

BIRTH OF A SONG

"OL' MAN RIVER"
By Jerome D. Kern and Oscar Hammerstein, 2nd

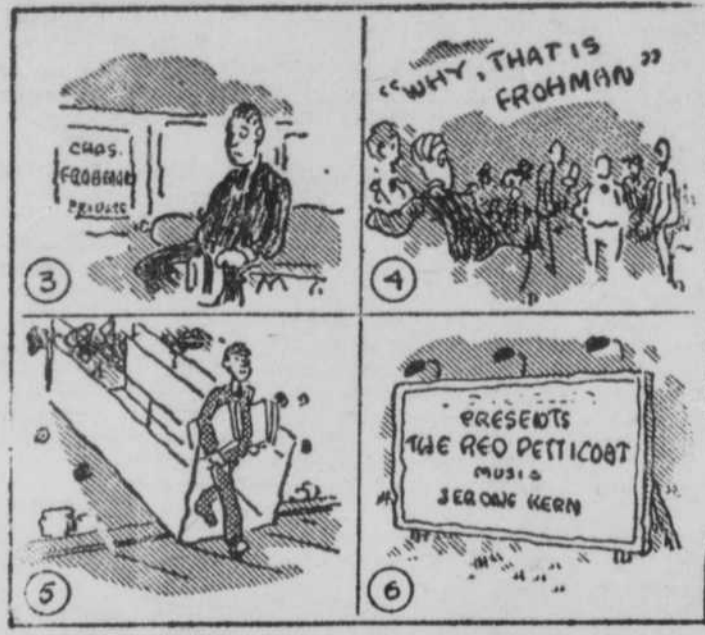
From ASCAP Files
By Joseph R. Fiesler and Paul Carruth



1 KERN has proved that a classical musical training is no handicap to the writing of successful popular music. By 35 he had composed twenty-five n...



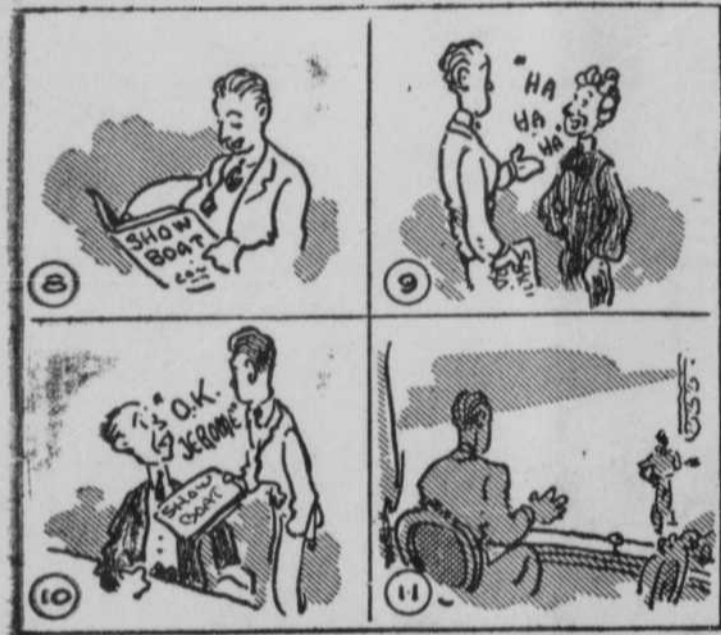
2 While still a bby Kern traveled to Germany to study, and then proceeded to England where he became interest... in the theatre.



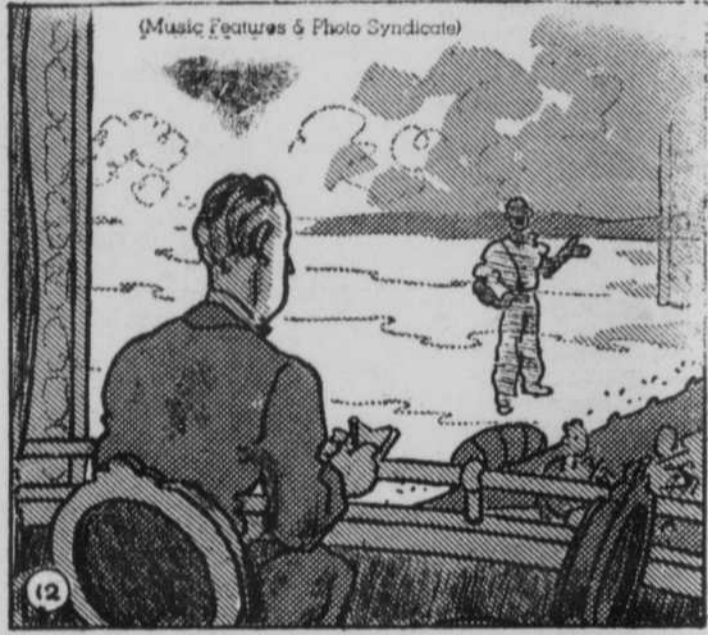
3 His life's ambition was to meet Charles Frohman, and finally one day he succeeded—and began work at fifteen dollars a week.



5 He returned with the music of twenty plays and the friendship of P. G. Wodehouse, at that time also starting his career.



6 Kern had read Edna Ferber's novel "Show Boat," and saw it in his mind's eye as a musical show, but Miss Ferber laughed. Kern persisted, bought the stage rights and persuaded Ziegfeld to produce it.



8 Kern heard Paul Robeson sing and got the idea for "Ol' Man River" from the impression the great negro singer made on him. He put the song in the new show.



9 But it was Jules Bledsoe who was cast in "Show Boat" and first sang the song. Kern has long been a member of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.



10 His melodic show boat has brought down the river of time such great songs as "They Didn't Believe Me," "Sally," "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," "Music In the Air," and many others the public remembers.

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PERSONALITIES IN MUSIC

MARIA GREVER A.S.C.A.P.

"Ti-Pi-Tin"—A Composer's Holiday



By Daniel I. McNamara

MARIA GREVER, Latin America's poet laureate of romantic song, upset the musical traditions of a score of years when early this year she strayed from the classic standards to write her first popular song. She had created nearly five hundred standard songs, many composed for individual stars of the concert stage, when she evolved the light gay number, "Ti-Pi-Tin."

Now "Ti-Pi-Tin" is to Maria Grever what the Prelude is to Rachmaninoff, or the Minuet to Paderewski... an inescapable part of her musical personality. She likes to dream of the recent past when she was hailed as composer and artist of the concert stage, before she discovered that she also had the touch of a popular songwriter. And as Rachmaninoff envisions heaven as a place where his Prelude never is heard, she can picture her paradise as a region not ringing with the rhythm of "Ti-Pi-Tin."

Maria Grever never regarded "Ti-Pi-Tin" as more than a passing fancy, and reluctantly consented to its publication early in the year, when friends who heard it in her studio pressed her to give its melody and luring lyrics to the world of popular music lovers. Raymond Leveen, A.S.C.A.P., wrote the English lyrics.

Maria Grever's career in song has been international. A native of Mexico City, she was reared in Spain. Returning to her native land, master of piano, violin and guitar, she sang with a velvety coloratura soprano. Her patrician family frowned upon her theatrical aspirations. Married at fourteen, she found her husband in sympathy with her ambitions for a career in music. A chance recording of one of her first compositions, "Besame," (Kiss Me) brought her recognition. When "Jurame," (Promise Me) followed, her fame was secure. Soon she was a reigning favorite of Latin America's concert stage, where for

twenty years she has played and sung her own songs.

Early in the 'thirties Senora Grever made New York her permanent address, became an American citizen, and by virtue of her many compositions, became a prominent member of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, through which such artists protect their copyrights. At the last annual dinner of the Society she met her American lyric writer, Raymond Leveen, a fellow member. Among concert artists, she is known as a couturiere of song, for she has composed dozens of songs, words and music, for such singers. One of her early patrons was Caruso. The others constitute a "Who's Who" in music.

Of the numerous fictions following the success of "Ti-Pi-Tin," one that most amuses its composer places her in the role of an aged, indigent songwriter. The fact is that Senora Grever ranks among the most successful of women composers, and that, while she proudly boasts three young grandchildren who have inherited the jet hair and flashing black eyes of their talented grandmother, she might well be mistaken for their mother.

So different from the usual run of her creations is "Ti-Pi-Tin" that in Latin America many will not believe it is her work. Yet like the Prelude and the Minuet, apparently it is destined to haunt its creator, a musical Nemesis, to remind her even if it is with swelling royalty checks, of her momentary lapse from the classic ideals of her other works.

(Music Features & Photo Syndicate)

WORDS WITHOUT MUSIC

By LOUIS REID

(Music Features & Photo Syndicate)

A CONCERT pianist, to get away from the beaten track, try out a novel detour, offered the other day "Old Black Joe" as a Polish dance; "Turkey in the Straw" as a Hungarian dance by Brahms; "Home, Sweet Home" as an Arabian dance by Tschikowsky; "Old Folks at Home" as a minuet by Bach; "Yankee Doodle" as both Chopin and Liszt would have done it, "America" as Beethoven and Tin Pan Alley would have written it, and "The Star Spangled Banner" in the manner of Mozart... Defours can be tedious.

Whatever became of Emma F. Tolen? She was the girl to whom the song "Sweet Adeline" was dedicated. Her name appeared at the top of every copy of the song. Harry Armstrong, composer of the ballad, recalls her as a young girl who in 1903, the year of the song's publication, was selling music in a New York department store. She had been successful in boosting his first song hit, "The Story the Violets Told."

Armstrong was grateful. "Why don't you write a song to me?" she asked. So when "Sweet Adeline" was ready it bore the inscription: "To Emma F. Tolen."

Our Most Popular Ballad

"Sweet Adeline," though now chiefly identified with the bibulous Americano, with song-shouting get-togethers of men everywhere, is our best known—certainly, our most popular—ballad since the days of Stephen Foster. Yet, it is doubtful people, in general, are familiar with the name of Harry Armstrong. Probably not one person in 10,000 can name offhand the writer of "Sweet Adeline." Armstrong, a veteran member of ASCAP, still pecks away at a keyboard, working out melodies.

The patron saints of the more ambitious popular orchestras continue to be Victor Herbert, Sir Arthur Sullivan and Franz Lehar. These three composers are always on tap, always ready and reliable when a program needs life pumped into it. Over and over you hear them. Yet, they never grow stale—well hardly ever. Herbert and Lehar bulk a little larger on the scene, if only because they, respectively, wrote the fuscious tunes, "Kiss Me Again" and "Merry Widow Waltz." These pieces are warbled by every singer above the rank of burlesque, are played by every band above the hood-down hillbilly grade.

But Paul Whiteman goes right on shaking his knee, Benny Goodman goes right on tapping his toes.

It is doubtful Frank Crumit would have given up a career in electrical engineering had he not in his idle moments furbished up the old ballad, "The Gay Cabellero." Two million records were sold of the thing, and Crumit's stage life began...

It is the Spaniard Andres Segovia who has convinced American ears that the guitar can be utilized for tunes other than those of the campus and the coral strands of Hawaii... There has never been a butlers' chorus—not even in England... Recently, there was a film called "Gold Is Where You Find It." Songwriters Warren and Dubin, glancing at the title, substituted "love" for "gold," and lo! that's how ballads are born... Modern American music is only 24 years old... Raymond Scott, the songwriter, is a brother of Mark Warnow, the band-leader.

Bandleaders most experienced in interpreting Herbert are Harold Sanford and George Hall. Both were associated for years with the composer. Much of their spare time today is spent in making new arrangements of their old leader.

One of the best definitions of jazz we have heard is given by Ray Noble, songwriting-bandman. "To most people," he says, "jazz means dance music. Personally, I think it's an ordinary tune played in regular tempo so that people can move around a dance floor."

Noble's right. People don't dance; they move around a floor.

Some musicians who live up to their torrid names in the tones they offer are Joe Venuti, fiddler; Phil Napoleon, trumpeter; Miff Mole, trombonist; Toots Mondello, Paul Rieck, Cab Calloway, saxophonists.

Benny Goodman, apparently, isn't satisfied to be the dictator of swing. He has turned songwriter, too. With the help of Edgar Sampson and Mitchell Parish he has penned a tune called "Don't Be That Way." Another swing sabbid, Louis Prima, has also written a song—"Where Have We Met Before?"—and quite a nifty it is.

There's no time in Germany for any "Hey-Nazi-Nazi and a Hi-De-Ho." A Berlin daily had this to say the other day: "As Germans, the most musical people on earth, we insist we no longer find pleasure in furious sax squeals, clarinet blasts, trumpet shrills. Jazz is finished."

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