

Hungry As The Wolf Felt When He Met Red-Riding Hood

In 1949, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II brought to the Broadway stage what would be their third musical blockbuster, [South Pacific](#). It tells the tale of Ensign Nellie Forbush, a “Cockeyed Optimist”-ic Naval nurse from Little Rock, stationed on a remote Pacific island, who falls in love with a worldly French planter. This type of interracial pairing was extremely controversial for a show in the 1940s. Even more so was the introduction of Emile de Becque’s two Polynesian children. After learning of the children, Nellie vows to “Wash that Man Right Out of Her Hair.”

A secondary plot revolves around the romance between Lt. Joseph Cable and a mute Polynesian native. The plots are brought together when de Becque and Cable are called upon to go on a dangerous mission which leads to tragedy.

The theme of racial prejudice is explored throughout the show and no more so than in the song “You’ve Got to be Carefully Taught.” Because of its biting commentary on prejudice, Rodgers and Hammerstein were encouraged to take the song out of the show to which they both responded that there would be no show without it.

South Pacific opened at the Majestic Theatre on Broadway April 7, 1949 (40 years ago, today) and had a run of 1,925 performances. It was the recipient of 9 Tony Awards (including all 4 of the major acting trophies). It also received the prestigious 1950 Pulitzer Prize for Drama (one of only 7 musicals to have done so). Most of the songs have become standards: “Some Enchanted Evening,” “Younger than Springtime,” “Bali Hai,” and “There is Nothing like a Dame” (a rousing chorus number led by the great character Luthor Billis and his chorus of Seabees). The [movie](#) was released in theatres

in 1958 as well as a [televised version](#) in 2001 starring an out-of-place Glenn Close who is much too old to play a young, naive Naval nurse. Ironically, it is the only major Rodgers and Hammerstein show to have never been revived on Broadway until it recently opened at the [Vivian Beaumont Theatre](#).

ADDENDUM: Any errors in mathematics are solely the responsibility of the blogger. He takes full responsibility for his ignorance and hopes that his brilliance does not become the topic for a post on another site. Unless it is by his own doing.