

# ***CINDERELLA***

A Musical by Rodgers & Hammerstein

A magical fairy tale as old as time, Cinderella takes young and old to an enchanted world where dreams do come true.

## ❖ **THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF *CINDERELLA***

The story of *Cinderella* can be traced back centuries and individual elements of the story can be found in almost every world culture. More than 1,500 variations on the story estimated worldwide, each adding something unique.

The familiar plot revolves around a young girl deprived of her rightful position in the family and given the cruel nickname *Cinderella* by her wicked stepmother and stepsisters. This popular fairy tale embraces a classic folk tale myth element of unjust oppression that ends with triumphant reward.

The earliest known version of *Cinderella* originated in China around AD 860. It appeared in "The Miscel Record of Yu Yang" by Tuan Ch'ing-Shih, a book which dates from the Tang dynasty. In this version Yen-Shen or Yeh-hsien, as she was called, is aided by the bones of her pet fish secretly killed by her wicked stepmother. Yeh-hsien is captured and taken to live as a servant in another province. She is left behind on the day of a big festival, and the bones of the fish provide her with a cloak of kingfisher feathers and tiny golden shoes, for Yeh-hsien had the smallest feet in the land. She loses a shoe when she runs home, which is picked up by a warlord who searches all over for the owner of the shoe so that he may marry her. Small feet were an important aspect of beauty in Chinese culture, but as the story made its way from Asia to Europe, the significance of Cinderella's shoe size became less important with the translation of the story into other cultures with different standards of beauty.

Since then hundreds of versions have been told, some using a gold slipper, others a ring or bracelet to give the Prince the clue to Cinderella's identity.

The first written version of the story comes from a 1501 German sermon and it has more in common with Shakespeare's *R* than with the modern-day *Cinderella*. In this tale, the daughter of a merchant falls in love with the son of a rival merchant. Her mother, thinking to stop the marriage of the two young lovers, tells the daughter that she must empty a bushel of barley, one grain at a time and using only her tongue, before she can wed. The daughter completes the task, with the help of ants, and the marriage takes place despite the parent's objections.

The story next appeared in a collection of Italian folk tales published in five volumes by Giambattista Basile between 1624 -1636. In this version of the tale, a young orphan girl sleeps among the ashes, and earns the name "The Cat Cinderella" for curling up like a cat at the fire.

Our modern-day story owes a great deal to the French version of the tale which was called *Cinderella and the Glass*. It was written by Charles Perrault (1628-1703) and published in 1697. This version introduced the characters of the stepmother and stepsisters, and also introduced the plot device of the royal ball. In some versions there are three balls, not just one. The glass slipper was also introduced in this version. Glass was very valuable in 17th century France, but critics unaware of this and perhaps troubled by the impracticalities of glass slippers, have suggested that Perrault's "glass slipper" (pantoufle de verre) was meant to be a "fur slipper" (pantoufle de vair). However, reference to the glass slippers have been found to turn up in older non-French versions of the tale as well.

There were two different versions of the story, called *Aschputtle*, created by The Brothers Grimm and published in 1812 and 1856. These stories first introduced the magical fairy godmother. Cinderella's aid also varies greatly from telling to telling – a golden fish, fairies, a magical tree, a fairy godmother. Many contain the idea of a bird or a cow or a cat or hound that holds Cinderella's dead mother's spirit, and comes to help her out of her predicament.

The story that we know today is a combination of all of these versions.

The 1950 animated film from Walt Disney Productions is well known by all, but the Rep's production is based on the 1957 television version starring Julie Andrews, written by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II specifically for CBS television. Rodgers and Hammerstein prepared their version of *Cinderella* in only eight months. They used the Perrault version of the tale, and embroidered the script with a few sly and witty touches. It includes several of Richard Rodgers' most enchanting waltzes and marches, like *In My Own Little Corner*, *Do I Love You Because You're Beautiful?*, and *Impossible*. It was produced for \$375,000 – very expensive for its time – and broadcasted to an audience of 107 million people!

Rodgers and Hammerstein intended to present the musical on stage the following season, but their plans did not materialize. A London producer, Harold Fielding, saw the potential for a splashy Christmas-time spectacle and *Cinderella* opened at the London Coliseum on December 18, 1958 and played through the holiday season.

*Cinderella* made an easy transition to the stage and has appeared on stages around North America as early as 1961. The story's classic appeal and timeless storyline continues to be popular with audiences everywhere. In the United States alone, more than 250 productions of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* are presented every year.

## ❖ THE STORY

**In Act I** the stage is set for the magic to unfold. We first hear about the Prince's upcoming ball and that he is expected to choose a princess the night of the ball. Cinderella and her stepmother and two stepsisters share in the excitement, but Cinderella is not allowed to attend. Once they leave for the ball, a lonely Cinderella is visited by her godmother. Godmother proceeds to grant Cinderella her wish to attend the ball, and magically transforms Cinderella into a princess.

**Act II** opens with Godmother giving Cinderella clear instructions to not stay at the ball past midnight. When Cinderella enters the ball, everyone is stunned by the beautiful girl that no one seems to know. For the Prince and Cinderella it is love at first sight. They dance together and spend the rest of the evening talking and gazing dreamily into each other's eyes. The clock striking twelve catches Cinderella by surprise and she dashes off. The Prince tries to catch her, but is left with only a glass slipper belonging to Cinderella.

**In Act III** it is the morning after the ball. Everything in Cinderella's house seems to be back to the way it was. Cinderella asks innocent questions about the ball. She is very obviously excited and very much in love, but her stepmother and stepsisters have no idea that she is the mystery princess from the night before. At the Palace the Prince asks the King and Queen to assist him in searching every inch of the kingdom for the owner of the glass slipper. The search creates a frenzy as all the young girls try to fit the slipper, but eventually the search takes the Prince's men to Cinderella's house. After the stepmother and the stepsisters all unsuccessfully try to make the slipper fit, Godmother suggests that Cinderella try it on – but she is nowhere to be found. Cinderella has gone for a walk and has wandered, lost in thought, into the Palace Garden where she runs into the Prince. With some intervention from Godmother, Cinderella tries the glass slipper on and it is a perfect fit! The wedding of Cinderella and the Prince is a perfect ending to a magical tale that proves impossible things happen every day.

## ❖ THE AUTHORS AND CINDERELLA

Rodgers and Hammerstein were an American songwriting duo consisting of Richard Rodgers (1902 – 1979) and Oscar Hammerstein II (1895 – 1960). They are best known for creating a series of immensely popular Broadway musicals in the 1940s and 1950s, including the legendary *Oklahoma!*, *The King and I* and *The Sound of Music*, which the Rep will produce this coming summer.

Hammerstein would always write the lyrics first and then Rodgers would write the music. Their joint efforts continued over a period of twenty years, until Hammerstein's death in 1960. The pair wrote nine musicals and a musical film, and their work and its adaptations received 34 Tony Awards, 15 Academy Awards, two Pulitzer Prizes, two Grammy Awards, two Emmy Awards and various other theater accolades.

The Rodgers and Hammerstein version of *Cinderella* premiered live on CBS-TV on March 31, 1957 —14 years to the day that Rodgers and Hammerstein's first collaboration, *Oklahoma!* opened on Broadway. CBS's presentation of *Cinderella* was prompted by the astounding success rival NBC had enjoyed previously with a television production of *Peter Pan* starring Mary Martin. Unlike *Peter Pan*, which was a television version of a Broadway production, it was determined by CBS that their musical would be created specifically for the medium. In choosing their fairy tale, inspired casting may have helped in the decision: at the time, a radiant Julie Andrews was charming Broadway in an Edwardian Cinderella musical called *My Fair Lady*, and when CBS asked her to play *Cinderella* for them, she readily agreed. With ideal casting like that, the network had very little trouble getting Rodgers and Hammerstein involved. "What sold us immediately was the chance to work with Julie," recalled Rodgers in his autobiography. "It was right from the start."

Rodgers and Hammerstein prepared their version of *Cinderella* in a scant eight month period. Produced at a costly \$375,000, this was a sumptuous *Cinderella* that spared no expense. “Being ignorant of the medium,” wrote Hammerstein of his first experience in television, “I wrote this show on the assumption we could do anything, and nothing has been refused me yet.” *Cinderella* went through an unusually long (for television) rehearsal period, followed by two complete run-throughs (dubbed “the New Haven and Boston tryouts” by the authors). On March 18, the cast went into Columbia Records studios where, they recorded the *Cinderella* score; the album was released in conjunction with the broadcast less than two weeks later. On Sunday night March 24, Rodgers and Hammerstein appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, playing selections from *Cinderella* and urging viewers to watch “the same channel, same time, same place” one week hence. And watch they did. *Cinderella’s* broadcast, live on CBS-TV on Sunday night March 31, 1957 from 8 to 9:30PM, was viewed by 107,000,000 people — the largest television audience to date. Rodgers mused that for *Cinderella* to reach as large an audience on Broadway it would have to play to full houses for 110 years! *Cinderella* made an easy transition to the stage, and began appearing in London and in theatres around the United States. With its stage success on track, CBS wanted to bring *Cinderella* back to television. The 1957 premiere had been phenomenally successful, but in the days before videotape it was doomed to one performance only. In 1965 CBS re-staged *Cinderella*, with Richard Rodgers serving as Executive Producer. The 1965 *Cinderella* featured a young performer named Lesley Ann Warren as Cinderella. Taped for broadcast, this *Cinderella* premiered on February 22, 1965, and was shown on CBS eight more times through February of 1974. Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Cinderella* endures. The original 1957 version survives in a relatively crude but historically fascinating kinescope in the archives of the Museum of Television in New York City; the 1965 remake can be seen frequently on The Disney Channel and CBS Fox/Playhouse home video. Compact disc and audio cassette recordings of both performances are available on Sony Broadway. Stage productions of *Cinderella* continue to thrive as well, including an acclaimed version presented by the New York City Opera in 1993, and again in 1995. More than 250 productions of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Cinderella* are presented in the United States every year. Confirming this work’s classic appeal, as well as the timelessness of its tale, yet a third television remake of *Cinderella* was prepared for a broadcast premiere on November 2, 1997. Its dazzling all-star cast included Whitney Houston as The Fairy Godmother, as well as singing and TV sensation Brandy in the title role. A co-production of Walt Disney TeleFilms, Storyline Entertainment and Houston Productions, this *Cinderella* — like the two TV versions preceding it — made television history: as the #1 show of the week, with over 60,000,000 viewers, it became the highest-rated TV musical in a generation, a hit with critics and audiences alike. An encore broadcast on Valentine’s Night 1998 drew another 15,000,000 viewers and the Disney Home Video version, also released that year, became the best-selling video of a TV movie ever released. In the Fall of 2000 Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Cinderella* stepped down from the screen and onto the stage once again in an enchanting revival on U.S. National Tour, starring Eartha Kitt as The Fairy Godmother, Deborah Gibson as Cinderella and — repeating his TV role — Paolo Montalban as The Prince. He reprised this role again in the Paper Mill Playhouse production of the show. Traveling from TV screens to opera houses to stages across America, Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Cinderella* has emerged from her own little corner to live happily ever after.

Rodgers and Hammerstein had the following to say about their version of *Cinderella*:

*We want the kids who see it to recognize the story they know. Children can be*

*very critical on that score. But, of course, the parents will be watching, too, so we have tried to humanize the characters without altering the familiar plot structure. As you may know, I'm not one for writing stories about poor little girls who suddenly win fame and happiness at the stroke of a magic wand. So in **Cinderella** I have deemphasized the 'fairy' aspect of the godmother, and have simply presented her as a matter-of-fact woman with a sense of humor who incidentally has magic powers. In her first scene with Cinderella she even tries to talk the girl out of her wild idea of going to the ball. But it's Cinderella's innocent faith in a miracle, which she expresses in the song "Impossible", that finally wins the godmother over to granting her wish.*

[Oscar Hammerstein II, 1957](#)

*Though a few of its songs have become popular, our score for CINDERELLA is another example of what theatre music is really all about. No matter what the medium, a score is more than a collection of individual songs. It is, or should be, a cohesive entity whose words and music are believable expressions of the characters singing them. When the lonely, bullied heroine sings, 'In My Own Little Corner,' it's not merely a song, it's a revelation of the girl herself. When she finishes, we know something more about her than we had before -- her sense of humor, her naive optimism, her imagination and her relationship to the rest of her family. It's fair to say that this song is familiar to a vast number of people, but it has never made anyone's hit parade and never will; it is simply part of the score. Like a symphony, concerto or opera, some portions have greater appeal than others, but it is the work as a whole that makes the overall impression.* [Richard Rodgers, 1975](#)

## ❖ **ACTIVITIES & DISCUSSION**

Watching live theatre is very different from watching a movie, TV or videos. The actors need your full attention. As an audience member you play a very important part in the production. The most important part of being in the audience is that you listen – with your ears, your mind and your heart. Listening with your ears means that you give the performers your full attention. Listening with your mind means that you learn all that you can from the show. Listening with your heart means that you share in the emotions of the characters on stage.

### **Pre-Show:**

1. Have you ever seen live theatre before? What do you think makes a good performance?
2. Read an older version of **Cinderella**. What does the name Cinderella mean? How does her name connect to some of her household chores?
3. Read another version of **Cinderella**. What are the similarities and differences? Were different themes or ideas highlighted?
4. Do you have a godmother or godfather? What does that mean? Have they helped you in the past?
5. Discuss fairy tales. What are they and which other ones do you know? Which one is your favorite?

### **Post-Show:**

1. What was your favorite scene from the play? And your favorite song?
2. Write your own **Cinderella** story or draw your favorite character from the production.
3. How do you imagine Cinderella felt when she was bossed around by her stepmother and stepsisters? How did she feel when she was transformed by her godmother?

4. Which element of the production stood out in your mind? It can be lighting, costumes, props, acting, etc. How does each of these contribute to the success of the production?
5. Discuss the music. If you were to go to a ball tonight, what kind of music do you think you'd hear? Would it be similar or different?
6. What did you enjoy about seeing the story come to life? Was it very different from when you read it?
7. Write a letter to the director telling her how much you enjoyed the production. Or write a letter to your favorite character.
8. Why do you think Cinderella has remained so popular over the centuries? Is there a moral to the story, and if there is, what is it?
9. Many cultures have stories similar to *Cinderella*. Try to find one of these and discuss it.
  - ❖ *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* – An African Folktale
  - ❖ *Aschenputtel* (German) by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm
  - ❖ *Fair, Brown and Trembling* - Glassie, Henry, ed. Irish Folktales. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.
  - ❖ *The Golden Slipper* - Afanasyev, Aleksandr. Russian Fairy Tales. Norbert Guterman, translator. New York: Pantheon Books, 1945.
  - ❖ *The Hearth Cat* - Thompson, Stith, ed. One Hundred Favorite Folktales, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974.
  - ❖ *The Little Red Fish and the Clog of Gold* - Bushnaq, Inea, ed. and trans. Arab Folktales. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.
  - ❖ *Rashin-Coatie* - Douglad, George. Scottish Fairy and Folk Tales. London: Walter Scott, Publishing.

## ❖ SOURCES

Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* – Music by Richard Rodgers, Book and Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II  
 The Rodgers and Hammerstein Organization - [www.rnh.com/theatricals/show](http://www.rnh.com/theatricals/show)  
 Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia – <http://en.wikipedia.org>  
 The Journal of Mythic Arts Reading Room - <http://www.endicott-studio.com>  
 National Endowment for the Humanities: Lesson plans - <http://edsitement.neh.gov>  
 The SurLaLune Fairy Tale pages - <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/cinderella>  
 The Brooklyn Centre for the Performing Arts: Cinderella Study Guide - <http://www.brooklyncenter.com>

## ❖ INFORMATION

*Cinderella* is suitable for students in all grades. Teachers of grades K-2 may find it helpful to discuss the story with students prior to attending the production. The Rep production starts on November 25, 2006 and plays four times a week through December 17. Please call Marilyn McCormick for more information at (707)786-5483. Group rates are available for groups of ten or more.