Riveter, we want to avoid a direct comparison visually between the two until she gets promoted, in which case her headscarf switches to red.

In contrast, Helen dresses bold, flashy, and puts a lot of emphasis on the way she looks – and at times we see that effort. Helen remains almost exclusively in dresses (outside of the factory), and wears dresses with a lot of ruching. She leans into her looks and there should be a marked difference between Ruth’s more modest style and Helen’s. Helen’s color palette should be a bold red. Compared to Helen, Alice is youthful, elegant, and effortless. While there aren’t too many noticeable differences between British and American fashion for young women at the

time, her hair and makeup definitely land British. The most noteworthy costume for Alice is her arrival in the port, fresh off the boat. A classic off the boat outfit at the time included a coat, gloves, and handkerchief. This helps to give her a more accurate upper-middle class look compared to the women closer to her in age, such as Gloria and Dorothy (who would have a green and yellow color palette) who are much more middle class.

In addition to the women's looks, the men's clothing should also fit the time, with personal differences. Frank, for example, should look just as sleezy as he acts, perhaps unbuttoning one more button than he should. On the other hand, Henry dresses responsibly and cleanly, maintaining a clean-shaven face and a military style haircut. Overall, we want the costumes of this world to contribute to the historical accurateness of the piece, while at the same time adding personal touches and differences that ground the characters in the reality of being whole, real individuals.

Set – Nora Hundertmark

Set in Savannah, Georgia, the set will consist of three concrete spaces as well as a myriad of abstract ones. The three main playing spaces will be the factory, Ruth's house, and Helen's house. It's important that these three scene settings are concrete for two reasons: the first because they share the most playing space, and secondly it helps to emphasize the idea of women at home and women at work. These sets will be detailed and historically accurate, further helping to ground the audience in the time period.

In addition to these three main concrete settings, other scene settings worth noting are the port and the battlefield. These, among others will be more abstract representations, letting the actors ground the reality of the space. Ideally the three concrete spaces will be revolving and

movable, allowing the playing space to be cleared for other scenes. Finally, throughout the entirety of the piece despite location, there will be a backdrop in Rosie the Riveter's colors (red and yellow), creating a visual line throughout the entire piece, despite the time and distance the show travels.

From Research to Musical Draft: The Connection and Conclusion

In the research portion of my thesis, I have established a structure Golden Age musicals followed throughout their era that continued to influence the musical theater world in subsequent years. Elements of this structure include the A/B plot formula, types of songs, and essential character archetypes. In writing a musical based on the structure of Golden Age musicals, I incorporated several classic elements of the era into the script – from types of songs to character archetypes. For example, the gossip song the women sing at the factory is a patter song, and Helen fits the Comic Relief character mold. The script also finds its Ingenue in Alice, who's vocal part (soprano) also fits with the classic musical range of the archetype. In this A/B plot structure, the A plot follows the Main Lovers (more similar to *Kiss Me, Kate* than shows with younger couples), Ruth and Charles, despite their distance. The B plot follows a second couple as well.

As with Alice, the Ingenue, many of the vocal parts also match the traditional spread. Just as the Ingenue is a soprano, Alice's fiancé James is a matching tenor. Helen, the Comic Relief, is an alto, and Frank (who sits largely as the villain of the piece) is a bass. Inspired by the purposeful use of musical genre in Golden Age Musicals, the majority of the music is jazz and big band style to fit in with the contemporary sound of the era in which it is set. However, there are some deviations in this, such as including a lament and the use of march when dealing with war. Similarly, the dance style fits with that of it's time, and is used to tell the story in its own right, inspired by Agnes De Mille's dream ballets. This is seen in the opening number, which uses movement to set the scene of a dance hall, and express the emotions of entering into the war.

While I utilized many classic structural elements in this piece, there are also some notable differences. Just as I've established classic musicals took it upon themselves to change and expand the form, I have chosen to make some purposeful deviations from the pre-existing mold. Perhaps the most notable of these is the opening number. Inspired by *Oklahoma!*'s opening number, which starts being sung off stage, the opening number in *Spring of '45* is entirely an instrumental dance number. This number first establishes the setting and style of the time, before transitioning into a movement-based expression of the news that the U.S. has entered the war. Similarly, the closing scene of the musical is also silent for a portion. This silence is meant to magnify the grief and nuance of the situation, and evoke the delicate nature of life and love that *She Loves Me* provides its audience.

While most Golden Age Musicals focus exclusively on the romance between the two main characters, in this show the romance is already established, and – while love and marriage between Ruth and Charles are still in play – Ruth's A plot focuses more on the factory and her advancement in the workforce than romance. In addition to this shift in focus in the A plot, the B plot also shifts, containing more classic Young Lover characters, and further shunting the comedy of the show onto the C plot, with Helen (the Comic Relief), Henry, and Frank. The last major difference once again belongs to Ruth, and ties into her as the main character not portraying the Ingenue. As a main female character in Golden Age Musicals, women were usually high sopranos – however, Ruth is a mezzo soprano, giving Alice the higher parts. These changes serve to highlight the focus on women in the workplace and the community they created, while seconding the love they find within and without that community.

Throughout this thesis I have established and described the classic and lasting elements of Golden Age musical structures, and the conversation between musicals that developed these

tenants. In the accompanying musical draft, I attempt to display how these techniques are and can still be used today, while furthering the dialogue between the 40s-60s and today. Part of what made these musicals so successful and the definition of American musical theater are the structural elements they employed, and the use of these techniques can still be seen today.