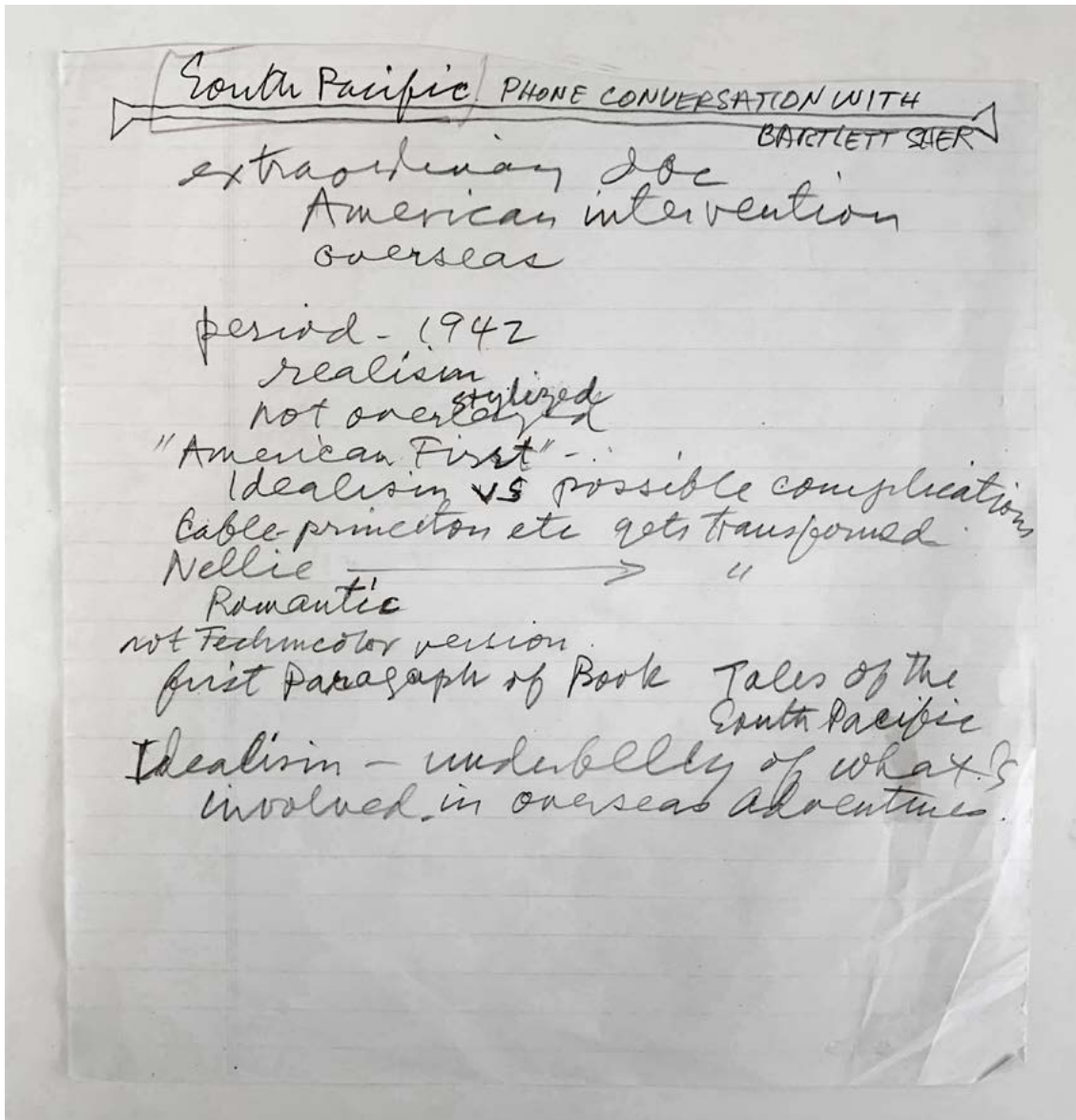


Mcmullan

THE POSTER DESIGN ARCHIVE
OF JAMES McMULLAN

South Pacific - Archive Items and Process Description

1. Notes from my phone conversation with director Bartlett Sher.



2. I rented the DVD of the 1950's movie South Pacific and photographed images from the TV screen. These are two of the many shots I took that gave me a feeling for the story and the characters. I knew that the stage production was going to be very different, but it provided me a way to start.



3. Three sheets of pencil sketches in which I tried out various compositions with Nellie Forbush, the nurse heroine of the story, as the dominant figure in the composition. Often my first doodles are an exercise in moving past the clichés that originally occur to me. In the lower left of the third sheet, you see the first intimation of the idea that finally took hold.



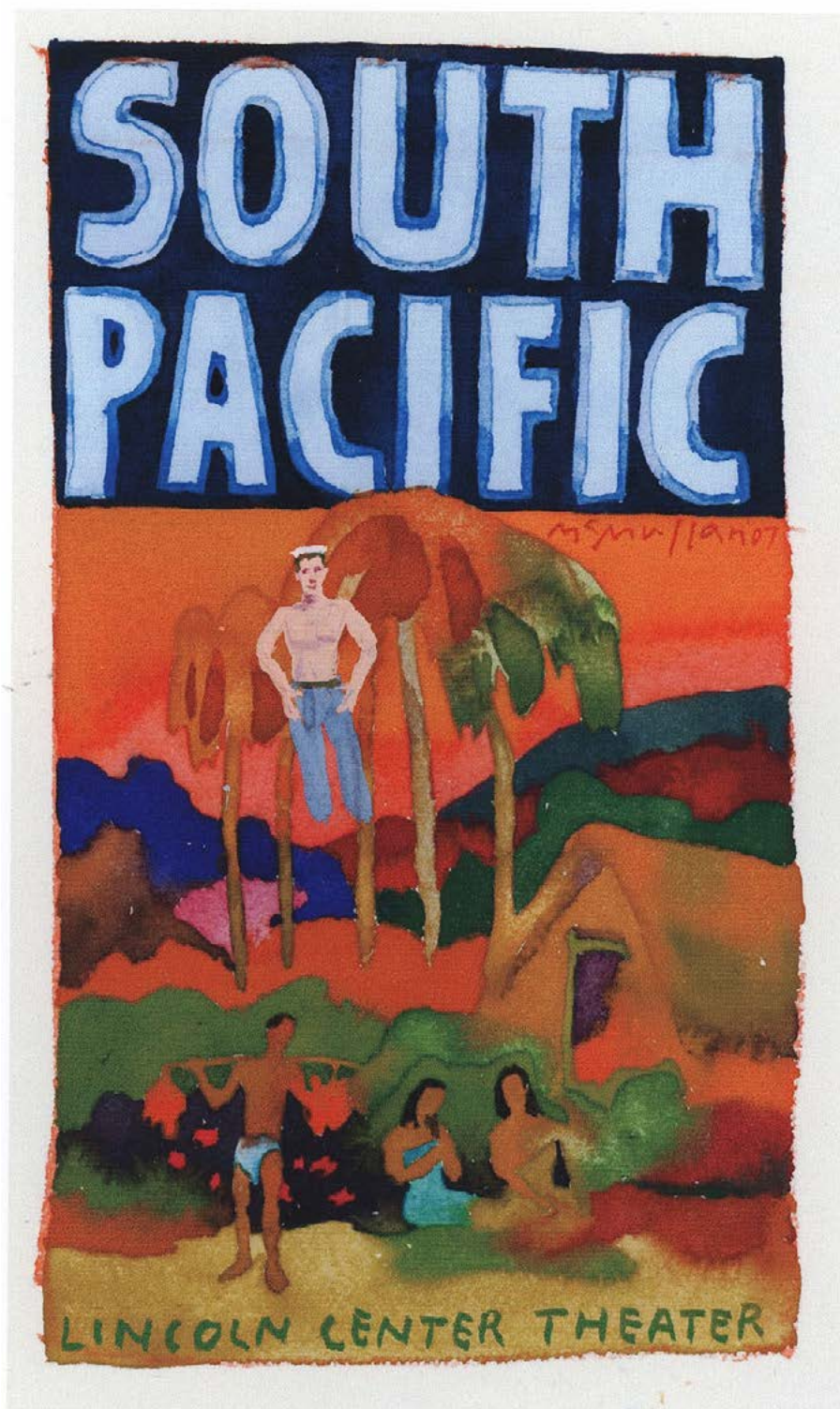
4. Two color sketches based on the pencil drawings. I didn't have a strong feeling that this direction was a good one, so I abandoned it and never showed these sketches to the people at Lincoln Center Theater.



5. The paintings from the Gauguin book, which I used as a basis for the background in my poster. My idea was that the Gauguin art represented the life of the island people that existed before the war and before the American Navy landed. The figures of the American sailors that I imposed on the idyllic landscape would be painted in a crude enough way, almost like slashes of paint over the more carefully painted background scene, to suggest one culture intruding on another. At the same time I wanted to show the vitality of the characters in the musical.



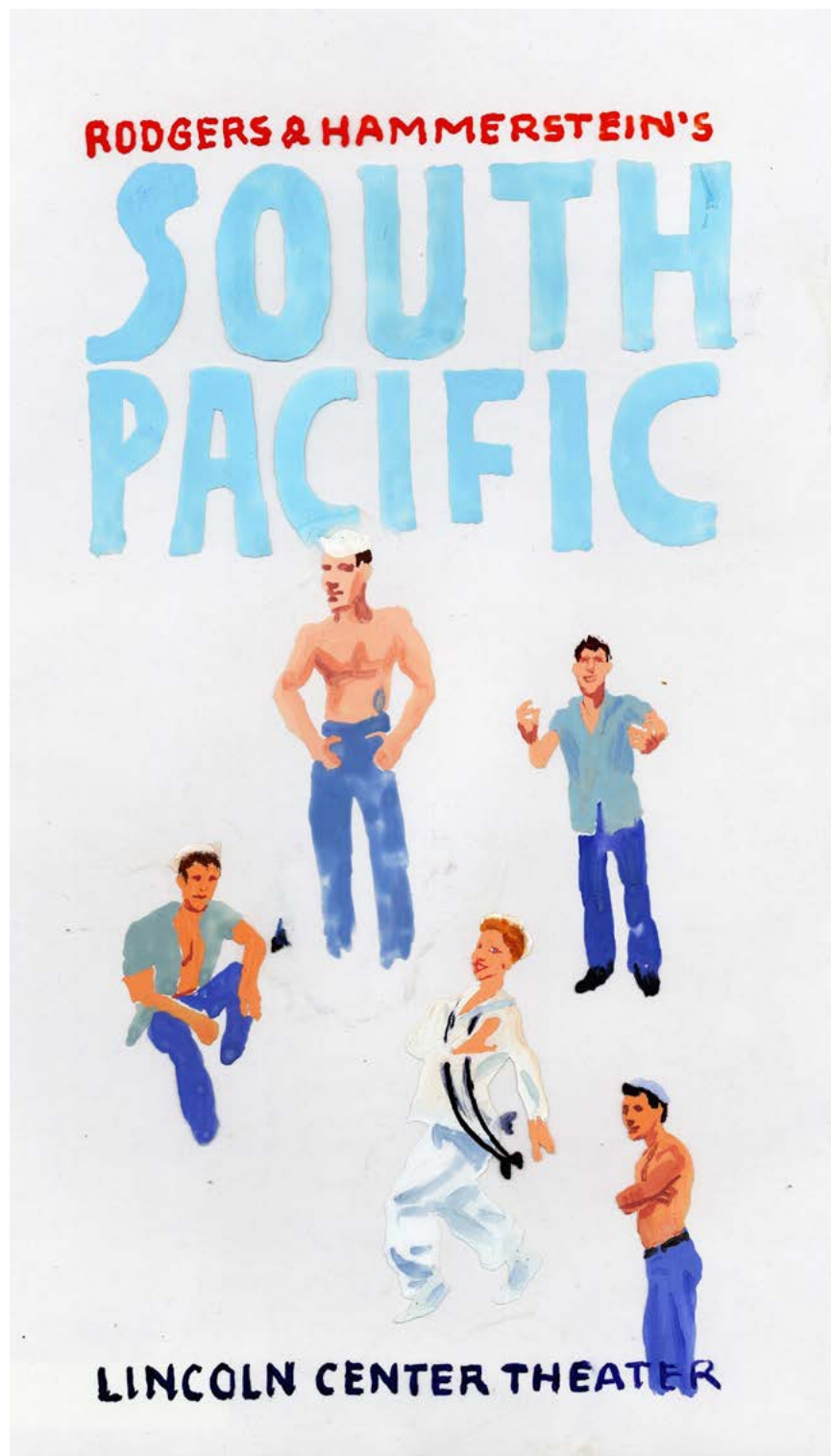
6. A first study of the “Gauguin” landscape. I decided that the painting was too light and too bright to successfully act as a foil for the figures in the top layer. I was planning on doing the sailors and Nellie Forbush in very pale colors and I need a background that was deep enough in value to set them off.



7. A collage of the figures I found from the movie photos that gave me the poses I needed for the sailors and the dancing nurse I painted over the tropical background.



8. A study of the sailors and Nellie Forbush painted on acetate in which I am trying out a simple calligraphic style that will contrast with the richness of my Gauguin-esque watercolor.



9. The finished poster.

