

ON THE

20TH

A Madcap
Musical
Comedy

CENTURY



UPSTAGE CALLBOARD

On the Twentieth Century

It's nonstop laughs aboard the Twentieth Century, a luxury train traveling from Chicago to New York City. Luck, love, and mischief collide when the bankrupt theatre producer Oscar Jaffee (Golden Globe® winner Peter Gallagher) embarks on a madcap mission to cajole glamorous Hollywood starlet Lily Garland (Emmy® and Tony Award® winner Kristin Chenoweth) into playing the lead in his new, non-existent epic drama. But is the train ride long enough to reignite the spark between these former lovers, create a play from scratch, and find the money to get it all the way to Broadway?

a note from Artistic Director Todd Haines

On the Twentieth Century is, in my opinion, one of the best musical comedies that most people don't know too much about. It was a big hit when it opened in 1978, but for some reason hasn't entered the canon in the way that many of its contemporary shows have, and this new production will mark its first Broadway revival. The delay is mind-boggling when you think about the talent of the creators involved. Cy Coleman wrote some of the greatest tunes Broadway has ever heard for shows as diverse as *Little Me*, *Sweet Charity*, *Barnum*, and *City of Angels*. And the team of Comden & Green represents Broadway's longest and most successful collaboration, with the pair writing book and/or lyrics for *On the Town*, *Bells Are Ringing*, *Wonderful Town*, *Peter Pan*, and many more. These authors are true musical theatre royalty.

when

1930s

who

Lily Garland - A Hollywood starlet. Oscar's former lover and protégé

Oscar Jaffee - An egotistical Broadway producer who is desperately in need of a success

Bruce Granit - Lily's current boyfriend. A quick-tempered, attractive actor

Owen O'Malley - Oscar's press agent

Oliver Webb - Oscar's business manager

Letitia Primrose - An extremely generous and religious woman

Max Jacobs - A successful film producer who once worked for Oscar

where

Aboard the Twentieth Century Limited, traveling from Chicago to New York City

Agnes - Lily's maid

Conductor Flanagan - the conductor in charge of the Twentieth Century

Dr. Johnson - a doctor aboard the Twentieth Century who tries to give Oscar an idea for a play

Imelda Thornton - an actress

Congressman Lockwood - a Congressman aboard the Twentieth Century

Anita - a secretary

Porters, secretaries, officers and train passengers



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INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR SCOTT ELLIS



Education Dramaturg Ted Sod interviews *On the Twentieth Century* director Scott Ellis.

Ted Sod: Can you tell us about your role as Associate Artistic Director and how that manifests itself at Roundabout?

Scott Ellis: That happened about 19 years ago. I can't believe the time that's gone by. After *She Loves Me*, Todd Haiman asked me if I would come on board as an Associate Director, which I did. Then, a short time after that, he said, "Would you come on as Associate Artistic Director?" which I was thrilled about. Todd runs the theatre. He makes all the decisions. What's nice for me is I can bring projects to him or he can suggest ideas to me saying, "Would you be interested in directing this?" Other than that, I'm involved with anything else that he needs. I have the best job possible.

TS: Does that mean that you brought *On the Twentieth Century* to Todd, or did he suggest it to you? How did that work?

SE: When we sit down and talk about possible shows, we just talk about plays and musicals that would be exciting shows for us to do. *On the Twentieth Century* was always something I wanted to do because of Kristin Chenoweth. I believe in one of our conversations, I brought it up. Although to be honest, we're so much on the same wavelength that he might have brought it up. I know it's something that we discussed a while ago. I said, "I want to do it, but it has to be with Kristin."

TS: Is that because it takes such a specific talent to play Lily Garland?

SE: It's almost like saying I'm going to do *Hamlet* without knowing who your Hamlet is. You've just got to know who's going to play Lily. She's got to be funny and beautiful and sing like crazy. There are so few people who can do it. For me, it was always about Kristin. When she said yes, I said yes. We've been planning this for a while. Between our schedules, things moved and shifted, but if she had said no, I would not have done it. Basically, I'm doing it because of her.

TS: Do you see this musical as a love story between Oscar and Lily, or is it more complex than that?

SE: It's such a wonderfully written piece—the entire action takes place on a train traveling from Chicago to New York City—and all the characters have a certain amount of time to finish getting what they need and want before they get to the final destination. It certainly is an unusual love story since Lily and Oscar both have huge egos and live in the world of entertainment—which has great importance in their lives—and that's something people in show business can relate to. It's a lopsided love affair. I think we've all been in them. I certainly have been in them one way or the other. It boils down to if you're going to commit to being a show biz couple. Basically, if you're meant to be together, then you're meant to be together. I think the "madcap" love between Oscar and Lily is part of the story.

TS: Did you have to do a lot of research on this period? Is this a period you're familiar with?

SE: Yes, I'm somewhat familiar with this period, but I certainly wasn't very familiar with the train. The train is as important as all the



On the Twentieth Century
director Scott Ellis

characters in the musical. I did a lot of research on the train as well as some research on the period. The theatre show-biz types don't change much no matter what era we're in. The question of how you balance being in show business with your personal life isn't very different. For me, it really was important to understand the train and the types of people riding or working on it. There was a certain level of income that meant you could afford to go on that train and could live like that and expect to be treated well.

TS: Train travel seems like a whole different world today.

SE: The whole world of this musical is different.

TS: Because –

SE: Because of the way stars were handled and looked after during the 1930s. We don't operate the way that world did anymore because today everything is so Internet-driven and about going viral and making an instant splash—it's not controlled like it was back then. All of that image stuff was so controlled. They had press agents who made up stories and kept their images glossy—the way they were supposed to be perceived by the public. It's impossible to do that anymore. You can't hide anything anymore. Someone's going to find out something you don't want them to.

TS: Do you see Oscar as someone who created Lily's public persona?

SE: Oscar was an impresario, and that was his job—they were able to keep that artifice alive without any fear of the press finding out

“WHEN WE SIT DOWN AND TALK ABOUT POSSIBLE SHOWS, WE JUST TALK ABOUT PLAYS AND MUSICALS THAT WOULD BE EXCITING SHOWS FOR US TO DO. ON THE TWENTIETH CENTURY WAS ALWAYS SOMETHING I WANTED TO DO...”

something dark and deep and all of that. That's very different from how it is today. The men in show business like Oscar created people like Lily Garland. They changed their names, they gave them images, they gave them back stories, they gave them boyfriends, they gave them girlfriends. They controlled all that.

TS: What were you looking for when casting this show?

SE: Casting, to me, is always the same. It's a very important part of a director's job. I pick people that I sense I'd like to be in a room with and will enjoy the rehearsal process with, because that's the best part. A lot of these people I've worked with, I've known for a while. I get to pull those people back into a room to play with. Some of them, I don't know. I've never worked with Mary Louise Wilson yet, but I've been a huge admirer and fan for a long time. This is an opportunity to say, “Great. I'd like to work with her!” I think part of casting this show is finding actors who are all a little off-center, you know?

TS: You need incredible singers.

SE: That score is pretty remarkable. You've got to really fill that space.

TS: Will you talk to us about how you've been working with your set designer? David Rockwell is someone you've worked with many times.

SE: The one thing you have to start with is that it takes place on a train, and the train has to leave at some point. We went back and started research on the actual train itself. We started that way. How do you move that train? You knew you had to get rid of the train several times because of flashbacks. The authors were so smart to do the flashbacks. It allows us to get off the train. When you get off the train, you better have something big visually and emotionally. So many of the meetings were about just the mechanics of where the train lives, where are you going to put the train, how are you going to do all that? It took us a long time to figure those logistics out. Thank God I am working with David.

TS: You've gotten great reviews this season for your direction of a comedy, *You Can't Take It With You*, and a drama, *The Elephant Man*. How did you pace yourself?

SE: Honestly, you never know when things are going to line up. I certainly didn't expect it to line up this way. I was going to do a film that fell through in the summer. All of a sudden, I was available. Out of the blue, I got a call about *You Can't Take It With You*. That was very, very fast, but it fit into the schedule. The timing actually worked well because *The Elephant Man's* dates got changed. We were supposed to do *The Elephant Man* last season in the fall. It got moved because of scheduling problems with Bradley Cooper's filming schedule. I think the hardest one was actually *You Can't Take It With You* because I was starting from scratch with no set, no nothing. *The Elephant Man* I did in Williamstown, so I had a sense of that even though we changed a lot. *On the Twentieth Century*, we had also been working on for a long time—so we had really just jumped ahead to design the set. It just all worked out because the starting dates spread out in a way that was manageable. You just have to stay on top of it.

TS: When I talked to Kristin, she said, “You know, playing a part like Lily, you have to live like a nun.” Did you have to live like a monk?

SE: No, because I was not allowed to. You can't live like a monk if you have two five-year-old twins. That ain't happening. Just the opposite actually.

TS: What's coming up for you after this? Will the film come back?

SE: Who knows? Film is always—it floats in and out. After this, I'm going out to San Diego to the Old Globe to do my first Shakespeare. I was asked, and I've never done a Shakespeare.

TS: Which one?

SE: *The Comedy of Errors*.

TS: Perfect. You've already done *The Boys from Syracuse*.

SE: Well, it's a bit different from the musical. Barry Edelstein, the Artistic Director at the Old Globe, gave me a list of shows that they have and haven't done recently, and I was looking at a drama. Again, with most of the Shakespearean dramas, you need to know who the leading actor is. Barry said to me, “You know what? If you want to do a comedy, *The Comedy of Errors* is the shortest play Shakespeare wrote.” I said, “Then I'll do that. If I'm going to do my first Shakespeare, I'll do a short one and see if I can do it.”

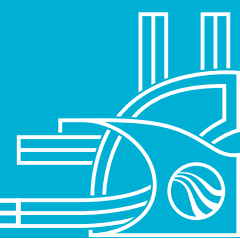
TS: It's also one of his earliest plays. And you got the two sets of twins to cast.

SE: I know about twins. •



Kristin Chenoweth and Peter Gallagher
in *On the Twentieth Century*

CY COLEMAN BIOGRAPHY



"A permanent gem in Broadway's crown." So said theatre critic Clive Barnes in praise of Cy Coleman and his nearly half-century of contributions to the American musical. Coleman was born Seymour Kaufman on June 14, 1929, the son of Russian immigrants. His mother owned an apartment house in the Bronx, where Seymour started playing music at age 4 when a tenant vacated, leaving behind a piano. The building's milkman heard Seymour play and was so impressed that he introduced Seymour to his son's piano teacher. Seymour made his Carnegie Hall debut at age 7. He attended the High School of Music and Art and at age 16 changed his name to "Cy Coleman" on the advice of a music publisher.

While attending New York College of Music, Coleman formed a jazz trio and earned money playing in cocktail lounges and clubs, where his enthusiasm for jazz and standards drew him away from classical music. He met lyricist Carolyn Leigh in the early 1950s and embarked on a fruitful but stormy collaboration. Coleman's pop-jazz melodies combined with Leigh's sophisticated, often suggestive lyrics to produce songs like "Witchcraft" (1957) and "The Best Is Yet To Come" (1959).

In 1960, Coleman and Leigh were brought on to compose a Broadway vehicle for Lucille Ball. The show, *Wildcat*, had a short run, but the song "Hey Look Me Over" became a standout hit. Next, the team scored *Little Me* (1962), with book by Neil Simon and direction by Bob Fosse. Despite its success, this was the final collaboration for Coleman and Leigh, who were fighting constantly.

Coleman continued to work with Fosse and Simon and paired with lyricist Dorothy Fields for *Sweet Charity*. Coleman and Fields followed up with *Seesaw*, a modest success, featuring a young Tommy Tune. Fields passed away in 1974, and Coleman next worked with Michael Stewart on *I Love My Wife* (1977).

Approached about composing a musical in collaboration with Betty Comden and Adolph Green, Coleman dove into a light opera style to create *On the Twentieth Century*. Coleman won his first Tony® Award for Original Score for this show in 1978.

Coleman's next triumph was the circus-style show *Barnum* (1980). He later took the Tony two years in a row, for the film noir inspired *City of Angels* (1990) and the country

spectacular *The Will Rogers Follies*, again with Comden and Green (1991). His last Broadway show was the gritty urban musical *The Life* (1997). For each new show, Coleman established a unique musical idiom and never repeated a style.

Remarking on his work ethic, Coleman said, "I don't like to let go. I will drain to the last drop." Until his death he was juggling multiple projects: a 2005 revival of *Sweet Charity* and several new shows, including a stage version of Wendy Wasserstein's children's book *Pamela's First Musical*. He also continued to perform his own cabaret act regularly at Feinstein's. Coleman passed away in February 2004; the following evening, the lights in all Broadway theatres were dimmed to honor his memory. •

FROM PAGES TO STAGES

THE FIRST PLAY:

Bruce Millholland writes a play called *Napoleon of Broadway* about working for a producer (possibly based on his experiences working for either David Belasco or Morris Gest). He gives the play to producer Jed Harris, who likes the main character (a producer, of course) but thinks that the team of Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur could come up with a stronger play for him. Millholland agrees to let him give the play to this writing team.

THE SECOND PLAY:

Hecht and MacArthur, authors of the hit play *The Front Page*, turn Millholland's *Napoleon of Broadway* into *Twentieth Century*. The play is directed by George Abbott and makes its debut on Broadway in 1932.

THE FILM:

Hecht and MacArthur are hired to adapt their play into a film. The film is released in 1934, starring John Barrymore as Oscar Jaffee and Carole Lombard as Lily Garland. Directed by Howard Hawks, this screwball comedy is a popular hit.

THE FIRST REVIVAL:

Twentieth Century gets its first Broadway revival in 1950, starring Jose Ferrer and Gloria Swanson (who is credited with designing her own gowns for the production).

THE BEGINNINGS OF A MUSICAL:

In 1975, composer Cy Coleman teams up with lyricist/librettist duo Betty Comden and Adolph Green to write songs for an Off-Broadway revue. The three hit it off and begin searching for a full-length piece to do together. They start out trying to come up with an original story but eventually land on the classic comedy *Twentieth Century*, wondering if they can take



AMERICAN OPERETTA



Cy Coleman and
Neil Simon

a play that is already good and turn into a great musical.

THE MUSICAL TRYOUT:

The new musical, titled *On the Twentieth Century* and featuring direction from Harold Prince and a stunning train set from designer Robin Wagner, begins its four weeks of tryout performances at Boston's Colonial Theatre in January 1978. Critics cite actress Imogene Coca, playing the character of Letitia Primrose, as a standout.

THE MUSICAL ON BROADWAY:

The musical opens on Broadway at the St. James Theatre on February 19, 1978. It receives strong reviews, with the *New York Times* writing, "The musical has an exuberance, a bubbly confidence in its own life." It goes on to win five Tony® Awards, including those for score, book, and set design, plus two for the actors—John Cullum as Oscar Jaffee and Kevin Kline as Lily's lover, Bruce Granit. The production runs for 449 performances and launches a successful national tour.

THE PLAY RETURNS:

Playwright Ken Ludwig (*Lend Me a Tenor*) creates a streamlined version of the Hecht and MacArthur play, turning it from three acts to two. Roundabout Theatre Company produces Ludwig's version of *Twentieth Century*, directed by Walter Bobbie, starring Alec Baldwin and Anne Heche at the American Airlines TheatreSM on Broadway. The production plays a limited engagement in the spring of 2004.

THE MUSICAL GETS A REVIVAL:

Roundabout produces the first-ever Broadway revival of the musical *On the Twentieth Century*, under the direction of Scott Ellis at the American Airlines TheatreSM. Opening night is set for March 12, 2015. The production stars Kristin Chenoweth as Lily Garland and Peter Gallagher as Oscar Jaffee.

At first, Cy Coleman was reluctant to compose *On the Twentieth Century* because he felt there had been too many other musicals set in the '20s and referencing popular music of that decade. But as he considered the characters' large personalities and "tikka-tikka-tikka" patter sound of a train, Coleman was excited to reference operetta, also known as "light" or "comic" opera, which had its peak popularity in America in the 1920s.

The origins of operetta go back to 19th-century Europe, with Jacques Offenbach in France and the ever-popular W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan in England. For his inspiration, Coleman drew largely from two great composers of American operetta: Sigmund Romberg and Rudolf Friml. Both came from Eastern Europe in the first decade of the 20th century. They struck musical gold collaborating with American lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II. How else could Friml, a piano virtuoso from Prague, dream up *Rose-Marie*, an operetta set in the Canadian Rockies, with lovers yodeling the "Indian Love Call"? Romberg's great success, *The Desert Song*, traded on the success of American movie star Rudolph Valentino and the adventures of Lawrence of Arabia.



Sigmund Romberg

With sweeping scores and romantic stories, operetta appealed to middle-class audiences who wanted something in between the rough entertainments of the Bowery and the highbrow refinements of the Metropolitan Opera. With the Great Depression, the attraction of operetta's grandness shifted to more sophisticated musical comedy. Productions of Friml and Romberg shows are rare today, but their works would influence musical theatre for many decades. Hammerstein went on to pen the books and lyrics for some of Broadway's greatest romantic musicals, including *Showboat*, *The King and I*, and *South Pacific*. •

LINKS:

To hear Jeanette McDonald sing "Indian Love Call":
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87bUBB-rwFc>

To watch a scene and title song from *The Desert Song*:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wub_DjEvsSo

INTERVIEW WITH LYRICIST AMANDA GREEN



Education Dramaturg Ted Sod talks with lyricist **Amanda Green**, whose father, **Adolph Green**, was a creator of *On the Twentieth Century*.

Ted Sod: Where were you born and educated; and when did you decide to write for the musical theatre?

Amanda Green: I was born in New York City and grew up in the apartment my mother, Phyllis Newman, still lives in on Central Park West. I went to Brown University, got a BA in Dramatic Literature, and I attended the Circle in the Square actors training program after that. I started to write for the musical theatre after I'd been singing at various cabaret gigs and writing country songs. On a whim, I applied to the BMI musical theatre workshop. As soon as I started writing theatre songs, I thought, oh, of course, this is what I should be doing. I went a round-about way to writing musical theatre songs because, at first, I wanted to act, and then I thought I'd write contemporary, non-theatrical music—maybe subconsciously I thought, don't go there. My father, Adolph Green, and my mother both were notable in the musical theatre world. But as soon as I started writing theatre songs, I felt at home. I realized this is what I know how to do and what I love doing.

TS: How did you get involved with the revival of *On the Twentieth Century*? Can you describe exactly what your role will be?

AG: Scott Ellis, the director, asked me to come aboard to look at one specific moment in the show—Oscar's "11:00 number," originally titled "The Legacy." It's a superb song that is totally in character with Oscar. But Scott was looking to make that moment have more heft, and when I studied it, I agreed the moment could be more emotional and revelatory about Oscar. As it exists, it is hilarious, but essentially a list song. I thought it could be a reckoning with himself about how much he loves and needs Lily—not just for his success on stage, but in his life, and owning his part in why she left. At the same time, it should be funny and, like him, a bit grandiose and myopic. Musically, I toyed with using melodies from several songs in the show, or maybe even using a Cy Coleman trunk song. In the end though, the existing melody to "The Legacy" suited the moment perfectly; as did the brilliant and hilarious lyrics of the song's introduction. So I kept both of those intact.

TS: Is that difficult, to get into the heads of the original writers, one of whom was your father?

AG: At first, I didn't know if it could be done or if it needed to be done. I love *On the Twentieth Century*, so I wasn't thinking, "Oh my God, how can you fix this show?" I really went into it saying, "Let me see if I can come up with something. If not, then not." Anyway, as I started to write, I asked myself that very same question: what is this going to be like? But Oscar is such a huge, rich character, thanks to my father and his writing partner, Betty Comden, that he is really, really fun to write for. I had a blast working on it.

TS: Do you have any recollections of the original production? You must have been a tween at the time.

AG: Yes, exactly. I was a tween. I remember being out of town one weekend. My brother, Adam, and I were with my dad in Boston. I remember the fun of it. God, I love that show. Who can forget Kevin



Amanda Green

Kline and Madeline Kahn and John Cullum? I have vivid memories of that production. The set was so exciting and the train—it was amazing when the steam came out, seeing it at different vantage points—it was all very dazzling.

TS: Do you have any sense of why it's taken so long for the show to be revived?

AG: No. That's my one-word answer. No, I don't.

TS: Can you talk a bit about Comden and Green and their working relationship from your perspective? What was that like?

AG: They were true partners. Whatever their private talks were about work, they always presented a unified front. They really created one voice together. I think that they were loyal, and they absolutely shared a theatrical mindset and an exquisite sense of humor. They had tremendous fun, intelligence, intellect and understood and loved human foibles and relationships. Theirs was a truly symbiotic partnership.

TS: Were you ever able to watch them work; or was that a private thing of theirs?

AG: It was a private thing. I certainly heard them when they were rehearsing, and I was there at early readings or backers' auditions. I could hear them all at the piano: Cy Coleman, my father, and Betty doing backers' auditions for *On the Twentieth Century* and then later, I remember them singing "Never Met a Man I Didn't Like" from *The Will Rogers Follies: A Life in Revue* when it was first written. And I know

"I THINK ONE OF THE REASONS WHY IT'S SUCH A BELOVED MUSICAL IS BECAUSE OF THESE CHARACTERS THEY'VE CREATED WITH THESE HUGE THEATRICAL EGOS. I CAN RELATE TO ALL OF THEM IN DIFFERENT WAYS."



Kristin Chenoweth, Peter Gallagher, Mark Linn-Baker, Michael McGrath, Mary Louise Wilson and Andy Karl in *On the Twentieth Century*

what they ate when they were working. They'd go over to the kitchen and come back with a tray of soup and lots of matzo and things like that. They liked to snack to a lot. I could tell you what they snacked on when they wrote.

TS: Do you personally relate to any of the characters in *On the Twentieth Century*? If so, which one and why?

AG: I think one of the reasons why it's such a beloved musical is because of these characters they've created with these huge theatrical egos. I can relate to all of them in different ways. Actually, they remind me of my father. Oscar reminds me of my dad because I can hear him singing "I Rise Again," which he loved. The show makes you love theatre people because of their egos, vanity, and fun, and their undeniable love of the theatre. That's why the show is so much fun; it obviously loves the world of the theatre and it pokes fun at it, too. You love the characters even as you see them scheming and trying to put one over on each other. It makes you fall in love with theatre people even with all their flaws.

TS: Do you see it as a love story between Oscar and Lily?

AG: I do. I do. If they have a true love, it is each other, absolutely.

TS: Do you have any advice for young people who might want to work in the musical theatre?

AG: My advice is to just do as many shows as you can, be involved.

If you don't get cast in it, do the lights or help with the sets because all of it is valuable. The more you learn how to do, in all different aspects of theatre, the better you'll be if it's something you want to do moving forward. It's always better to be involved, even if you don't get to do the one thing that you want to do. If it's not in your school, find it in your community. So many young, professional actors I see today got their start in the community theatre. If nobody's doing it, you do it—start it yourself.

TS: I was wondering if you would share what other projects you're working on currently?

AG: 2014 has been the year of my dad and Betty. I just finished doing *Peter Pan Live*, which was really fun. I wrote a few additional songs using Jule Styne's music and starting with the base of the songs that he wrote with my dad and Betty to create some new song moments for Captain Hook, Wendy, Mrs. Darling, and Peter. That was very exciting. Again, another outsized character that reminds me of my dad, Captain Hook. I just started working on a new musical I am very excited about.

TS: Is there a question you wish I had asked but didn't?

AG: I just think that people today will enjoy *On the Twentieth Century* as much as, if not more than, when it first came out. It's truly a fantastic musical. It's so funny and smart, and you fall in love with these characters. I love the operetta style of it. And I'm so excited to have Kristin Chenoweth and Peter Gallagher and the rest of this great cast be part of the first Broadway revival. •

HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS



"Walking out on the studio! You'll never work in Hollywood again."

-Bruce Granit to Lily Garland, *On the Twentieth Century*

"Anyway, what is—was—a studio? A studio is a place governed by a budget set by a mogul who believes he can market certain kinds of stars who are presented by a staff of experts who hold certain social, artistic, and political aperçus in common."

-Ethan Mordden, *The Hollywood Studios*

On the Twentieth Century is set amidst the Golden Age of the Hollywood film industry, and Lily Garland—once a stage ingénue, now a celebrated movie star—is the ambassador of the boom. With the rise of talking and color pictures in the 1920s, competition between movie studios increased,

and the country's leading studios stepped up their exertion of power. Five studios bought theatre chains across the nation in order to control production, distribution, and exhibition of their films (a process called "vertical integration").

All of the major studios (Warner Brothers, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Universal, Paramount, RKO, Fox [later Twentieth Century-Fox], Columbia, and United Artists) launched into a period of fast-paced, money-conscious production, in which the importance of quantity ran neck-and-neck with (and sometimes ahead of) quality. On an individual basis, studios might produce some fifty films per year; in total, Hollywood studios churned out some 7,500 films during their 1930-1945 heyday. And though the five vertically-integrated studios owned only 16 percent of American theaters, they took in about three-quarters of the industry's revenue.

No wonder, then, that *On the Twentieth Century's* Lily, a darling of MGM, would sing about gold silverware, a Cadillac, and copious champagne in "I've Got it All." Movie

stars were a product of the studio system and, while their fame lasted, they could reap its generous rewards. The Hollywood of the '30s and '40s retained the recognizable "types" of the nineteen-teens and twenties (the sweetheart, the hero), but with the advent of talking pictures, the industry also swelled with newly recognizable names and a type of personal celebrity that extended beyond the screen. The public appetite for these stars was both created and maintained by the studios' ceaseless production, which, in turn, was fueled by economic need. The "exhibition" link in the chain of vertical integration was an expensive one. Approximately 95% of a studio's operating cost, if it was vertically integrated, went to the cost of the movie theatres themselves. As a result, movie houses needed to keep

audiences in seats and production costs low. This constant need for new releases led to a profitable and predictable method of movie-making. In his book *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era*, author Thomas Schatz explains the powerful consistency of top-down studio filmmaking:



"The quality and artistry of all these films were the product not simply of individual human expression, but of a melding of institutional forces. In each case the 'style' of a writer, director, star—or even a cinematographer, art director, or costume designer—fused with the studio's production operations and management structure, its resources and talent pool, its narrative traditions and market strategy. And ultimately any individual's style was no more than an inflection on an established studio style."

To illustrate his point, Schatz compares what a movie scene featuring a "darkened, rain-drenched street" might look like at three different studios. At Warner Brothers, we might watch a gangster, post-shootout, breathing his last breath (as in *Public Enemy*). At MGM, we'd see "a glossy, upbeat



Poster for Universal's movie *Frankenstein*

celebration of life and love" (as in one of the "Andy Hardy" series). At Universal, a monster or mad scientist might be plotting their next move (as in *Dracula* or *Frankenstein*).

Studio style was consistent in plot and casting as well as in aesthetics, and all factors—including the actors, directors, and screenwriters making the "creative" decisions—were controlled by the studio bosses. Few stars benefitted from the studio system in the long run. Many actors were signed to a studio contract at a young age, on the basis of a strong screen test. These contracts were initially beneficial, ensuring that the actor would be employed for up to seven years (the maximum, and typical, contract length). But if, over time, a performer gained public attention (and, by extension, money for the studio), they had no control over their newfound star power. Under contract, everything from their salary to their public image to their movie roles was determined and enforced by studio executives. While the studio could terminate the contract at any time, performers were utterly bound by contract—no matter how valuable or famous they became.

Over time, some successful actors began to resent this product-oriented, restrictive "star system," and several of them, including Olivia de Havilland, Bette Davis, and James Cagney, sued the studios to be released from their contracts,

with varying degrees of success. Even directors, who tended to have longer careers than studio stars (who constantly faced the threat of being replaced with a comparable, and cheaper, actor of their type), spoke out against the unfair power distribution of the studio system. Frank Capra, in an open letter to the *New York Times* in 1939, wrote that "80 percent of the directors today shoot scenes exactly as they are told to shoot them without any changes whatsoever [and] 90 percent of them have no voice in the story or in the editing." In sum, he asserted, "the director at present has no power... About six producers today pass upon 90 percent of the scripts, and cut and edit 90 percent of the pictures." Capra's frustration was less with the unequal distribution of money (he says that some directors are "prone to sit back and enjoy their fat salaries and forget the responsibilities they have toward the medium they are in") than it was with an inequitable division of creative control. Lily's desire to shoot a picture with Letitia Primrose's money alone—without the influence of a studio producer—signals a similar attitude, one in which all the champagne (and cash) in the world can't make up for the servitude of studio stardom. •



Opening Night of *Don Juan* at Warner Bros. Theatre

INTERVIEW WITH ACTRESS KRISTIN CHENOWETH



Education Dramaturg Ted Sod interviews *On the Twentieth Century* actress Kristin Chenoweth.

Ted Sod: Why did you choose to do the musical *On the Twentieth Century* and the role of Lily Garland?

Kristin Chenoweth: When I was a college student, my voice teacher always was saying, “Lily Garland is the part you’ll play one day.” I thought, yes, yes, yes, okay, not really connecting with it yet, and then in 2000, I met Betty Comden and Adolph Green, because I did one of their songs from *Two on the Aisle* on my first record. It’s a song called “If,” and I invited them to my recording session, never thinking they’d come, and they did. Having them be there was so special to me. I just wanted to meet them. And Adolph said, “You know what part you’re born to play?” And Betty said, “Lily Garland.” And I just remember them saying, “You must do it. You just have to do it.” And it stuck with me and then, four or five years ago, we did a reading at Roundabout. I fell in love with the role; it requires a lot from the actress who plays Lily. The comedy chops are major, the vocal chops are challenging and tough, and physically it’s a killer. I’ve wanted to work it in my schedule for a while, and finally it happened. I just want to do it justice, you know? I want to put my stamp on it and make Betty, Adolph, and Cy Coleman proud.

TS: I know you work diligently on your roles. What kind of pre-production work have you been doing; what’s your process before rehearsal?

KC: I think everybody’s process is different, and I know that some actors don’t want to work on anything until they show up and have a “very real experience” without any preconceptions. And I think that’s lovely, but my brain doesn’t work that way. I need to go into rehearsal with a working knowledge of the music and script so that I can use rehearsal time to play, and maybe fail. I need to figure out my take beforehand. I want to be available to my costars and see what works for them, so we can find it together. I have been singing every day for several years. I’ve been doing a lot of concert work. My voice is actually in good shape. This score by Cy Coleman requires different muscles. I’m trying to get this music in my voice right now. I’ve been working on and off for a couple months, in my spare time, which has not been a lot. I’ll pick up a song from the score and work on that one song for a week; and then the next week, I’ll pick another song and live with that one.

I read the script a lot. I’ve been on a lot of flights, so I find plenty of time to read the script. I’ve listened to the tracks on the album a few times, but I’ve discovered that, for me, I can’t do that anymore. I will, unabashedly, pick up on Madeline Kahn, all of her choices. I usually think about the song I’m working on, and I’ll read that scene aloud to myself over and over. But I can’t get too comfortable with it—because I still want that spontaneity—as if I’m saying the lines for the first time.

TS: Was Madeline Kahn a favorite performer of yours?

KC: Definitely. We’re very similar. I’ve been compared to her before, which I take as a humongous compliment because I think there was no one like her. She was an original, which is why people wrote for her. And I’m glad that I’m getting the opportunity to put my feet in her



Kristin Chenoweth

shoes. I want to do her proud, too.

TS: What are the challenges of a role like this?

KC: It’s all going to be hard. I’m going to have to live like a nun, which I do anyway, so it’s not going to be that big of a change. The key will be sleeping a lot, resting my voice, and staying in physical therapy. I have previous injuries, and I have to take care of my body so that I can get through the run. But I’m going to do it because I’m ready.

TS: One of the things I love is that Lily’s real name is Mildred Plotka. It’s almost as if she’s self-invented, or perhaps Oscar helped invent her.

KC: I think she thinks that she’s self-invented, when in actuality, Oscar helped her. She’s not in a place to give him credit for one damn thing, though. It’s the narcissist syndrome. Two people with huge egos discover each other—one is already a narcissist, and he helps a budding narcissist find herself. When two narcissists try to be together, it can be difficult. I think for me the trick will be making her pain real; making the audience understand that she’s really been wronged by Oscar. And I believe she was. I believe that, in his heyday, Oscar did hurt her, even though he discovered her. Mildred Plotka never imagined she’d become Lily Garland—she never knew she was going to be a star. But she’s accepted it gracefully and owns her role as a movie star. There’s a part of me that wants to show the audience Mildred Plotka along the way. Because the truth is, you can take the girl out of Oklahoma, but you can’t take Oklahoma out of the girl—just like me. I mean, I’m Kristi Dawn Chenoweth. I will always be that, and I think there’s part of Lily that will always be Mildred.

"I FELL IN LOVE WITH THE ROLE; IT REQUIRES A LOT FROM THE ACTRESS WHO PLAYS LILY. THE COMEDY CHOPS ARE MAJOR, THE VOCAL CHOPS ARE CHALLENGING AND TOUGH, AND PHYSICALLY IT'S A KILLER."

TS: Do you think this is a love story between Oscar and Lily?

KC: Absolutely. I think they do love each other. I think that they've never had anybody else who truly understands who they are, and that's what keeps them linked. That's why she can't really love anyone but Oscar. She says, "He might be a swine, but he's got something no one else has got." And that's talent—she believes in his talent, and he believes in hers. I think they are each other's aphrodisiac.

TS: Do you see Oscar as Lily's Svengali?

KC: Yes, yes. She says, "Svengali in an alley hit hard times." I do see that he was her Svengali, but when she got hurt by him—then once she surpassed him—she viewed him as a has-been. But I think she believes that he still has it and can still do it, but she would never, ever admit that he's her Svengali. The truth is, she's looking for his approval in everything she does.

TS: Are you looking forward to working with Peter Gallagher?

KC: I just adore that man. I think he's going to be the real surprise here.

TS: How do you like to collaborate with a director, choreographer, and musical director? Can you give us a sense of what you look for?

KC: I have to feel, number one, very safe. And 99 percent of the time, I have felt that. I'm willing to go out on a limb and see what works. Scott Ellis cast me in John Kander and Fred Ebb's *Steel Pier*—my first Broadway musical. I was a nobody. Scott, John, and Fred all seemed to think I might be able to offer something, and they allowed me to do that. Kevin Stites, the music director, and I have a working relationship from prior performances, so he knows my voice. He knows my flexibility. He knows when I'm tired. He knows when I'm good. And Warren Carlyle directed and choreographed me in *Stairway to Paradise* a few years back at Encores! I don't think I could be in better hands. I feel so lucky to be part of this team.

TS: Will you tell us about your training. Did you have any great teachers?

KC: I grew up singing in church, and I took piano lessons at Tulsa University. I did ballet. That was the original dream, to be a ballerina. But over time it became apparent that I really wanted to sing, and I focused more on that, and my parents were smart enough to say, "You need to go to college. Whatever it is you do, you need to go to college." It was really important to my dad, especially, that I got a degree. I visited a couple of schools, and I came upon OCU. They had a great music, drama, and dance program there. And they had a musical theatre program. Not very many schools had that yet.

At OCU, I met Florence Birdwell, who changed the course of my life. The first time we met, she took me to her studio after my audition and said, "You'll have the highest of highs here and the lowest of lows, but the important thing is, you'll be ready when you leave." I didn't really quite know what she meant. The first time I got up in front of a master class to sing, I thought I killed it. Everybody was clapping and she said, "I just can't wait to teach you how to sing." I was devastated. And of course, I now understand what she meant. She meant, not just technically, because I have natural ability, but from the soul. She taught me to look for what songs mean, what the lyric is, and all the things that I've come to understand about singing. Tons of people have voices, but to be a true singer and an artist, what does that take? I got my master's degree in opera and had a shift of career plans. I

thought I was going to go to Philadelphia to do graduate work at the Academy of Vocal Arts. I was accepted into that program, but I went to New York with my friend Benny and got a part at the Paper Mill Playhouse in a show I'd never heard of about the Marx Brothers, whom I vaguely knew. I had a decision to make right then and there: Was I going to do opera, or was I going to do musical theatre and stay in New York? I guess you know the end of that story. •



Kristin Chenoweth in
On the Twentieth Century

GOLDEN AGE OF TRAIN TRAVEL



America is experiencing a resurgence in passenger rail travel. Between 1995 and 2012, ridership rose 55%. On the Acela Express, you can get from Washington, D.C. to Boston in 6 hours, 45 minutes. During the trip you can order vegetarian lasagna or a turbot fillet and sip a glass of wine or champagne, all while you get some work done via the train's wireless internet connection.

But none of the modern amenities in American passenger rail come close to the opulence and luxury of the Twentieth Century Limited.

When it debuted on June 15, 1902, the Twentieth Century Limited was the flagship train of the New York Central & Hudson River Railroad (NYC&HR). At the time, passenger rail accounted for virtually all interstate travel: cars weren't widely available, highways were nonexistent, and the Wright Brothers had yet to take their famous flight. The only way to get from New York to Chicago was by train.

The Twentieth Century Limited was the creation of George H. Daniels, the General Passenger Agent and first advertising manager of the NYC&HR. Daniels was a marketing wizard: he branded the NYC&HR as "America's Greatest Railroad" in 1890, introduced red-hatted porters, or "redcaps," to assist passengers with baggage for free in 1896, published books and magazines advertising resorts and sights along railroad routes, and reimagined dining car and depot restaurant food and service. By 1902, improvements in railroad track technology and a more powerful locomotive engine set the stage for the biggest success of Daniels' career: the Twentieth Century Limited.

Operating in conjunction with the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern, the Twentieth Century traveled from Grand Central Station in New York City, along the Hudson River, across the shores of Lake Erie, to the LaSalle Street Station in Chicago, and back each day. Advertisements touted the train's

"Water Level Route," offering better sleeping conditions than competing trains, which cut through the Appalachian Mountains. Trains departed Grand Central at 2:45pm and arrived in Chicago 20 hours later, at 9:45am, maintaining an average speed of 49 miles per hour.

Forty-two passengers lined up for the Twentieth Century Limited's inaugural trip. The train consisted of a ten-wheel steam engine, three Pullman sleeper cars, a dining car, and a buffet/library car, all of which were fairly standard. But it was the little extras Daniels added that made the Twentieth Century Limited so special: a barber shop, so passengers could arrive well-groomed; valets and maids; a trained secretary/stenographer to assist businessmen; and electric lights powered by the movement of the train's axle. When the train pulled in to LaSalle Street Station, oil and steel

tycoon John W. Gates stepped off and told waiting reporters that the train "made Chicago a suburb of New York."

The Twentieth Century was an immediate success. Travel time was soon cut to 18 hours. In 1912, an advertising trade publication ran an assessment of the train's first ten years titled *Making a Train World Famous: How the 20th*

Century Limited Has Become a Business Necessity and Its Name an English Idiom by Advertising. The author pointed out that the Pennsylvania Railroad's Pennsylvania Special offered nearly identical service in terms of time, cost, and comfort, but the Twentieth Century's widespread newspaper advertising made it a household name. Albany residents "set their watches by the Twentieth Century Limited." Ty Cobb was "as fast as the Twentieth Century Limited."

In 1914, the New York Central & Hudson River and the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern were merged into the New York Central System, one of the largest companies in the country. Passenger rail travel peaked in 1920, when 1.2 million people rode the rails. On average, 47 million "passenger miles" (one passenger traveling one mile) were traveled each day that year.



New York Central train from the early 1900s



As ridership grew, the Twentieth Century expanded both in size and amenities, adding manicurists, telephones, and air conditioning. Dinner was business formal, with freshly-prepared gourmet meals served on china and white tablecloths. Cocktails were delivered to private rooms. Mail cars were added: postal clerks sorted and stamped “fast mail” on the swaying train.

One could secure an upper or lower berth for the trip, which meant an open seat during the day that converted into a curtained-off bunk at night. Toilet facilities were shared and featured “dental lavatories.” Going up in price, one could get a walled off roomette with private toilet, a bedroom with upper and lower berths and private toilet, a compartment with two berths, a sofa, lounge chair, and private toilet, a drawing room with three berths, a wardrobe, sofa, movable lounge chairs, and private toilet, and finally, a double bedroom or bedroom suite with two adjoining bedrooms, each with private amenities.

The Twentieth Century became known as the “train of tycoons” and catered to the biggest names of its time: Marshall Field, Walter Chrysler, and William Wrigley, Jr. Hollywood celebrities rode the Twentieth Century. Despite all this, ridership was declining by the late 1930s, and the NYCS commissioned industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss to give the train an art deco makeover.

The new train debuted on June 10, 1938. Lighter and faster, it made the trip to Chicago in 16 hours. The train’s exterior had a streamlined shape and was two shades of gray with a blue stripe—colors chosen to match the urban environments of New York and Chicago. At night, the train’s two dining cars (which featured radios and “automatic record changing phonographs”) were converted into the Cafe Century nightclub.

After the redesign, the NYCS began rolling out a plush red carpet on the platform in Grand Central Station. This touch of hospitality is the origin of the action “walk the red carpet” and the phrase “the red carpet treatment,” both of which entered the lexicon as fans gathered to watch celebrities disembark.

After WWII, train travel in the United States went into decline as air travel and car trips became more popular. The Twentieth Century Limited made its last run on December 3, 1967. •



Advertisement for the anniversary of the 20th Century Limited

PULLMAN CARS

The Pullman Palace Car Company was founded in 1857 by George Mortimer Pullman and Benjamin Field. Legend holds that Pullman spent an uncomfortable night on the train from Buffalo to Westfield, New York and realized there was a market for comfortable sleeper cars. The first Pullman cars had cherry floors, damask curtains, and furniture that transformed from parlor benches into sleeping berths. Soon, Pullman was producing dining cars and parlor cars as well. The ornate cars were expensive to produce, but the company turned a profit by leasing the cars and through the on-board services to railroads, for which passengers paid a required charge above their ticket price. Each sleeping car came with a Pullman Porter to assist passengers, handle baggage, maintain clothing, fill built-in thermoses with ice water, act as a waiter and valet, and provide security. By the 1920s, the Pullman Company was the country’s largest employer of African-American men. Porters were overworked and underpaid but played a crucial role in the development of the Civil Rights movement. They distributed information and African-American owned newspapers across the country, and in 1925 they founded the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, an influential union.

INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR PETER GALLAGHER



Education Dramaturg Ted Sod interviews *On the Twentieth Century* actor Peter Gallagher.

Ted Sod: Where were you born and educated, Peter?

Peter Gallagher: I was born in New York City in Lenox Hill Hospital and grew up in Armonk, NY, where I went to Byram Hills High School and then to Tufts University in Boston—where I met my wife.

TS: Did you have great teachers who have influenced you?

PG: I have been very lucky to have had, and still have, some amazing teachers—they are really important. Mr. Gene P. Bissell was my music teacher in high school, and he was the one that introduced me to the theatre. He had worked in New York professionally years before. He was a wonderful pianist and composer. It was on one of his field trips that I saw my first Broadway show (*Hello Dolly* with Pearl Bailey and Cab Calloway and a young Morgan Freeman in the chorus). It was my first exposure to anything like that, and he also introduced me to the discipline of the theatre. I did a bunch of shows with him and learned a lot and will always be grateful to him.

TS: Did you always know you could sing?

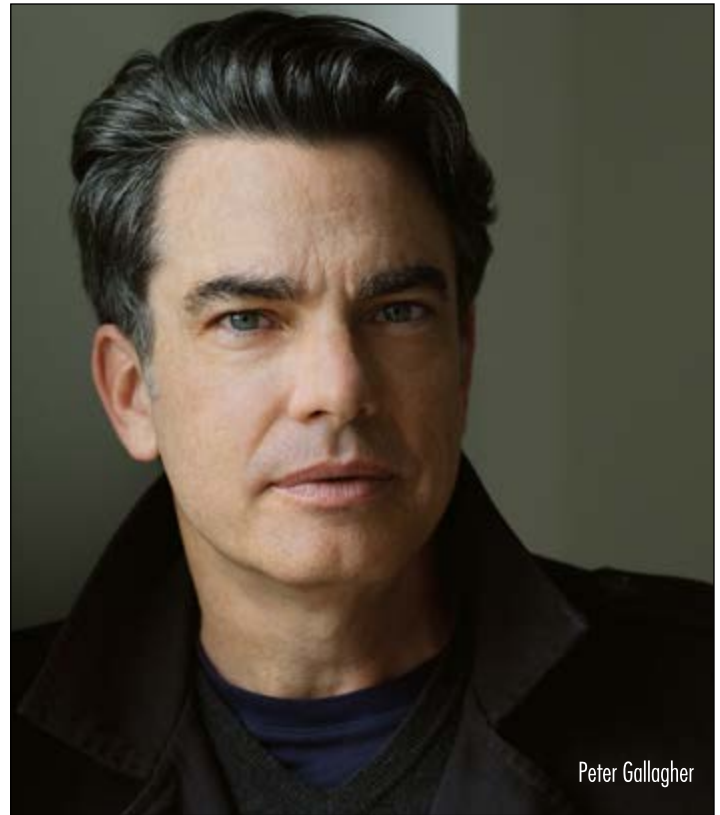
PG: No. I suspected that I could because I would do impressions of people like Dean Martin. To me, they sounded pretty good, but I'd never sung in front of anybody. In fact, I was misbehaving in Mr. Bissell's music class, and I remember, in an effort to humiliate me, he had me stand up and said, "Okay, sing this solo by yourself." It was sort of a pivotal moment because I was deeply terrified but I didn't want to give him the satisfaction of embarrassing me, so I thought, "Goddammit, I'm going to give this my best shot." I guess it was okay because he didn't say anything after I was through—although I was the only one in the class he didn't ask to be in the first show—I got my chance on the second one, *Pajama Game*, and never looked back.

TS: Why did you choose to do *On the Twentieth Century* and to play Oscar Jaffee?

PG: Because Oscar Jaffee is a great role. Throughout my career, I've always come back to the theatre because that's where I've always gotten the best roles. I've wanted to work with Kristin Chenoweth for years. Scott Ellis is an old friend of mine. We started off our careers in a bus-and-truck tour of *Grease* in the '70s. I also had the good fortune of working with Betty Comden and Adolph Green and Hal Prince on the very next show that they did after *On the Twentieth Century*, which was *A Doll's Life*. *A Doll's Life* was a pretty big flop, but it's still one of my favorite experiences. I've learned that whether a show hits or misses, it doesn't have any relationship to the quality of the experience you have in helping put it together. I feel like the luckiest guy in the world to have this role in this production. This is the first day of rehearsal, so fingers shall remain crossed for months.

TS: What kind of preparation or research do you have to do in order to play Oscar?

PG: I've been working on the music with my wonderful singing teacher, Joan Lader, for a little while—it's a lot of big singing. I've been



researching great theatre artists of the period, in particular, David Belasco. I think Betty and Adolph were intrigued with Belasco, as well. Some people think of him as a genius who insisted on the most natural kind of settings, detail, lighting, and acting. Other people think he was just a hack. Between idiot and genius, there's a lot of fun to be had with a character like Jaffee.

TS: What are some of your early thoughts about the character of Oscar?

PG: He very much believes in the long shot and the power and the importance of what he does. He thinks every moment in life could be improved with a little salesmanship and stagecraft. I love the fact that Oscar has to write a play in 16 hours. I also love the fact that Belasco, who didn't have the benefit of Chekhov or other great playwrights, wrote a lot of the plays he produced himself. Some of the plays are really cool, and some of them were not so great, but he wrote over 200 plays! That's extraordinary. I'm looking forward to finding that intersection of art and life for Oscar. For him, the theatre is like life and death. It's that important. It's a vocation. It's a calling. He'll do whatever he needs to do at the moment to make the moment work. When Belasco did a show that required a laundry set or kitchen set he would insist that they be fully functioning, so the audience would believe in what was happening. He put an active, functioning laundry on stage so the actors would be actually washing clothes. If it was a kitchen scene, actors would actually fry eggs so the smell of food would waft into the audience. Belasco was all about capturing the right light. He would study light. It was all an attempt to create real life on the stage as closely as he possibly could.

"I'VE LEARNED THAT WHETHER A SHOW HITS OR MISSES, IT DOESN'T HAVE ANY RELATIONSHIP TO THE QUALITY OF THE EXPERIENCE YOU HAVE IN HELPING PUT IT TOGETHER."

TS: Sometimes Oscar's described as a megalomaniac. Do you see him that way?

PG: I think that Belasco's fascination with detail and dedication to it certainly, in others' eyes, could easily pass for megalomania. I think all good directors are megalomaniacs—and know it. I recently realized this will be the third director I've played in a row on Broadway: Bernie Dodd in *The Country Girl* and Lloyd Dallas in *Noises Off*. Hopefully third time's the charm! I've also had a few trains in my past on Broadway...hmmm.

TS: Will you talk about your understanding of the relationship between Oscar and Lily?

PG: I think it's a love story. The musical focuses on Oscar's pursuit of his own salvation and Lily's pursuit of her renewed legitimacy as an actress, which allows them to rediscover how much they've missed each other. Oscar has kept his ear to the ground and figured out a way to be in Lily's proximity. There's a freedom and comfort they provide each other because they intimately know one another. In a way, there's nothing more important to them than being as good as they can be, and they love taking no prisoners. Of course, the relationship really depends on who is playing Lily, and because it's Kristin, it's wonderful.

TS: Would you say they have a symbiosis?

PG: Yes, there is give and take between them. There are some people that understand each other. Very rarely do you get a chance to revisit those wonderful feelings you have with certain people. I think in their early successful times together, they both made the mistake of thinking that they were the one who had something to do with it, instead of recognizing their good fortune. Both of them have said, "Oh, I don't need him," or "Oh, I don't need her." The truth is they are better together.

TS: I also wanted to ask you a little about Oscar's relationship to Oliver and Owen. Why do you think they're so loyal to him?

PG: That's a different kind of love story. What else do you have except your relationships and your friendships? They've been through the wars together and survived. Why throw your lot in with someone new? When things are going well and the money's coming in and the audiences are filling the seats, everything is great. This just happens to be a time when everything's gone to shit. And it may very well be the end of Oscar Jaffee. It might be just his swan song, and nobody wants to get any of that on them—but Oscar still owes them money—and where else will they go?

TS: How do you like to collaborate with the director, musical director, and choreographer?

PG: Rehearsal might be my favorite part of the process, and these rehearsals are led by an amazing group of creative people. I have ideas about Oscar, but I'm just as interested—if not more so—in their ideas. I'm not really a dancer, so I've just got to work hard and hide behind our truly amazing dancers. Warren is a great choreographer and director in his own right and a really kind person, so I seriously doubt he's going to be giving me something that's going to make him or me look bad. Kevin Stites is a great music director who has

assembled some of the finest voices on Broadway and is succeeding in teaching the rest of us this amazing score, too. I have every confidence in Scott, who is the premier director on Broadway right now. I love his work: its diversity, precision, and heart, and I couldn't have more respect for him. I'm thrilled that he wanted me to play this part. I think we'll all have to work really hard to have a lousy time.

TS: Do you have any advice for a young person who might want to be a performer?

PG: I truly believe ninety percent of life is showing up. Regardless of what you do, whether it's in show business or not, it's all about showing up. If there's anything else you can imagine doing other than going into show business, do it. If there's absolutely nothing else you can imagine doing, then you owe it to yourself to give it your best shot because you don't want to be lying on your death bed thinking, I wish I had...I shoulda...I coulda. And if you're lucky enough to get to do what you love and can make a living at it—have fun and don't forget that you're one of the lucky ones. •



Peter Gallagher and Michael McGrath
in *On the Twentieth Century*

SCREWBALL COMEDY



Howard Hawks' 1934 film *Twentieth Century* featured American stage actor John Barrymore as Oscar Jaffee and a breakout comic performance by Carole Lombard as Lily Garland. Many historians identify this film as the first example of "screwball comedy," a genre of escapist entertainment popular during the Great Depression and through the 1940s. Some of the most famous screwball titles include Frank Capra's Academy Award® winner, *It Happened One Night* (1934), Hawks' *Bringing Up Baby* (1938), and Preston Sturges' *The Lady Eve* (1941).

In 1930, Hollywood came under the scrutiny of the Hays Code, which imposed firm moral guidelines and restricted how movies could portray sex, crime, drugs, and religion. Screwball emerged as a creative response to the Code, and directors like Hawks, Capra, and Sturges made increased use of innuendo and subtext to create sexual tension. Screwball employed physical comedy, like slapstick and farce, but also featured witty dialogue and sophisticated, upper-class characters. Depression-era audiences welcomed the opportunity to watch the wealthy and privileged behaving with comic lunacy.

Screwball storylines drew upon comedic conventions such as mistaken identity, improbable plot twists, and a battle-of-the-sexes between a mismatched romantic couple. Typically, the male hero lived an ordinary life before meeting a strong woman, often from a higher socioeconomic status, who disrupted his status quo. Hero and heroine were thrown together into a series of comedic adventures, frequently travelling by train, boat, or car. Despite their differences

and conflicts, the couple usually fell in love and married in the final scene. Though many of these elements are still seen in contemporary romantic comedies, the term "screwball" denotes a specific group of films produced in the '30s and '40s.

Twentieth Century established Carole Lombard as one of the great comedy stars of her time. Other popular stars who performed in screwball comedies include Katharine Hepburn, Barbara Stanwyck, Claudette Colbert, Myrna Loy, Ginger Rogers, Cary Grant, and two of Lombard's off-screen husbands, William Powell and Clark Gable. These links offer peaks at some classic screwball moments. •

LINKS:

Scenes from the 1934 film *Twentieth Century*
<http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/27561/Twentieth-Century/videos.html>

It Happened One Night (1934)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ar-hnj5Zsk4>

Bringing Up Baby (1938)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWKBHxzDu20>

The Lady Eve (1941)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZ7X5JDKmSI>

RELIGIOUS JOKES

The character of the fanatical millionaire in *On the Twentieth Century*, Letitia Primrose, originated by Imogene Coca, was adapted for the musical from the play and film versions, where the character is a man named Matthew J. Wright, played by Etienne Giradot. Giradot, a small, birdlike character actor of Anglo-French parentage, was the only cast member of the original *Twentieth Century* stage production to appear in the film. Howard Hawks had to be careful with this character and religious jokes, as the Hays Code forbid the ridicule of religion. Joseph Breen, who ran the Hays Office, was most concerned about how audiences would respond to the comic use of Jaffee's *Passion Play*, but with the exception of one line, he allowed Hawks to use most of the script. To see Etienne Giradot and the religious jokes that made it past the Hays Office, watch this clip:

<http://www.tcm.com/mediaroom/video/212556/Twentieth-Century-Movie-Clip-I-Am-a-Baptist-.html>



Scene from the 1934 film *It Happened One Night*



DESIGNER STATEMENTS

DAVID ROCKWELL – SET DESIGN

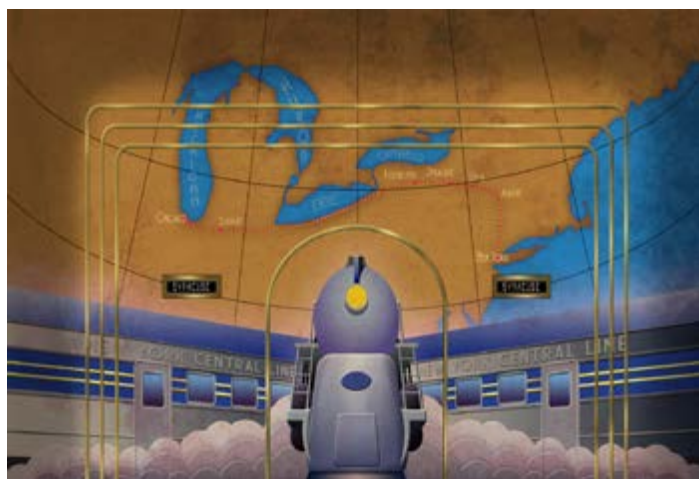
The essence of the 20th Century experience was the combination of speed and extravagance, the inherent optimism of expanding train travel experienced in opulent interiors. Two design languages are used to capture this combination and create the armature of the production: the finely detailed and luxurious train carriage. Speed and motion are embodied in the use of an exaggerated forced perspective on the Show Curtain, inspired by the elegant poster art of the time that used graphic distortions to celebrate speed. The Streamline Moderne language, an aerodynamic intersection of cylindrical and linear forms that is expressed in the actual 20th Century locomotive designed in 1938 by industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss, influenced the design of the train in the show. Luxury and opulence are captured by the 1930's Art Deco style characterized by bold geometric patterning and lavish ornamentation. The train interiors are crafted from a rich and varied palette of symmetrical patterns expressed in vivid fabrics and a palette of metals in gold, silver, and bronze that interweaves to create a heavily textured jewel box environment. In bringing an architect's sensibility to a set that combines the inherent asymmetry of Streamline Moderne with the symmetry of Art Deco, the design adds a new dimension to the highly pedigreed production of *On the Twentieth Century*.

WILLIAM IVEY LONG – COSTUME DESIGN

This project has been a wonderful design experience because it is a comedy set in one of my favorite periods. It is also set on a train, which means everyone is in very close quarters. I worked very closely with David Rockwell to ensure that all of our details told a cohesive story. When I sketched the thumbnails for this show, I laid out all the characters in each scene together and also put elements of the train on the sketch to show our director, Scott Ellis, a more complete visual world. I had the opportunity to design the revival of the straight play, *Twentieth Century* (also at Roundabout), about 10 years ago, and I like that I now have the chance to tell the same story in a different way—this time with music and dancing.

DONALD HOLDER – LIGHTING DESIGN

Lighting Design is often relied upon to make crucial storytelling contributions to a play or musical, and this is certainly the case for *On the Twentieth Century*. My first objective was to create a bright, effervescent atmosphere both on the train and off that establishes a real sense of time and place and provides a high-energy foundation for the



On the Twentieth Century set design by David Rockwell

comedy and hijinks. This included the integration of many period-looking practical lighting sources (in collaboration with David Rockwell and his team) that would motivate the warm, bright light of the train interiors. To communicate and reveal the many moments of flashback, inner monologue, and fantasy, the lighting features dramatic shifts to a highly colored and romantic palette, using angles and textures that contrast strongly with what the audience has typically encountered during the more realistic moments on board the moving train. •

Click here for process statements from the *On the Twentieth Century* choreographer and music director:

<http://www.roundabouttheatre.org/Roundabout/media/Roundabout/PDF/UPSTAGE/OTTC-Process-Statements.pdf>



HOW DO ACTORS CREATE COMEDIC SCENES IN THE STYLE OF “SCREWBALL COMEDY?”

The film *20th Century* is considered one of the first classic Hollywood “screwball comedies.” Learn about this film genre on page 18 of this UPSTAGE and use the links to see examples of classic screwball scenes. Then, work in pairs to create your own scenes.

ACTIVATE Plan and improvise a humorous scene that includes all of the following elements of screwball comedy. (Alternatively, students can write the dialogue and then perform.)

WHO: Two very different characters. One is rich, the other is either poor or middle class. One character is much more sophisticated than the other. You decide who.

WHAT: They secretly like each other but would never admit it to themselves or each other.

WHERE: They are travelling somewhere, but they are stuck (you decide where) and haven’t figured out how to move forward.

WHEN: Either the past or present, but be specific and try to be historically accurate.

WHY: Both characters are motivated by a shared objective—a person, object, or event that they BOTH want (ie: two actors who both want to win an Academy Award®.)

REFLECT: What was humorous about this situation? Why did screwball comedy become popular during the Great Depression? What elements of screwball do you think you might see in the musical *On the Twentieth Century*?

HOW DOES A SET DESIGNER PLAN THE PERFECT MODE OF TRANSPORTATION?

On the Twentieth Century takes place on the Twentieth Century Limited, a luxurious train that catered to celebrities and wealthy business people. Passengers enjoyed fine dining, private bedrooms, butlers, manicurists, an on-board post office, and more. Learn about the train on pages 14-15 of this UPSTAGE.

REFLECT Imagine you are traveling across the country by train and the trip will take several days. What would the train interior look like? What amenities would you want on the train? Make a list.

DESIGN Draw, or describe in words, your perfect five car train. Make sure to include sleeping quarters and at least one car designed to serve food.



POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

HOW DOES A PLAYWRIGHT WRITE A MONOLOGUE IN RESPONSE TO *ON THE TWENTIETH CENTURY*?

During *On the Twentieth Century*, you followed a group of characters on a comedic cross-country adventure. Think about how the show ends, choose your favorite character, and create a monologue (a speech for one speaker) in which you imagine them one year later.

WRITE

Use these prompts to write your own monologue.

- Who am I? (choose one: LILY, OSCAR, LETITIA, BRUCE)
- How did the train trip change me, and what did I learn about myself during this voyage?
- What happened when I got off the train?
- What am I doing a year later, and how do I feel about that?
- Which of the other characters am I still in touch with? What do I think of them?

ACTIVATE

Perform your monologues for each other in your classroom. Try to create the character as you imagine him/her.

REFLECT

Why did you choose this character? What do you like about him or her? What other characters or people does he/she remind you of?

HOW DOES A LYRICIST WRITE A SONG THAT PARODIES CELEBRITY CULTURE?

In *On the Twentieth Century*, Oscar Jaffee, a major producer, and Lily Garland, the star he made famous, have a farcical "love-hate" relationship. They sing:

LILY.
 Save your breath
 Don't even try
 Back again with you?
 I'd rather die!

OSCAR.
 Perhaps it's just as well
 I've seen you on the screen
 On stage you wove a spell
 With each new play it deepened...
 But now your art is gone
 It's coarsened and it's cheapened!

REFLECT

What modern celebrities remind you of Lily and Oscar? Where do we see the idea of frenemies in today's culture? Why would a magazine or a television show promote this type of story?

WRITE

Using the lyrics above as a template, write a song in which two modern celebrities argue. Make the argument a parody: exaggerate the characters and celebrity culture style.

ACTIVATE

Working with a partner, read your lyrics out loud to a small group without revealing who the characters are. Have the group guess which celebrities you wrote about.

GLOSSARY



CLOSE THE IRON DOOR	To shut out completely <i>Oscar often tells Oliver and Owen that he closes the iron door on them.</i>	MOLYNEUX	An English fashion designer <i>Max tells Lily her costumes will be made by Molyneux.</i>
FLIT	A brand of insecticide from the late 1920s <i>Oscar sings that he will spray Flit in the faces of his enemies.</i>	ROTGUT	Cheap liquor <i>Oscar asks to be brought rotgut.</i>
GONE TO POT	Broken, defective, substandard <i>Lily sings about Cyril and how he's gone to pot.</i>	SLUG	Swig <i>Oliver asks for a slug from a bottle.</i>
IN THE CAN	When a film is finished and ready to be shown to the public <i>Letitia Primrose says that the Mary Magdalene movie is in the can.</i>	SOMERSET MAUGHAM	A British author and playwright who was the highest paid writer in the 1930s <i>Max tells Lily that his play is written by Somerset Maugham.</i>
OPIUM DREAM	An unrealistic expectation; a fantasy <i>Oliver tells Oscar that having Lily agree to be in his play is an opium dream.</i>	VARLET	A dishonest or unprincipled person <i>Owen refers to the secretary of the train as a varlet.</i>
MIELZINER	A French scenic designer from the Golden Age of Broadway, who is considered to be the most successful designer of that time <i>Max tells Lily that the sets for his play will be created by Mielziner.</i>		

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ABOUT ROUNABOUT

ROUNABOUT THEATRE COMPANY

Founded in 1965, Roundabout Theatre Company has grown from a small 150-seat theatre in a converted supermarket basement to become the nation's most influential not-for-profit theatre company, as well as one of New York City's leading cultural institutions. With five stages on and off Broadway, Roundabout now reaches over 700,000 theatregoers, students, educators and artists across the country and around the world every year.

We are committed to producing the highest quality theatre with the finest artists, sharing stories that endure, and providing accessibility to all audiences. A not-for-profit company, Roundabout fulfills its mission each season through the production of classic plays and musicals; development and production of new works by established and emerging writers; educational initiatives that enrich the lives of children and adults; and a subscription model and audience outreach programs that cultivate and engage all audiences.

2014-2015 SEASON



Book by Joe Masteroff
Music by John Kander
Lyrics by Fred Ebb
Starring Alan Cumming and Sienna Miller
Co-directed and choreographed by Rob Marshall
Directed by Sam Mendes



By Tom Stoppard
Directed by Carey Perloff



By Tom Stoppard
Starring Ewan McGregor, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Josh Hamilton and Cynthia Nixon
Directed by Sam Gold



Music & Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim
Book by James Lapine
Reimagined by Fiasco Theater
Directed by Noah Brady and Ben Steinfeld



Book & Lyrics by Betty Comden & Adolph Green
Music by Cy Coleman
Choreographed by Warren Carlyle
Directed by Scott Ellis



By Jeff Augustin
Directed by Giovanna Sardelli



By Joshua Harmon
Directed by Trip Cullman

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: INTERVIEW WITH PAYROLL DIRECTOR, JOHN LABARBERA

Ted Sod: Tell us about yourself.

John LaBarbera: I was born in Queens and raised in Smithtown on Long Island. I double majored in Psychology and Theatre at SUNY Buffalo. I was on track to continue my studies in Clinical Psychology, but I wanted to explore my chances in the arts first, so I passed on an opportunity from the National Institute of Mental Health to continue my research, and that led me to NYC in 1997. While at SUNY Buffalo one of my mentors was a chairperson for the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, and I became aware of Roundabout through working on that. Some of my most respected friends held Roundabout in such high esteem that upon graduation I walked into the offices at 1530 Broadway, handed the receptionist my resume, interviewed a day or so later, and had my first job out of college by week's end. I started in Ticket Services, moved into the Customer Service Coordinator position, and then took over the payroll in 2001.

TS: Describe your job at RTC. What are your responsibilities?

JL: Overall being the Payroll Director means working closely with all departments to ensure the correct processing and accounting of an employee's paycheck. That means first data collection from each theatre/department including timesheets, new hire information and any changes that affect a person's pay, and then second reviewing all of the

submissions for data entry into an electronic file that can be sent to a processing center for the cutting of checks.

TS: What is the best part of your job? What is the hardest part?

JL: The hardest part is collecting the data and staying organized in the face of strict deadlines. There are 52 weekly payrolls a year, so I have to focus and keep things moving. The best part of my job is to know that what I do makes a difference. Who doesn't like pay day? And working with so many great people because getting payroll done is truly a collaboration across every department.

TS: Why do you choose to work at Roundabout?

JL: When I took a chance on the arts in 1997, on some level I know I was being guided toward Roundabout. Walking into the offices back then, I felt an excitement in the air, and I was ready for anything. In turn, I feel Roundabout took a chance on me by giving me many opportunities to learn and grow with it over the years. That relationship is one I feel can be seen on all levels from its artists, employees, and audience. We are all connected and committed, year after year, to bringing the best theatre possible to New York City, and that is why I choose to work at Roundabout Theatre Company.

Learn more at roundabouttheatre.org. Find us on:



WHEN YOU GET TO THE THEATRE

FOR
EDUCATORS

TICKET POLICY

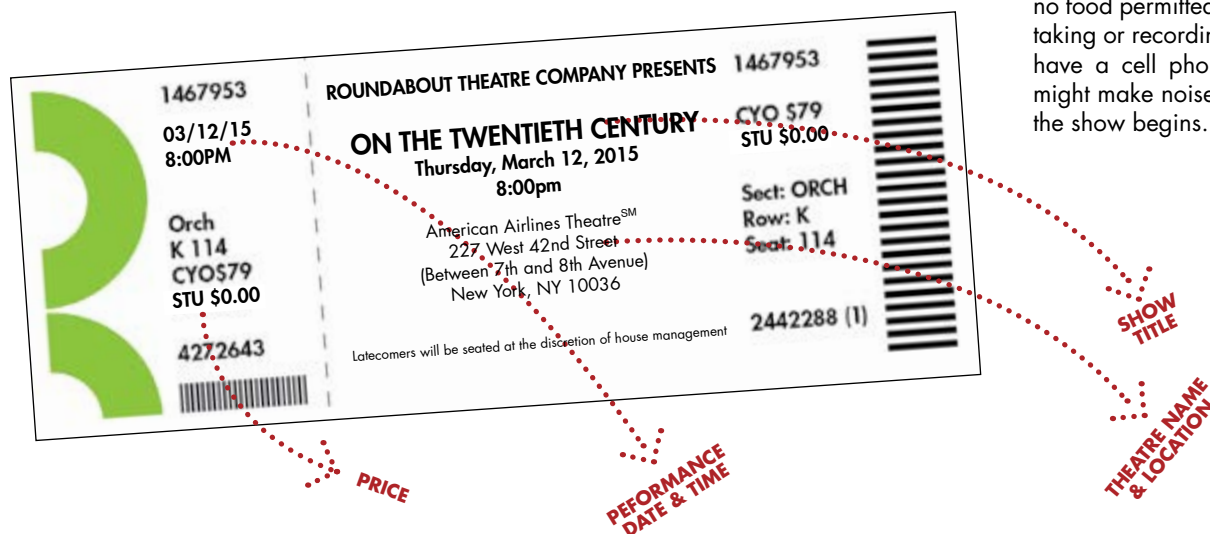
As a student, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. You will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat is located. These tickets are not transferable and you must sit in the seat assigned to you.

PROGRAMS

All the theatre patrons are provided with a program that includes information about the people who put the production together. In the "Who's Who" section, for example, you can read about the actors' roles in other plays and films, perhaps some you have already seen.

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

As you watch the show please remember that the biggest difference between live theatre and a film is that the actors can see you and hear you and your behavior can affect their performance. They appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. So please save your comments or need to use the rest room for intermission. Also, there is no food permitted in the theatre, no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a cell phone or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.



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