

Composer Study, April 1-2, 2020

Narrate what you know about Rodgers and Hammerstein and three musicals we have studied—*Oklahoma*, *South Pacific*, and *The King and I*.

You may be wondering how *The King and I* came into being. A British actress was seeking a new role and her manager thought the book *Anna and the King of Siam* could turn into a lovely musical in the right hands. Both wives of Rodgers and Hammerstein had read the book and they agreed.

The team had a very different opinion. A love story between the king and Anna was inappropriate. A

musical is not a musical without a love story. One day Hammerstein noticed an account of one of the unhappy, young wives of the king. They created a romance between her and a scholar. Rodgers was concerned that Thai music and speech might be a little too exotic. He made the speech of the Thai characters very musical, except for the king whom he gave a forceful, emphatic style.

Today we will listen to three songs. The first is sung by Anna. In “Hello Young Lovers,” Anna sings about the love of her life who died. This performance is by a young people’s theater group.

Next up is Yul Brynner, the original king, in the debut on Broadway in 1951. It ran for three years and had many tours and revivals. He also was cast in the 1956 film. Here he sings, “A Puzzlement.”

Finally is the most memorable scene, “Shall We Dance?” After many tense disagreements, Anna and the king realize they can both soften their strong wills and become friends.

Listen to all three songs and pick your favorite. Narrate why it is your favorite and, if you can, tell about its mood (feeling), tempo (speed), and other musical elements.