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Show notes

by John Steele Gordon

A review of *The Letters of Oscar Hammerstein II* by Mark Eden Horowitz

BOOKS IN THIS ARTICLE

The Letters of Oscar Hammerstein II
Mark Eden Horowitz

The Letters of Oscar Hammerstein II

Oxford University Press, 1088 pages, \$39.95

Oscar Hammerstein II (1895–1960) was the most important figure behind the creation of one of the twentieth century's great art forms, the Broadway musical.

When he began his career in the early 1920s, musicals were usually either featherweight comedies with improbable plots or operettas set in far-off locales and featuring stories involving milkmaids and princes. It was not uncommon for a star to have a contractual right to do his or her vaudeville schtick, such as playing the ukelele, at a particular time in the evening—a bit of business that would just have to be shoehorned into the plot.

But by the time of Hammerstein's death forty years later, the Broadway musical was in the midst of its golden age, with such masterpieces as *Guys and...*

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