

CAROUSEL

Music by Richard Rodgers, book and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, based on "Liliom" by Ferenc Molnar, adapted by Benjamin F. Glazer.

Majestic Theatre, New York - 19 April, 1945 (890 perfs) with John Raitt (Billy) and Jan Clayton (Julie).

Opened at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London, 7 June 1950 with Stephen Douglass and Iva Withers.

A film version was produced by Twentieth Century-Fox in 1956 with Gordon MacRae and Shirley Jones.

SYNOPSIS

From the magical evocation of the carousel in the overture to the majestic and moving strains of the immortal "You'll Never Walk Alone", this giant of the musical stage remains timeless and starbright. The poignant story of the faithful Julie and her brutish husband Billy is one of the most powerful books of the musical theatre and perfectly matches its extraordinary score. Recently revived by the Royal National Theatre to immense critical acclaim. Famous songs include "Mister Snow", "If I Loved You", "June Is Bustin' Out All Over" and "When The Children Are Asleep".

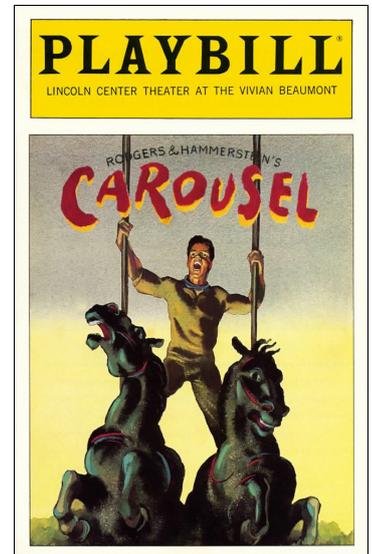
STORY

Act I

The opening scene is an amusement part on the coast of New England around the year 1873. A feature of the park is Mrs Mullin's carousel with its gaily painted horses and its jack-the-lad barker, Billy Bigelow. Mrs. Mullin likes Billy and she likes the amount of feminine business he brings to the carousel, but she is clearly jealous of the girls whom he picks out for his special attention. She gets sourly steamed up when he pays a little attention to a mill girl called Julie Jordan and she vehemently warns the surprised Julie away from the carousel.

Her timing is bad, for Billy himself catches the end of the warning. He turns on his employer and tells her that she has no control over what girls he sees and, when the quarrel raises itself a tone, Mrs Mullin, not for the first time, sacks the barker. Julie and her friend Carrie are aghast at the scene, and even more worried when it turns out that Billy probably doesn't have the price of a beer to his name, but the man shrugs off such worries. He's going to get his things and then one of them can go and have a drink with him. He doesn't mind which.

Carrie is open-mouthed with amazement at Billy, and the girls are quite fazed at the fact that he is paying attention them. The quiet, introspective Julie has never had a boyfriend ('You're a Queer One, Julie Jordan') and Carrie's experience of men is in a very different field. She's going to marry the respectable and reliable fisherman, 'Mister Snow'. When Billy returns and asks which one of them is going to spend the evening with him, Julie volunteers without hesitation. She faces dismissal from the mill for doing so, for Mr Bascombe, the mill owner, insists that his girls are in their dormitory on time and when the two of them are seen together by Bascombe and a policeman, her fate is settled. She is as much out of a job as Billy is.



Although she is warned of Billy's reputation as a layabout, a sponger and a ladies' man, Julie declares firmly that she will spend the evening with him. She's a strange one: nothing like any of the women Billy has known before. She says she isn't ever going to marry and when he asks her, teasing, if she would marry him, the layabout and sponger, Julie has only one simple response-'If I Loved You'. At the end of the evening they kiss, and the kiss is not the usual kiss Billy gets from his women.

When they are married, Julie and Billy move in with Julie's cousin Nettie Fowler who runs a snack bar on the beach. Billy is unable to get a job, and he becomes more and more snore sombre and difficult as the workless days go by. He takes his frustration out on Julie and, one day, a one-sided row ends with his hitting her. Immediately the tale goes round town that Bigelow beats his wife. But if things are not as happy as they should be with the Bigelows, the rest of the folk are lively enough. 'June Is Bustin' out All Over' and there is to be a big clambake on the beach. As for Carrie, she is still awaiting her wedding day and she and Enoch Snow pass the time in dreaming of their future together in the rosiest way ('When the Children Are Asleep').

Billy has taken to hanging around with a known evildoer called Jigger Craigin, and Jigger is heading him for trouble ('Blow High, Blow Low'). He has a plan to rob the mill owner of the payroll he brings each week to the captain of Jigger's ship-three thousand dollars. Billy would never have to worry about a job again. He is tempted, but when Mrs Mullin comes to try and woo him back to her employ and the carousel he realises that his old life is better and safer than crime. Only there's a catch: Mrs Mullin insists that he leave Julie. What's the use to her of a barker whom all the girls chase and who goes home to his wife? He'd better talk to Julie and see whom she puts first.

When Billy goes to talk to Julie, however, she has something very different to tell him: she's going to have a baby. For Billy, that changes everything. Life has a future (Soliloquy). Now he has to make something of himself, he has to make money. There is no other way he knows of to do it: he will have to take part in Jigger's plan.

Act II

Anxious to provide for the coming child, Billy has been persuaded by Jigger, a shiftless sailor, to take part in a hold-up. They plan it for the night that the rest of the town is on the beach at A REAL NICE CLAMBAKE. Julie is troubled by Billy, who she knows has something on his mind. The other girls sense her unhappiness, but Julie bravely shrugs it off (WHAT'S THE USE OF WOND'RIN').

Billy and Jigger attempt the robbery. They are thwarted; Jigger escapes, but Billy is caught by Mr. Bascombe, the would-be victim, who vows to hand him over to the police with the prospect of a long prison term. Cornered, disgraced and terrified for Julie and their unborn child, Billy kills himself. Julie cradles Billy as he dies in her arms and is comforted by an old saying the students used to recite in school (YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE).

Fifteen years pass. Billy, escorted by a Heavenly Friend, arrives in the backyard of Heaven. Here he meets The Starkeeper, who informs him that he will never get into Heaven until he redeems himself. After some argument, Billy is given a chance.

He is allowed to return to Earth for one day, during which he must perform one good deed. Afforded a glimpse of Louise, his lonely and unhappy fifteen-year-old daughter, Billy steals a star to give to her at their first meeting. But back on Earth, he is still the rough blunderer. Louise is shy and won't accept his gift. Unable to reach her in any other way, Billy slaps his daughter - but the sting feels miraculously like a kiss to the girl. Louise explains this to her mother, Julie, who also sees the star that Billy has left behind and, instinctively, Julie understands.

Nevertheless, Billy has not yet performed his good deed, and the slap should have been the last straw. But Billy persuades the Starkeeper to give him one last chance. Unseen, Billy watches Louise and her high school graduation. He observes his daughter's self-doubts, her insecurities.

Invisibly, spiritually, Billy reaches out to her; he urges her to believe in herself, and he is filled with pride as he watches his daughter blossom with confidence. Turning to Julie, Billy says simply, "I loved you, Julie. Know that I loved you." And Julie, somehow, hears him. She joins Louise and the rest of the townsfolk in singing YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE ... as Billy heads towards Heaven.

CAST - 5 women, 5 men, chorus

- JULIE JORDAN - A real New England village girl, but 'deeper', quieter and more complex than her friends. Her infatuation for Billy turns to a love which is proof against his fatal character weaknesses and lives on many years after the tragedy.
- BILLY BIGELOW - An earthy anti-hero with a reputation for being a lay-about and a ladies' man. He is a deeply troubled character ultimately redeemed by the love he could not communicate to his wife and unborn child.
- CARRIE PIPPERIDGE - As the stage direction says, 'a naive, direct and normal young woman of the period'. Julie's friend, her horizon is no further than domestic bliss with be-whiskered Mr. Snow.
- MRS. MULLIN - The carousel owner; a middle-aged woman who believes that Billy is not only her employee, but her property.
- ENOCH SNOW - Dour, respectable and ambitious in a small-town sort of way, he is an affectionate family-type too.
- JIGGER CRAIGIN - A real 'bad lot' who plays on Billy's weaknesses, and deserts him when things go horribly wrong.
- NETTIE FOWLER - The motherly soul of the village.
- MR. BASCOMBE - The self-important millionaire and richest man around.
- HEAVENLY FRIEND / STARKEEPER - Billy's guides and mentors, who tell him the home-truths he really needs.

MUSICAL NUMBERS:

1. PROLOGUE The Carousel Waltz
2. CHANGE OF SCENE
3. OPENING ACT 1
4. DUET - Mister Snow - (Julie and Carrie) - "You're a queer one, Julie Jordan"
5. SONG - If I Loved You (Julie with Billy) - "If I loved you, time and again I would try to say"
6. SCENE CHANGE
7. CHORUS - June Is Bustin' Out All Over (Girls, Men, with Carrie) - "March went out like a lion"
8. ENCORE - June Is Bustin' Out All Over
9. GIRLS' DANCE
10. JULIE'S ENTRANCE
11. REPRISE - Mr Snow - (Girls and Carrie) - "When you walk down the aisle"
12. SEQUENCE - When the Children Are Asleep - (Carrie and Mr. Snow) - "I own a little house"
13. CHORUS - Blow High, Blow Low - (Men with Jigger) - "Blow high, blow low, a-whalin' we will go!"
14. DANCE - Hornpipe
15. SOLO - Soliloquy - (Billy) - "I wonder what he'll think of me"
16. FINALE - ACT I
17. ENTR'ACTE
18. OPENING ACT II
19. CHORUS - A Real Nice Clambake - (Nettie and chorus) - "This was a real nice clambake"
20. ENSEMBLE - Geraniums in the Winder - (Snow, Jigger, Chorus) - "Geraniums in the winder"
21. SONG - What's the Use of Wond'rin' - (Julie) - "What's the use of wond'rin'"
22. CHANGE OF SCENE
23. SONG - You'll Never Walk Alone" - (Nettie) - "When you walk through a storm"
24. INCIDENTAL MUSIC - Entrance of Heavenly Friend
25. SONG - The Highest Judge of All - (Billy) - "Take me beyond the pearly gates"
26. EXIT MUSIC - CHANGE OF SCENE
27. BALLET
28. REPRISE - My Little Girl"
29. INCIDENTAL MUSIC - (Carrie) - "I'm just a tom-boy"
30. PORCH SCENE
31. GRADUATION SCENE (Finale Ultimo)

SCENES AND SETTINGS:

Time 1873 - 1888

ACT I

Scene 1: - Prelude - An Amusement Park on the New England Coast. May

Scene 2: - A tree-lined path along the shore. A few minutes later

Scene 3: - Nettie Fowler's Spa on the ocean front. June

ACT II

Scene 1: - On an island across the bay. That night

Scene 2: - Mainland waterfront. An hour later

Scene 3: - Up there

Scene 4: - Down here. On a beach. Fifteen years later

Scene 5: - Outside Julie's cottage

Scene 6: - Outside a schoolhouse. Same day.

INSTRUMENTATION:

2 flutes db. piccolo, oboe db. cor anglais, 2 clarinets, bassoon, 3 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba, percussion, harp, piano, strings