

# PERUSAL SCRIPT



**With songs by IRVING BERLIN  
(plus a few songs by others)**

**Music Arranged by Chip Deffaa**



Leicester Bay  
THEATRICALS

Salt Lake City

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**THE IRVING BERLIN STORY**

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(This play may also be performed, if desired, under its alternate title, "The Story of Irving Berlin.")

For Ben Youngstone and Sam McCoy, two talented “co-inspirators,” who add light  
and playfulness, and joy to the universe....  
and dance with panache, too.

**THE IRVING BERLIN STORY**  
**A musical play by Chip Deffaa**  
**featuring songs by Irving Berlin (plus a few songs by others)**

**Musical numbers**

**Act One:**

1. **“CRINOLINE DAYS”** (words and music by Irving Berlin, with revisions by Chip Deffaa)
2. **“I’D RATHER SEE AN Old-Time SHOW”** (words and music by Irving Berlin, with revisions by Chip Deffaa)
3. **“I LOVE A PIANO”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
4. **“HOME-AGAIN BLUES”** (words and music by Irving Berlin and Harry Akst)
5. **“THE CIRCUS IS COMING TO TOWN”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
6. **“THE CURSE OF AN ACHING HEART”** (words by Henry Fink, music by Al Piantadosi)
7. **“DOWN IN THE CITY”** (words and music by Chip Deffaa, based on traditional material)
8. **“SHE IS MORE TO BE PITIED, THAN CENSURED”** (words and music by William B. Gray)
9. **“THAT OLD IRISH MOTHER OF MINE”** (words by William Jerome, music by Harry Von Tilzer)
10. **“WHAT YOU GOIN’ TO DO WHEN THE RENT COMES ‘ROUND?”** (words by Andrew B. Sterling.  
Music by Harry Von Tilzer)
11. **“CHINATOWN FLO”** (words and music by Chip Deffaa)
12. **“YOU’D BE SURPRISED”** (words & music by Irving Berlin)
13. **“I’M DOWN IN HONOLULU LOOKING THEM OVER”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
14. **“GRIZZLY BEAR”** (words by Irving Berlin, music by George Botsford)
15. **“BRING ON THE PEPPER”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)

**Act Two:**

16. **“GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROADWAY”** (words and music by George M. Cohan)
17. **“I BEG YOUR PARDON, DEAR OLD BROADWAY”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
18. **“ALEXANDER’S RAGTIME BAND”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
19. **“I WANT TO GO BACK TO MICHIGAN, DOWN ON THE FARM”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
20. **“SOME SUNNY DAY”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
21. **“STOP STOP STOP!”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
22. **“I’LL SEE YOU IN C-U-BA”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
23. **“WHEN I LOST YOU”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
24. **“ALL BY MYSELF”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
25. **“EVERYBODY’S DOIN’ IT NOW”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
26. **“EVERYBODY STEP”** (words and music by Irving Berlin, with revisions by Chip Deffaa)
27. **“OH! HOW I HATE TO GET UP IN THE MORNING”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
28. **“WHEN I GET BACK TO THE USA”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
29. **“I’VE GOT MY CAPTAIN WORKING FOR ME NOW”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
30. **“WHEN THE MIDNIGHT CHOO-CHOO LEAVES FOR ALABAM”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
31. **“AFTER YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT YOU DON’T WANT IT”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
32. **“PLAY A SIMPLE MELODY” / “MUSICAL DEMON”** (words and music by Irving Berlin)
33. **BOWS MUSIC: “I LOVE A PIANO”** (music by Irving Berlin)
34. **EXIT MUSIC: “HOME-AGAIN BLUES”** (music by Irving Berlin and Harry Akst)

### **Music Preparation Credits**

The music has been arranged primarily by Chip Deffaa. The music has been prepared primarily by Don Brown, who made much-appreciated additional arranging contributions. Richard Danley, who also made highly valued additional arranging contributions and has served as music director for the project, did the editing and proofreading of the charts. Additional music copying by D. Jay Bradley. All music preparation, arranging, and editing on this project has been done as work-for-hire for Chip Deffaa Productions LLC.

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### **A BIT ABOUT THIS MUSICAL PLAY...**

“The Irving Berlin Story” is a musical comedy, written for a big cast, about the most enduringly popular of all American songwriters. Irving Berlin (1888-1989)—who was originally named Israel Baline--wrote more number-one hits (and made more money) than any of the others who gave us the Great American Songbook. This musical comedy includes more than two-dozen Berlin songs, mixing some of his well-known numbers (like “You’d be Surprised,” “Alexander’s Ragtime Band,” “Everybody’s Doin’ It,” “Play a Simple Melody,” “After You Get What You Want,” and “I Love a Piano”) with some wonderful rarities and rediscoveries.

There are more than 50 speaking parts, although many of these are quite small and can easily be “doubled” by actors if you’re doing a production with a smaller cast. Ideally, for maximum impact, this show should be mounted with a cast of 30 or more. (You have the option of using as many chorus members as desired.)

But it should be noted: the show can be performed successfully with anywhere from 20 players (with some “doubling” of roles) to 50 or more players. Settings can be as simple or as elaborate as you like.

This play may also be presented, if desired, under its alternate title, “The Story of Irving Berlin.”

## CAST OF CHARACTERS -- (23M 22W 5TB 2TG 2B 1G + CHORUS)

At the start of the show, we are simply in a theater.

The **EMCEE**,  
his **SIDEKICK**, and

**A LADY IN THE ENSEMBLE**

tell us that they intend to give us a show celebrating Irving Berlin. They make it clear they are primarily interested in presenting songs of his—entertainment for entertainment’s sake. And they, and others, sing of their love for such old-style entertainment. We then meet

**IRVING**—songwriter Irving Berlin as an old man,

wearing his trademark black-rimmed eyeglasses and a conservative suit. He stresses that he wants the show to include key facts about his life; he wants some historical accuracy about his life and times, not simply light escapist entertainment. And from time to time throughout the show, **IRVING** will offer commentary and reminiscences—sharing some key facts about his life. And we will see, on stage, scenes from his recollections. In these scenes, several younger actors will portray Irving Berlin at different stages of his life.

The **LITTLE BOY** will portray Berlin as a young boy (between the ages of about five and twelve).

**A BOY OF 13** will portray Berlin when he was around age 13.

**A BOY OF 17** will portray Berlin when he was around age 17, 18.

**A MAN OF 20** will represent Berlin from age 20 well into middle-age. Other actors will represent, briefly,

**IRVING’S MOTHER,**

**IRVING’S FATHER,**

**SIFRE**, Irving’s older sister (at the age of 13),

**AN OLDER BROTHER** of Irving.

We will meet briefly characters including

**PROFESSOR GOTTLIEB**, a music teacher;

**IRISHMAN** from New York’s Lower East Side who saved the life of young Irving Berlin;

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD**, a theatrical impresario who projects the confident air of a likeable con man;

**SPINDLER**, a fellow who’d once toured with Sanderson Cartiford and doesn’t trust him;

**HARRY VON TILZER**, the famed songwriter, who—in vaudeville days--briefly hired young Irving Berlin to work for him.

**MIKE SALTER** (a burly, swarthy Russian Jewish immigrant who was known, in his day, as “Nigger Mike” Salter due to his olive complexion) was an important figure in Berlin’s life; he ran a club where Berlin developed his skills as a singer/songwriter. It was a rough joint, with a house of prostitution above it. Salter was a powerful man in the community. He was also widely believed to have murdered various men in his career. (Note: Mike Salter was known as “Nigger Mike” Salter, and in the interest of historical accuracy, he is referred to as such in this script; however, if you wish to call him simply “Mike Salter” and delete the N-word in your production, you may do so.)

**MADAM GERTIE** is the proprietor of the brothel above Mike Salter’s joint;

**NICK** is a piano-player at Mike Salter’s joint. We also meet several good-time gals who work for Madam Gertie, and sometimes sing as Mike Salter’s place:

**HOTSY TOSY GAL #1;**

**HOTSY TOSY GAL #2.** We meet, too,

**FRISCO JOE**, a longtime patron of Mike’s club who kills another patron at the club.

**JOE SCHENK** (who’d become a lifelong friend of Irving Berlin’s) is working at a drug store around the corner from Mike Salter’s club when we first meet him. Later he’ll become a motion-pictures mogul in Hollywood.

We will meet, too,

**DOROTHY** (Dorothy Goetz), a beautiful, demure gal of about 20, who becomes Irving Berlin's first wife. She is a singer, hoping for a career in vaudeville, when Berlin meets her.

**TRIXIE** (Trixie Maguire) is a more experienced—and more aggressive--singer, who's come up out of burlesque. Later, we will meet

**ELLIN** (Ellin Mackay), who's in her early 20's and is from one of America's richest families; she will fall for Irving Berlin and become his second wife.

**CLARENCE MACKAY**, Telegraph-magnate, is Ellin's father—rich, powerful, overbearing, and narrow-minded; he is adamantly opposed to her daughter's involvement with Berlin.

**GEORGE M. COHAN** -- Master song-and-dance man – dapper, self-assured, wearing a neat suit, in his early 30's—is an idol of young Irving Berlin. (Ideally, the actor portraying COHAN ought to be able to tap-dance, since Cohan's featured number in this show includes a tap-dance break.)

**EDDIE FOY**, who's in his 50s, is a veteran song-and-dance comedian, who leads the most popular family act of the day, **EDDIE FOY & THE SEVEN LITTLE FOYS**. He has seven kids of varying ages and sizes (who appear to range in age from perhaps five to 15), dressed in matching outfits. In real-life, Eddie Foy's family included five boys and two girls, and that would be the ideal way to represent the **SEVEN LITTLE FOYS**, but if you happen to have more girls than boys in your cast and wish to have more of the Foy children be girls in your production, you may. There is one scene in the show in which Eddie Foy and his seven children sing and dance a number, with bantering by the father and his kids. Of the seven kids, four—identified in the script simply as

**A FOY KID, (a girl)**

**A SECOND FOY KID, (Charlie, about 13)**

**A THIRD FOY KID, (Richard, about 15)**

**A FOURTH FOY KID (a teen girl)**—have lines to speak.

In this musical play, we will see different performers putting over Berlin songs through the years; sometimes the performers are named, sometimes they are not named (in which case they might be identified in the script only as, perhaps, “a Broadway showgirl” or “a club entertainer”). If you have a big cast, different actors can portray all of the different individual performers. If you have a smaller cast, it is fine to have actors “double” roles, so long as (with the aid of, perhaps, different wigs, costumes, vocal inflections and body language) they make it clear they are portraying different characters. Among the performers whom we see and hear singing Berlin numbers through the years are:

**ETHEL LEVEY,**

**EMMA CARUS,**

**BELLE BAKER,**

**BROADWAY SHOWGIRL #1,**

**BROADWAY SHOWGIRL #2,**

**BROADWAY SHOWGIRL #3;**

and performers identified in the script simply as

**A SINGER/JUDY,**

**A SINGER/FRED,**

**A SINGER/BING, and**

**A SINGER/MARILYN.**

The performers identified in the script as **A SINGER/JUDY**, **A SINGER/FRED**, **A SINGER/BING**, and **A SINGER/MARILYN** sing Berlin songs that were performed at one time or another by Judy Garland, Fred Astaire, Bing Crosby, and Marilyn Monroe. The director of your production may, if he wishes, have the actors try to evoke something of the styles of Judy Garland, Fred Astaire, Bing Crosby, Marilyn Monroe. Or the director may, if he prefers, simply have his actors sing the numbers in their own voices, in their own styles; the script notes that Garland, Astaire, Crosby, and Monroe sang certain Berlin songs (as did many other artists); it

does not require that the singers whom you choose to sing such numbers do imitations, or specifically represent those particular stars; they are simply doing songs sung by those stars (and by others) at one time or another.

You have flexibility as to how many singers will sing ensemble parts on certain numbers. For example, the song “I’ll See You in C-U-B-A” is sung, in part, by

**A CUBAN CHORUS** (which would be a chorus of any size, dressed in Cuban attire, since the number is taking place during Berlin’s Honeymoon trip to Cuba).

**A MALE CHORUS** of any size, wearing US Army uniforms, backs Berlin on the song “When I Get Back to the USA.” The songs “I’m Down in Honolulu…” and “Grizzly Bear” are sung, in part, by the

**HOTSY TOTSY GALS.**

The script only assigns spoken lines to two Hotsy Totsy Gals

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #1** and

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #2**

When it says that lines are sung by **HOTSY TOTSY GALS**, you are free to have two, or four, or six, or as many **HOTSY TOTSY GALS** as you wish, sing. If you have a small cast, you might just have a couple of gals sing. If you have a big cast, you might have six or eight gals sing. A similar situation occurs with the song “Everybody’s Doin’ It,” which is sung, in part, by gals entertaining at a club. When the script says that singers are

**THE CLUB GALS**, you are free to have two, or four, or six, or as many **CLUB GALS** as you wish singing.

In addition, the following characters make brief appearances in this musical play, perhaps simply offering a line or two:

**A MAN ON THE STREET,**

**A WOMAN IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD,**

**PASSERBY #1,**

**PASSERBY #2,**

**PASSERBY #3,**

**A THEATER ANNOUNCER,**

**A MAN IN THE AUDIENCE,**

**A WOMAN IN THE GROUP,**

**ANOTHER WOMAN IN THE GROUP,**

**A POLICEMAN,**

**A CHORINE,**

**A CLUB GAL,**

**REPORTER #1,**

**REPORTER #2,**

**REPORTER #3,**

**ELLIN’S FRIEND,**

**A NEWSBOY.**

Please note: you have flexibility as to gender. If the script, for example, identifies a speaker as “A MAN ON THE STREET,” and you wish to have “A WOMAN ON THE STREET” deliver the line instead, that is fine. You also have flexibility concerning how many of the smaller characters are seen and heard. If the script, for example, has three different newspaper reporters asking questions of Irving Berlin, you have the option of having fewer or more reporters on stage, depending on the size of your cast. (If you were mounting this show with a very small cast, you could, for example, have in the scene just one or two newspaper reporters, instead of three reporters; if you have a larger cast, and want to have four or five reporters, instead of three reporters, that is fine, too.) If you wish to make trims or edits to the script or score, due to time constraints, you may do so. If you wish to add an extra chorus to a song, to give greater exposure to singers or dancers, you may do so. If you



wish to cut a dance break because, perhaps, you do not have good dancers in your production, you may do so. Permission is granted to make such minor revisions. However, you may not add new lines or new songs, or change existing lines or songs, without obtaining from the playwright (or his representative) written permission to make such changes.

This is a copyrighted work, and if you license a production, no changes (other than the minor changes specified above) may be made without first securing written permission to make such changes. All rights are strictly reserved.

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“THE IRVING BERLIN STORY” had its first reading on November 10, 2012 at Ripley-Grier Studios, 520 Eighth Avenue, New York City, with the following collective personnel: Michael Townsend Wright, Emily Bordonaro, Alex Dreier, Katie Branden, Ethan Haberfield, Eve Prouty, Charles Michel, Missy Dreier, Christian Castro, Deborah Grisorio, Chip Deffaa.

\* \* \*

### **A BIT OF BACKGROUND....**

Many years ago, a top New York supper club, Michael’s Pub, planned to do a tribute to Irving Berlin, telling his life story via songs and commentary. Gil Wiest, the owner of the club, asked me if I’d write a preview piece for The New York Post. (For years I wrote about jazz, cabaret, and theater for The Post.) Berlin—who was then up in his 90s--read my article in The Post, and phoned Gil Wiest, demanding that the club cancel the tribute. Berlin made it clear that he did not want anyone telling his life story while he was alive; he zealously guarded his privacy. And just as zealously maintained control, as much as possible, over his music. The club cancelled the tribute. Berlin got the BBC to cancel a planned television dramatization of his life, too. And repeatedly turned down requests from Hollywood to film his life story. But his story is a great one. I’m glad to tell it (with a few artistic liberties) here. And I’m very glad to be able to set his life, in this play, to his wonderfully infectious music.

Incidentally, one of the actors who helped me develop this script asked me why I don’t refer to Berlin (as some writers have) as “the King of Ragtime.” That was not a title Berlin claimed for himself. He saw himself as a craftsman who could write appealing songs in many different styles; he drew upon ragtime traditions and many other musical traditions, over the course of his long career. His huge hit “Alexander’s Ragtime Band,” which made him internationally famous, is a terrific popular song with a hint of ragtime in it. (It is a wonderful song, but it is not a pure ragtime song.) Berlin aimed to write songs in whatever styles people might enjoy. The great composers of ragtime (such as the peerless Scott Joplin) were the masters of that idiom. Berlin aimed to write hit songs, in all sorts of styles. And he sure succeeded.

\* \* \*

### **MANY THANKS...**

My gratitude, always, for their encouragement and wisdom, to the one and only Carol Channing and to master song-and-dance man Tommy Tune. My gratitude, too, to the ever-inspiring Matthew Broderick and Sarah Jessica Parker; to the irrepressible Victoria Leacock Hoffman; to the gifted and ever-reliable Max Galassi, Tyler DuBoys, and Peter Charney—I’m glad to have them in my corner--for various kindnesses; to playful playwright/songwriter Lisa Lambert; to Matt Nardozi, a first-rate actor and valued friend; to my audience-research consultants, Max and Julia Deffaa; to Donnie, Earl, and Lucas Snyder; to Ava and Josh Schaller and family; to my Korean producer friend, Hansaem Song; to my British producer friend Edmund Sutton; to Hawkins (“Max”) Gardow of AMDA; to director Okey Chenoweth; and to Keith Anderson of Univision.

My gratitude, also, to the late George Burns and Todd Fisher, for the tales they so generously shared with me from their early days in vaudeville, which influence this work; to a much-appreciated latter-day vaudevillian, Michael Kasper; to show people Santino Fontana, Brandon Pollinger, and Anthony Rapp, who’ve

helped more than they realized; to ASCAP's unfailingly helpful musical-theatre expert, Michael Kerker, who's always been there to answer any questions. Thanks, too, for the help provided in various ways, by John Kander and his late partner Fred Ebb, Matt ("Angel") Buckwald, Jerry Herman, Bailey Cummings, Youri Spindler, Zack Riopelle, Bernice Burge, Max Beer, Giuseppe Bausilio, Joe Franklin, Jack Sprance, Cody Green, Chase Brock, Will Conard, Matt ZanFagna, Maite Uzal, Howard Cruse, Joe Polsky, Cody Dericks, Chadwick Von Rankin, Anna Holmes, Drew Smith, Jonah Mayor, Barrett Foa, Jamie DeRoy, Tommaso Di Blasi, Emily Bordonaro, Betty Buckley, Ben Orlando, Beth Bartley, Alec Bordonaro, Rayna Hirt, Joe Polsky, Deanna Giulietti, Noah Smith, Mike Caizzi, Jesse Eberl, Jack Saleeby, David Eckstein, Ricky Schroeder, Mike Walker, Kristopher Hayes, Sharon A. Wilcox, Agnes Duggan Dann, Ed Bassett, Foster Evans Reese, and the inspiring folk I've enjoyed at the Thomaston Opera House.

Richard Danley has been more than just a music director on this project; he's been a good friend and sounding board. And the thoroughly professional, unflinchingly supportive help of Don Brown, who's overseen music preparation, can't be beat. The show has been developed by Chip Deffaa Productions LLC (Chip and Deb Deffaa, principals). A tip of the hat to my favorite interns, Ian Palmer and Michael Herwitz. Special thanks to publisher C. Michael Perry, Leicester Bay Theatricals; I always appreciate his belief in my work.

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#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON IRVING BERLIN AND HIS TIMES...**

If you would like to learn more about Irving Berlin and his times, here are some recommended books: *As Thousands Cheer: The Life of Irving Berlin* (by Laurence Bergreen; New York, DaCapo Press, 1996); *The Irving Berlin Reader* (by Benjamin Sears; New York, Oxford University Press, 2012); *The Complete Lyrics of Irving Berlin* (edited by Robert Kimball and Linda Emmet; New York, Borzoi Books, published by Alfred A. Knopf, 2001); *Irving Berlin: American Troubadour* (by Edward Jablonski; New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1999); *Irving Berlin: A Life in Song* (by Philip Furia, with the assistance of Graham Wood; New York, Schirmer Books, 1998); *Irving Berlin: Songs from the Melting Pot: The Formative Years, 1907-1914* (by Charles Hamm; New York, Oxford University Press, 1997); *Irving Berlin* (by Michael Freedland; New York, Stein and Day, 1983); *Irving Berlin and Ragtime America* (by Ian Whitcomb; New York, Limelight, 1988); *Irving Berlin: A Daughter's Memoir* (by Mary Ellen Barrett; New York, Limelight, 1988); *The Story of Irving Berlin* (by Alexander Woolcott; New York, DaCapo, 1983); *Irving Berlin's American Musical Theater* (by Jeffrey Magee; New York, Oxford University Press, 2012),

And these books offer additional valuable information on Berlin and his fellow songwriters: *Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish: How Yiddish Songs and Synagogue Melodies Influenced Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, and Hollywood* (by Jack Gottlieb; New York, State University of New York Press, 2004); *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators 1900-1950* (by Alec Wilder, edited and with an introduction by James T. Maher; New York, Oxford University Press, 1972); *A History of Popular Music in America* (by Sigmund Spaeth; New York: Random House, 1948); *They're Playing Our Song* (by Max Wilk; New York, Atheneum, 1973); *The House that George Built* (by Wilfrid Sheed; New York, Random House, 2008); *Word Crazy: Broadway Lyricists from Cohan to Sondheim* (by Thomas S. Hischak; New York, Praeger Publishers, 1991); *The Melody Lingers On* (by Roy Hemming; New York, Newmarket Press, 1986); *Music in the Air* (by Philip K. Eberly; New York, Hastings House, 1982); *Show Biz: From Vaude to Video* (by Abel Green and Joe Laurie, Jr.; New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1951).

# THE IRVING BERLIN STORY

A Musical Comedy in Two Acts, by Chip Deffaa

## ACT ONE

*(This first number, cued by the stage Manager, opens the show. The piano plays the introduction, THE EMCEE strolls out and begins singing.)*

### **(SONG #1. "CRINOLINE DAYS")**

**THE EMCEE.** *(Sings:)*

BACK TO THE OLDEN  
DAYS THAT WERE GOLDEN  
MEMORY OFTEN STRAYS,  
BEFORE ANYONE COULD GAZE  
AT MOLLY AND MAY'S  
LITTLE ANKLE DISPLAYS.  
TIME WITH ITS CHANGES  
OFTEN ARRANGES  
STYLES THAT BECOME THE CRAZE;  
BUT I AM YEARNING  
TO BE RETURNING  
BACK TO THOSE CRINOLINE DAYS.

*(The chorus begins filing on, and the sound gets bigger as we gradually hear more voices.)*

**EMCEE and MEMBERS OF THE CHORUS:**

IN THOSE DEAR OLD CRINOLINE DAYS,  
OLD-FASHIONED PEOPLE WITH THEIR OLD-FASHIONED WAYS,  
WHEN THE GIRL A FELLOW COURTED  
WAS THE GIRL HE MARRIED AND SUPPORTED.  
BACK IN THOSE DEAR OLD DAYS OF YORE  
ROSY COMPLEXIONS WEREN'T BOUGHT IN A STORE.  
GRANNY AND GRANDDADDY LONGINGLY GAZE  
BACK TO THOSE CRINOLINE DAYS.

*(By now, the full chorus should be on stage.)*

**EMCEE and THE FULL CHORUS:**

IN THOSE DEAR OLD CRINOLINE DAYS,  
OLD-FASHIONED PEOPLE WITH THEIR OLD-FASHIONED WAYS,  
WHEN THE GIRL A FELLOW COURTED  
WAS THE GIRL HE MARRIED AND SUPPORTED.  
BACK IN THOSE DEAR OLD DAYS OF YORE  
ROSY COMPLEXIONS WEREN'T BOUGHT IN A STORE.

PERUSAL PAGES FILE -- THE IRVING BERLIN STORY by Chip Deffaa

GRANNY AND GRANDDADDY LONGINGLY GAZE  
BACK TO THOSE CRINOLINE DAYS.

**EMCEE.** Ladies and gentlemen, we're proud to offer you a show filled with heartwarming nostalgia, sentimental sentiment, and a ridiculous amount of good cheer. We take you back to those dear old golden days of yore as we present "THE IRVING BERLIN STORY."

**IRVING BERLIN** (*hereafter referred to simply as "IRVING"*). Wait! Wait! Wait! What's all this talk about nostalgia and sentiment? And crinoline?

**EMCEE.** (*To the audience, happily surprised.*) Ladies and gentlemen—Mr. Irving Berlin!  
(*To Irving Berlin.*)

We are honored, sir! We are delighted!

**THE EMCEE'S SIDEKICK** (*hereafter referred to simply as "SIDEKICK"*). Absolutely delighted! And surprised!

**EMCEE.** We never thought we'd have the great Irving Berlin himself, right here on the stage of the Thomaston Opera House.

(*Note: Instead of saying "The Thomaston Opera House"—the EMCEE should say the name of the actual theater in which the show is being performed.*)

**SIDEKICK.** Today, Mr. Berlin, we are celebrating your life.

**EMCEE.** (*To IRVING.*) And as for crinoline dresses, I understand they were rather fashionable, in the better circles in America, back when you were born.

**IRVING.** Not where I was born—in a poor village, deep in the heart of Russia, in 1888. We wore very simple clothes, which my mother made herself.

**EMCEE.** Details, details.

**SIDEKICK.** I can see this one's a stickler for details.

**A LADY IN THE ENSEMBLE.** A totally excessive concern for the truth—

**SIDEKICK.** —and facts.

**A LADY IN THE ENSEMBLE.** THAT could be a problem.

**SIDEKICK.** Now, just sit back and relax, Mr. Berlin, while we entertain you.

**EMCEE.** Props! One chair, downstage right, please--for Mr. Irving Berlin to sit in very quietly, while he enjoys the show!

(*A man brings out a chair for IRVING, who sits down.*)

**SIDEKICK.** We have a fun show planned, Mr. Berlin—

**EMCEE.** You're going to love it! We're going to present, right here on stage, the good times of your childhood--

**IRVING.** What good times? My childhood wasn't exactly happy. To tell you the truth, it was pretty damn rough.

**EMCEE.** Mr. Berlin, you're an old-time songwriter, are you not?

**IRVING.** I like the reviewer who once described me as a "timeless" songwriter.

**EMCEE.** You, sir, are a great old-time songwriter.

**A LADY IN THE ENSEMBLE.** We're saluting you, Mr. Berlin!

**EMCEE.** You, sir, wrote more hit songs than anyone else in history.

**SIDEKICK.** That's a fact, sir--

**IRVING.** I probably wrote more flops, too.

PERUSAL PAGES FILE -- THE IRVING BERLIN STORY by Chip Deffaa

**EMCEE.** We're going to honor you today with a great old-time show.

**SIDEKICK.** The exuberant kind of old-time show you used to get in those gentler, simpler, kinder, happier days of yesteryear.

**IRVING.** I was THERE, young man; to tell you the truth, the "good old days" weren't always all that good.

**EMCEE.** Ah! But those wonderful old-time shows!

**SIDEKICK.** Entertainment for entertainment's sake!

**A LADY IN THE ENSEMBLE.** Nothing too weighty to weigh you down.

**SIDEKICK.** No.

**EMCEE.** Songs! Dances!

**A LADY IN THE ENSEMBLE.** Bright lights! Color!

**SIDEKICK.** Bright colors! Light!

**A LADY IN THE ENSEMBLE.** Jokes! Gags! Riddles!

**SIDEKICK.** *(To the EMCEE.)* Say, Mister—who was that lady I saw you with last night?

**EMCEE.** That was no lady; that was my wife.

**IRVING.** But you're supposed to be telling my life story—

**EMCEE.** I was thinking more that we'll CELEBRATE your life—in a great, big way!

**SIDEKICK.** Old-style entertainment.

**A LADY IN THE ENSEMBLE.** People would rather enjoy songs, dances, and laughs—lots of laughs--than get a history lesson—

**EMCEE.** Music!

***(SONG #2. "I'D RATHER SEE AN OLD-TIME SHOW.")***

**EMCEE.** *(brightly)*

I'D RATHER SEE AN OLD-TIME SHOW  
THAN ANY OTHER SHOW I KNOW.  
OH, THOSE COMICAL FOLKS  
WITH THEIR RIDDLES AND JOKES!  
HERE IS THE RIDDLE THAT I LOVE THE BEST:  
"WHY DOES A CHICKEN GO...?"  
YOU KNOW THE REST.  
I'D PAWN MY OVERCOAT AND VEST  
TO SEE AN OLD-TIME SHOW.  
I NEVER CARED ABOUT THE DRAMA.

**SIDEKICK.** No.

**EMCEE.**

THE DRAMA ALWAYS GOT MY HAMMER.

**SIDEKICK.** Oh!

**EMCEE.**

I COME FROM SUNNY ALABAMA,

**SIDEKICK.**

AND HE LOVES AN OLD-TIME SHOW.

PERUSAL PAGES FILE -- THE IRVING BERLIN STORY by Chip Deffaa

**EMCEE.** (*Speaking while the music of the song continues as underscoring.*) Mr. Berlin, Hollywood made wonderfully entertaining films about songwriters like Jerome Kern, George Gershwin, and Cole Porter without ever once letting facts get in the way of a good story....

**SIDEKICK.** Pure old-style entertainment!

**A LADY IN THE ENSEMBLE.** That's what made the good old days so good.

**SIDEKICK.** And so old!

**IRVING.** But sometimes people need to hear the truth. Life isn't all fun and games, you know.

**THE ENSEMBLE** (*except for Irving, in a hushed, staccato manner*)

I'D RATHER SEE AN OLD-TIME SHOW  
THAN ANY OTHER SHOW I KNOW.  
OH, THOSE COMICAL FOLKS  
WITH THEIR RIDDLES AND JOKES!  
HERE IS THE RIDDLE THAT I LOVE THE BEST:  
"WHY DOES A CHICKEN GO...?"  
YOU KNOW THE REST.

*(The singing swells to full volume.)*

I'D PAWN MY OVERCOAT AND VEST  
TO SEE AN OLD-TIME SHOW.

**IRVING.** I can see I'm outnumbered here.

**EMCEE.** Now if you'll just sit *quietly*, Mr. Berlin, we've planned a diverting show.

**SIDEKICK.** Lots of songs!

**IRVING.** Well.... a lot of my life can actually be found in my songs.

**A LADY IN THE ENSEMBLE.** And we do like to sing.

**IRVING.** But since you're celebrating my life, I'd like to make one request.

**EMCEE.** Well yes, if you must.

**SIDEKICK.** We aim to please!

**IRVING.** I'd like to be able to interject comments, every once in a while—to make sure that this show actually includes some important facts about my life.

**EMCEE.** So long as those facts aren't too boring.

**SIDEKICK.** Personally, I hate "*boring.*"

**IRVING.** I want to be sure that the significant information about me in this show is indeed the truth.

**EMCEE.** Then again, there's something to be said for exercising artistic license.

**SIDEKICK.** Everyone loves artistic license.

**IRVING.** I think it's understood that any theatrical piece may take some artistic liberties.

**EMCEE.** Artistic liberties *will* be taken.

**SIDEKICK.** Hear, hear!

**IRVING.** But I want your word that if you're telling my life story, the essence will be accurate.

**EMCEE.** You drive an awfully hard bargain.

**SIDEKICK.** You're killing us, Mr. Berlin; you're killing us.

**A LADY IN THE ENSEMBLE.** The man's awfully picky, if you ask me!

**EMCEE.** I'm all in favor of trying something radically new—telling the truth!

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**SIDEKICK.** We'll do it! Just so long as it's entertaining!

**IRVING.** Deal!

**EMCEE.** Now let's clear the stage of all non-essential personnel so we'll be ready for the first scene.

*(Everyone exits, except for the EMCEE, the SIDEKICK, and IRVING.)*

Wait till you see the first scene, Mr. Berlin!

**IRVING.** It gives people a good feel for who I am?

**SIDEKICK.** Oh, my word, yes!

**IRVING.** Is it the truth?

**SIDEKICK.** Even better!

**EMCEE.** The curtain rises. We see you, the young prodigy--already dedicated to your craft--writing out in longhand your first songs.

**SIDEKICK.** Props! Bring a piano out here.

*(A piano is brought out from the wings.)*

**IRVING.** Well, I *do* love a piano.

**SIDEKICK.** Ssshhh! We'll have no foreshadowing in this show.

**EMCEE.** And we'll need a little boy to portray Irving Berlin, at the age of five.

*(A LITTLE BOY enters, and sits at the piano.)*

And a beautiful woman to portray his mother.

**IRVING.** My mother was never exactly beautiful.

**SIDEKICK.** *(Grumbling.)* Again with the facts. He seems obsessed.

**EMCEE.** And we'll need a handsome man to portray your father.

**IRVING.** Wait! Wait! My father was never--

**SIDEKICK.** *(To IRVING.)* Hush!

**EMCEE.** The scene: the spacious comfortable home of the Berlin family. Young Irving sits at the piano, awaiting a visit from his music teacher. His mother and father enter.

**IRVING'S MOTHER.** I've brought you some tea and cakes, Irving.

**LITTLE BOY.** Thank you, Mother. I'm finishing up writing a new song. It's quite good.

**IRVING'S FATHER.** I'm not surprised, Irving. Music's in your blood.

**IRVING'S MOTHER.** I'm sure Professor Gottlieb will be pleased with whatever you're writing.

*(A doorbell rings.)*

Oh! That must be him now.

*(She exits.)*

**IRVING.** *(To the EMCEE.)* This really isn't ANYTHING like the truth--

**EMCEE.** *(To IRVING, cutting him off.)* Mr. Berlin! Please hold your praise until the end of the scene. Wait till you see the song we'll be introducing; it's one of the best you ever wrote.

*(IRVING'S MOTHER returns, leading on a distinguished-looking gentleman.)*

**IRVING'S MOTHER.** Irving, my son, Professor Gottlieb is here for your music lesson.

**PROFESSOR GOTTLIEB.** Have you written out a new composition for me, Irving?

**LITTLE BOY.** Oh, yes! It's catchy, it has a beat, and you can dance to it.

**IRVING.** *(To the EMCEE.)* Don't tell me! You're not going to have him sing--

**(SONG #3. "I LOVE A PIANO")**

**LITTLE BOY.**

I LOVE A PIANO,  
I LOVE A PIANO;  
I LOVE TO HEAR SOMEBODY PLAY  
UPON A PIANO,  
A GRAND PIANO—  
IT SIMPLY CARRIES ME AWAY.

**IRVING'S MOTHER.**

I KNOW A FINE WAY  
TO TREAT A STEINWAY;  
I LOVE TO RUN MY FINGERS  
O'ER THE KEYS,  
THE IVORIES,

**PROFESSOR GOTTLIEB.**

AND WITH THE PEDAL  
I LOVE TO MEDDLER.  
WHEN PADEREWSKI COMES THIS WAY,  
I'M SO DELIGHTED,  
IF I'M INVITED  
TO HEAR THAT LONGHAired GENIUS PLAY.

**IRVING'S FATHER.**

SO YOU CAN KEEP YOUR FIDDLE AND YOUR BOW,  
GIVE ME A P-I-A-N-O, OH, OH—  
I LOVE TO STOP RIGHT  
BESIDE AN UPRIGHT  
OR A HIGH-TONED BABY GRAND.

**LITTLE BOY.**

AS A CHILD  
I WENT WILD  
WHEN A BAND PLAYED;  
HOW I RAN  
TO THE MAN  
WHEN HIS HAND SWAYED!  
CLARINETS  
WERE MY PETS,  
AND A SLIDE TROMBONE  
I THOUGHT WAS SIMPLY DIVINE.  
BUT TODAY  
WHEN THEY PLAY,  
I COULD HISS THEM;  
EV'RY BAR  
IS A JAR  
TO MY SYSTEM;



BUT THERE'S ONE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT  
THAT I CALL MINE:

**LITTLE BOY; IRVING'S MOTHER; IRVING'S FATHER; PROF. GOTTLIEB; JOINED BY  
MEMBERS OF THE ENSEMBLE WHO FILE ON.**

I LOVE A PIANO,  
I LOVE A PIANO;  
I LOVE TO HEAR SOMEBODY PLAY  
UPON A PIANO,  
A GRAND PIANO—  
IT SIMPLY CARRIES ME AWAY.  
I KNOW A FINE WAY  
TO TREAT A STEINWAY;  
I LOVE TO RUN MY FINGERS  
O'ER THE KEYS,  
THE IVORIES,

**LITTLE BOY.** (*Shouted.*) Dance break!

*(Members of the ensemble tap-dance to music corresponding to the following lines of the song  
AND WITH THE PEDAL / I LOVE TO MEDDLE. / WHEN PADEREWSKI COMES THIS WAY, /  
I'M SO DELIGHTED, /IF I'M INVITED / TO HEAR THAT LONGHAIREG GENIUS PLAY. / SO  
YOU CAN KEEP YOUR FIDDLE AND YOUR BOW, / GIVE ME A P-I-A-N-O, OH, OH— / I  
LOVE TO STOP RIGHT / BESIDE AN UPRIGHT / OR A HIGH-TONED BABY GRAND.)*

**EVERYONE:** (*except for Irving Berlin, who watches, dumfounded*)

SO YOU CAN KEEP YOUR FIDDLE AND YOUR BOW,  
GIVE ME A P-I-A-N-O, OH, OH—  
I LOVE TO STOP RIGHT  
BESIDE AN UPRIGHT  
OR A HIGH-TONED BABY GRAND.

**EMCEE.** And... Scene!

**IRVING.** My life was NOTHING like that. This is ridiculous! Clear that stage! Now!

*(Everyone exits, except for IRVING, the EMCEE, the SIDEKICK, and the LITTLE BOY.)*

**EMCEE.** But you did write "I Love a Piano," didn't you, Mr. Berlin? A delightful number.

**SIDEKICK.** One of your biggest hits.

**EMCEE.** Audiences love hearing it.

**LITTLE BOY.** I sure liked singing it.

**IRVING.** Of course I wrote that song! But not when I was five years old! I was nearly 30. When I was five, I didn't know what a piano looked like. You can't open the show this way.

**EMCEE.** Oh, but we *can*. It says right here in our script: "We open in the spacious, comfortable home of the Berlin family--"

**IRVING.** We never had any spacious, comfortable home. My parents were poor Russian Jews who spoke only Yiddish. And we weren't "the Berlin family." We were the *Baline's*. I was Israel Baline back then.

**EMCEE.** I think you're making a big kerfluffle--

**SIDEKICK.** --a very big kerfluffle--

**EMCEE.** --over relatively minor details.

**LITTLE BOY.** So long as we give people some good songs, they'll have a good time, won't they, Mr. Berlin?

**IRVING.** Maybe they will. But--

**EMCEE.** Now in the next scene, your music teacher will--

**IRVING.** I never had a music teacher!

**SIDEKICK.** Well, SOMEONE must have taught you to read and write music.

**IRVING.** Do you want to know the truth? And I promise you that if we stick to the truth, the real story of my life is far more interesting than anything you could invent.

**EMCEE.** Hollywood never stuck to the truth.

**IRVING.** And I HATED the phony-baloney film biographies they almost always made of songwriters. The only film biography I ever liked was "Yankee Doodle Dandy." Hollywood wanted to film my life story, but I told them: "Over my dead body!"

**SIDEKICK.** I bet they said they were patient.

**IRVING.** The truth is--I never, ever learned to read music or write music. And never learned to play the piano well. I could only play piano in one key, and rather poorly at that.

**EMCEE.** But you created more than 1200 songs.

**SIDEKICK.** I could name 25 of your songs that became number-one hits.

**IRVING.** Indeed! And for about 50 years I earned more money than any other songwriter in the world.

**EMCEE.** We know, we know.

**SIDEKICK.** But how did you do that?

**IRVING.** Now THAT, gentlemen, is a story. And you'll have to let me tell it my own way. The truth is more interesting than anything you could ever make up.

**SIDEKICK.** But does your life story at least start happily? People want musicals to be light.

**IRVING.** It does *not* start happily.

**EMCEE.** Well, maybe we can skip that part.

**IRVING.** No, no, no! Whenever I reminisced with friends, it was always the early years that interested me. The start of my life, the struggle.... That's where the drama was--not in the years at the top when I just kept turning out song after song, show after show, film after film. Now scoot! I need to think about how his should really begin.

**EMCEE.** *(Complaining to the SIDEKICK, as they begin to exit.)* The show won't even begin happily. No wonder his life story never got made by Hollywood. Or Broadway.

**SIDEKICK.** People won't stand for it. Who wants to know about suffering?

*(They exit. The stage is empty except for IRVING and the LITTLE BOY.)*

**LITTLE BOY.** *(To IRVING.)* Did you at least learn a lot along the way, Mr. Berlin? My mother says that any day in which you've learned something is a good day.

**IRVING.** You have a wise mother.

**LITTLE BOY.** If we really want to tell your life story properly, we need to do more than just sing and dance--as fun as that is. We need to show what you learned.

**IRVING.** I kinda like that.... Tell me, what is your name, little boy?

**LITTLE BOY.** I'm David Cook. I've been an actor all my life.

**IRVING.** That long, huh?

**LITTLE BOY.** And I'm honored to be playing the role of Irving Berlin, when he was a child. Mr. Berlin,

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you're a great American--

**IRVING.** --who started out--if truth be told--as a frightened little boy in a small village in Russia. And that's how the story has to begin.

**LITTLE BOY.** Frightened?

**IRVING.** *Terrified.* So were my six older brothers and sisters, and my parents.

**LITTLE BOY.** But why, Mr. Berlin?

*(Actors begin filing on stage. And as IRVING begins telling the story of his life, the actors begin acting out the scenes he is describing.)*

**IRVING.** My earliest memory: People are gathering outside our home--they're drunk, hostile, menacing. They're shouting at us to get out, leave! We go outside. They burn down our house.

**LITTLE BOY.** Your earliest memory--

**IRVING.** I'm standing outside, in the night, confused, shaking, watching my house--my whole world--go up in flames. And now these people are setting fire to my neighbors' houses. This one, then that one.

*(To the LITTLE BOY.)*

Now David, go and join the scene. You're portraying me as a little boy. And you need to be with your family.

**LITTLE BOY.** But, but--I don't know what is happening--

**IRVING.** Neither did I on that night, when I was a little boy. I'm right here, if you have any questions. But for now, you're a five-year-old boy in Russia. It is 1893--

**LITTLE BOY.** And I'm feeling--

**IRVING.** Confused. Lonely. Frightened--

**LITTLE BOY.** No. Terrified.

*(To his mother.)*

What's happening, Mama?

**IRVING'S MOTHER.** We have to leave--

**LITTLE BOY.** Why?

**IRVING'S MOTHER.** There are bad men. Wicked men. It's not safe here anymore.

**LITTLE BOY.** Where are we going?

**IRVING'S FATHER.** To the next village. Or maybe the village after that--

**IRVING'S MOTHER.** No! We will not be safe anywhere in Russia now. We must go to America.

**IRVING.** And so we left our village, seeking a new place to call home, thousands of miles away. We were driven out because we were Jews. We certainly weren't the first people to emigrate to America, to escape religious persecution. We wouldn't be the last. I didn't understand any of it then, of course. I didn't know what *pogroms* were. I only knew that bad people were burning down our house, forcing us--and so many of our friends--to flee.

**IRVING'S MOTHER.** *(To one of the girls in the family, SIFRE, who is 13.)* Sifre, you hold on to your little brother's hand. You must watch out for him, make sure nothing can harm him.

**SIFRE.** *(To IRVING'S MOTHER.)* I will, Mama. I promise.

**IRVING'S MOTHER.** *(To the LITTLE BOY.)* Izzy, mein kindt, your sister Sifre will be like a little mother to you on our journey to America; she will help keep you safe.

**LITTLE BOY.** *(To IRVING.)* And was she able to keep you safe, Mr. Berlin?

**IRVING.** On the ship--packed like sardines, in steerage, everyone breathing each other's germs--many people got sick. My sister Sifre was one of them. And she died. She was just 13.

**IRVING'S MOTHER.** (*Kissing the ground, and getting her son to do likewise.*) We're in America. This our home now. We will be free here.

**LITTLE BOY.** Free.

**IRVING'S MOTHER.** (*To the LITTLE BOY.*) Kiss the ground. This is America, mein kindt. This is YOUR America.

**IRVING.** And I accepted that this was MY America. Of course I loved this country. God bless it! People were not going to burn down our house here. No mob was going to drive us away. Do you I understand why I've always felt this is the greatest country on earth? This America that welcomed so many millions of immigrants who'd suffered in their old countries.

**LITTLE BOY.** I understand.

**IRVING.** I have no patience--none at all!--with people who criticize America! This country gave me a chance. It gave me everything.

**LITTLE BOY.** And your parents?

**IRVING.** Never adjusted to America. Never loved it, like I did. They felt they'd lost everything: their home, their belongings, now their daughter.... For the rest of their lives, they looked dazed, sorrowful. But I was young! I picked up English right away--enthusiastically. My parents never learned to speak English. I grew up in a family that was hurting--a family steeped in feelings of loss, and longing for the way things once had been.

**LITTLE BOY.** That was the air you breathed.

**IRVING.** Throughout my career, no songs came more easily to me than songs of homesickness.

**(SONG #4. "HOME AGAIN BLUES")**

**IRVING.**

HOME, KNOCK AT THE DOOR;  
HOME, JUST LIKE BEFORE,  
ROAM NEVER NO MORE.  
"NO PLACE LIKE HOME"--  
OH, WHAT A SONG!  
HOME WHERE I BELONG--  
OH, I'VE GOT THOSE HOME AGAIN BLUES.

**LITTLE BOY.**

I CAN'T WAIT UNTIL I REACH THAT GATE AND HOME I SEE;  
SURE AS FATE I KNOW THEY'RE GONNA WAIT TO WELCOME ME.  
I WANT TO STATE THAT'S THE END OF MY MISERY.  
IF I KNEW I'D EVER FEEL SO BLUE, I'D NEVER ROAM,  
BUT IT'S TRUE WE LEARN A THING OR TWO AWAY FROM HOME:  
I'M TELLING YOU I'VE CEASED TO BE A ROLLABLE STONE--  
I'M GOING...

**LITTLE BOY AND HIS FAMILY.**

...HOME, KNOCK AT THE DOOR;  
HOME, JUST LIKE BEFORE,  
ROAM NEVER NO MORE.

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“NO PLACE LIKE HOME”--  
OH, WHAT A SONG!  
HOME WHERE I BELONG--  
OH, I’VE GOT THOSE HOME AGAIN BLUES.

**IRVING.** Our new home was a crowded tenement on Cherry Street, on New York’s Lower East Side. My father could not find work. In Russia he’d been a respected man—a Cantor. He finally found work as a house painter. This proud, learned man, who’d never done manual labor—now painting tenement apartments, spending his days breathing fumes of paint and turpentine.

**LITTLE BOY.** But you liked America?

**IRVING.** I loved it. I was young and open to everything. Life, all around me! Friends to make. Everyone scuffling, trying to find a way to earn a buck.

**LITTLE BOY.** *(To his mother.)* Mama, I’ve got a job! I’m going to be a “newsie”.

**IRVING’S MOTHER.** A “newsie”?

**LITTLE BOY.** Selling the New York Evening Journal. A newspaperboy. When I come home, at the end of the day, my hands will be filled with coins for you and Papa. I’ll think of you all day, while I sell my papers.

*(The LITTLE BOY kisses his mother, and exits.)*

**(SONG #4. “HOME AGAIN BLUES”)**

**IRVING.**

I CAN’T WAIT UNTIL I REACH THAT GATE AND HOME I SEE;  
SURE AS FATE I KNOW THEY’RE GONNA WAIT TO WELCOME ME.  
I WANT TO STATE THAT’S THE END OF MY MISERY.  
IF I KNEW I’D EVER FEEL SO BLUE, I’D NEVER ROAM,  
BUT IT’S TRUE WE LEARN A THING OR TWO AWAY FROM HOME:  
I’M TELLING YOU I’VE CEASED TO BE A ROLLABLE STONE--  
I’M GOING...  
...HOME, KNOCK AT THE DOOR;  
HOME, JUST LIKE BEFORE,  
ROAM NEVER NO MORE.  
“NO PLACE LIKE HOME”--  
OH, WHAT A SONG!  
HOME WHERE I BELONG--  
OH, I’VE GOT THOSE HOME AGAIN BLUES.

*(A big Irishman enters, carrying in his arms the LITTLE BOY; he brings the LITTLE BOY to the boy’s MOTHER and FATHER, and family.)*

**IRISHMAN.** Your little boy here nearly drowned. He was selling newspapers, by the East River. A crane hit him, knocked him into the river. He was going under. I had to jump in and save him.

**IRVING’S FATHER.** Thank you. Thank you very much.

**LITTLE BOY.** Mama, Papa! I sold papers. Look! I have coins for you. Four cents!

**IRISHMAN.** He could have died, this one! That crane knocked him right out into the East River. But the Good

Lord must want to have him around—must have a purpose for him.

**IRVING’S FATHER.** Someday, he will be a Cantor in the Synagogue. He comes from a long line of Cantors. He loves to sing the songs of our faith.

**IRVING.** My father taught me all of the songs he knew. Religious music. But he was working himself to death in this new country, barely earning enough to survive. All of us kids worked, as best we could. My older brothers and sisters did sewing, and rolled cigars, and washed laundry.

**IRISHMAN.** Keep an eye on this lad! He had a very close call today.

*(The Irishman exits.)*

**IRVING.** I loved to sing all kinds of songs—not just the religious songs my father knew. On the Lower East Side, there was music all around us. Kids singing on the sidewalk, busking for coins. Italian Hurdy-Gurdy players with dancing monkeys. And, oh! Street-parades! We never had anything like that in our *shtetl*, back in Russia! Parading entertainers, stirring up interest in shows. You’d hear them coming, far off in the distance, and grow excited, before you could see ‘em.

**(SONG #5. “THE CIRCUS IS COMING TO TOWN.”)**

**LITTLE BOY.**

THE CIRCUS IS COMING TO TOWN,  
THE CIRCUS IS COMING TO TOWN:  
TWO DOZEN ACROBATS FROM O’ER THE FOAM,  
AND SALOME, HIP-HIP-HIPPODROME.

**AN OLDER BROTHER.**

COME SEE THE COMICAL CLOWN  
TURNING HIMSELF UPSIDE DOWN;

**LITTLE BOY.**

COME AND PURCHASE A PHOTOGRAPH

**ANOTHER OLDER BROTHER.**

OF THE FREAKS AND THE BIG GIRAFFE;

**LITTLE BOY.**

OPEN YOUR DINING ROOM AND START TO LAUGH—

**LITTLE BOY, PLUS TWO OLDER BROTHERS.**

THE CIRCUS IS COMING TO TOWN.

*(The music corresponding to the following lines is played as underscoring:  
THE CIRCUS IS COMING TO TOWN, / THE CIRCUS IS COMING TO TOWN: /  
TWO DOZEN ACROBATS FROM O’ER THE FOAM, / AND SALOME, HIP-HIP-  
HIPPODROME. / COME SEE THE COMICAL CLOWN / TURNING HIMSELF UPSIDE  
DOWN. And while the underscoring plays, IRVING speaks.)*

**IRVING.** *(Speaking over underscoring.)* And there was always a way for a kid with moxie to get in to see a show, whether you had money or not. The first time I saw a circus, I was overwhelmed; there was far too much to take it all in. But I loved every bit of it—the lights, the colors, the humor, the music.

**LITTLE BOY.**

COME AND PURCHASE A PHOTOGRAPH

**AN OLDER BROTHER.**

OF THE FREAKS AND THE BIG GIRAFFE;

**LITTLE BOY, AND HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS.**

OPEN YOUR DINING ROOM AND START TO LAUGH--

THE CIRCUS IS COMING

THE CIRCUS IS COMING

THE CIRCUS IS COMING TO TOWN.

**THE ENTIRE ENSEMBLE.** (*Sings, as they parade, and then exit:*)

COME SEE THE COMICAL CLOWN

TURNING HIMSELF UPSIDE DOWN;

COME AND PURCHASE A PHOTOGRAPH

OF THE FREAKS AND THE BIG GIRAFFE;

OPEN YOUR DINING ROOM AND START TO LAUGH--

THE CIRCUS IS COMING

THE CIRCUS IS COMING

THE CIRCUS IS COMING--

*(Everyone exits--the music fading as they leave--except for IRVING and the LITTLE BOY.)*

**IRVING.** I was enthralled. My brothers teased me that someday I'd run away with the circus.

**LITTLE BOY.** And did you, Mr. Berlin?

**IRVING.** No, I didn't run away with the circus. But I did run away with another traveling show. I was maybe 12, 13 years old; it's hard to remember exactly. I was singing on street corners for spare change.

**(SONG #6. "THE CURSE OF AN ACHING HEART.")**

**LITTLE BOY.** (*Sings:*)

YOU MADE ME WHAT I AM TODAY,

I HOPE YOU'RE SATISFIED.

AND THOUGH YOU'RE NOT TRUE,

MAY GOD BLESS YOU,

THAT'S THE CURSE OF AN ACHING HEART.

**PASSERBY #1.** You stink, kid!

**PASSERBY #2.** My Uncle Louie could sing better than you, kid. And he's been dead 12 years.

**PASSERBY #3.** Get yourself a real job!

*(SANDERSON CARTIFORD, the manager of a theater company, enters. He is dressed prosperously.)*

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** (*To the LITTLE BOY.*) My dear young man, you have an absolutely unique way with a song--

**LITTLE BOY.** Hey! I know I'm not too good yet--but I'm getting better every day.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** I can see your potential. Any real professional could see it!

**LITTLE BOY.** (*Skeptically.*) And you're "a real professional"?

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** Young man, I assumed that you--as a fellow professional in our business--

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recognized me! I'm Sanderson Cartiford, the well-known theatrical impresario, producer, and promoter. Of the Raleigh, North Carolina Cartifords.

*(He hands the LITTLE BOY his card.)*

**LITTLE BOY.** Your card says you're from Madison, Wisconsin.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** My dear lad, do you think a producer as big as Sanderson Cartiford could afford to have only one office? And only one card?

*(He hands the LITTLE BOY another card.)*

**LITTLE BOY.** And you want me for a show?

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** You'd be playing my own son. I'll be starring as the King of the Gypsies in my musical "The Revenge of the Roman"—a heartbreaking tale of life among the Gypsies, featuring what we proudly advertise as America's "first-ever all-Gypsy cast."

**LITTLE BOY.** I'm not a Gypsy.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** Well, neither am I! But I have every confidence you'll FEEL the truth of the story. You *are* acquainted with heartbreak, aren't you?

**LITTLE BOY.** A little.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** No one can reach his true potential as an artist without experiencing heartbreak.

**LITTLE BOY.** And you're going to help me realize my true potential?

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** Absolutely! We leave tomorrow for a grand tour of New England. We perfect the show out on the road, and then conquer Broadway.

**LITTLE BOY.** *(With stars in his eyes.) Broadway...*

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** And you won't be just a mere actor. Oh no! You'll also get to assist in the making and transporting of all scenery, props and costumes; you'll help put up posters, placards, and bills; you'll mop the stage after shows; and personally aide the senior-most members of the company as needed. You'll learn all aspects of the show business.

**LITTLE BOY.** It's a chance of a lifetime.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** And, you're going to see the world! We'll play Hoboken, Hartford, Hastings, and Wolcott! Southbury, Waterbury, Watertown, Schenectady. You'll get your first paycheck in a mere matter of weeks—barely over a month, possibly two months or more--when we play Rochester.

**LITTLE BOY.** We won't get paid until we play Rochester?

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** I'd like to pay you sooner, my boy; honestly I would, but...

**LITTLE BOY.** It's just not possible? I understand.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** I have great difficulty parting with money.

**LITTLE BOY.** It sounds like a terrible problem.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** Oh, it is.... A curse!... But I have a great eye for talent. And you, my friend, have such a bright future, you mustn't concern yourself with mere money.

**IRVING.** And so we were off! We played to good houses. Everything seemed to be going well—until we hit Thomaston, Connecticut, where a man on the street thought he recognized the head of our theatrical troupe.

**SPINDLER.** *(To SANDERSON CARTIFORD.)* Hoxie! Hoxie Carson!

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** *(To SPINDLER.)* I believe you've mistaken me for somebody else, Old Sport. I'm Sanderson Cartiford—the well-known theatrical impresario.

**SPINDLER.** It's been 15 years, but I'd know that mug anywhere. You're Hoxie Carson, the small-time promoter, grifter, and confidence man.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** Please! There is nothing small-time about Sanderson Cartiford.



**SPINDLER.** (*Handing SANDERSON CARTIFORD his card.*) My card, sir.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** (*Reading the card.*) “E. Spindler, Esq.” You’re E. Spindler?

**SPINDLER.** Yes. I’m a lawyer now. But I still remember the way you left our whole troupe stranded in Torrington, Connecticut, without paying any of us anything.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** That’s a terrible fate—being in Torrington.

**SPINDLER.** I was just 21 years old—a featured dancer in your show. You billed me as “Snakehips Spindler.”

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** I can’t say as I recall anyone ever named “Snakehips Spindler.” I remember “Snakehips Sprance” very well—a heck of a dancer.

**SPINDLER.** You told me I had a very bright future.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** And today you are a lawyer!

**SPINDLER.** In the dead of winter, you left our whole troupe in Torrington. You skipped town with all the money you’d taken in, on the tour.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** Do I look like a man who’d take anyone’s money?

**SPINDLER.** Exactly! Tonight, I’m heading over to the theater to see your show. And I’m bringing the Chief of Police with me.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** You are, huh? Hmm.... Well, you’re going to love the show—and especially this very talented young man.

*(To the LITTLE BOY.)*

And someday, I’m already planning on telling people, “I knew you when.”

**SPINDLER.** Of course, you’ll probably be in jail by then.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** I’ll still be saying, “I knew him when.” Now I have to run off and do some errands.

*(To the LITTLE BOY.)*

Izzy, sing for this gentleman the number I sing to you in the show, when you ask me what became of your dear old mother.

*(To SPINDLER.)*

Spindler, this song makes grown men weep.

*(To the LITTLE BOY.)*

Sing it, sonny.

**(SONG #7. “DOWN IN THE CITY”)**

**LITTLE BOY.** (*Sings:*)

DOWN IN THE CITY OF SIGHS AND OF TEARS,  
DOWN BY THE WHITE STEETLIGHT’S GLARE,  
DOWN IN THE VALE OF WASTED YEARS,  
... YOU’LL FIND YOUR MOTHER THERE...

**IRVING.** As for Sanderson Cartiford—he vanished that day, taking all of the box-office receipts with him. None of us got paid a cent for the tour. I managed to make it back home, feeling sadder, savvier, and older.

**LITTLE BOY.** How much older?

**IRVING.** Ah, my young friend, I’m afraid we’ll need someone a bit older to portray me now. But you can sit with me and watch.

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*(The LITTLE BOY sits next to IRVING.)*

**LITTLE BOY.** I want to see how this story turns out. A lot of ups and downs.

**IRVING.** *(To the LITTLE BOY.)* Don't be counting on any happy endings any time soon, kid.

*(Calling out to the wings.)*

Bring out that boy of 13 now, to play me as a youth!

*(A BOY OF 13 steps out on stage, dressed similarly enough to the LITTLE BOY so that we sense continuity; he'll now be playing Irving Berlin as a youth.)*

**A BOY OF 13.** *(To the audience.)* I was through with traveling! There were plenty of street-corners in my own neighborhood where I could sing and pass the hat. I knew all the sentimental and melodramatic ditties that were in vogue back then, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

***(SONG #8. "SHE IS MORE TO BE PITIED, THAN CENSURED")***

**A BOY OF 13.**

DO NOT SCORN HER WITH WORDS FIERCE AND BITTER,  
DO NOT LAUGH AT HER SHAME AND DOWNFALL.  
FOR A MOMENT JUST STOP AND CONSIDER...  
THAT A MAN WAS THE CAUSE OF IT ALL.

**A MAN ON THE STREET.** You should be in school, ya bummer you. Not singing for pennies. What would your mother say?

**A WOMAN OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.** *(To the others.)* I know this kid. That's Moses Baline's youngest boy. They used to sing together in the synagogue, before the father—may his memory be for a blessing—got sick.

**IRVING.** My father got lung problems. My mother couldn't care for him. He was placed in the poorhouse. And he died when I was 13. I felt I was too old to be living at home. And from then on, I was on my own. I sang on the street corners, in cafes and saloons—anywhere that I could make enough money to buy food, and a place at a flophouse to sleep for the night. I sang the sentimental songs that were so popular back then.

***(SONG #9. "THAT OLD IRISH MOTHER OF MINE.")***

**A BOY OF 13.**

SHE'S AS SWEET AS THE DAY  
SHE STOLE DAD'S HEART AWAY,  
THAT OLD IRISH MOTHER OF MINE.

**A PASSERBY—HARRY VON TILZER.** That's not bad, son; that's not bad at all.

**A BOY OF 13.** It's the hit of the season; everybody loves that song.

**HARRY VON TILZER.** What would you say if I told you I wrote that song?

**A BOY OF 13.** I'd say your name is Harry Von Tilzer.

**HARRY VON TILZER.** I guess you recognized me from my photographs on the sheet music?

**A BOY OF 13.** Yeah. And I've seen you sing at B. F. Keith's Union Square Theater.

**HARRY VON TILZER.** How'd you like to work for me? You'll be planted in the audience. I'll sing; then

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you'll start singing back to me—you like my songs so much, you just can't help yourself. And people will want to buy the sheet music. You'll sing exactly what I sing—don't change a word or a note!

**A BOY OF 13.** Got it! Don't change a word or a note! I'll make you proud.

*(Blackout.)*

**THEATER ANNOUNCER.** B. F. Keith's Union Square Theater is pleased to present one of America's foremost songwriters, introducing his newest numbers... Mr. Harry Von Tilzer.

*(The lights come up on HARRY VON TILZER; he'll sing a chorus from the stage, then A BOY OF 13 will sing a chorus from the audience.)*

**(SONG #10. "WHAT YOU GOIN' TO DO WHEN THE RENT COMES 'ROUND?")**

**HARRY VON TILZER.**

RUFUS RASTUS, JOHNSON BROWN,  
WHAT YOU GOIN' TO DO WHEN THE RENT COMES 'ROUND?  
WHAT YOU GOIN' TO SAY,  
HOW YOU GOIN' TO PAY?  
YOU'LL NEVER HAVE A BIT OF SENSE TILL JUDGEMENT DAY.  
YOU KNOW, I KNOW, RENT MEANS DOUGH.  
LANDLORD'S GOIN' TO PUT US OUT IN THE SNOW.  
RUFUS RASTUS JOHNSON BROWN,  
WHAT YOU GOIN' TO DO WHEN THE RENT COMES 'ROUND?

*(A BOY OF 13 stands up from a seat in the audience and starts to sing.)*

**A BOY OF 13.** *(with verve:)*

MR. RUFUS, MR. RASTUS, MR JOHNSON BROWN,  
OHHHHH! WHAT YOU GOIN' TO DO WHEN THE RENT COMES 'ROUND?

**HARRY VON TILZER.** Tell me!

**A BOY OF 13.**

WHAT YOU GOIN' TO SAY?"

**HARRY VON TILZER.** What?

**A BOY OF 13.**

HOW YOU GOIN' TO PAY?

**HARRY VON TILZER.** How?

**A BOY OF 13.**

YOU'LL NEVER HAVE A BIT OF SENSE—YOU HEAR ME, BOY—NOT TILL JUDGEMENT DAY.  
NOW YOU KNOW AND I KNOW, WE ALL KNOW RENT MEANS DOUGH.

**HARRY VON TILZER.** Ho!

**A BOY OF 13.**

LANDLORD'S GOIN' TO PUT US OUT IN THE SNOW.

**HARRY VON TILZER.** Ten below!

**A BOY OF 13.**

RUFUS RASTUS, MR. JOHNSON BROWN,

**HARRY VON TILZER.** Yes?

**A BOY OF 13.** *(Sings:)*

WHAT YOU GOIN' TO DO,  
I SAY, WHAT YOU GOIN' TO DO,  
TELL ME, WHAT YOU GOIN' TO DO  
WHEN THE RENT COMES 'ROUND?

**A MAN IN THE AUDIENCE.** Hey, Von Tilzer. That kid's better than you! Is he working for you?

**HARRY VON TILZER.** Not any more he ain't!

**IRVING.** And just like that, I was fired!

**A BOY OF 13.** I don't get it, Mr. Von Tilzer. Are you sackin' me just because the audience liked me more than you?

**HARRY VON TILZER.** I'm sackin' you because you've added extra words and notes to a song I've written. And that I can't abide. What! Do you imagine you're a songwriter, kid?

**A BOY OF 13.** Oh, no. I can't read music. I can't write music. I'm certainly no songwriter.

**HARRY VON TILZER.** And you darn well better not forget it! There's a mere handful of us seasoned, professional REAL songwriters—who write the hit songs everyone sings. We're paid well because we can do something very few people know how to do. I studied long and hard, in the finest conservatories in Europe--

**A BOY OF 13.** I wasn't trying to step on your toes, Mr. Von Tilzer.

**HARRY VON TILZER.** I don't need competition. I mean, I gave you a perfectly good straight melody line:  
YOU'LL NEVER HAVE A BIT OF SENSE TILL JUDGEMENT DAY.  
YOU KNOW, I KNOW, RENT MEANS DOUGH.

But did you sing the lines the way I wrote them? No--you changed words and music.

**A BOY OF 13.** I was just ragging it--making a good song better. My version's much catchier:

YOU'LL NEVER HAVE A BIT OF SENSE--YOU HEAR ME, BOY--NOT TILL JUDGEMENT DAY.  
NOW YOU KNOW AND I KNOW, WE ALL KNOW RENT MEANS DOUGH.

**HARRY VON TILZER.** How dare you change my song!

**A BOY OF 13.** I change around a lot of the songs I sing on the street. I make 'em sound better.

**HARRY VON TILZER.** Listen to him! Changing lyrics, changing melodies! HE thinks he's a songwriter. This street-kid! I'm one of America's most popular songwriters.

**A BOY OF 13.** George M. Cohan's even more popular.

**HARRY VON TILZER.** And I've got my own publishing company.

**A BOY OF 13.** Yeah, but still.... the audience liked my version of your song better.

**HARRY VON TILZER.** That's all I need. OUT!

**A BOY OF 13.** *(as he exits:)*

YOU'LL NEVER HAVE A BIT OF SENSE--YOU HEAR ME, BOY--NOT TILL JUDGEMENT DAY.

**IRVING.** I sang anywhere I could. I'd walk into the roughest Bowery dives--saloons with names like "The Morgue"--sing a few songs, and pass the hat. I sang for sailors and roustabouts, drug addicts and drunks, grizzled old hags, over-the-hill working girls. You grow up quickly, working dives like that.

*(During this speech, A BOY OF 17 enters--dressed similarly enough to the BOY OF 13 so that we realize he is the same character, Irving Berlin, just a bit older.)*

I was 17 when I got offered steady employment at one joint. For the next few years, it'd be my home, and its owner, Mike Salter, was the closest thing to a father I had. He was a Russian Jew with a swarthy

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complexion; his nickname—pardon the language--was Nigger Mike Salter. Everyone called his place “Nigger Mike’s.” I’m just being honest, here; it was a different time.

**MIKE SALTER.** You work from eight at night until six in the morning, kid, as a singing waiter. You’ll make \$7 a week—plus tips.

**A BOY OF 17.** I’ve never made that much money in my life.

**MIKE SALTER.** And no one else is ever going to pay you as well. Remember that! But stick with me, kid—and you’ll have a job for life. Or as long as we can stand each other. Every waiter here sings. We got gals who sing, too. Sometimes folks in the audience sing. It’s non-stop music here. And much more. Anything a customer wants, he can get it here.

**IRVING.** Mike Salter—big and tough--held a lot of political power, too. A big man in the community.

**MIKE SALTER.** You know your songs—right, kid?

**A BOY OF 17.** I know just about every song ever written, that’s all.

**MIKE SALTER.** Well, whatever Nick Nardozi plays on that ol’ piano, you’d better be able to sing

**A BOY OF 17.** When do I begin?

**MIKE SALTER.** He’s playin’ and singin’ now, ain’t he? You sees an opening, you jump in!

**(SONG #11. “CHINATOWN FLO”)**

**NICK.**

THAT GIRL IS WITTY, I’LL SAY SHE IS SWEET  
THAT GIRL IS PRETTY, HER FIGURE’S A TREAT.  
I LOVE HER SO, THE GIRL THEY CALL CHINATOWN FLO.

*(The music continues, while NICK and A BOY OF 17 speak to one another over the underscoring.)*

**NICK.** OK, kid. You’d best start earning your \$7 a week.

**A BOY OF 17.** Don’t worry about me, Nick. I learn fast.

**NICK.** You take the next chorus.

**A BOY OF 17.** But I can’t. I don’t know this song.

**NICK.** No one does; I just made it up. Follow me. Just sing anything—the first thing that comes into your head.

WHEN WE GO DANCIN’, THE BOYS THEY ALL STARE.

**A BOY OF 17.**

I LIKE ROMANCIN’. AND FLO, SHE DON’T CARE.

**NICK.** Good!

**A BOY OF 17.**

I LOVE HER SO, THE GIRL THEY CALL CHINATOWN FLO.

**NICK.** Next chorus!

FLO’S A REAL BEAUTY, A NATURAL BLOND.

**A BOY OF 17.**

YES, SHE’S A BEAUTY, WHEN HER WIG IS ON.

**NICK.** I like it!

**A BOY OF 17.** *(Sing:)*

I LOVE HER SO, THE GIRL THEY CALL CHINATOWN FLO.

**A BOY OF 17.** More?

**NICK.** More!

SHE LOVES YOU, IZZY. YOU'LL BE HERS FOR LIFE.

SHE LOVES YOU, IZZY.

**A BOY OF 17.** (*Speaks:*) I'm too YOUNG to have a wife!

**NICK and A BOY OF 17.** (*Sing:*)

WE LOVE HER SO, THE GIRL THEY CALL CHINATOWN FLO.

**NICK.** (*To the AUDIENCE.*) We're taking a short break. But if you like what you're hearing, folks--and I can tell you--don't forget to drop a few coins in the "tips" pitcher, atop the piano.

(*To IRVING.*)

So, kid, you're now a songwriter. We made up that song together.

**A BOY OF 17.** Oh, I'm no songwriter. I'm barely even a singing waiter. I once worked for a real songwriter--conservatory trained, no less: Harry Von Tilzer.

**NICK.** Von Tilzer! That bum! He never studied any place. When he was 14, he ran away with the circus. His real name's Aaron Gumbinsky. And HE can't read or write music, either. I used to work for him as a musical secretary.

**A BOY OF 17.** A what?

**NICK.** A musical secretary. He'd make up songs, sing 'em to me, I'd write 'em down on paper, so he could get 'em published.

**A BOY OF 17.** Could you write down on paper songs I make up?

**NICK.** Why not? If you make up songs, words and music, and sing 'em to me--I'll write 'em down. We'll try 'em out proper here. Get the gals here to help sing 'em.

**A BOY OF 17.** Forgive me for saying so, Nick. But the way some of these hotsy-totsy gals hanging around here are dressed, I'd have mistaken them for--you know, residents of a brothel.

**NICK.** Hah! The brothel's right upstairs, kid. The gals like to spend their free time here, chatting up potential customers. If any of 'em can sing, Mike's happy to let 'em sing--for tips.

**IRVING.** And before too long, I was creating songs in my spare time, Nick was setting 'em down on paper--and the gals were helping us introduce them. I was in heaven.

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #1.** I'd like to dedicate this next number to the youngest singer/songwriter/waiter I know. Izzy... you're kinda cute. Scrawny, but cute. Folks, lemme tell you all about him.....

(*SONG #12. "YOU'D BE SURPRISED"*)

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #1.**

HE'S NOT SO GOOD IN A CROWD BUT WHEN YOU GET HIM ALONE,  
YOU'D BE SURPRISED.

HE ISN'T MUCH AT A DANCE, BUT WHEN HE TAKES YOU HOME,  
YOU'D BE SURPRISED.

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #2.**

HE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH OF A LOVER,  
BUT DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER.

HE'S GOT THE FACE OF AN ANGEL BUT  
THERE'S A DEVIL IN HIS EYES.

**HOTSY TOSY GAL #1.**

HE'S SUCH A DELICATE THING BUT WHEN HE STARTS IN TO SQUEEZE,  
YOU'D BE SURPRISED.  
HE DOESN'T LOOK VERY STRONG BUT WHEN YOU SIT ON HIS KNEE,  
YOU'D BE SURPRISED.

**HOTSY TOSY GAL #2.**

AT A PARTY OR AT A BALL, I'VE GOT TO ADMIT HE'S NOTHING AT ALL.  
BUT IN A MORRIS CHAIR,

**BOTH HOTSY TOSY GALS. (Sing:)**

YOU'D BE SURPRISED.

**IRVING.** (*Speaking over underscoring, as the pianist plays the music of the verse.*) I was the youngest, most innocent-looking singing waiter Mike ever hired. I was clearly enjoying myself. And I really became popular with the crowd there. Mike liked that I was always making up songs. He thought it gave the joint prestige.

**HOTSY TOSY GAL #1.**

HE'S NOT SO GOOD IN THE HOUSE BUT ON A BENCH IN THE PARK,  
**A BOY OF 17.**  
YOU'D BE SURPRISED.

**HOTSY TOSY GAL #2.**

HE ISN'T MUCH IN THE LIGHT, BUT WHEN HE GETS IN THE DARK,  
**A BOY OF 17.**  
YOU'D BE SURPRISED.

**HOTSY TOSY GAL #1.**

I KNOW HE LOOKS AS SLOW AS THE ERIE,  
BUT YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT DEARIE.  
HE LOOKS AS COLD AS AN ESKIMO,  
BUT THERE'S FIRE IN HIS EYES.

**HOTSY TOSY GAL #2.**

HE DOESN'T SAY VERY MUCH, BUT WHEN HE STARTS IN TO SPEAK,  
**A BOY OF 17. (Sings:)**  
YOU'D BE SURPRISED.

**HOTSY TOSY GAL #1. (Sings:)**

HE'S NOT SO GOOD AT THE START, BUT AT THE END OF A WEEK,  
**A BOY OF 17. (Sings:)**  
YOU'D BE SURPRISED.  
ON A STREETCAR OR ON A TRAIN,  
YOU'D THINK I WAS BORN WITHOUT ANY BRAIN.  
BUT IN A TAXI CAB,  
YOU'D BE AMAZED.

**HOTSY TOSY GAL #1. (To the audience.)** He's somethin' else, ain't he? Our little Izzy Baline. He actually wrote that song.

**HOTSY TOSY GAL #2.** Let's give him a hand. And buy him a drink--of MILK. Probably the only guy ever

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worked for Mike who don't drink—

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #1.** —or do anything else. The gals upstairs can be very entertainin'. But Izzy here would rather be off by himself, making up songs.

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #2.** And he's getting his songs published, too. Can you beat that? Only on his latest song, the printer garbled his name. Instead of printing "Baline" as Izzy's last name, the printer accidentally wrote "Berlin." B-E-R-L-I-N

**A BOY OF 17.** I like that. My real name, "Israel Baline," sounds kinda old-country. For my songwriting, I'm going to call myself "Irving Berlin." It sounds solid. Professional.

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #1.** To us, you'll always be "Izzy."

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #2.** And folks, he actually got plugged in the newspapers the other day. A reporter noted that a singing waiter here named "Izzy"—he didn't give no last name—scored a real hit with visiting swells.

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #1.** First entertainer here ever to get a mention in the newspaper.

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #2.** Save that clipping, Izzy! It ain't likely anyone from here will ever get TWO mentions in a newspaper. Our Izzy. Getting a plug in the press!

**MIKE SALTER.** And if he wants to keep his job, Izzy had better get back to work. I ain't paying him \$7 a week to talk with you ladies.

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #1.** I appreciate ya calling us "ladies" tonight, Mike.

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #2.** Ain't he got the way with words.

**MIKE SALTER.** I need to hear some singing! Izzy, how about that Hawaiian song of yours? It gives the joint a tropical feel.

**A BOY OF 17.** Professor, a tropical arpeggio, if you please....

*(SONG #13, "I'M DOWN IN HONOLULU.")*

**A BOY OF 17.**

I'M DOWN IN HONOLULU LOOKING THEM OVER,  
I'M DOWN IN HONOLULU LIVING IN CLOVER.  
TRY AND GUESS THE WAY THEY DRESS;  
NO MATTER WHAT YOU THINK IT IS, IT'S EVEN LESS.

**THE HOTSY TOTSY GALS.**

THEIR LANGUAGE IS HARD TO UNDERSTAND,  
BECAUSE IT'S SO TRICKY;  
HE'S GOT THEM TEACHING HIM  
TO SAY 'WICKY WICKY.'  
HE DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS,  
BUT IT'S THE BEST THAT EVER WAS;

**A BOY OF 17.**

AND IF IT MEANS JUST WHAT I THINK IT DOES,  
I'LL BE IN HONOLULU LOOKING THEM OVER  
FOR A LONG, LONG TIME."

**A BOY OF 17.** *(To the HOTSY TOTSY GALS.)* Girls! Dance!

*(The HOTSTY TOTSY GALS dance, while the music continues. To NICK.)*

Nick, look at the way those two guys are fighting, out there on the dance floor. Shouldn't someone break it



up?

**NICK.** Izzy, just pretend you don't see anything.

**A BOY OF 17.** But he's got a knife.

**NICK.** And the other fellow's drawing a pistol. These things have a way of working themselves out.

*(A gun shot is heard! And another!)*

What did I tell you?

**A BOY OF 17.** Mike! Do something! He shot that man dead, in cold blood.\

**MIKE SALTER.** Sing, Izzy, sing!

**A BOY OF 17.** But Mike, a man was just shot!

**THE HOTSY TOTSY GALS.** *(a bit faster than before:)*

HE'S DOWN IN HONOLULU LOOKING THEM OVER,  
HE'S DOWN IN HONOLULU LIVING IN CLOVER.  
TRY AND GUESS THE WAY THEY DRESS;  
NO MATTER WHAT YOU THINK IT IS, IT'S EVEN LESS.  
THEIR LANGUAGE IS HARD TO UNDERSTAND,  
BECAUSE IT'S SO TRICKY;

**A BOY OF 17.**

I'VE GOT THEM TEACHING ME  
TO SAY 'WICKY WICKY.'

**THE HOTSY TOTSY GALS.**

HE DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS,  
BUT IT'S THE BEST THAT EVER WAS;

**A BOY OF 17.**

AND IF IT MEANS JUST WHAT I THINK IT DOES,

**A BOY OF 17** and **THE HOTSY TOTSY GALS.**

I'LL (HE'LL) BE IN HONOLULU LOOKING THEM OVER  
FOR A LONG, LONG TIME."

**MIKE SALTER.** Ladies and gentlemen! May we have a moment of silence please. There's been a tragic accident. This longtime customer of ours, Hobnailed Casey, has accidentally shot himself to death with his own pistol.

**FRISCO JOE.** He didn't shoot himself, Mike.. A everyone here plainly saw--I shot him. With my gun. And I had my reasons.

**MIKE SALTER.** Like I was saying, Hobnailed Casey accidentally shot himself. And as for you, my dear Frisco Joe, I'm sure plenty of eyewitnesses--myself included--will attest to the fact, Joe, that you weren't even here tonight.

*(To HOTSY TOTSY GAL #1.)*

Miss McNibby, would you be an eyewitness?

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #1.** I would totally swear to whatever, yeah.

**MIKE SALTER.** *(To HOTSY TOTSY GAL #2.)* And Miss Lambert?

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #2.** Joe, you was not even here tonight. Cross my heart.

**FRISCO JOE.** But Mike, ladies--if I wasn't here tonight, then where was I?

**MIKE SALTER.** At home, providing company to your own dear old mother.

**FRISCO JOE.** My dear old mudder has been dead for a dozen years.

**MIKE SALTER.** I'm trying to help you, Joe. I'm sure that for a very small consideration, any of these lovely ladies here could be a very credible witness.

**FRISCO JOE.** You mean these "ladies of the evening," these "working girls"--

**MIKE SALTER.** Any of these lovely ladies here would swear in court that (a) she is your own dear sweet mother, and (b) you was at home with her the whole time.

**FRISCO JOE.** But they're younger than I am!

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #1.** Aw, you're sweet, Joe.

**MIKE SALTER.** For an added consideration, the Madam herself could alibi you.

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #2.** And she's older than dirt.

**FRISCO JOE.** The judge will believe that Madam Gertie is the mudder of someone like me?

**MIKE SALTER.** The judge always seems to, in situations like this, yes.

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #2.** He's a man of great wisdom.

**HOTSY TOTSY GAL #1.** Which is why we all support his re-election fund so generously.

**FRISCO JOE.** But what if the police come to investigate?

**A POLICEMAN** (*who has been a member of the audience at Mike Salter's place all along*). Oh, I'll be getting around to the investigation shortly, But first, I've got to finish my coffee. Mike, can I get a refill on this?

**MIKE.** We'll take good care of you, officer....

**A POLICEMAN.** You always do.

**MIKE.** Izzy, bring him some coffee and donuts!

**FRISCO JOE.** But Mike, what if some witnesses say I shot Hobnailed Casey?

**MIKE SALTER.** I know what it's like to be unjustly accused of a crime, my friend. It's happened to me personally, many a time....

**IRVING.** It was generally believed that Mike had beaten murder charges on 10 different occasions. I never actually saw him commit an act of violence. But there were persistent rumors that Mike had killed 10 men.

**MIKE SALTER.** Fortunately, Madam Gertie and the gals tend to provide very good alibi's.

**IRVING.** I remember Mike Salter fondly. A powerful man--the community's number-one "fixer" of any problem you might have. For the right fee, he could make seemingly any problem go away. I admired him. I'd have been happy to have worked for him, at \$7 per week, forever.

**MIKE SALTER.** Hey! I'm hearing an awful lot of silence. We advertise this joint as providing "continuous entertainment." The floor should be filled with couples dancing! MUSIC!

**(SONG #14. "THE GRIZZLY BEAR.")**

**A BOY OF 17.**

HUG UP CLOSE TO YOUR BABY,  
THROW YOUR SHOULDERS T'WARD THE CEILING,  
LAWDY, LAWDY, WHAT A FEELIN'  
SNUG UP CLOSE TO YOUR LADY,  
CLOSE YOUR EYES AND DO SOME NAPPIN',  
SOMETHING NICE IS GWINE TO HAPPEN.  
HUG UP CLOSE TO YOUR BABY,  
SWAY ME EVERYWHERE;

SHOW YOUR DARLIN' BEAU  
JUST HOW YOU GO TO BUFFALO,  
DOIN' THE GRIZZLY BEAR.

**THE HOTSY TOTSY GALS.**

OUT IN SAN FRANCISCO WHERE THE WEATHER'S FAIR,  
THEY HAVE A DANCE OUT THERE  
THEY CALL THE GRIZZLY BEAR.  
ALL YOUR OTHER LOVIN' DANCES DON'T COMPARE.  
NOT SO LOONY,  
BUT A LITTLE MORE THAN SPOONY.

**NICK.**

TALK ABOUT YO' BEARS THAT TEDDY ROOSEVELT SHOT,  
THEY COULDN'T COMPARE WITH WHAT  
OLD SAN FRANCISCO'S GOT.

**THE HOTSY TOTSY GALS.**

LISTEN MY HONEY DO.  
AND I WILL SHOW TO YOU  
THE DANCE OF THE GRIZZLY BEAR.

**A BOY OF 17.**

HUG UP CLOSE TO YOUR BABY,  
HYPNOTIZE ME LIKE A WIZARD,  
SHAKE YO'SELF JUST LIKE A BLIZZARD,  
SNUG UP CLOSE TO YOUR LADY.  
IF THEY DO THAT DANCE IN HEAVEN,  
SHOOT ME, HON, TONIGHT AT SEVEN.

**A BOY OF 17.** Everybody!

**THE ENSEMBLE.**

HUG UP CLOSE TO YOUR BABY,  
SWAY ME EVERYWHERE;  
YOU AND ME IS TWO,  
I'LL MAKE IT ONE WHEN WE GET THROUGH,  
DOIN' THE GRIZZLY  
DOIN' THE GRIZZLY  
DOIN' THE GRIZZLY BEAR.

**IRVING.** And that's where I grew up. Mike was the closest thing to a father I had. And he was proud every time I got another song published.

*(And now we see a slightly older actor step on stage to portray Irving Berlin. A BOY OF 17 exits and A MAN OF 20--dressed similarly enough so that we realize it is the same character, just a bit older--takes his place.)*

**MIKE SALTER.** I remember the first day you walked in here, Izzy, a few years ago. Write a few more songs, kid, and I'll be telling people: I knew you when. And I've been thinking, Izzy, that maybe you've outgrown this place.

**A MAN OF 20.** Nah, I'll always be happy working for you, Mike. I'm happy writing the occasional song on the side. But I could never live on the money the songs are bringing me.

**MIKE SALTER.** But tell me truth, kid; if you could have any sort of life for yourself--if you could be anyone on earth--who would you be?

**A MAN OF 20.** George M. Cohan.

**MIKE SALTER.** George M? "The Man Who Owns Broadway"? I should have guessed. You've sung plenty of his songs here.

**A MAN OF 20.** He writes the songs that everyone is singing these days, he writes the Broadway shows everyone wants to see. He stars in those shows, directs and produces them, too. I have a picture of him on the wall in my apartment for inspiration.

**MIKE SALTER.** So he's your idol. You ever meet him?

**A MAN OF 20.** No! How would I meet a great man like him? I've seen him perform in shows, though. I save up my money, I buy a ticket in the balcony, and watch him.

**MIKE SALTER.** You should make a point of meeting him. Go around to the stage door. Tell him you know me. He's a good guy.

**A MAN OF 20.** You know him?

**MIKE SALTER.** Mike Salter knows everybody. But you're not going to become the next George M. Cohan working all your life in a joint like this. You deserve something better, kid.

*(The EMCEE and his SIDEKICK walk out on stage, to talk with IRVING.)*

**EMCEE.** *(To IRVING.)* He's right, you know.

**SIDEKICK.** *(To IRVING.)* Mike Salter is absolutely right.

**EMCEE.** With your talents, you deserve more than to be working for peanuts at dive like this.

**LITTLE BOY.** You're the great Irving Berlin, aren't you? You're going to be the most popular songwriter in the world.

**EMCEE.** How did it happen? Did someone come into that joint and discover you?

**SIDEKICK.** Maybe Mr. George M. Cohan?

**EMCEE.** Or did you simply tell Mike Salter one day that you'd had enough! You quit, and moved onward and upward!

**SIDEKICK.** Bigger and better things. Broadway!

**EMCEE.** Frankly, a life-changing event would fit perfectly in this script, right about now.

**LITTLE BOY.** Guys, guys! Quiet. You're just going to have to let Mr. Berlin tell it his own way. That's the only way. Sit with me, and watch. Quietly.

**IRVING.** Mike Salter was always a hard guy for me to figure out. He was big, burly, tough. Powerful. And many people were afraid of him. But I never saw him take a drink or lose his temper. His best pals were Madam Gertie and her gals, but I never knew him to be involved with them, or any woman, for that matter, except as friends. He lived with his mother; he was her sole support. And he made sure that I gave a little of whatever I earned to my own mother.

**MIKE SALTER.** Kid, you're gettin' too old to be a singing waiter. What are ya now, 18? 19?

**A MAN OF 20.** Actually, today I turn 20. But I don't want anyone making a fuss over me.

**MIKE SALTER.** Do I look like a fussy man?

**A MAN OF 20.** Mike, you're sorta a mystery to me.

**MIKE SALTER.** I'm just an ordinary fellow, trying to give the public what it wants.

**IRVING.** Indeed he was. Mike Salter offered drinks and dancing in the café itself. Above the cafe, Madam

Gertie ran her famed “house of ill-repute.” At the nearby drugstore, Joe Schenk—oh, we became great pals, lifelong pals—was dispensing opium. It was legal then. Joe, who was a clerk there, was always running over to our building—filling orders from our patrons, and from the Madam and her gals. Like me, and like Mike, Joe was a Russian Jewish immigrant. I liked him a lot; his kid brother, Nick, too. But he had bigger dreams than I did.

**JOE SCHENK.** Izzy, you and I are gonna make it really big someday. Work our way outa here.

**A MAN OF 20.** I’m not so sure, Joe. We’re just two more immigrant kids, with no education. The streets are filled with bums like us, just struggling to get by.

**JOE SCHENK.** But we’re workers. We hustle.

**A MAN OF 20.** So do a million others. Who ever gets out of here? This ain’t a bad life.

**JOE SCHENK.** Oh, ye of little faith. I’ll bet you a five-spot we both make it very big. Very.

**IRVING.** Rich society folk made their way to our rough joint, to see how the lower class lived. They got thrills seeing the Madam and some of her gals using opium, right in front of their eyes. Rich folk—“slumming”—would pay guides good money to take them to Mike’s, where they could be “shocked” by what they saw and heard. And enjoy the singin’, dancin’, and carryin’ on.

*(SANDERSON CARTIFORD enters, leading a tour group of rich people.)*

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** C’mon, folks! You won’t see anything like this Den of Iniquity back in your own home towns.

**A WOMAN IN THE GROUP.** Look at those women! They look like hussies. Like floozies.

**ANOTHER WOMAN IN THE GROUP.** Shameless women.!

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** Shameless indeed! They don’t just LOOK like hussies, like floozies—they ARE hussies and floozies!

**THE WOMEN IN THE GROUP.** *(Shocked.)* No!

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** For a fee, they’ll go with any man who wants them.

**A WOMAN IN THE GROUP.** Probably all drunkards and dope fiends.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** Shocking, ain’t it? I am personally quite shocked.

**MIKE SALTER.** And yet they’re big-hearted gals, every one of them! For a modest consideration, they’ll let you take pictures of them—or with them—with their drugs and whatnot.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** Oh, yes! Depravity! These gals are so in need of reforming.

**MIKE SALTER.** Izzy, see if these fine gentlemen and ladies are in need of any refreshments.

**A MAN OF 20.** *(Recognizing SANDERSON CARTIFORD.)* Sanderson? Sanderson Cartiford?

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** Nix! Nix on the name! I’m going by “Hoxie Carson” these days. Too many people were looking for “Sanderson Cartiford.”

**A MAN OF 20.** It’s good to see you again. Even if you still owe me money from that tour.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** I’m proud of ya, Izzy. I’ve brought groups here before, and stood quietly in the back. I’ve seen the way you win over audiences with your songs.

**A MAN OF 20.** Ehhh, I’m enjoying myself. I doubt if anyone really listens to me, anyway.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** You belong on Broadway, kid. Your songs have life. People are sick of all those sentimental old ballads. I bring groups of swells down here, and they go home singing your songs. I’d be willing to manage you, kid. Promote ya. Take a small cut.

**A MAN OF 20.** Oh, I’d never want any manager or agent. That’s just the way it is.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** I’ve a good eye for talent. I promoted the dancer Snakehips Sprance, and today, doing his “Trouble in Mind” Apache Dance—he’s a sensation on Broadway.

**A MAN OF 20.** I'm content here. I make up songs. We try 'em out. Now we're doing production numbers. I've got a good job for life.

**SANDERSON CARTIFORD.** But there's an awful lot of people out there writing bland, boring songs. And your songs are different; they've got just the right seasoning.

**A MAN OF 20.** I know! A pinch of that "Irving Berlin pepper." But I'm sure I'm not ready for Broadway. Now, if you'll excuse me, there's a song I want to introduce tonight.

**NICK.** Ladies, gentlemen... and others. Our own Izzy Baline—

**A MAN OF 20.** Ahem!

**NICK.** Excuse me, our own Irving Berlin, would like to offer you his latest song. And folks, let's make him really feel at home here tonight. It's his 20th birthday! Let's make this a night he'll always remember! Irving, what have you got to say for yourself?

**(SONG #15. "BRING ON THE PEPPER")**

**A MAN OF 20.**

SNAPPY MUSIC IS THE ONLY MUSIC  
THAT WAS EVER MEANT FOR ME;  
A LITTLE SPICE  
IS VERY NICE  
IN EV'RY MELODY.  
LET ME MINGLE WITH A PEPPY JINGLE  
THAT THE JAZZ BANDS LOVE TO PLAY.  
I'M A SWIFTY,  
VERY NIFTY,  
THAT'S WHY I SAY:

**A MAN OF 20 and THE GALS.**

BRING ON THE PEPPER;  
WE NEED A LOT OF PEPPER—  
YOU'VE GOT TO BE A STEPPER  
WITH A BARREL OF SPEED.  
MAKE IT GOOD AND SNAPPY  
IF YOU WANT TO GET BY;  
MAKE 'EM THINK YOU'RE HAPPY  
THOUGH YOU'RE READY TO DIE.  
WHEN YOU BEGIN IT,  
PUT LOTS OF GINGER IN IT—  
ABOUT A MILE A MINUTE  
IS THE TEMPO WE NEED;  
SLOW FOLKS ARE NO FOLKS  
TO TROUBLE WITH, NO INDEED!  
LOTS OF PEP WILL MAKE AN UNDERTAKER  
ROCK WITH JOY AND LAUGHTER;

**A MAN OF 20.**

IF YOU CAN SPRINKLE A CUTE LITTLE TWINKLE,  
YOU'LL FIND THAT'S THE WRINKLE WE'RE AFTER.  
JUST KEEP A-GOIN'  
AND DON'T FORGET TO THROW IN  
A BIT OF GEORGIE COHAN, THAT WE KNOW;

**A MAN OF 20** and **THE GALS**.

LOTS OF TABASCO,  
THAT'S ALL WE ASK, SO  
BRING ON THE PEPPER--LET'S GO!

**IRVING BERLIN.** (*Exclaimed.*) Everybody!  
**EVERYBODY.**

BRING ON THE PEPPER;  
WE NEED A LOT OF PEPPER--  
YOU'VE GOT TO BE A STEPPER  
WITH A BARREL OF SPEED.  
MAKE IT GOOD AND SNAPPY  
IF YOU WANT TO GET BY;  
MAKE 'EM THINK YOU'RE HAPPY  
THOUGH YOU'RE READY TO DIE.  
WHEN YOU BEGIN IT,  
PUT LOTS OF GINGER IN IT--  
ABOUT A MILE A MINUTE  
IS THE TEMPO WE NEED;  
SLOW FOLKS ARE NO FOLKS  
TO TROUBLE WITH, NO INDEED!  
LOTS OF PEP WILL MAKE AN UNDERTAKER  
ROCK WITH JOY AND LAUGHTER;

**A MAN OF 20.**

IF YOU CAN SPRINKLE A CUTE LITTLE TWINKLE,  
YOU'LL FIND THAT'S THE WRINKLE WE'RE AFTER.  
JUST KEEP A-GOIN'  
AND DON'T FORGET TO THROW IN  
A BIT OF GEORGIE COHAN, THAT WE KNOW;

**EVERYBODY.**

LOTS OF TABASCO,  
THAT'S ALL WE ASK, SO  
BRING ON THE PEPPER--LET'S GO!

*(The music continues as underscoring.)*

**MIKE SALTER.** Hey, Izzy!

**A MAN OF 20.** Yes, Mike!

**MIKE SALTER.** There's money missing from the till!

**A MAN OF 20.** I wouldn't know about that--

**MIKE SALTER.** You closed up last night, didn't you--

**A MAN OF 20.** Of course I did, but–

**MIKE SALTER.** You're fired!

**A MAN OF 20.** But you know I'd never steal from you, Mike. You're like a father to me!

**MIKE SALTER.** Nobody takes advantage of Mike Salter.

**A MAN OF 20.** But I'm honest. You know it.

**MADAM GERTIE.** (*To A MAN OF 20.*) Whether or not he realizes it, kid—he's doing you a favor.

**NICK.** And maybe he does realize it..

**MIKE SALTER.** You've been sponging off me for too long, kid. I pays ya \$7 a week—and for what? For singin' a few songs?

**A MAN OF 20.** But how am I going to pay my bills?

**MIKE SALTER.** Go see your beloved George M. Cohan. See if he—or anyone else—is ever willing to match the \$7 a week I've been paying you.

**A MAN OF 20.** But everyone loves me here. And they love my songs.

**MIKE SALTER.** Oh, we'll still be singing your songs, Izzy. Only YOU won't be here any more.

**LITTLE BOY.** And did he really fire you, Mr. Berlin?

**IRVING.** Oh, yes! I felt hurt, betrayed, abandoned. I had no idea how I'd support myself.

**EMCEE.** You can't end an act like this! The First Act has to end on an upbeat note!

**SIDEKICK.** Send the audience out happy, confident, sharing in your success.

**EMCEE.** Singing your songs!

**MIKE SALTER.** I need to hear singing!

**IRVING.**

MAKE IT GOOD AND SNAPPY  
IF YOU WANT TO GET BY;

**A MAN OF 20.**

MAKE 'EM THINK YOU'RE HAPPY  
THOUGH YOU'RE READY TO DIE.

**MIKE SALTER.** Everybody!

**EVERYBODY.**

WHEN YOU BEGIN IT,  
PUT LOTS OF GINGER IN IT—  
ABOUT A MILE A MINUTE  
IS THE TEMPO WE NEED;  
SLOW FOLKS ARE NO FOLKS  
TO TROUBLE WITH, NO INDEED!

**MIKE SALTER.**

LOTS OF PEP WILL MAKE AN UNDERTAKER  
ROCK WITH JOY AND LAUGHTER;

**EVERYBODY.**

IF YOU CAN SPRINKLE A CUTE LITTLE TWINKLE,  
YOU'LL FIND THAT'S THE WRINKLE WE'RE AFTER.

**A MAN OF 20.**

JUST KEEP A-GOIN'



**PERUSAL PAGES FILE -- THE IRVING BERLIN STORY** *by Chip Deffaa*

**IRVING.**

AND DON'T FORGET TO THROW IN  
**A MAN OF 20** and **IRVING.**

A BIT OF GEORGIE COHAN, THAT WE KNOW;  
**EVERYBODY.**

LOTS OF TABASCO,  
THAT'S ALL WE ASK, SO  
BRING ON THE PEPPER--LET'S GO!

– END OF ACT ONE –

**30 ADDITIONAL PAGES MAKE UP ACT TWO**

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT...

Chip Deffaa is the author of thirteen published plays and eight published books. An expert on old-time show business, he has been “following his bliss” since he wrote his first report for school—at 10-page essay on George M. Cohan—at the age of nine.

His play *George M. Cohan Tonight!*, which Deffaa wrote and directed Off-Broadway in New York at the Irish Repertory Theatre, was hailed by *The New York Times* as “brash, cocky, and endlessly euphoric” (*The New York Times*, March 11, 2006). It has since been performed everywhere from Seoul, Korea to London, England. Deffaa has written and directed assorted other plays, including *The Seven Little Foys*, *The Johnny Mercer Jamboree*, and *Theater Boys*.

Cast albums are available for such shows of his as *The Seven Little Foys*, *One Night with Fanny Brice*, *The Johnny Mercer Jamboree*, and *George M. Cohan Tonight!*

Deffaa has written eight books, including *Swing Legacy*, *Voices of the Jazz Age*, *In the Mainstream*, *Traditionalists and Revivalists in Jazz*, *Jazz Veterans*, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Princeton Years* (ed.), *Blue Rhythms*, and (with David Cassidy) *C'Mon Get Happy*. He has contributed chapters to the books *Harlem Speaks* and *Roaring at One Hundred*.

For 18 years, Deffaa wrote for *The New York Post*, writing news, feature stories, and reviews dealing with jazz, cabaret, and theater. He was also a longtime writer for *Entertainment Weekly* magazine.

Deffaa has written liner notes for many CD's, including those of such artists as Miles Davis, Benny Goodman, Ray Brown, Diane Schuur, Ruth Brown, Tito Puente, Dick Hyman, Randy Sandke, Scott Hamilton, and the Count Basie Orchestra.

Deffaa has won an ASCAP/Deems Taylor Award, a New Jersey Press Association Award, and an IRNE Award (Independent Reviewers of New England). Deffaa is a member of the Society of Stage Directors & Choreographers, the Dramatists Guild, ASCAP, NARAS, the Jazz Journalists Association, the F. Scott Fitzgerald Society, the Drama Desk, and the American Theatre Critics Association. Deffaa is a trustee of the Princeton *Tiger* magazine.

Deffaa's most recent plays include *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, *The Fanny Brice Story*, *Song-and-Dance Kids*, and *One Night with Fanny Brice*, which opened Off-Broadway in 2011. All of Deffaa's plays are available for licensing. He is represented by the Fifi Osgood Agency, New York City. For further information, please visit: [www.chipdeffaa.com](http://www.chipdeffaa.com).