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CAROUSEL

by Richard Rodgers (1902 - 1979), music
Oscar Hammerstein II (1895 - 1960), lyrics

The successful collaboration of composer Richard Rodgers and lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II continued when *Carousel* opened on Broadway in 1945. Together in their *Oklahoma!* they had revolutionized musical theater with the integration of music and story such that the music itself advances the plot. With the two others of that successful creative team, director Robert Mamoulian and choreographer Agnes DeMille, Rodgers and Hammerstein next dared to bring tragedy to the musical theater stage, and in the end defined this uniquely American genre, musical theater.

From *Liliom*, an obscure and dark 1909 Ferenc Molnar play set in Budapest and starring a criminal anti-hero who suicides, Rodgers and Hammerstein crafted thought-provoking entertainment replete with hummable melodies, and they made theater history. They reset the action in a New England fishing village. They created extended scenes of music and dialog not unlike the operatic recitative. They embraced themes of domestic violence and redemption. They expanded the role of the orchestra, seemingly to comment on what has happened, or will, with Rodgers' richly broader symphonic orchestrations. And, they gave us such enduring favorites as "If I Loved You," and "June Is Bustin' Out All Over." The climactic anthem, "You'll Never Walk Alone," is now famous in its own right, heard at graduations and funerals and, for all of 35 years, in an emotional rendition by Jerry Lewis to close his annual MDA Telethon.

Both Rodgers and Hammerstein cited *Carousel* as their favorite collaboration. In 1999, *Time* magazine named it the "Best Musical of the 20th Century."

DILETTANTES OF MAGIC VALLEY brought Broadway to Twin Falls, Idaho, in 1959, with a production of *Carousel*. It wasn't a love of Broadway that prompted the effort, but rather a

strong desire on the part of a few forward-thinking citizen artists to build a community auditorium. That idea, and the plan to launch community-wide fund-raising by “putting on a show,” has been attributed to Marty Mead. Her own family, recalls husband David, laughed. Roger Vincent was a believer and early collaborator.

Carousel was truly a community effort. Marty Mead and Roger Vincent brought superior musical talent to the lead roles. The pit orchestra brought the score to life. The sets were magnificent. The costumes were just right. And then there was the invaluable contribution of Mary Walker. Aspiring to opera, she had studied at Julliard but supported herself performing on television and Broadway, including in *Carousel*. According to an autobiography she wrote many years ago, she brought the original Mamoulian staging to the Twin Falls production. The town responded and tickets sold out early. An extra three performances were hastily arranged, and today we enjoy the fruits of those early efforts: successful fund-raising built the Fine Arts Auditorium we enjoy tonight; the pit orchestra continued to perform independently, becoming us— Magic Valley Symphony; and the troupe continued to perform one Broadway show every March every year since.

Dilettantes of Magic Valley reports proudly that they are the longest continuously performing musical theater production company in Idaho, and have sustained without ever receiving public financial assistance. Magic Valley Symphony salutes the Dilettantes.