

## THE COMMUNITY OF HUNGERFORD THEATRE COMPANY – TOWN SHOW 2010

### CAROUSEL - A musical by Rodgers & Hammerstein

Carousel is a musical by Richard Rodgers (music) and Oscar Hammerstein II (book and lyrics). The show starts with the magical evocation of a carousel in the overture and includes the hit musical numbers "Mister Snow", "If I Loved You", "June Is Bustin' Out All Over", "When The Children Are Asleep", and the immortal "You'll Never Walk Alone". Carousel was innovative for its time, being one of the first musicals to contain a tragic plot.

The original production opened at the Majestic Theatre, New York on Broadway on April 19, 1945, and ran for 890 performances. In the UK it opened at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London, 7 June 1950 (566 Performances). Richard Rodgers said it was his favourite musical. Time magazine named it the best musical of the 20th century.

- A film version was produced by Twentieth Century-Fox in 1956 starring Gordon MacRae and Shirley Jones.  
**Beware:** the film version omits many of the songs from the show and re-arranges others!

*In a Maine coastal village in the 1870s, the swaggering, carefree carnival barker, Billy Bigelow, captivates and marries the naive mill worker, Julie Jordan. Billy loses his job and learns that Julie is pregnant and, desperately intent upon providing a decent life for his family, he is coerced into being an accomplice to a robbery. Caught in the act and facing the certainty of prison, he takes his own life and is sent "up there." Billy is allowed to return to earth for one day fifteen years later, and he encounters the daughter he never knew. She is a lonely, friendless teenager, her father's reputation as a thief and bully having haunted her throughout her young life. How Billy instils in both the child and her mother a sense of hope and dignity is a dramatic testimony to the power of love.*

#### SYNOPSIS - Act I

Two female mill workers in 1870s New England visit the town's carousel after work. One of them, demure Julie Jordan, is flirted with by the carousel's barker, Billy Bigelow (instrumental piece: "Carousel Waltz").

Mrs. Mullin, owner of the carousel, is jealous of the girls and tells Julie never to return to the carousel. Julie and her friend, Carrie Pipperidge, argue with Mrs. Mullin. Billy arrives and also argues with Mrs. Mullin and so is fired (again) from his job. Carrie presses Julie for information about Billy, but Julie is reticent ("You're a Queer One, Julie Jordan"). Eventually satisfied, Carrie confides that she has a beau of her own: local fisherman Enoch Snow ("Mister Snow"). Billy returns and makes it clear that only Julie should stay with him. Carrie leaves. Mr. Bascombe, owner of the mill, and a policeman appear and warn Julie that Billy has taken money from other women. Bascombe offers to take Julie home so she can keep her job, but she refuses and gets fired, too. She and Billy, now alone, can talk freely, but neither can quite confess the growing attraction they feel for each other ("If I Loved You").

A month passes. At a seaside cafe owned by Julie's cousin, Nettie Fowler, noisy sailors appear with clams for the evening's clambake. This spurs Carrie and the other female townfolk to jeer at them (this section is sung as a sort of recitative, rather than spoken). Nettie arrives and leads them all in celebrating love and spring. An elaborate dance ensues ("June Is Bustin' Out All Over"). The men leave as Julie, now married to Billy, arrives. (He and his whaler friend Jigger have been missing all night.) Nettie tells Carrie to comfort Julie.

Julie confides in Carrie that Billy, now unemployed and living with her at Nettie's, is unhappy over the loss of his job and, out of frustration, has slapped Julie. Carrie has happier news — she and Enoch are to be married. At this, the girls who have so far been feigning work, rush over, congratulate Carrie, and imagine the wedding day (reprise: "Mister Snow"). Enoch has arrived and startles the girls by joining them in song. The girls leave Julie, Carrie, and Enoch alone.

Carrie tries to talk with Julie and Enoch, but Julie bursts into tears in Enoch's arms. As she pulls herself together, Billy arrives with Jigger. He is openly rude to Enoch and then Julie, and he soon leaves along with Jigger, followed by a distraught Julie. Left alone, Enoch reveals how he expects both to become rich selling herring and to have a large family with Carrie ("When The Children Are Asleep").

Billy, Jigger, and other whalers sing of life on the sea ("Blow High, Blow Low") then dance, with the local girls flirting with the whalers. Jigger tries to recruit Billy for a robbery, but Billy declines when he learns the victim (Mr Bascombe) might have to be killed. Mrs. Mullin arrives to tempt Billy back to the carousel and he reveals he is unhappy with Julie. Julie arrives and tells Billy of her pregnancy and they go inside. Mrs. Mullin and Jigger return and spar until Billy comes back out and tells Mrs. Mullin to leave. Overwhelmed with happiness by the news, and determined to provide financially for his future child, Billy decides to be Jigger's accomplice after all ("Soliloquy").

Act 1 ends with the whole town leaving for the clambake. Billy, who previously shunned the idea of going to the clambake, now realizes it is integral to his and Jigger's alibi: he decides to go too. Julie is delighted.

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### SYNOPSIS - Act II

The act begins with the town reminiscing about the huge meal that they have just eaten ("This Was a Real Nice Clambake"). As everyone leaves to help clear up before the treasure hunt, Jigger tries to seduce Carrie. Unfortunately, Enoch walks in while Carrie is in a compromising position. He declares that he is finished with her ("Geraniums In The Winder"), as Jigger jeers ("Stonecutters Cut It On Stone"). The girls try to comfort Carrie, saying all men are bad. When Carrie turns to Julie for comfort, she reflects simply that all that matters is that "he's your feller and you love him" ("What's The Use Of Wondrin?"). Then Julie sees Billy trying to sneak away with Jigger and, while trying to stop him, feels the knife hidden in his shirt. She begs him to give it to her, but he refuses and leaves to commit the robbery. Julie realizes that Billy is about to do something that may get him into trouble.

Jigger and Billy gamble, using cards. At stake are their shares of the anticipated robbery spoils. Billy loses his share of the expected proceeds: his participation is now pointless. Unbeknown to Billy and Jigger, Mr. Bascombe, the intended robbery victim, has already deposited the money he was expected to be carrying. He instead carries a gun. The robbery fails: Bascombe pulls his gun and starts shooting. Jigger escapes unharmed, but the police corner Billy. Billy stabs himself with his knife and dies; Julie arrives just in time for him to say his last words to her.

Carrie tells Julie that Billy's death is not necessarily a bad thing. Enoch gets back together with Carrie and supports this view. Mrs. Mullin arrives, much to the disgust of the townsfolk, but Julie lets her view the body. Mrs. Mullin does so and then runs off weeping. Everyone leaves except Julie. Nettie arrives on the scene and comforts her ("You'll Never Walk Alone").

Billy arrives at heaven's gate. There, a pair of angels explain that, to enter, he must alleviate the distress he caused. Billy refuses to see a simple magistrate in Heaven: he demands to be taken directly to God to be judged ("The Highest Judge Of All"). The Starkeeper sends him back to earth. Stealing a star on the way down, he returns fifteen years after his suicide. His daughter, Louise, is now an angry and rebellious teen, mocked by Mr. Snow's snobbish and wealthy children because her father was a thief (instrumental: "Louise's Ballet" ~ 8 Minutes long!).

Enoch and his children call at Julie's house to pick up Carrie on the way to the graduation, and Enoch's son (Enoch Jr.) waits behind to talk to Louise. Louise reveals that she plans to run away from home with a carnival troupe she met, but when Enoch Jr. proposes, she decides to stay. He reveals, however, that his father would not think Louise an appropriate match. Insulted, Louise orders him to leave and bursts into tears.

Billy, able to make himself visible or invisible at will, reveals himself to Louise and pretends to be a friend of her father.



Trying to cheer her up, he offers her a small gift — the star he stole from Heaven. She refuses it and, frustrated, he slaps her. As he makes himself invisible, Louise tells Julie what has happened. She reveals that the slap miraculously felt like a kiss, not a blow. Without allowing her to actually see him, Billy finally confesses his love to Julie (reprise: "If I Loved You"). Having thus made amends, he invisibly attends Louise's high-school graduation. The whole town shuns her and refuses to applaud her. Dr. Seldon, who strangely resembles the Starkeeper, tells the graduating class not to rely on their parents' success (advice directed at Enoch Jr.) or be held back by their parents' mistakes (directed at Louise). Seldon then leads everyone in a final chorus (reprise: "You'll Never Walk Alone"). Billy, still invisible, whispers to Louise, telling her to have confidence in herself. His silent words enter her mind and, inspired, she — along with Julie — joins the singing. This good deed redeems Billy, who wins entry into Heaven.

### THE MUSIC

In this show, the music tells the story as much as the words, such as in 'The Carousel Waltz', a mimed opening number that takes the place of an overture, or the Act II Ballet.

On other occasions, the music tells us more than the surface meaning of the words. This is the case in Billy's 'Soliloquy' when the outward romance of the lyrics for the 'My little girl' section is underscored with eerie augmented chords that foreshadow the death that will come upon Billy when he agrees to commit a crime in order to steal money for his yet unborn daughter.

In this show Rodgers and Hammerstein used music in new fluid ways. For instance, they arrive at the 'song' part of 'Mister Snow' by way of an introduction in which Julie and Carrie speak in unpitched rhythm with a musical underscoring and a section of recitative that is so distinctive and lyrical ('You're a Queer One, Julie Jordan') that it could almost be a song on its own. The same thing happens in Act II, when Enoch Snow's 'Geraniums in the Winder' and Jigger's 'Stonecutters Cut it on Stone' are really just an extensive introduction to the extraordinarily poignant 'What's the Use of Won'drin'.