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American Commemoratives Stamp Series: Broadway Musicals

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AMERICAN COMMEMORATIVES



MUSICAL – a theatrical production that is characteristically sentimental and amusing in nature with a simple but distinctive plot, offering music, dance and dialogue.

Across a span of four decades, four of the most popular and innovative musicals were produced for the Broadway stage. Out of each decade came a story, set to music, that created an impact in the musical theater that would pave the way for future performances in the years to come.



BROADWAY MUSICALS

Based on Edna Ferber's novel, Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II's production of *Showboat* in 1927, was called the "Gone with the Wind" of musical theater. For 1927 audiences, apart from whatever memories it evoked, *Showboat* presented possibly the most important breakthrough in the history of the musical stage. Neither a Viennese operetta nor an American musical comedy, it was the first real "musical play"; a lyric piece with a serious romantic story about everyday people set to music.

Porgy & Bess, a 1935 musical based on a book by Dorothy and DuBose Heyward with lyrics and music by Ira Gershwin and DuBose Heyward, was heralded as the season's masterpiece in American Folk Opera. Staged and performed with scenes of haunting fervor, *Porgy & Bess* allowed audiences a look at the devastating grief of death, the terror of blacks caught in a ramshackle house during a hurricane and the uninhibited gaiety of a picnic.

The team of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II introduced, in 1935, a western love story that would change the face of musicals yet to be performed. Rodgers' music in *Oklahoma!* marked a change from the suave, brash lines he had previously written. Instead, the lyrics were softer, romantic and expressed the actions and feelings of the characters in an unforgettable fashion that had not been done before.

In 1956, Frederick Loewe and Alan Jay Lerner's adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion" delighted audiences. Critics reported that the music was uncommonly faithful and even when it deviated from the original story it did so with intelligence, taste and style. *My Fair Lady* is considered the most perfect musical to date as almost every line, song and dance advances the plot. Even after several viewings it remains endearing and always enjoyable.

The Broadway Musicals commemorative stamps were issued on July 14, 1993, in New York, New York. Wilson McLean of New York, New York, designed the stamps which depict scenes from each of the featured musicals.





PORGY and BESS

First Day of Issue

CATFISH ROW

