Introduction

Appreciating Musicals is designed to introduce students to the wonderful and exciting world of musical theater. This guide is designed to introduce you to the book and ideas for its successful use. But neither book nor guide will work alone. Musicals are to be seen and heard, and readers cannot appreciate them without the seeing and the hearing. So *Appreciating Musicals* should be used in conjunction with as many listening and viewing experiences as possible. Then any course in which musicals are studied will be fun as well as informative. There is a great deal of audio and visual material available to supplement this book. Or, to put it another way, this book can supplement any audio and visual material used for studying musicals.

The most satisfactory experience for studying musicals is to see one. They are performed by college and university drama and music departments, high school classes, amateur and semiprofessional theater clubs, touring professional troupes, and summer stock companies. Any of these possibilities may appear in your community, and a little searching could turn up such a theatergoing opportunity. You can use even summer-stock productions to advantage by considering musicals before the close of school and encouraging students to see a show during vacation.

Stage productions may not be available, but that does not close out the possibility of experiencing something from this exciting musical form. Most major musicals have been recorded and, if not currently for sale in stores, may be found in school and public library collections. Musicals from the 1920's, a period when they were not recorded, still survive in part through their songs, many of which have become popular standards. This is certainly the case with the music of composers such as Jerome Kern and George Gershwin. In other words, songs mentioned in this book can often be found in the song collections of noted composers of musicals, even if a recording of the show itself cannot be found.

This book does not include a discography since, in every case, songs performed by the original cast are preferred. Also, many teachers will be limited to the holdings of their school or community library, so discography recommendations would be of little value. However, following this introduction is a list of the musicals most frequently mentioned in the student book, both in their historical setting in Part II and as examples of how musicals are made in Part I.

Getting stocked with as many of these as possible will give you recorded examples for examining most of the material in the book.

The revivals of some older musicals have been recorded. Although they are not performed by the casts that originated the shows, the revived versions may have better sound quality. Some original cast recordings from the 1940's sound flat in comparison with versions recorded later.

Recordings taken from the sound track of movie musicals are also available. However, it should be noted that the movie versions sometimes have added material or may not include all of the songs from the original stage production. When MGM filmed *The Student Prince* in 1953, the producer commissioned three new songs for the movie.

If cast recordings are not available, you may find recordings of songs that have come from musicals. The student book lists such songs, a number of which have become standards and have been recorded many times by a variety of artists. You and your students should examine music and lyrics by listening to vocal versions rather than instrumentals. Lyrics are vital to the songs in a musical, since they help tell the story. Instrumental versions tend to be freely arranged and interpreted so that they do not necessarily convey the spirit of the original. Of course, this can also happen with vocals, so a singer's style must be seen as a possible misinterpretation of the song's original use in a musical.

A class runs more smoothly if you have all equipment ready and all recordings organized, ready to go. Be ready to use your tape-player counter to quickly find the proper parts of tapes. It is also useful to write down lyrics beforehand. They are sometimes difficult to hear and follow when played in a classroom situation, so written lyrics can be helpful for reference.

Because many of the musicals discussed in this book have been made into movies, they can be seen on television or as video cassettes. However, movie versions must be studied with some caution, for they often vary from the original stage production. As a rule, the movie versions that have been most successful artistically hold closely to the original production. These are films such as *West Side Story, Fiddler on the Roof,* and *My Fair Lady.*

Movie performers are not always those who originated a Broadway role. This can affect the film version. Barbara Streisand was a very different Dolly Levi in the movie *Hello, Dolly!* from Carol Channing in the original Broadway show. Still, a movie is sometimes the only available performance of a musical. Videos of musicals can be used to study and enjoy while keeping these reservations in mind.

The exercises at the ends of the student chapters help to broaden the study of the chapter's material. Every exercise section includes suggestions for creating a class musical. This may not be possible because of time, school facilities, or student abilities. However, those suggestions can be used as points of discus-

sion. In other words, even if the class will not create and stage a musical, how would they do it if they could? No one understands a creative art better than someone who attempts it.

This teacher guide includes some specific questions (with answers) on the content of each chapter. There are also listening exercises using material that is likely to be available to you.

Used from beginning to end, the student book offers a survey of the techniques and history of musicals. If you plan to study a single show or period, the second half of the book is useful. If a class hopes to stage a musical, the first half provides background as to how musicals are created. Your planned musical may be discussed in relation to its historical context, as in the second part of the book.

What high school subject could include the study of musicals? Several, in fact. Andrew Lloyd Webber, composer of such musicals as *Cats* and *The Phantom of the Opera*, has said that musical theater is the most collaborative form of theater one can find. It includes music, literature (the story and lyrics), dance, and the visual arts (stage and costume design). Many schools that stage a class musical frequently combine the work of music, English, and theater classes, then call upon the art class to prepare the scenery.

But even if you don't intend to do a class production, studying musicals raises the curtain on one of America's most important cultural traditions. Has it also anything to do with American history? On first thought no, because musicals seem to be an evening's escape from, rather than concern with, trying historical events. Caught in the Depression of the 1930's, movie fans went to see Ginger Rogers in silk and furs dance with debonair Fred Astaire in marble-columned halls and luxurious gardens. But doesn't that say something about the spirit of the times, the need to dream of silk and of marble halls? Besides, theater audiences of the 1930's did encounter a life of poverty in a southern ghetto when they went to see *Porgy and Bess*. Such connections with historical events will be pointed out in the body of this guide.

Nevertheless, the best reason for studying musicals is to get in touch with one of the most important developments in twentieth-century American culture and to enjoy the fruits of that development.

So get out the recordings and video cassettes as this guide helps you lead students into the theaters of Broadway and beyond to enjoy their lively, colorful, exciting, musical shows.

Recordings of the following musicals will help you sample the greater portion of the book's examples:

The Mikado, Show Boat, Porgy and Bess, Oklahoma!, My Fair Lady, West Side Story, Hello Dolly!, Fiddler on the Roof, Man of La Mancha, Jesus Christ Superstar.

Recordings of these musicals are also useful:

The Student Prince, Anything Goes, The Music Man, Hair, Cats, and *The Phantom of the Opera.*

This guide provides the pronunciation for several words that might give students trouble. Feel free to copy these phonetic pronunciations for students if doing so would be helpful to them.

The guide concludes on page 32 with a copy of a form included in the student book to help listeners assess the musicals they hear. J. Weston Walch grants permission to teachers to make as many copies of this form as needed for use by their own students.

Part I

Musical Making

The first section of the student book examines how musicals are created, discussing a particular phase of musical production in each chapter. Introducing the theme of each chapter is some feature of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*. This work was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, because the published work of Gilbert and Sullivan entered the public domain a few years ago, it can be produced without the complications and cost of seeking permission. This means many Gilbert and Sullivan shows are today performed throughout the country. Student productions also can be staged without permission. Secondly, a number of recordings of Gilbert and Sullivan music are readily available for class demonstration. *The Mikado* represents their many productions simply because it is one of their best and most popular.

Each chapter in Part I of this guide includes the following topics:

Chapter object: The chapter title is explained and expanded on.

Listening exercises: Again it is stressed that listening to musical scores is most important. Listening exercises contain suggestions for each chapter.

Specific questions: These questions (with answers) can be asked to see if the students have grasped the material in the chapter.

CHAPTER 1

Musical Theater

Chapter object: This chapter describes some of the various kinds of musical theater, then isolates the musical as our primary subject.

Listening exercises: Since this chapter distinguishes musicals from other kinds of musical theater, have the class listen to excerpts from a typical opera, operetta, and musical to understand the distinction. A selection from a Wagner, Verdi, or Puccini opera would certainly make the point. Play an aria and a portion with chorus and full orchestra to demonstrate the seriousness, deep feeling, and power of operatic music.

A selection from a Strauss or Lehar operetta could serve here. If no complete recording is available, then an overture from one of their works, such as *Die Fledermaus* or *The Merry Widow*, can be used, or, if nothing else, a waltz from such an operetta.

Any selection from a musical that emphasizes a contemporary American song style such as jazz, country, dance, or pop can demonstrate the spirit of a musical.

Questions:

1. How would you describe an opera, in contrast to an operetta or musical? (An **opera** is a theatrical production in which most everything is set to music, including dialogue. It employs choral singing, solo arias, ensemble singing as duets, trios, etc., and recitatives, which are sung speech, all with orchestral accompaniment.)
2. How would you describe an operetta? (An **operetta** is lighter in theme and spirit than opera, with songs scattered through a story plot. Dialogue is spoken, not sung. The music styles are traditional, such as waltzes and straight ballad singing.)
3. How would you describe a musical? (A **musical** is a theatrical production in which a story plot includes songs, dances, and other interludes, generally employing popular 20th-century music styles such as jazz, country, and pop ballads.)

CHAPTER 2

The Book

Chapter object: This chapter explains how a musical is based upon and grows out of the **book**, that is, the story or plot created by the author of the musical.

Reading exercises: Since this chapter does not deal with music, there are no listening exercises. Instead, students can make an outline of the plot of *The Mikado*, which begins the chapter. Part II of the student book includes book summaries for a number of musicals. Students can outline the plots from some of the longer summaries, such as *Show Boat, Porgy and Bess, Oklahoma!, West Side Story, Fiddler on the Roof,* or *The Phantom of the Opera.*

Questions:

1. Name ways the **book** can help establish the characters in a musical. (Suggested answers: the roles and character descriptions the book gives them; the way characters describe one another; the way they react to one another; the way they speak; the way they are to be costumed, according to the book.)
2. What are some of the functions of the dialogue created by the author of the book? (Establish character; describe historical background; move the plot along; provide comedy; serve as the basis for song lyrics; provide transition from spoken speech to sung lyrics.)
3. Students can match some famous musicals mentioned in this chapter with the type of source for the book. (*Oklahoma!, My Fair Lady, Kiss Me Kate, West Side Story*—based on plays; *Show Boat, Oliver!, Fiddler on the Roof, Guys and Dolls*—based on novels and short stories.)

CHAPTER 3

Lyrics

Chapter object: Here we examine the functions of lyrics in a musical. Then we consider how a lyricist creates the words of songs.

Listening exercises: Following are suggestions for examining the functions of lyrics, but other available recordings can be used. Let students listen to the words, even write them down, and see how the lyrics perform their particular functions.

Express emotions: "Maria" (*West Side Story*); "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" (*My Fair Lady*).

Establish character: "Why Can't the English?" and "Wouldn't It Be Loverly?" (*My Fair Lady);* "I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'" (*Porgy and Bess*).

Establish setting: "Summertime" (*Porgy and Bess*); "Oh What a Beautiful Morning!" (*Oklahoma!*).

Establish theme: "Man of La Mancha" (*Man of La Mancha*); "Aquarius" (*Hair*).

Pacing and entertainment: "Kansas City" and "I Cain't Say No" (*Oklahoma!*); "Do You Love Me?" and "If I Were a Rich Man" (*Fiddler on the Roof*).

Questions:

1. What functions do lyrics serve in a musical? (Express emotions, establish character, establish setting, establish theme, pacing and entertainment. These functions can be examined by listening to the lyrics of song examples.)
2. What function do you think the song "Titwillow," which opened Chapter 3, serves in *The Mikado*? (Pacing and entertainment.)
3. "Tom-tit" is a British term for tiny birds such as wrens or chickadees. Why might Gilbert have chosen such a bird for this melancholy song? (The alliteration of the name repeating the *T* sound and the contrast of using a small, insignifi-

cant bird to express heavy melancholy and then despairing suicide produces humorous lyrics.)

4. What kinds of sound patterns occur in lyrics? (Regularly repeated syllable accents and rhyming patterns.)
5. Which of the two sound patterns is always necessary to lyrics and which one is not? (A regular accent pattern is necessary because this gives the lyric rhythm. A rhyming pattern is not absolutely necessary.)
6. If it is not absolutely necessary, how can a rhyming pattern serve a lyric? (It can help emphasize meaning, help conclude a lyric, or simply produce good fun.)