

Jerome Kern Revisited

Let's just keep it simple: Jerome Kern was one of the greatest and most important composers of theater, film, and popular music, and one of the great melodists of all time.

Kern was born in 1885, a native New Yorker. At sixteen, he wrote songs for his high school's first musical. In 1902, he began studies at the New York College of Music, and that same year he had his first piece of music published, a piano piece called "At the Casino." He worked as a rehearsal pianist and a song plugger. From there, he began contributing songs to shows that were being imported from England. He even wrote scores for silent films.

His first complete score, written in 1912, was for the Broadway musical *The Red Petticoat*. Between 1915 and 1920, Kern wrote sixteen Broadway scores. Kern was extremely prolific all throughout the 1920s, writing a series of popular musicals known as the Princess Theatre musicals. And then, in 1927 came the show that would change everything, including what was possible in musical theater. The show was, of course, *Show Boat*, adapted from Edna Ferber's novel by Oscar Hammerstein. The show opened at the Ziegfeld Theatre and was a massive success, receiving glowing reviews, which resulted in long lines at the box-office. It repeated that success in London, and then all over the country and eventually the world. It produced a large number of classic songs, including "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," "Make Believe," "Live Upon the Wicked Stage," "Why Do I Love You," "Bill" (with lyrics by P.G. Wodehouse), and, of course, "Ol' Man River." The show has had many revivals over the years, was filmed three times, and the songs have been sung by a laundry list of the greatest singers who ever lived.

But it wasn't just Broadway – Kern found equal success in Hollywood, writing classic scores for such films as *Roberta*, *Swing Time*, *You Were Never Lovelier*, *Cover Girl*, *Centennial Summer*, and many others. Those films yielded yet more classics from Kern and his lyricists, including "I Won't Dance," "A Fine Romance," "Pick Yourself Up," "The Way You Look Tonight," "Long Ago and Far Away," "I'm Old Fashioned," "Sure Thing," "Up with the Lark," just to mention a handful. With Hammerstein, he also wrote the hit song, "The Last Time I Saw Paris," which was then put into the film *Lady Be Good*, where it one the Oscar for Best Song.

In 1945, MGM began filming a fictionalized version of his life, *Till the Clouds Roll By*. In the fall of 1945, Kern was to begin work on a new musical called *Annie Get Your Gun*, which was going to be produced by Rodgers and Hammerstein. On November 5th, at the corner of Park Avenue and 57th Street, Kern suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. He was taken to Doctors Hospital in Manhattan, where he passed away. He was sixty years old. But his music lives on, rediscovered by every new generation, who are entranced by those Kern tunes, ear candy of the highest order. Singers sing his songs in concerts and cabarets the world over – in addition to the songs already listed, it's hard to escape "I've Told Ev'ry Little Star," "All the Things You Are," "The Folks Who Live on the Hill," "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," "They Didn't Believe Me," "Why Was I Born?" "Yesterdays," "Look for the Silver Lining," "Let's Begin," "Who" – well, one could go on for pages. And every great jazz artist has had his/her way with Kern tunes, too. And Kern was back on Broadway in 2003 with the show *Never Gonna Dance*, whose score was comprised of all Kern songs.

Ben Bagley's *Jerome Kern Revisited* actually has a few of Kern's hit songs, but of course it is loaded with the lesser-known Kern. Bagley assembled a wonderful cast of singers, including Barbara Cook, Bobby Short, Nancy Andrews, Harold Lang, Rod McKuen, Kaye Ballard, Cy Young, and George Reinholt. Norman Paris, who did several *Revisiteds*, was the musical director and arranger. As we've done for all these releases, we've considerably spruced up the sound for this new release. And the cover art is, of course, by the great Harvey Schmidt.

Bruce Kimmel

This CD produced by Bruce Kimmel

Mastered by James Nelson at Digital Outland

Art Direction and Package Design: Doug Haverty for Art & Soul Design

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Thanks to Ken Patton, Brad Bennett, and the memory of Ben and Harvey.

1. Good Morning Dearie (from Good Morning Dearie – lyrics by Anne Caldwell) Barbara Cook, Harold Lang, Cy Young
2. Didn't You Believe? (from Good Morning Dearie – lyrics by Anne Caldwell) George Reinholt, accompanied by Judd Woldin
3. I Have the Room Above (from Showboat – lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein) Cy Young
4. Blue Danube Blues (from Good Morning Dearie – lyrics by Anne Caldwell) Barbara Cook, Bobby Short
5. Heaven in My Arms (from Very Warm for May – lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein) Harold Lang
6. Bojangles of Harlem (from Swing Time – lyrics by Dorothy Fields) Bobby Short
7. Just Let Me Look at You (from Joy of Living – lyrics by Dorothy Fields) George Reinholt, accompanied by Judd Woldin
8. Some Sort of Somebody (from Very Good Eddie – lyrics by Elsie Janis) Nancy Andrews, Harold Lang
9. Put Me to the Test (from Cover Girl – lyrics by Ira Gershwin) Bobby Short
10. Cinderella Sue (from Centennial Summer – lyrics by E.Y. Harburg) George Reinholt, accompanied by Judd Woldin
11. You Never Knew About Me (from Oh, Boy – lyrics by Guy Bolton and P.G. Wodehouse) Barbara Cook, Cy Young
12. In Egern on the Tegern See (from Music in the Air – lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein) Nancy Andrews
13. Never Gonna Dance (from Swing Time – lyrics by Dorothy Fields) Bobby Short
14. In the Heart of the Dark (from Very Warm for May – lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein) Barbara Cook
15. Love and the Moon (from Rose Briar – lyrics by Booth Tarkington) George Reinholt, accompanied by Judd Woldin
16. Make Way for Tomorrow (from Cover Girl – lyrics by Ira Gershwin) Barbara Cook, Bobby Short, Cy Young

Bonus Songs

17. That Lucky Fellow (from Very Warm for May – lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein) Rod McKuen
18. Tonight is Opening Night (cut from Lovely to Look At – lyrics by Dorothy Fields) Kaye Ballard and Chorus
19. The Shorty George (from You Were Never Lovelier – lyrics by Johnny Mercer) Rod McKuen
20. April Fooled Me (lyrics by Dorothy Fields) Henrietta Valor
21. What's Good About Good Night? (from Joy of Living – lyrics by Dorothy Fields) Rod McKuen
22. Cover Girl (from Cover Girl – lyrics by Ira Gershwin) Chorus

Music by Jerome Kern

Musical Direction and Arrangements by Norman Paris

That Lucky Fellow, April Fooled Me, What's Good About Good Night: Arrangements by Larry Moore

The Shorty George: Arrangement by Mark Riese