

The World of Jerome Kern: A Journey Through His Life, Music, and Legacy

Jerome David Kern (January 27, 1885 – November 11, 1945) was an American composer and theatre writer known for his contributions to musical theatre, particularly for his numerous collaborations with lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II. Kern's music is characterized by its lyrical melodies, lush harmonies, and sophisticated rhythms. He is considered one of the most important figures in the development of American musical theatre and his songs continue to be performed and enjoyed around the world.

Early Life and Education

Jerome Kern was born in New York City to German Jewish immigrants. His father, Henry Kern, was a clothing merchant, and his mother, Fannie Kakeles Kern, was a talented pianist. Kern showed an early aptitude for music and began taking piano lessons at the age of six. He later attended the New York College of Music, where he studied composition and orchestration.



The World of Jerome Kern: A Biography by David Ewen

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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Career

Kern began his career as a songplugger in Tin Pan Alley, where he wrote songs for vaudeville and other popular entertainment venues. In 1904, he wrote his first Broadway show, *The Red Petticoat*. Over the next several years, he continued to write Broadway shows and songs, including *Sally* (1920), *Sweet Adeline* (1929), and *Roberta* (1933).

In 1927, Kern met lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II. The two men formed a partnership that would produce some of the most successful musical theatre shows in history, including *Show Boat* (1927), *Music in the Air* (1932), and *Swing Time* (1936). Kern's music for these shows is characterized by its lyrical melodies, lush harmonies, and sophisticated rhythms. He is considered one of the most important figures in the development of American musical theatre and his songs continue to be performed and enjoyed around the world.

Personal Life

Kern married Eva Leale in 1910. The couple had two children, Dorothy and Jerome Jr. Kern was a devoted husband and father and he enjoyed spending time with his family. He was also an avid golfer and enjoyed playing the piano. Kern died of a heart attack in New York City on November 11, 1945.

Legacy

Jerome Kern is considered one of the most important figures in the development of American musical theatre. His songs are characterized by their lyrical melodies, lush harmonies, and sophisticated rhythms. He is considered one of the most important figures in the development of

American musical theatre and his songs continue to be performed and enjoyed around the world.

Kern's music has been featured in numerous films and television shows, including *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961). His songs have also been recorded by a wide range of artists, including Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, and Tony Bennett.

Kern's legacy continues to live on through his music. His songs are still performed and enjoyed by audiences around the world. He is considered one of the most important figures in the development of American musical theatre and his music will continue to be enjoyed for generations to come.

Major Works

- *Show Boat* (1927)
- *Music in the Air* (1932)
- *Swing Time* (1936)
- *Roberta* (1933)
- *Sally* (1920)
- *Sweet Adeline* (1929)
- *The Red Petticoat* (1904)

Awards and Honors

- Pulitzer Prize for Drama (1928) for *Show Boat*
- Academy Award for Best Original Song (1936) for "The Way You Look Tonight" from *Swing Time*

- Tony Award for Best Musical (1945) for *Annie Get Your Gun*
- Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award (1985)
- Kennedy Center Honors (1985)

Further Reading

- *Jerome Kern: A Biography* by Stephen Banfield
- *The Jerome Kern Songbook* by Alec Wilder
- *The World of Jerome Kern* by Richard Rodgers

Additional Resources

- The Jerome Kern Society
- Jerome Kern on Broadway
- Jerome Kern on AllMusic



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