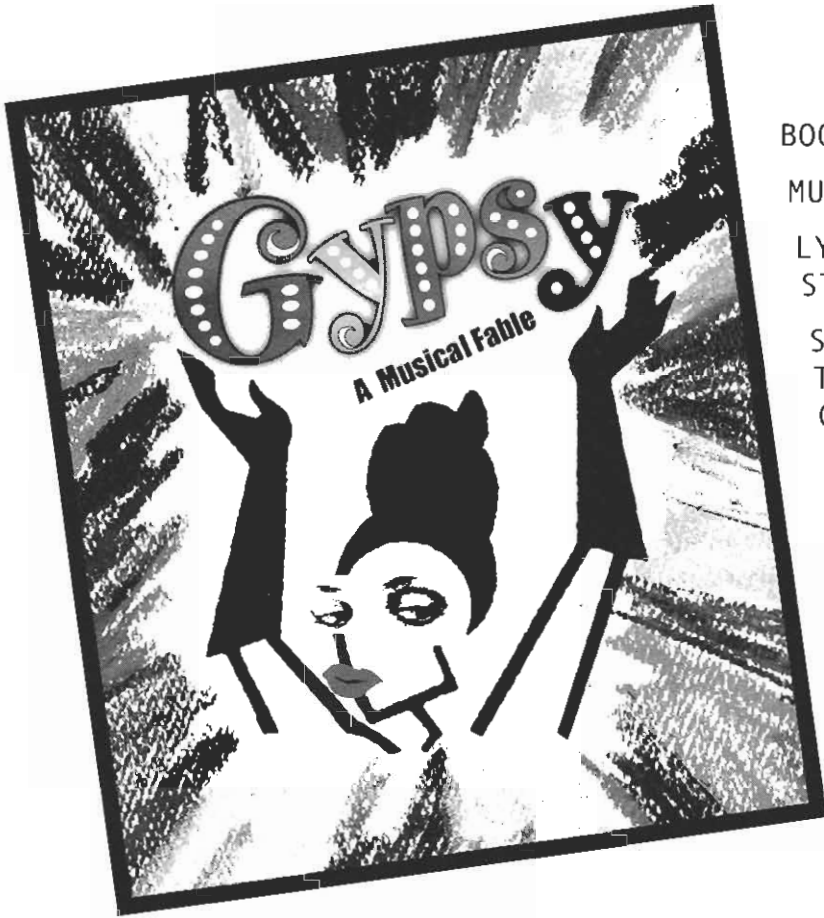


THE **STUDY** OF **GUIDE**
REPERTORY THEATRE OF SAINT LOUIS



BOOK BY ARTHUR LAURENTS

MUSIC BY JULE STYNE

LYRICS BY
STEPHEN SONDHEIM

SUGGESTED BY
THE MEMOIRS OF
GYPSY ROSE LEE

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION BY
DAVID MERRICK AND
LELAND HAYWARD

ENTIRE PRODUCTION
ORIGINALLY DIRECTED
AND CHOREOGRAPHED BY
JEROME ROBBINS

CONTENTS

2. WHO'S WHO

WORDS TO THE WISE

3. WHAT'S THE STORY

5. VAUDEVILLE SPEAKS

6. SHOP TALK

7. BIO & BEYOND

READ MORE ABOUT IT

8. Q & A

MAJOR SPONSOR: MONSANTO FUND

WHO'S WHO

Uncle Jocko, the slimy master of ceremonies for a penny ante vaudeville "kiddie" show, is one of the first "professionals" to have the rare pleasure of dealing with Madam Rose.

Louise (Gypsy Rose Lee), a quiet, timid girl is an afterthought in her family and struggles to move out of the shadow of her sister and the grasp of her mother.

June, Louise's younger sister, is, in her mother's mind, "the star", but in time she comes to question both her mother's judgment and her methods.

Rose is an unstoppable locomotive of raw ambition, bowling over anyone or anything that steps in her path, yet at the same time managing to charm even the most difficult of characters.

Pop is Rose's father, a down to earth man who sees his daughter's life as destructive, both for her and her children.

Mr. Weber is a Los Angeles theatre manager who falls prey to Rose's interminable insistence.

Herbie is a soft-hearted ex-agent driven out of show business by his own compassion and generosity and drawn back into it by an inexplicable attraction to Rose.

Mr. Goldstone, a theatre manager, holds the key to the Orpheum Circuit, the first phase of Rose's dream.

WORDS TO THE WISE

Vaudeville—This now defunct form of entertainment was very prominent from the late 1870s through the late 1920s and offered everything from song and dance routines to jugglers and contortionists. It is on this circuit that Louise and June make their theatrical debut.

Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Elks—Rose rattles off this parade of civic organizations in an attempt to feign familiarity with the smarmy Uncle Jocko.

"Ad lick"—In an attempt to showcase her knowledge of "theatre" Rose mangles the phrase "ad lib" into "ad lick" when instructing an orchestra member how to play.

Orpheum Circuit—The vaudeville market was divided into two primary circuits, the Orpheum in the west and the Keith in the east. Herbie's first (and only) major booking for Dainty June and Company is on this "big time" circuit and continues to be the one moment of glory that Rose clings to for many years.

Boudoir—As is her style, Rose elevates the state of her dingy hotel room by using this French term instead.

Menagerie—Rose travels with an assortment of animals, or as Mr. Kringelein refers to them, a "dirty menagerie."

"the talkies"—Herbie cites the success of these movies with spoken dialogue as one of the reasons that vaudeville is struggling.

Pantages Circuit—One of the many "small time" circuits of vaudeville, it is on this route that Herbie first books Baby June and Her Newsboys.

The Lunts—This husband and wife acting team dazzled American audiences with their performances from the 1920s through the late 1950s.

Fanny Brice—A singer and comedienne of the 1920s and '30s, Brice was a star of revues such as the Ziegfeld Follies and was the inspiration for the musical, *Funny Girl*.

Ziegfeld—One of the most successful producers of his era, Ziegfeld is best known for his extravagant Follies featuring stars such as Will Rogers and W.C. Fields.

Burlesque—As it is portrayed in *Gypsy*, this term refers to a form of entertainment popular in the United States from the early 1900s through the mid 1940s. Scantly clad women were the primary feature and were accompanied by bawdy comedians.

Finesse—Tessie Tura claims that her act is superior because she does "it with finesse," or a little extra flair.

Demurer—Tessie, whose act is a broken-down version of ballet, coins this term to indicate that she is more refined and elegant than the other dancers.

Minsky's—The *crème de la crème* of the burlesque theatres, Minsky's is the pinnacle of Gypsy's striptease career and a sure sign that she is at last a success.

A bientôt—Gypsy practices her newly acquired French by using this phrase to say, "so long."

WHO'S WHO

Tulsa, Yonkers, L.A. and Angie are the ill-used "talent" that Rose collects along the roadways for the act, performing for little or no pay, eating a steady diet of warmed-over Chinese food and sleeping five to a room.

Mr. Kringelein is the meddling manager of one of the seedy hotels in which Rose houses her troupe.

Miss Cratchitt is a dutiful secretary who must not only endure an audition by Dainty June and Her Farmboys, but also must go toe to toe with Rose in negotiations.

The Hollywood Blondes are Rose's ragtag band of peroxide-dunked girls who support Louise's act.

Pastey is a foul-mouthed, "young snot" of an employee at the burlesque theatre in Wichita.

Cigar is the greedy, perverse owner of the theatre where Gypsy Rose Lee makes her debut.

Tessie Tura, Mazeppa and Electra are the resident strippers in Wichita who show Louise the ropes.

Renée, Louise's maid, is a token of her success.

Phil, another reminder of Louise's rise to fame, is her press agent.

Bourgeron-Cochon is a photographer who is scheduled to do a photo spread of Gypsy Rose Lee for *Vogue*.



• ACT I •

Scene One

The vaudevillian world of *Gypsy* opens on the set of Uncle Jocko's Kiddie Show in Seattle in the early nineteen-twenties with the slippery Jocko himself herding ruthless wannabe stage mothers out of rehearsal. He skims brusquely through the acts, allowing only enough time to establish entrance and exit cues, until he reaches Baby June and Company, two little girls dressed as a Dutch boy and girl. He instructs them to perform only half of their dance and half of their song, but before even five lines of "Let Me Entertain You" are out of their mouths, an unseen voice bellows, "Sing out, Louise— sing out!". Within seconds, Momma Rose has bullied her way onstage and is giving directions to everyone from June and Louise to the spotlight operator to the conductor to Uncle Jocko, who is beside himself. Before she is finished, she strong-arms Jocko into removing the pre-determined winner, a girl engulfed in balloons, from the show and thus begins her campaign towards stardom for Baby June.

Scene Two

After the girls receive only ten dollars for their performance, Rose decides that they are finished with "Kiddie Shows" and announces that she has had a dream in which a new act, Baby June and Her Newsboys, has been revealed to her. Rose is determined to get this new show on the Orpheum Circuit and insists that she knows what is best for June and Louise. The only obstacle in her way, (as far as she is concerned) is money. She needs to take the girls to L.A., and when her father refuses to fund her pipedreams, she plucks his only source of pride, a gold retirement plaque, from the wall and stuffs it in her purse.

Scenes Three & Four

She and the girls hitchhike their way to Los Angeles, kidnapping three boys for the new act while in transit. When the exhausted troupe arrives at Weber's vaudeville house in L.A., they do not receive the warm welcome that Rose had hoped for, but she is not deterred. She hammers away at the theatre owner with no luck until Herbie, the theatre's candy supplier and an ex-agent, vouches for the show, claiming to have seen it in Seattle. With this, he wins precisely what he was looking for, an audience with Rose. However, they quickly learn that getting what they want from each other will be a challenge. Herbie wants a wife, but with three failed marriages, Rose isn't interested in any more trips to the altar. Likewise, Rose wants an agent, but after losing his health and home to show business,

Herbie is reluctant. As usual though, Rose maneuvers her way to victory and persuades Herbie to handle the show.

Scene Five

Despite the addition of the three stolen children, Baby June and Her Newsboys looks and sounds remarkably similar to Baby June and Company. We see this same act travel around the country as the children grow and change, but with the exception of a slight name change (Baby June becomes Dainty June.), the show does not.

Scene Six

This rag-tag band does not travel in style, but instead stays in a pair of dilapidated hotel rooms and dines off of leftover Chinese food—morning, noon and night. When we next see them, they are in Akron, and it is Louise's birthday. She is crammed into the smaller of the two rooms with the now four

boys in the act, while June and Rose have the other, much larger room to themselves. Louise tries to rouse the boys and remind them of the day's significance, but they are not impressed and try to go back to sleep. Soon, June wanders in from the other room dressed in a frilly nightgown and robe and reports that Louise has woken Momma, so everyone must get up for breakfast. Fending off groans and complaints, Louise apologizes and slips into the adjoining room, where Momma greets her with a small birthday cake with lighted candles. The boys rush in to sing "Happy Birthday" and as they turn on the lights, reveal the menagerie of dogs, cats, monkeys and birds that are occupying Rose's room.

Each of the boys and June present Louise with gifts, pilfered from the five and dime, and Momma announces her dream-delivered plan for a new act, Dainty June and Her Farmboys. Before she can expose her present though, the party is interrupted by Mr. Kringlein, the hotel manager. He has come to confiscate Rose's illegal hotplate, but finds that she has committed much greater violations. As he is inspecting the rooms, he unwittingly frees Louise's surprise birthday gift, a small lamb. This enrages him, and he orders Rose and her circus out of the hotel immediately. She is not intimidated though and within minutes has forced him into such a compromising position that he has no choice but to let her stay. Just as a very flustered Mr. Kringlein is extracting himself from the hubbub, Herbie arrives with a Mr. Goldstone in tow. He explains that Mr. Goldstone is from the Orphenm Circuit, where the act is now booked. When Rose realizes what Herbie has said, she lavishes Goldstone with attention, offering him everything from an egg roll to a poetry recitation. Amidst the excitement,



The real-life Dainty June and Louise stroll on stage with two newsboys.

continued from previous page

Louise's birthday is forgotten, and she sits quietly in the corner with her "Little Lamb."

Scene Seven

Their stint on the Orpheum Circuit is short-lived, but Rose continues parading the act around with the same childish costumes and routines. Herbie, too, finds old habits hard to break and is still asking the same question that he first asked Rose, "When are you going to marry me?" She assures him that as soon as June is on Broadway, she will wed him, and when he threatens to "pick up and pack out," she reminds him that he'll "never get away from" her. His only hope is that the next day's audition for T.T. Grantzinger's Palace Theatre will be a success.

Scenes Eight & Nine

In spite of Rose's meddling, Mr. Grantzinger agrees to sign the rehashed show for a one-week contract but for Grautzinger's Variety Show, not for the Palace Theatre. When Rose balks at this, the secretary explains that the only reason the contract was offered in the first place was because Grantzinger feels that June has potential. He is willing to provide her with a year of free training—if Rose will stay away from her. This infuriates Rose and sends her into a tirade during which she makes it quite clear that if June is to become a star, she will do so under Rose's direction and no one else's. June, on the other hand, realizes the stark reality of the situation and commiserates with Louise as they dream about what it would be like "If Momma Was Married."

Scenes Ten & Eleven

Dainty June and Her Farmboys take to the road again, but with frequent cancelled bookings, Tulsa, the oldest of the kidnapped boys, begins to make plans of his own. While in Buffalo, Louise sees him practicing a dance routine that he has devised for himself and a female partner. He explains that all he needs is the girl to get his own act on tour. By the time they reach Omaha, though, Tulsa has found his girl—June. The pair elopes and sets up a series of bookings for their own act. Their exit is quickly followed by that of the remaining boys who know all too well that the act is doomed without June. Rose is blindsided by this news, and Herbie takes advantage of the opportunity to offer her, yet again, the calm predictability of domestic life, something which both he and Louise crave. Rose, however, will not have it and turns not to Herbie for solace, but to Louise, apologizing for sacrificing her in the past and promising to make her the new star. As the first act ends, Rose is burning with raw ambition as she declares, "everything's coming up roses!"

• ACT II •

Scenes One & Two

Before long, Rose has replaced the farmboys with señoritas and topped Louise with a blonde wig in a pathetic attempt to replicate June. Despite her best efforts, Louise is no June and she

is painfully aware of it. She rejects the wig and the "star" mantle but Rose manages to cajole her back into good humor and agrees to change the act to Rose Louise and Her Hollywood Blondes. The cosmetic change does little to enhance the routine though and soon they find themselves in the graveyard of vaudeville acts—a burlesque theatre in Wichita. When Rose learns what kind of an establishment it is, she orders the girls to pack their things and go. Louise, insists that they stay and perform, though, pointing out that they are "flat broke." Remarkably, Rose listens to her and acquiesces. At the same time, she admits defeat, saying that the act is "washed up" and asking Herbie to marry her. When he agrees, she falters, saying that they can't do it while they're in burlesque, but promises to marry the day that they close. Louise gets a quick introduction to the world of burlesque by sharing a dressing room with Tessie Tura and finds herself substituting as a feed for a comic to earn an extra ten dollars. She also learns the essentials of the strip tease as Tessie and her colleagues, Mazeppa and Electra, explain the necessity of individuality in "You Gotta Get a Gimmick."

Scenes Three & Four

Two weeks later, the Hollywood Blondes have completed their engagement in Wichita, and Rose and Herbie are preparing to marry when Rose's lust for stardom intervenes once more. She overhears the theatre manager complaining that his star stripper has been arrested and volunteers Louise to fill the spot. She shoves Louise into a dress and shoes and coaches her on her make-up and hair while selecting June's classic, "Let Me Entertain You" for her musical number. Louise endures all of this without uttering a word, but Herbie cannot and unleashes a torrent of anger that has been welling for years. He tells Rose that he loves her, but that he will not allow himself to be treated this way anymore. Broken-hearted, he stands up to Rose for the first and last time.

ROSE is unshaken and delves whole-heartedly into directing her latest ticket to stardom, Wichita's newest stripper, Gypsy Rose Lee. As Louise walks tentatively onstage, Momma yells out directions as if they were back at Uncle Jocko's again. Even with this distraction, Louise slowly gains confidence until at the end of the number she is actually enjoying herself. She is never less than a lady though, only removing a single glove and playfully lowering one shoulder strap. This elegance becomes her trademark as she travels across the country from the Alhambra Theatre of Detroit to the Philadelphia Diamond Burlesque and finally, to Minsky's World Famous Burlesque, transforming from a "lovely newcomer" to "the Queen of the Strip Tease."

Scenes Five & Six

At last, Louise has found success and apparently with it, happiness, but the same cannot be said for Rose. Louise now has everything that Rose ever claimed to want for her: fame, wealth, even a photo spread in *Vogue*, but Rose has lost her. Louise plans her own act; arranges for her own gowns and pays her own maid, all to the great dismay of her mother. Rose is determined to maintain control of her daughter, but Louise will

continued from previous page

not be handled anymore and insists that she be allowed to live her own life. This infuriates Rose and prompts her to ask why she made so many sacrifices: "what'd I do it for?" Louise, once again a little girl, answers: "I thought you did it for me, Momma." Rose says nothing, but while Louise is busy with a photo shoot, she takes "Rose's Turn," showing the world all that

she could have and should have been. Louise slips in to see the end of this display and gains a quiet appreciation for her mother and her motives. Rose confesses: "I guess I did do it for me." but Louise forgives her, knowing that her mother, much like herself, only wanted to be noticed. Together, the two leave for a highbrow party, as the interminable Rose tells Louise about her latest dream: a Minsky's ad which reads, "Madam Rose and Her Daughter Gypsy."

VAUDEVILLE

SPEAKS

Alley-oop—An acrobatic or tumbling act. A circus term from the French "allez" (to go) and the English "up"

All Washed Up—No bookings and little hope of any in the future

Applesauce—Nonsense

Big time—First class vaudeville with a program usually consisting of eight acts. Big time meant high salaries, playing big cities and only two shows a day. The theatres were tap notch and often had reserved seating.

Bit—Sketch, routine, trick or a part thereof

Blackout—Short comedy routine ending on a punchline or curtain line as the lights go out at the curtain closes

B.O.—Box Office. Good B.O. meant good ticket sales.

Boff, boffo—Outstanding

Booner—Talent Scout (from Daniel Boone)

Boston version—Cleaned up version of a burlesque routine

Bundle actor—A performer who traveled without trunks, crates, rigging boxes, or any other type of heavy baggage. Unlike the legitimate theatre, vaudevillians were usually responsible for the costs of transporting their own freight and baggage.

Business—Actions by a performer intended to establish atmosphere, reveal character, or explain a situation

Canned—Fired

Clicked—Was a success

The Death Trail—A string of small, cheap theatres extending from Chicago to the Northwest, down the Pacific Coast, and finishing up in Southern California

Deuce spot—Second on the bill. Considered to be the worst spot in the program

Died—Played to no applause

Disappointment Act—An act substituted for a scheduled act which could not perform. It was assumed that any performer(s) still available at the last minute probably weren't very good.

Doughdy—Weekly salary

Dumb Act—Silent act or act that did not involve talking such as juggling, acrobats, strongmen, animal acts etc.

Excess Baggage—A non-professional spouse who tours with their vaudevillian husband or wife

Feature spot—Top billed act, headliner

A Fish—A lousy act

Five-percenter—Theatrical agent or broker, named for the percentage of a performer's fee to which they were entitled

Flash act—A large impressive act. This could range from a musical with as many as fifteen beautiful girls to a large animal circus type act

Gagging—Introducing unplanned and unrehearsed remarks, reactions, bits or business into an act during performance. Used to draw focus or to throw off the other performer(s)

Got back your pictures—Were cancelled or fired

Almost as entertaining as some of the acts seen on the vaudeville stage was the collection of terms and phrases that grew out of this theatre genre. Some of these expressions have survived the years and will be familiar to you, while others will simply make you laugh. Enjoy the trip back in time as you "learn the lingo" of the day.





SHOP TALK

"I'm electrifying, and I'm not even trying." These lyrics, sung by Electra in "You Gotta Get a Gimmick" are half truth and half fiction. As you will see in The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis' production of *Gypsy*, Electra is indeed electrifying, but as seamless as actor Carol Schuberg's performance may appear, she, along with a remarkable special effect, is hard at work. The costume that Schuberg wears as Electra is a complex garment which must meet a variety of needs. Like any other costume, it must communicate information about the character wearing it and at the same time, permit the actor to move (or in this case, dance) as she needs to. In addition, this garment must be a self-contained special effects unit, allowing the actor to control when and where on the costume lighting effects occur. Because of these special challenges and the enormous amount of time and labor involved in meeting them, this costume was rented rather than constructed on site at The Rep. According to Rep production manager, Edward Coffield, this costume alone would require nearly four weeks of work, and with another 150 costumes to prepare for the show, building Electra in-house simply wasn't feasible for the costume shop.

The rented costume was originally created for a production of *Gypsy* at the Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire with Nancy Missimi designing the costume itself and Tom Locke creating the effects component. As shown in the photographs on this page, the garment has six different lighting possibilities, including two chase effects. All of the effects are engineered by a circuit board tucked at the back of the garment, among the feathers. The board is controlled by a computer chip and powered by a 9-volt battery. Hidden in the fingers of Schuberg's gloves are female electrical connections which, when joined with the male connection in her thumb, allow her to activate each of the cloth stars (accented with Christmas tree lights and trimmed in lighting tubes). To help Schuberg master these magic gloves,

The costume that Schuberg wears as Electra is a complex garment which must meet a variety of needs.

Rep costume shop staff created the "fingering chart" seen on this page. So now, as Electra appears to be making alluring gestures with her hands, she is actually turning her stars on and off.

This incredible technology affects every aspect of performance, though, and has played heavily in the rehearsal process. Choreographer Janet Watson and musical director Steven Gross worked closely with Schuberg to create Electra's dance in "You Gotta Get a Gimmick." One major issue of

concern was how to incorporate the use of the star effects smoothly into the dance. Although it is powerful visually to activate the lights in tandem with accents in the music, there is always a concern that the moment might be lost if an electrical connection fails or if it lights a fraction of a second too late. In an effort to overcome these kinds of challenges, Watson and Gross have given Schuberg the power to drive the music in this number, rather than the music driving the dance and in turn, the effects. Percussion instruments in particular play a large role in this song, so the percussionists in the orchestra pit will be able to watch Schuberg's dance on a video monitor to help ensure that their beats match hers.

The other significant challenge of the costume is its physical complexity. Once Schuberg dons the costume, she cannot sit down and at one point, she has only five minutes to exit the stage on one side, cross to the other side, change her costume completely and get "plugged in" before making another entrance. To guarantee that she makes this quick change, the wardrobe staff will have one dresser on hand to meet her as she exits the stage, another to clear a path ahead of her as she moves backstage and two more to help her into her costume after she reaches the other side. So, contrary to what she may sing, Electra does, in fact, "have to sweat to get paid."

Interestingly, much like Baby June and Baby Louise, *Gypsy's* creators hit the entertainment scene early in life. At the age of ten, Stephen Sondheim knew that Broadway musicals were in his future. His family spent summers vacationing in Pennsylvania next door to one of the founding fathers of American musical theatre, Oscar Hammerstein II. Sondheim and Hammerstein's son became friends, opening an avenue for the young pianist to be mentored by one of the business' greatest talents. At the age of fifteen, Sondheim wrote a musical, *By George!*, for a school project. When he showed his work to Hammerstein, the master declared that it was one of the worst things that he had ever read, but he went on to explain what the problems were. As Sondheim later said of the experience, "In that afternoon, I learned more about song writing than most people learn in a lifetime." He went on to study music at Williams College, where he won the prestigious Hutchinson Prize for Musical Composition and later studied with composer Milton Babbitt in New York.



Although Broadway was his goal, he launched his career in Hollywood writing scripts for the series "Topper." This afforded him the opportunity to meet and impress a few influential players, namely Arthur Laurents and Leonard Bernstein. By 1957, the twenty-seven year old's lyrics could be heard in the Broadway hit, *West Side Story* and by 1973, he had collected four Tony Awards for his work both as a lyricist and as a librettist in *Company*, *Follies* and *A Little Night Music* and *Sweeney Todd*, *Into the Woods*, and *Passion* added another three Tony's to his collection. With a total of thirty musicals, movie scores and plays to his credit, Sondheim continues as one of the most celebrated names in contemporary theatre and shows no signs of slowing his creative pace. His current projects include a full-scale musical movie and the movie version of *Into the Woods*.

Arthur Laurents enjoyed a less traditional introduction into the theatre world than Sondheim did, as his first job after graduating from Cornell University was as a department store salesman. After being fired for falling asleep behind the towel counter, he began his writing career with radio dramas but his skills were quickly transferred into the army with the eruption of World War II. Initially placed in a paratroop squad, he was soon reassigned to Special Services where he wrote morale building radio scripts. He used those wartime experiences as a foundation for his first major work, *Home of the Brave*. The play enjoyed a mediocre reception in theatres but did draw the attention of some critics. The play was made into a movie and Laurents went to Hollywood for what appeared to be a

promising career as a screenwriter. That path was interrupted though when the young writer was blacklisted as a result of the investigations of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Although not a member of the Communist party, Laurents' self-described liberal politics and his profession made him a prime suspect for subversive activity. He did not, however, allow the events of the McCarthy era to destroy his goal of becoming a writer. Unable to work in the U.S., he sailed to Paris where he lived and wrote for over a year. Recalling those events he has said: "Sometimes a terrible thing like a witchhunt can have a good effect on your life... The truth of it is, I didn't like Hollywood. I didn't care about being blacklisted because I didn't want to particularly write movies. I considered myself a playwright." When he did return to the U.S. he actively pursued a career as a playwright and wrote a number of plays, as well as the books for such well-known musicals as *West Side Story* and *Hallelujah Baby!* Still working, at the age of eighty-three, Laurents debuted his most recent play, *Jolson Sings Again*, in 1995.

The final member of the creative team behind *Gypsy*, Jule (Joo-lee) Styne, was born Julius Kerwin Styne in London's East End in 1905, and immigrated to the U.S. with his family in 1912. He, like Sondheim, showed an aptitude as a musician early in life and before the age of 10 had performed at the piano with the Chicago, St. Louis and Detroit Symphonies. At only sixteen, he was commissioned to write a song for a musical review being assembled by Mike Todd, who would later go on to produce *Around the World in Eighty Days*. From that time until his death in 1994, Styne published a remarkable 1,500 songs ranging from Broadway standards to Hit Parade favorites to film score classics. He is best known for Broadway tunes such as "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend," "The Party's Over" and "People." With songs like these, he launched the careers of stars Carol Channing, Mary Martin, Ethel Merman, Carol Burnett and Barbra Streisand.



He earned Tony nominations for *Bells Are Ringing*, *Do Re Mi* and *Funny Girl* and won a 1968 Tony Award for his work on *Hallelujah Baby!* He was elected to the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1972 and the Theatre Hall of Fame in 1981, but one of Styne's greatest moments came in 1959, on the occasion of his 25th anniversary in show business, when the following tribute was read into the Congressional Record: "The lives of Americans throughout our land as well as the lives of people throughout the corners of the world have been enriched by the artistry and genius of Jule Styne."

READ MORE ABOUT IT

We encourage you to examine these topics in-depth by exploring the following books, Web sites and videos.

Gypsy & Me: At Home and on the Road with Gypsy Rose Lee by Erik Lee Preminger Thorndike, 1984. Gain new perspective on the life of the real Gypsy Rose Lee by reading this account of her adult years written by her only child.

Musical Comedy in America: From The Black Crook to South Pacific by Cecil Smith Routledge/Theatre Arts Books, 1950. Trace the roots of musical comedy from its European influenced beginnings through vaudeville, burlesque, the revue and beyond.

Pictorial History of Vaudeville by Bernard Sabel Citadel, 1961. See the exciting and sometimes strange sights of vaudeville in this rich visual history.

<http://info.net/LNX/lvaud.html> With over thirty links to vaudeville and burlesque related pages, this site is an excellent research resource.

<http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/vshml/vslme.html> A branch of the Library of Congress, this site offers a great overview of the various types of acts that might be seen on the vaudeville and burlesque circuits.

Gypsy [videorecording] producer/director, Mervyn LeRoy, screenplay by Leonard Spigelglass, music by Jule Styne, lyrics by Stephen Sondheim Warner Home Video, 1998. ©1962. See how the larger-than-life story of Gypsy translates into film as Rosalind Russell and Natalie Wood star.

The Trouble with Angels [videorecording] directed by Ido Lupino, screenplay by Blanche Hanalis, music by Jerry Goldsmith, produced by William Frye RCA/Columbia, 1966. Get a taste of the real Gypsy Rose Lee's film career as she plays in this convent comedy with Hayley Mills and Rosalind Russell.



These questions and activities are designed to help students anticipate the performance and then to build on their impressions and interpretations after attending the theatre. The activities and questions are divided into “**Before the Performance**” and “**After the Performance**” categories. While most of the exercises provide specific instructions, please feel free to adapt these activities to accommodate your own teaching strategies and curricular needs. To assist you in incorporating these materials into your existing curriculum, we have provided the numbers of some of the corresponding Missouri Knowledge Standards and Illinois Learning Standards.

• COMMUNICATION ARTS •

Before the Performance

1 The zany acts from vaudeville and burlesque may seem far-removed from today’s entertainment scene, but for many older generations, these live shows were the mainstays of diversion. Gain a first-hand account of what it was like to be in a vaudeville audience by interviewing an older relative, neighbor or friend who attended such a performance. Prepare at least ten questions for your interview. After you have spoken with your subject, use his or her answers to write a newspaper style article of at least five hundred words. (MO: CA1, CA3, CA4, CA5, CA6, SS2, SS6 IL: 1, 3, 4, 5, 16, 18)

After the Performance

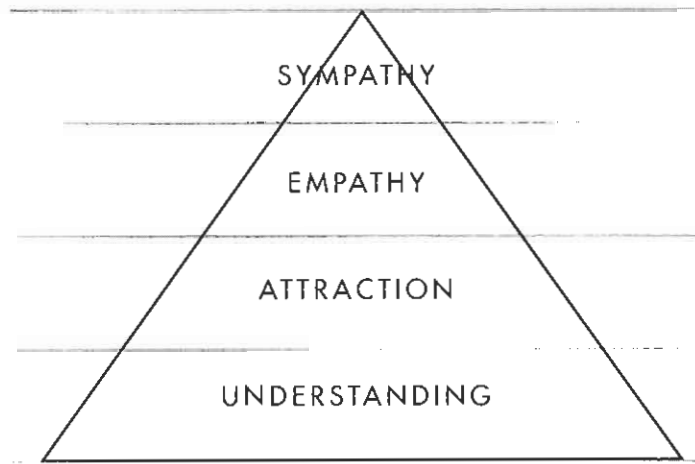
2 *Gypsy* book writer, Arthur Laurents is well-known for his skill in writing women’s roles for plays and films such as *The Time of the Cuckoo*, *Summertime*, *Anastasia*, *The Way We Were* and *The Turning Point*. When he was questioned about this, he explained that he had never based his writing of women’s voices on any preconceived ideas but that he did “think women tend to reveal them[selves] more to each other, though not to men.” In his opinion: “Women are more open.” Based on the women’s roles that you saw portrayed in *Gypsy* (Rose, June, Louise, Mazeppa, Electra, Tessie) how do you interpret Laurents’ remarks? Do you think that these characterizations support his thoughts about how women relate to one another? In an essay of at least five paragraphs, either defend or debate Laurents’ assertion, using specific examples from the performance to support your thesis. (MO: CA1, CA2, CA4, CA5, CA7, FA3, FA4, FA5, SS6 IL: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 18, 27)

3 “She is, in short, a brassy, brazen witch on a mortgaged broomstick, a steamroller with cleats, the very mastodon of all stage mothers. And you love her. Behind all her backstage clamor, her shouting to the men in the spot booth, her wrangling with jealous strippers, her soaring ascents into confident song there lurks a worrying sense of doom—a sense that she will never fulfill her dream of stardom for her girls because it is really a dream of stardom for herself” This excerpt from drama critic Walter Kerr’s 1959 review of *Gypsy* paints Rose in a rather unflattering, yet strangely sympathetic light. In just a few lines, he distills the essence of Rose. Considering the performance that you saw at The Rep, would you agree or

disagree with Mr. Kerr’s assessment? If, in fact, she is as reprehensible as he says, how then can we also love her? What about Rose is redemptive, charming, engaging? What allows her to control Herbie, June, Louise and countless others as she does? Conversely, what causes her to lose control of these same people? Does she change, or do those around her change? Consider these kinds of questions as you work in a group of no more than five to write a Philosophy of Life for Rose. Be sure to include what you think motivates her, what troubles her, what challenges her, what inspires her and anything else that you think defines who Rose is. (MO: CA1, CA2, CA3, CA4, CA5, CA6, FA3, FA4 IL: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 27)

4 Typically, when a playwright or novelist creates a work, he or she writes it with the knowledge (and hope) that the audience or reader will, in some way, identify or connect with characters within the story. In live theatre, this is a particularly exciting process because it enables the audience member to participate in a play from both the outside, as an observer, and the inside, as someone who shares an emotional stake with the characters in the play. Essentially, it is this identification that keeps an audience involved in a play; we are drawn into a situation because we, in some way, identify with what is happening and we continue to watch because we want to see if the story ends the way we want it to. It is important to note that identifying with a character or situation is not the same as agreeing with it.

Identification involves four stages: understanding, attraction, empathy and sympathy. At the understanding level, we accept the behavior of a character as believable or understandable even though we may not necessarily approve of his or her choice. For example, in the story of “Little Red Riding Hood,” we may not like the Wolf’s decision to eat Granny, but we understand why he chose to do so. He was hungry. At the next level of identification—attraction—we are drawn to a character and want him or her to succeed, even though we do not share any common feelings with the character. To return to the fairy tale, we want Little Red Riding Hood to outsmart the Wolf, even though it is unlikely that we have shared that same experience. If we imagine that we do share that experience with the character, we move to the next level of identification, empathy. This often, but not always leads



to the final stage, sympathy. At this point, we not only share the character's experience but also agree with it. For a moment, we want what that character wants. This is why we are relieved and happy for Little Red Riding Hood at the end of the story. We are cheering for ourselves as much as we are cheering for her character. A writer may arrange a script so that we identify primarily with one character, with a wide variety of characters at different stages or with different characters at different points in the play.

Think about the performance of *Gypsy* that you saw at The Rep. With which character(s) did you identify and at what stages? Did this change over the course of the play? Chart your findings on the pyramid above, starting with understanding at the base and sympathy at the top. How do you think your identification with different characters affected your interpretation of the musical? (CA1, CA2, CA4, CA5, CA7, FA1, FA3, FA4 IL: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 25, 27)

• FINE ARTS •

Before the Performance

1 Although the most common association with burlesque is probably the scandal of women dancers, the most lasting contribution that this genre made to musical theatre and entertainment in general is comedy. Classic comedians such as W.C. Fields, Fanny Brice, Al Jolson, Abbott and Costello and Bert Lahr all were born out of burlesque. The influence of these performers and others like them can still be seen today in television programs such as *Saturday Night Live*, *The Wayne Brady Show* and *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*. Part of what makes these shows successful is that, like burlesque performers, they are willing to take risks in front of a live audience. Trace the development of comedy in the U.S. by researching one of the comedians or comedy teams mentioned above. Locate a script or routine used by your chosen performer(s), memorize the "bit" (Work with a partner if necessary.) and perform it for the class. With your performance, provide a brief biography of your comedian(s). (MO: FA1, FA2, FA3, FA4, FA5, CA1, CA2, CA3, CA5, CA6, CA7, SS2, SS6 IL: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 25, 26, 27)

2 In *Gypsy*, you will find that Momma Rose is, if anything, a resourceful woman. One of the ways in which her resourcefulness manifests itself is in her clothing choices for her children. Rather than buying garments or even fabric from a store, Rose "borrows" material from hotels, restaurants and anywhere else that she can get it to make clothes for June

and Louise. As you watch The Rep's production of *Gypsy*, look for repeating patterns in Rose, June and Louise's clothing. Does the same fabric appear in more than one garment? How do costume designer Suzy Benzinger's choices help reinforce these characters personalities? After the performance, discuss these questions in a group of no more than five. (MO: FA1, FA3, CA1, CA5, CA6 IL: 1, 4, 5, 25, 26)



After the Performance

3 As you have seen, producing *Gypsy* on a thrust stage dramatically impacts the scenic design and the subsequent shift of scenery, but with over 2600 light bulbs in use for this production, lighting plays a significant role as well. In what way do you think the lighting design is affected by the use of a thrust stage? How does the lighting design help facilitate the transitions to eighteen different scenes?

(MO: FA1, FA2, FA3, FA4, CA5 IL: 1, 4, 25, 26)

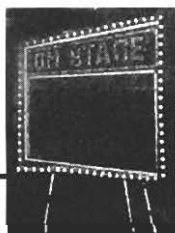


IN 3

IN 2



IN 1



4 Following the performance of *Gypsy* at The Rep, read scenic designer John Ezell's design notes on page 35 of your Mainstage program. Think about the way in which his set design operated on The Rep's thrust stage. Now imagine that you are designing a production of *Gypsy* for a proscenium stage. Using Mr. Ezell's explanation of the in one, in two, in three staging method to guide you, create your own scenic design. Make sure to include each of the following scenes in your design:

- Act I, Scene 1: Uncle Jocko's Kiddie Show—Seattle
- Act I, Scene 2: Home Sweet Home—Seattle
- Act I, Scene 3: The Road to Los Angeles
- Act I, Scene 4: Weber's Theatre—Los Angeles
- Act I, Scene 5: A Theatre—Los Angeles
- Act I, Scene 6: Two Hotel Rooms—Akron
- Act I, Scene 7: Chinese Restaurant—New York
- Act I, Scene 8: Grantzinger's Palace Theatre—New York
- Act I, Scene 9: Grantzinger's Office—New York

- Act I, Scene 10: A Theatre Alley—Buffalo
- Act I, Scene 11: Railroad Terminal—Omaha
- Act II, Scene 1: Desert Country—Texas
- Act II, Scenes 2 & 3: Backstage—Wichita
- Act II, Scene 4: Backstage & On-stage—Wichita, The Alhambra Theatre—Detroit, Diamond Burlesque—Philadelphia, Minsky's Burlesque—New York
- Act II, Scene 5: Minsky's Dressing Room—New York
- Act II, Scene 6: On-stage Minsky's—New York

Indicate on the stage diagram above where each scene will be played: in one, in two or in three, keeping in mind the shifts that will be required to move from one scene to the next. Try to arrange the scenes in such a way that almost all of the set changes can occur behind a drop while another scene is playing. When your design is complete, present it to the class. Be prepared to explain your choices. (MO: FA1, FA2, FA3, FA4, FA5, CA1, CA3, CA5, CA6 IL: 1, 2, 3, 4, 25, 26)



Bette Midler took Momma Rose to television in a 1993 production.

5 According to *Gypsy* lyricist Stephen Sondheim, a good lyric should reveal to the audience things which a character does not have the knowledge or understanding to explain with complete accuracy. As an example of this theory at work, look at the following excerpt from the lyrics to “Rose’s Turn.”

Momma’s lettin’ loose,
 Momma’s got the stuff,
 Momma’s lettin’ go—
 Momma—
 Momma’s—
 Momma’s got the stuff,
 Momma’s got to move,
 Momma’s got to go—
 Momma—
 Momma’s—
 Momma’s goua let go!

Here, Rose is crumbling, mentally and emotionally, yet she is not in a position to recognize or verbalize that to the audience. Instead, Sondheim has her show us her decline by causing her to stumble, almost choke on the words, and consequently the idea, that troubles her most—“Momma’s gotta let go!” What other examples of this principle can you recall from the musical? At what other times do a character’s lyrics allow him or her to express thoughts or emotions that could not otherwise be understood? Brainstorm with a partner to create a list of at least five examples. (MO: FA1, FA2, FA3, CA1, CA2, CA4, CA5, CA6, CA7 IL: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 25, 26, 27)

• SOCIAL STUDIES •

Before the Performance

1 From the late 1800s through the late 1920s, vaudeville was the most popular form of entertainment in America. At vaudeville’s birth, television had not yet been invented, radio broadcasts were not widespread and talking movies were still several years in the future. With reasonable ticket prices and a wide variety of acts to be seen, it was the primary diversion for most Americans. In a sense, it was the television of today; however, less than a century later, it is practically unknown. What, then, happened to vaudeville? There are many different proposed causes for the decline of this form of entertainment, including the increased use of radio and talking movies, the Great Depression and Prohibition. Work together with a research partner to draw your own conclusions. One of you will be responsible for researching the social history of the time and the other will investigate the period’s economic history. You may use the resources listed in “Read More About It,” those available in the school and public libraries and reliable Internet sources. Consult a minimum of four sources each. Compile your research to develop a single theory about what caused vaudeville’s demise. Create a ten-minute joint presentation which explains your theory and deliver it to the class. Be sure to include relevant audio or visual aides. (MO: SS2, SS4, SS6, SS7, CA1, CA3, CA4, CA5, CA6, FA5 IL: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 15, 16, 18, 27)

Some of those who made it to the big time. Clockwise, from left: Abbott and Costello. Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy; Fanny Brice; Al Jolson, and Gypsy Rose Lee.





From top:
Bert Williams,
Ma Rainey and
Bessie Smith



2 Vaudeville was the first form of popular entertainment in the U.S. to produce an African-American star. While radio, motion pictures and the “legitimate stage” were still closed to performers of color, headliners such as Bert Williams, Ethel Waters, Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith were in demand on vaudeville stages. Learn about the difficult path taken by these pioneer performers by selecting one of them to research. Create a timeline which highlights the major events in the life and career of your chosen performer as well as the landmark events concerning race in American society at that time. For example, you might include an entry showing that Bessie Smith performed at the Apollo Theatre in 1934, but also note that this was the first year in which African-American patrons were allowed in the theatre. (MO: SS2, SS6, SS7, CA1, CA3, CA4, FA5 IL: 1, 2, 3, 5, 16, 18, 27)

After the Performance

3 Read “Steve’s Thoughts” on page 31 of your Mainstage program. Notice what Rep artistic director, Steve Woolf has to say about Rose as a figure of power: “She is a woman born at exactly the wrong time. She arrived too late to be the entertainer she clearly was, and she arrived too early to capitalize on a time in which women wield more power.” Explore women’s roles in the 1920s and 1930s in America. How did most women spend their time in this era? What were some standard occupations for women? What was the average rate of pay for women who were employed? Consider these kinds of questions as you build a composite of the typical woman of the 20s and 30s. Create a collage which represents your findings. Include on the collage a paragraph that compares Rose to the average woman of her day. Discuss in your writing what it is about Rose that makes her, in her own words, a woman who was “born too soon and started too late.” (MO: SS2, SS4, SS6, SS7, CA1, CA3, CA4, FA1, FA5 IL: 1, 2, 3, 5, 15, 16, 18, 27)

4 As seen in *Gypsy*, both vaudeville and burlesque had standardized touring routes through which an act would travel. In vaudeville, these routes were known as circuits, and in burlesque, they were called wheels. To accommodate these tours, numerous theatres were built throughout the country for the express purpose of presenting either vaudeville or burlesque entertainment. Often, the buildings themselves were as impressive as the acts performing in them, with their ornate architecture and lavish furnishings. When these forms of entertainment declined, many of the theatres were saved from demolition by being converted into movie houses. Today, those theatres that survive are considered architectural goldmines because they preserve a part of cultural and entertainment history. The St. Louis metropolitan area is fortunate to have a number of these buildings still in existence, including Powell Symphony Hall and the Americana Theatre. Take a step back in time by researching the former life of one of St. Louis’ historic theatres. Discover what its original name was, what circuit or wheel it was a part of, what types of acts performed there and when it stopped operating as a live theatre. Use this information to create a playbill advertising an evening of entertainment at your theatre. Be sure to include ticket prices and show times along with photographs or sketches of the theatre if possible. (MO: SS2, SS4, SS5, SS7, CA1, CA3, CA4, FA5 IL: 1, 2, 3, 5, 16, 18, 27)



St. Louis’ own Powell Hall was once a vaudeville theatre.