



Jerome Kern: His Life and Music

Gerald Bordman

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In what has become *the* biography of the father of American musical theatre, Gerald Bordman demonstrates a keen understanding and sympathy for Kern the man, as well as Kern the musician.

No "rags-to-riches" folk hero, Jerome Kern grew up on the periphery of the American-Jewish elite, achieved early success, and moved throughout his life among the era's leading personalities and performers. Bordman follows Kern's career from its beginnings on Broadway and London's West End before World War I to his death in 1945. He reveals how Kern's 1914 hit "They Didn't Believe Me" established the pattern for the modern popular ballad; how his famous Princess Theatre shows during World War I helped end the dominance of European musicals on Broadway; and how with *Show Boat* he initiated the Americanized operetta style that dominated the American stage for decades. Examining the scores for all of Kern's shows and films (including fascinating discussions of such famous songs as "Look for the Silver Lining," "Ol' Man River," and "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes"), Bordman demonstrates not only how Kern dramatically changed perceptions of what theatre music should or could be, but also how developments around Kern influenced him and his music.

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