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partnership. Tried to hold back and weigh the suggestion, but his eagerness so pathetic that consented. Mem: Am I too impulsive? Fight against this tendency.

Whatever the facts of the case, the three, Bolton, Wodehouse and Kern were now linked and would soon begin to write a series of musicals for the Princess that cemented their reputations and influence musical comedy in the United States for the next forty years. Together the three wrote four musicals (*Have a Heart*, *Oh Boy!*, *Leave it to Jane*, and *Oh, Lady! Lady!!*) and became the taste-setters for theater-going audiences.

In 1918, Dorothy Parker wrote:

Well, Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern have done it again. Every time these three gather together, the Princess Theatre is sold out for months in advance. You can get a seat for *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* somewhere in the middle of August for just about the price of one on the stock exchange. If you ask me, I will look you fearlessly in the eye and tell you in low, throbbing tones that it has it over any other musical comedy in town. But then Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern are my favorite indoor sport. I like the way they go about a musical comedy. ... I like the way the action slides casually into the songs. ... I like the deft rhyming of the song that is always sung in the last act by two comedians and a comedienne. And oh, how I do like Jerome Kern's music!

Unfortunately, the trio broke up over a disagreement over money and some rather shocking behavior from Kern. According to Guy Bolton, the opening salvo in the battle occurred soon after the phenomenal success of *Oh, Boy!* Bolton recalls approaching Jerry (Kern being by far the best businessman of the trio) to urge him to go to Comstock and ask for a raise of 10% for each of them. Kern seemed to Bolton

to be reluctant and declared that he didn't believe the Princess could afford it. Bolton recalled that he was disappointed, but resigned to accept Kern's appraisal of the situation, when the company manager gave Kern a copy of the previous night's receipts. When Bolton inquired why neither he nor Wodehouse received them, the manager said baldly, "Mr. Kern has 10% of the show. You don't."

Ten percent of *the show!*

Things would never be the same between them, and it certainly wasn't Kern's finest hour.

Despite this highly regrettable breakup, Kern's career continued to progress rapidly. Kern was working on shows for Florenz Ziegfeld of *Follies* fame and churning out songs and shows at an unbelievable pace. All of this work and success earned him the trust necessary to allow him and Oscar Hammerstein II to create his best known work the landmark *Show Boat* in 1927.

Jerome Kern met Oscar Hammerstein II in 1925. Hammerstein was the young and talented protégé of the established librettist Otto Harbach and yet another young librettist graciously invited to the Kern home to be looked over by the increasingly powerful composer. Kern threw out a couple of his melodies for Hammerstein to try his teeth on. Evidently, Kern liked him, because he and Harbach went on to collaborate on Kern's next Ziegfeld show, *Sunny* (1925). It was a huge hit. From then on, every important Broadway show that Kern ever wrote would include some combination of Hammerstein and Harbach.

In October of 1926, Kern read Edna Ferber's best-selling novel, *Show Boat* and thought it might be just the thing to take musicals to a new level. By happy coincidence, Ferber was in the house for opening night of *Criss Cross* (a dreadful play with a Kern score). They met. Jerry explained his idea for a musical version of *Show Boat* to her.

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