

Irving Berlin & Co.

Written and Arranged by
Chip Deffaa

Music and Lyrics By
Irving Berlin

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DEDICATION

This one is for Jack Sprance, with appreciation....

STORY OF THE MUSICAL

Inspired by actual events, legendary songwriter Irving Berlin shares his life story with two teens. It's a rags-to-riches tale--terrific for schools, colleges, community theaters, and more--about a poor immigrant kid rising to become the most successful songwriter in the world. Along the way, we get to hear such timeless Berlin songs as "I Love a Piano," "All by Myself," "Play a Simple Melody," "Ragtime Violin," and "Alexander's Ragtime Band." The songs are pure Americana--great for singing and dancing.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

The first reading of this script was held February 10, 2013, at Ripley Grier Studios, 520 Eighth Avenue, New York City, with the following collective personnel: Michael Townsend Wright, Emily Bordonaro, Michael Kasper, Bob Diamond, Brian Gari, Katie Branden, Eve Prouty, Matt Zanfagna, Deborah Grisorio, Chip Deffaa. Aides-de-camp: Jesse Riehl, Jack Saleeby, Ben Youngstone, Samantha McCoy.

Special thanks to Donald Brown and Richard Danley for preparing the music for this show.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(12 to 24+ actors: 14 m, 9 w, doubling possible)

EMILY: A girl of about 16.

SPRACK: A boy of about 16, able to dance.

IRVING BERLIN: At the opening of the play, he is 95 years old. He is America's most famous and successful individual songwriter; he is also a recluse; he has not been seen in public in years. He can be something of a curmudgeon—feisty, but in a likeable kind of way. He need not look extremely old, however; Berlin aged rather well.

JOHN WALLOWITCH: A middle-aged man, a great admirer of Irving Berlin's music.

BERTRAM: Another member of the group, a middle-aged man.

BERNICE: Berlin's longtime housekeeper.

BIG BRYAN LeTENDRE: Owns a variety theater, which offers a weekly amateur show.

A. WALTER BRODY: Owns a movie theater.

POLLINGER BRANDONE: A do-gooder, a reformer, whose mission is to stop child labor, particularly in places he does not approve of.

MIKE SALTER: A big, rough fellow, owns a beer hall/dance hall. He is also the community "fixer," who can, for a fee, make any problem go away.

MAX BEERSTEIN and BEN STONE: Singing waiters.

NICK NARDOZZI: A piano player.

MISS McNIBBY, MISS LAMBERT, and MISS LISA are entertainers.

SOPHIE TUCKER: A popular entertainer of the era, a big woman with a big voice and a commanding manner.

GEORGE M. COHAN: A buoyant fellow known as "the man who owns Broadway," is a top song-and-dance man, a star.

FANNY BRICE: A popular singing comedienne. She rose from the ranks of burlesque to become a top star on Broadway, on the radio, etc.

AL JOLSON: Billed as "the World's Greatest Entertainer," is dynamic singer, a top star.

Continued

DOROTHY GOETZ: A pretty 20-year-old aspiring vaudeville singer, becomes the first Mrs. Irving Berlin.

LOQUACIOUS B. NUTMEG: A former entertainer turned preacher, protesting the supposed sins of the entertainment world.

ELLIN MACKAY: Beautiful, refined, 20-ish, and from one of the wealthiest families in America, becomes the second Mrs. Irving Berlin.

EXTRAS: The other members of the group are not named, but do have lines. The script includes such figures as a **DRUNKEN PATRON, MAN IN THE CROWD, AUDIENCE MEMBER #1, AUDIENCE MEMBER #2,** and **CHORUS MEMBERS** (on certain songs). **MALE CHORUS OF SOLDIER-SINGERS**

NOTE: BERLIN, EMILY, and SPRACK must be played by actors who do not play any other characters. The other characters can be doubled. The actor playing JOHN in the first scene, for example, might also play one or more other characters – such as POLLINGER BRANDONE or MIKE SALTER – who only appear in later scenes. The actress playing BERNICE in the first scene, for example, could also play one or more other characters – such as SOPHIE TUCKER or MISS McNIBBY –who only appear in later scenes. If you have a larger cast, you can have more people in the group of singers in the opening scene, and in other ensembles later in the play.

SETTING

Settings can be as simple or elaborate as you like. The story begins in front of Irving Berlin's home, 17 Beekman Place, New York City. The action then moves inside the home, and then we see scenes from Berlin's life, as he reminisces.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Spoken introductions to songs may occasionally be slightly different on the cast album than in the script and score. Actors should perform the script as written.

*See additional notes at the end of the script.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT I

1. "Alexander's Ragtime Band" (Irving Berlin)
2. "The International Rag" (Irving Berlin)
3. "Simple Melody" / "Musical Demon" (Irving Berlin)
4. "I'm Going Back to Dixie" (music by Ted Snyder, words by Irving Berlin)
5. "Araby" (Irving Berlin)
6. "There's Something Nice About the South" (Irving Berlin)
7. "Ragtime Violin" (Irving Berlin)
8. "I've Got to Have Some Lovin' Now" (Irving Berlin)
9. "Everybody Step" (Irving Berlin)

ACT II

10. "All By Myself" (Irving Berlin)
11. "I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy" (George M. Cohan)
12. "Yankee Love" (words and music by E. Ray Goetz and Irving Berlin)
13. "Down Where the Jack O'Lanterns Grow" (Irving Berlin)
14. "This is the Life" (Irving Berlin)
15. "Wild Cherries" (music by Ted Snyder, words by Irving Berlin)
16. "That Dying Rag" (music by Bernie Adler, words by Irving Berlin)
17. "We're On Our Way to France" (Irving Berlin)
18. "In A Cozy Kitchenette Apartment" (Irving Berlin)
19. "They Call It Dancing" (Irving Berlin)
20. "Settle Down in a One Horse Town" (Irving Berlin)
21. "Mandy" (Irving Berlin)
22. "Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning" (Irving Berlin)
23. "When I Get Back to the USA" (Irving Berlin)
24. "I Love a Piano" (Irving Berlin)
25. Bows music (curtain-call music): "Mandy"—instrumental (Irving Berlin)
26. Exit Music: "Say It With Music"—instrumental (Irving Berlin)
27. Optional Encore: "I Beg Your Pardon Dear Old Broadway"
28. Optional Encore: "I'm Gonna Pin a Medal on the Girl I Left Behind" (Irving Berlin)

ACT I

(AT RISE: It is Christmas Eve 1983. A GROUP of 10 or so, dressed warmly, sings outside the home of Irving Berlin. One older man, JOHN, is the leader/conductor of the group. The group includes EMILY and SPRACK.)

(SONG #1. "ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND.")

EMILY: *(Sings.)*

COME ON AND HEAR, COME ON AND HEAR
ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND.
COME ON AND HEAR, COME ON AND HEAR,
IT'S THE BEST BAND IN THE LAND.

SPRACK:

THEY CAN PLAY A BUGLE CALL LIKE YOU NEVER HEARD
BEFORE,
SO NATURAL THAT YOU WANT TO GO TO WAR,
THAT'S JUST THE BESTEST BAND WHAT AM,
HONEY LAMB.

EMILY, SPRACK, and OTHERS

COME ON ALONG, COME ON ALONG,
LET ME TAKE YOU BY THE HAND
UP TO THE MAN, UP TO THE MAN,
WHO'S THE LEADER OF THE BAND,
AND IF YOU CARE TO HEAR THE "SWANEE RIVER" PLAYED
IN RAGTIME,
COME ON AND HEAR, COME ON AND HEAR
ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND.

(EMILY speaks to the audience, while the music continues softly as underscoring. The OTHERS freeze in place.)

EMILY: *(To audience.)* Oh! I remember every detail of that amazing night so vividly, as if it happened just a moment ago. It was Christmas Eve, 1983, and only four degrees above zero. We were so cold! I was 16. And a group of us were gathered outside the townhouse of Irving Berlin, on Beekman Place, in New York City. My buddy, Sprack, and I - who dreamed of being on Broadway someday -

End of Freeview

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