

# **Broadway Lullaby**

**By Craig Sodaro**

*A 1995 winner  
of the Columbia Entertainment Company Award*

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## THE STORY

It's 1927 and the 42nd Street Orphanage for Girls in New York is a bleak place. The McGrew Sisters who head the orphanage are mean and stingy to the young teenage girls in their charge. Enter a new orphan, young Ginny Hobbs, with a truck full of "magic," costumes and props from the vaudevillian circuit her late parents used to work.

As the girls perform a few skits, two con artists form a plan. They'll get investors to help stage the girls' show called *Broadway Lullaby*, get it fully insured, and when it flops, collect all the money.

But the girls have other plans, and with the help of Cecil Colossus, a big Hollywood producer, their dreams do come true!

## Synopsis of Scenes

### ACT I

Scene 1: 42nd Street Orphanage for Girls, one afternoon.  
Scene 2: A street in Hollywood (*before curtain*) and the orphanage, early evening.

### ACT II

Scene 1: The orphanage, several weeks later.  
Scene 2: The Dead Pan Alley Theatre on Broadway and the orphanage.  
Scene 3: The orphanage, later that night.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**  
*(10m, 18w, 4 flexible. Doubling possible.)*

**NEWSKIDS 1-4**...Tell news before curtain  
**LOU MCGREW**...Head of the orphanage  
**SUE MCGREW**...Her sister and partner  
**MADILYN**...Orphan  
**STELLA**...Orphan  
**DELLA**...Orphan  
**CARLA**...Orphan  
**ALBERTA**...Orphan  
**GIGGLES**...Orphan  
**MAE**...Orphan  
**BETTY**...Orphan  
**SHIRLEY**...Orphan  
**TINA**...Orphan  
**GINNY HOBBS**...The new orphan  
**LEONARD**...A friend of the girls  
**\*GLADYS**...The cook  
**CHARLIE TRAVIS**...Gladys' boyfriend  
**FREDDIE FINKE**...A gangster  
**NOLA LABOLA**...His moll  
**JEROME**...His bodyguard  
**CECIL COLOSSUS**...A big Hollywood producer  
**DARLA DRIBBLENOTE**...His secretary  
**\*DRAGPIT**...A nasty investor  
**\*SLOACUM**...Another  
**\*MADAME CLEO**...A dance teacher  
**MARCELLA GABBAG**...A gossip columnist  
**ELLIOT ST. JOHN**...A director  
**\*COSGROVE (ED)**....An insurance agent  
**\*KRAMER (TED)**...Another

*\*Gladys can double as Madame and the nasty investors can double as the insurance agents.*

## **SETTING**

The play takes place in the community room of the 42nd Street Orphanage for Girls in New York and in the imagination of the girls themselves. The year is 1927. An arched entrance at USC leads to the main door to the outside and a hallway to other rooms. An entrance DSL leads to kitchen and additional rooms of the orphanage. At times Leonard enters SR, after sneaking through a window. We don't see the window and a wing entrance works well for this.

The room we do see is sparsely furnished. A couch at right is old and shabby. At left are two mismatched chairs with a lamp on a table between them. Signs about the girls' behavior and rules of the orphanage work well on the walls. It's good to leave plenty of room for the plays within the play which occur.

Ginny's large trunk is placed DSL during the show. A light inside the trunk, as if magic is spilling out, is a very nice touch if it can be done. Props and costumes for the plays within the play should be inside. That includes crown, toy sword, red cape, mob hat, shawl, cane, top hat with ears, black cape, two hats, three pig noses and ears, a basket of goodies include pepper spray, and two "furs."

Set a strobe at USC for the silent movie sequence. This will provide a flickering light that simulates the old movies. Old-time piano music should be used as a background.

## **SOUND EFFECTS**

Clock striking nine, three different crashes, old-time movie music.

**NOTE:** For a complete list of props, please see end of script.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

(BEFORE CURTAIN: New York City street, 1927.  
NEWSKID ONE enters SL and crosses SR waving newspaper.)

NEWSKID ONE: Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Lucky Lindy lands in Paree! Single-handedly crosses Atlantic in thirty-three and a half hours. How much more can a man accomplish?

(NEWSKID TWO crosses from SR to SL, waving a newspaper.)

NEWSKID TWO: Extra! Extra! Here's the scoop! President Calvin Coolidge declares buying on installment plans is safe, easy, and All-American!

(NEWSKID THREE crosses from SL to SR waving paper.)

NEWSKID THREE: Extra! Extra! The Babe slams sixty! New York Yankee slugger Babe Ruth hit homerun number sixty today to become the all-time homerun champ! Nobody will ever be better!

(NEWSKID FOUR crosses from SR to SL waving paper.)

NEWSKID FOUR: Extra! Extra! Life can't get any better! The Gains Institute reports that Americans are happier and richer now, in 1927, than ever before! There are two chickens in every pot and a Model T in every driveway!

(NEWSKID FOUR exits SL as CURTAIN opens to reveal the 42nd Street Orphanage. The room is empty, but after a moment, we hear a whistle.)

LOU: (*Off USC.*) All right, girls! FALL IN! Forward, MARCH! Left, left, left, right, left! (*DELLA, STELLA, ALBERTA, SHIRLEY, MADILYN, BETTY, TINA, MAE, GIGGLES and CARLA march from USC followed by LOU, with a whistle, and SUE. The girls line up across the stage as they reach DSC.*) Company, HALT!

MADILYN: (*Raising HER hand.*) Miss McGrew?

LOU: 'Tention! (*The GIRLS snap to attention, except for MADILYN.*)

MADILYN: Miss McGrew?

LOU: I ordered you to attention! What's wrong with you, soldier?!

MADILYN: I'm not a soldier!

LOU: (*To SUE.*) Get a load of THAT! She says she's not a soldier! (*To MADILYN.*) And just what do you think you are?

MADILYN: An orphan?

LOU: You're ALL orphans! THAT don't make you special!

Now, snap to attention or you won't see bread for a week!

MADILYN: But my tummy aches!

LOU: Sooooooooooo? Think about our boys in the Big War!

They had to live in trenches, in the mud and rain, never knowing if they were going to see the next morning, eating worms when their rations ran out, but never once complaining!

SUE: There! I'll bet THAT makes you feel better, Madilyn.

(*MADILYN covers her mouth and races off SL.*)

LOU: You're weaklings! ALL of you!

SUE: It's this new generation!

LOU: In our day we were tough! (*LOU slugs SUE in shoulder with her fist. Sue cringes. STELLA raises her hand.*)

STELLA: Were YOU an orphan, too, Miss McGrew?

LOU: Which one are you? Stella or Della?

STELLA: Stella.

DELLA: And I'm Della.

SUE: They're twins.

LOU: They don't look like twins! But I still can't tell 'em apart!

DELLA: I'm the youngest.

STELLA: Della was born five minutes after me.

LOU: THAT'S a big help. And sure, my sister and me were orphans, just like you. In fact, we got raised up right here in this very building. Everything we know we learned right inside these walls! But do you think we whined and cried and felt sorry for ourselves all the time?

CARLA: You mean you just started?

SUE: Did you hear what she said, Sister?! She said we whine and cry—

LOU: I heard it, Miss McGrew! And I didn't like it! A good soldier NEVER says anything against his commanding officer.

ALBERTA: But this isn't an army, Miss McGrew. This is the 42nd Street Orphanage run by the city of New York.

LOU: Wrong, Miss Smarty-pants! This the 42nd Street Orphanage run by ME! Now, Carla, my pet...what do you say?

CARLA: I say we revolt! All who are with me, step forward!  
(*NO ONE moves.*) C'mon! (*No response.*)

LOU: What do you say?

CARLA: I'm sorry, Miss McGrew.

LOU: On your knees!

CARLA: (*Defiantly.*) I'm sorry Miss McGrew!

SUE: I love it when they grovel, Sister. Make them all do it!

LOU: All of you! On your knees! (*The GIRLS kneel.*) On the count of three...one, two, three—

GIRLS: We're sorry, Miss McGrew!

(*MADILYN enters SL.*)

LOU: Get back in line! All of you, up, up, up! I've something to tell you! (*The GIRLS rise as MADILYN resumes her place.*)

GIGGLES: Feel better, Maddy?

LOU: NO TALKING! Now, girls, important news. We're getting a new girl this morning. Her name is Virginia Hobbs. She prefers to call herself something cute like Ginny. And I want you to make her feel...very welcome.

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