

# **THE MELODY LINGERS ON**

Production notes and script  
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Barbershop Harmony Society

# PRODUCTION NOTES

" ... *The Melody Lingers On*" was written as a tribute to the life and music of Irving Berlin. It replaces the Society's show Mr. Music.

Irving Berlin lived for 101 years and wrote music that captured many phases of American life. From his beginnings as a young Russian immigrant on the Lower East Side of New York, he rose to become the master of the American musical art form. But his life was more complex than many people are aware. This show depicts Berlin as the consummate artist who knew that his music was special.

## SYNOPSIS

The show features 12 songs written by Irving Berlin. While these 12 were used in the Harmony College production, other Berlin songs can be used if the chapter desires. Since the show deals with Irving Berlin and his music, it is probably best not to introduce music from other composers, since Berlin himself found so little time for them during his lifetime.

The show is set as a Friars Club meeting in New York City to induct Irving Berlin into its Hall of Fame. Present on this occasion, and celebrating the 50th anniversary of their performance, are members of the cast of *This Is the Army*. They serve as the chorus for the show. The highlight of the ceremony is the unveiling of the silhouette of Berlin as a tribute to the distinguished composer.

During the proceedings, the silhouette comes to life and presents a closer look into the life of Berlin through his own words, as recorded in several Berlin biographies. His emotions during the show range from anger to romance. During Berlin's speaking parts, the rest of the cast is oblivious to his words and actions.

There are two main speaking parts in the show: the emcee and Irving Berlin's silhouette. Three other minor parts are available and each consists of just a few lines. The relatively few speaking parts coupled with a simple set design and good solid barbershop music make this a show that chapters of all sizes should be able to handle.

## CREATIVITY

The following are more specific thoughts about the show and some production ideas. There may be other ideas that you wish to incorporate. You are encouraged to use your imagination.

One good method of generating some creativity is brainstorming. Divide the chapter into groups and give them some time to meet during the chapter meeting. Ask them to develop a list of things that would enhance a production about Irving Berlin's life. No idea at this time is a bad one, and everything should be considered. Have each group submit its list to the show committee for its review and approval. The idea is to generate creativity and interest for the chapter members. Let the committee make the final decisions with the good of the total show in mind.

As with any production, you should use all the performance and theatrical elements at your disposal to make " ... *The Melody Lingers On*" the best possible production for your audience. These elements include scenery, props, costuming, lighting, chorus staging, vignettes, pantomimes, or just about any other entertainment device that you can imagine.

Remember, the audiences at your show could stay home and listen to barbershop recordings or be entertained in other ways. They are at your show to be entertained by a theatrical experience that includes both sound and sight. Don't cheat them. Feature our unique product--barbershop harmony--and complement it with a solid visual performance.

## **MUSIC**

Obviously, since the show is a tribute to Irving Berlin, his music is used. The script lists the music and stock numbers along with recommendations for the ensemble that should sing each song. The music was selected to showcase the widest possible array of Irving Berlin's talent, to provide the audience with some recognizable music, and to give the singers some music that will fit easily into their libraries.

The recommendations as to who should perform each song are merely suggestions based upon the Harmony College show. They may be presented in any form that you desire. But remember that mixing chorus, quartet, octet and even very-large-quartet (VLQ) performances offers variety to your audience, gives a brief respite to the

performers and provides opportunities to encourage quartet participation within the chapter. It is also an alternative to having the chorus learn 12 new songs for a show. Do not overlook other possibilities for variety such as featured voices (solos), voice-overs with the chorus "looming" in the background, or quartets singing part of a song while the chorus does the rest.

## **STOCK ITEMS**

A set of all 12 printed arrangements is available; stock no. 2067.

## **STAGING AND SETS**

The Harmony College show was staged rather simply. A lectern for the emcee was set on the apron downstage right. The chorus risers were set slightly right of center. The shadow box for Irving Berlin was set slightly left of center and upstage of the risers. A quartet microphone and lighting pool was established downstage left. The only movable set piece that was used came from stage left.

## **SET PIECES**

The emcee's lectern is a pretty standard piece found in most theaters. The more elaborate the piece, the better the effect.

The chorus risers should be set as far right as possible and canted slightly toward the center of the stage. The actual positioning of the risers will depend on the size of your stage and the number of risers that your chorus needs. If the focal point of the risers can be directed toward the center of the stage, it will help draw the audience's attention to the silhouette of Berlin.

A movable set piece was built for "When The Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves For Alabam'." It was a wagon with two flats forming a cornered wall section. As the song began, it was pushed into a lighted area from stage left. The set piece contained a couch, luggage, and some small furniture items. The wagon itself was eight feet long by 4 feet wide, with one wall built up from the four-foot side and another from the rear adjoining eight-foot side. An actor, sitting on the couch, entered with the set piece. This piece can be as elaborate or simple as you wish.

### **SHADOW BOX**

The shadow box is the focal point of the entire show. It should probably be elevated from the stage about six feet to help provide visibility to the audience and to eliminate lighting-wash problems. The shadow box at Harmony College contained a cut-down outline of an upright piano and a bench. Six feet wide and seven feet high, The shadow box was elevated six feet from the stage itself. (Lighting for the shadow box is covered under the Lighting notes.) The shadow box was hidden from the audience by a drop, which was flown during the emcee's lines early in the show. Later, it was covered following Berlin's last spoken lines to allow the character to leave the shadow box. During the tag of the final song, the drape was raised again to provide the climactic moment alluding to Berlin's absence.

### **OTHER SETS**

In the Harmony College production, the quartet pool was established slightly

downstage of the shadow box. It too is more completely discussed under the lighting notes.

### **ACTING AND CHARACTERIZATIONS**

The principal character of the show is, of course, Irving Berlin. In order to provide some realism, cast someone who is relatively thin, of a little less-than-average height, and a fastidious dresser. He should have a robust head of hair, or be able to wear a wig well. If possible, his voice should be somewhat high-pitched. It would be a good idea to have the character do some research into the life of Irving Berlin. An excellent source of information and pictures is found in Laurence Bergreen's book, *As Thousands Cheer* (New York: Viking, 1990).

The role of the emcee is also quite important. He should have a good speaking voice and a command of the stage. This person controls the pace of the show quite a bit and must be able to memorize his lines, since so many cues depend on him.

Three minor speaking parts offer good opportunities for a variety of character types. For those aspiring Thespians in your chorus, these parts may be just the ticket; they are discussed later in these notes.

If your chapter does not have the characters necessary to fill these roles, check with a local theatre company or drama club to see if there is interest. Quite often, members of these groups are cooperative and willing to work on local chapter shows at little or no cost to the chapter.

## ADDITIONAL STAGING VARIETY

It is important to remember that at no time during the show do the other members of the cast realize that the silhouette of Berlin is speaking. Use of freeze poses may be employed during Berlin's lines. Lighting may also be used to divert the audience's attention from the other characters to Berlin.

The songs that are presented need to have some staging life in them. It is important that you remember the visual aspects of presentation. Berlin was a primary contributor to the early Ziegfeld Follies; visual physical productions were one of his traits. A show that pays tribute to him would do well to incorporate some of his ideas.

## SONG STAGING IDEAS

"There's No Business Like Show Business" should be presented with lots of pizzazz and plenty of production.

The use of props and additional animation during *"Alexander's Ragtime Band"* is also a good idea. *"Easter Parade"* may be staged with a Ziegfeld-like parade of appropriately costumed women. Lighting effects, especially subdued ones, can be used to present *"When I Lost You."* Even though the last two songs are recommended for quartets, there still can be some effective staging done to enhance the production of the songs.

*"When The Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves For Alabam"* incorporated some neat ideas at Harmony College. Using the set piece mentioned earlier, one character entered from stage left and pantomimed the song as though he were leaving on

a journey. From stage right came the conductor, and the two of them acted out the entire lyrical message of the song.

*"Mandy"* was presented as a minstrel show number in a comical setting. Nine men entered the stage with tambourines and noise makers and did a Spike Jones-kind of routine; unfortunately, there were only eight seats, so the man who had no seat became the foil for the number. It has light lyrics and is easily adaptable to comedic presentations.

The two recommended quartet songs in 4 the second act can also have some additional staging, if desired. *"When It's Night Time In Dixie Land"* and *"White Christmas"* both have limitless possibilities for staging ideas.

The song *"Always"* was sung by the chorus as a bridal couple danced and pantomimed during the song. It was directly related to the Berlin's intent for the song: a wedding gift to his bride.

*"God Bless America"* provides an opportunity to involve the entire audience in a sing-along for a portion of the song. This stirring patriotic masterpiece can be presented in other ways as well, but audience participation definitely worked at Harmony College.

*"Simple Melody"* provides a marvelous opportunity for the voice-over of Berlin as the song begins. The contrapuntal nature of the song also makes it a crowd-pleaser, when the quartet and chorus are working at the same time with different lyrics. Please note that there is another version of the song available. It is suitable for either a chorus or quartet to sing alone.

*"The Song Is Ended"* provides both a visual and musical climax to the show. A brief reprise of the dancers takes place early in the song to underscore the idea of the "heavenly dancers." During the tag, the drape is flown to reveal an empty shadow box. This has the potential of creating a very poignant climax.

A reprise of *"There's No Business Like Show Business"* after the final curtain allows the curtain call for all the participants in the show. The order of curtain calls can be flexible, but the emcee and Irving Berlin should probably be the last two.

### **GUEST QUARTETS**

The script as written is a two-hour production including a 15-minute intermission. The two feature-quartet spots can be removed and the show can be reduced to a one-act presentation of approximately one hour.

The show was written as a two-act presentation to preserve the continuity of entertainment for the audience. If the theme of a show lasts until intermission, there is the possibility that the switch in themes may create a distraction for the audience. A single, two-act show allows for a more complete type of presentation to your audience, and keeps the hosting chapter in the forefront of the evening's entertainment.

The script is written so that the two guest quartets are an integral part of the tribute to Irving Berlin. Be sure to check with each of the quartets to ensure that none of the chorus's music is duplicated. If either of the guest quartets uses Berlin

songs, try to ensure that their remarks about the songs are appropriate to the Berlin theme. Send each of the quartets a copy of the script, well in advance, with their sections highlighted. Ask them to read the entire script. Be sure to include these production notes and explain the need for cooperation.

### **COSTUMES**

The chorus has two options. If they wish to role play the parts of the cast of *This is the Army*, they may wish to dress in business suits or suitable light evening wear. Try to allow for some colorful but tasteful accessories. Or, they may choose to formalize the occasion and wear tuxedos. If the chorus already has a tuxedo as a uniform, this option is probably a good one. It is not recommended that the chorus wear uniforms that are not formal in nature, i.e. straw hats and vests.

The emcee definitely should appear distinguished and somewhat different from the rest of the chorus. Stylish apparel is important for him.

Irving Berlin almost never appeared in casual clothing. His character should be "dressed to the nines" even though only his silhouette shows for the production. A pocket handkerchief, boutonniere, tie pin, etc., are all examples of the stylish look that Berlin preferred.

For the two characters that pantomime the scene in *"When The Midnight Choo Choo Leaves For Alabam"* one should be dressed in a conductor's outfit, complete with pocket watch, and the other in costuming that would be appropriate for a rail traveler.

The dance scene requires something reminiscent of a wedding gown for the woman and formal tails for the man.

All characters (including Berlin) should be in make-up appropriate for the stage.

### **SPECIAL EFFECTS**

The shadow box and its usage during the show is the biggest special effect. Extreme care must be taken to avoid light spills onto the scrim. More details appear under the Lighting notes.

Another special effect is the train light used during *"When The Midnight Choo Choo Leaves For Alabam'."* At Harmony College, a hard-edged leko, that was softened just a bit, was mounted on a grocery cart off-stage right. The bracket was left loose so that the light appeared to be bouncing when it was moving, similar to a railroad engine's headlight. At the end of the song, the grocery cart was backed up with the light shining on stage. As it was backed up, the grocery cart was also turned upstage to give the effect of a train leaving the station. The light was killed as the applause following the song reached its peak. A train whistle may be added for additional effect.

Other special effects may be added as desired. Remember, Berlin believed in visual as well as musical artistry.

### **LIGHTING**

Lighting differs with just about every stage. It will be dependent upon the kinds of equipment that you have available and the knowledge that your technician has of stage lighting. To give you some ideas, here are some lighting

notes from the Harmony College production.

All lighting for Harmony College was done to ensure that the shadow box would not be affected by light spillage.

The emcee's lectern was lit with two lekos from the first and second catwalk. One was hung from center stage on the second catwalk, the other from stage right on the first catwalk. Neither was gelled.

The risers themselves were handled mostly with fresnels with some lekos. There was some steep backlighting done with PARS due to the spillage problem on the shadow box. Most of the lighting was directed on the chorus from stage left and left of center stage to cut down on the possibility of spilling onto the shadow box.

A pool of light was established for the quartets to sing from by using one fresnel and four small lekos. The pool was located down left, slightly to the left of the shadow box. Again, the lights were hung from stage left. Both barn doors and the irises of each light were used to eliminate extra light.

The set piece used in *"When The Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves For Alabam'"* required steep overhead backlighting to allow the set to be seen adequately. It also used some of the quartet pool of light to 6 economize on the number of lighting instruments being used near the shadow box.

All the backlighting for the above plots was gelled. The chorus backlighting was about 80% blue (various shades) with 20% red. Straw and light-pink gels were

used on the quartet pool. All the blue gels were held on a separate circuit to create mood effects, especially during "When I Lost You."

The shadow box can be a challenge. It is recommended that more than one layer of cheese cloth scrim be used to create the front of the shadow box. The higher the box can be raised from the stage floor, the better, for that helps to eliminate more light wash and spillage. A single hard-edged leko was used to create the shadow. You will need to experiment a bit with the position of the light to avoid hot spots on the scrim. Another problem whose solution needs some experimentation is the elongation and distortion of the silhouette if the light is incorrectly placed. Position the Berlin character properly and have him mark his spots to ensure the proper placement of the light. Everything in the shadow box should be painted a flat black for best results.

For the two featured quartets, follow spots and curtain warmers were used. Because the curtain was red, yellow/gold gels were used on the lekos, two from each side of the stage from the side pockets.

## **SOUND**

Sound, like lighting, will have many variables depending on the stage and the personnel involved.

The Harmony College show used omnidirectional microphones hung from the battens. Additionally there were two PCCs down center for the featured quartets.

Irving Berlin was fitted with a wireless, lavalier microphone. Although his area of movement is restricted, he needs this kind of microphone to keep the illusion believable. Working from a standard microphone would simply not be effective.

If possible, the three minor parts could use wireless lavalieres, too. However, the characters can be blocked to use either of the PCCs down center, if necessary.

The emcee has an omni-directional microphone mounted on his lectern.

The sound requirements for this show are rather simple. It is still a good idea to have someone knowledgeable in sound reproduction set the microphones, adjust them during a technical rehearsal and ride gain on them during the show.

There are no sound effects required by the script. However, there may be spots in the script where you wish to enter some. Be aware that sound effects require additional sound preparation, which may also be an additional expense.

## **CONCLUSION**

The preceding information is not the only way to present this show. The suggestions that have been offered were a result of one performance. Your own chorus's abilities, theater, and equipment available to you will determine how you present your version of the show. If there are changes to be made, make them intelligently.

Lighting cues, sound cues, spot-light cues, and pin-rail movements have



been purposefully omitted, since all of them vary with each production.

Please notice that there is no space allocated for announcements from the stage. Let the program booklet or afterglow handle these items. If you offer door prizes and the like, try to indicate in the program booklet that the winners will be notified at the afterglow or later. Keep the show moving with entertainment, nothing else.

Timing and Pacing are critical. There can be no dead spots or the production will slow down and become dull. Each song must begin immediately after a preceding scene or on the downward ebb of the applause, if two songs are sung in a row. Pitches must be blown unobtrusively and tune-ups should be hummed quietly under the talk or applause. You may even find that tune-ups are unnecessary if all the singers concentrate on the pitch being blown. In any case, the director should give the down-beat as soon as the set-up is

finished or the applause has almost died. Movement of scenery should not hold up a show, either.

In this show, the words spoken by Irving Berlin are near-direct quotes attributed to him. You must remember that Irving Berlin was an extremely private man who did not take kindly to outsiders who wished to interfere with his privacy. He was quick to litigate against anything or anyone who offended him. His estate has been left with strict orders as to the handling of his copyrights and his reputation. Please do not vary Irving Berlin's lines. They have been carefully researched and are accurate as written. To attempt to "spice them up" may only lead to difficulties.

The show is full of familiar music and has some great opportunities for you to entertain an audience. These production notes, coupled with your own creativity, should lead you to a very enjoyable performance. Have fun, and may your melodies linger on!

# ... THE MELODY LINGERS ON SCRIPT

*(The accompanying production notes should be read first. They will assist in a thorough understanding of the content and approach of this script. The song titles shown in this script are the ones used in the premiere performance at Harmony College. They are followed by the stock number. The production notes show some of the staging ideas that were used at the Harmony College production.)*

## ACT1

*(House lights to half, hold for five seconds and then out)*

*(Curtain opens and chorus immediately sings:)*

### **SONG #1-- THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOW BUSINESS, #7724**

*(EMCEE enters stage right)*

EMCEE: There certainly is no business like show business, as we in the Friars Club all know. Ever since our club was formed as a fraternity of entertainers, we have been honoring our best performers. For over 60 years Irving Berlin was show business to many of us. Tonight we gather to honor Irving by inducting him into our Friars Club Hall of Fame. We are pleased as members of Irving's cast of *This Is The Army* to be celebrating the 50th anniversary of his show and honoring our friend.

From his simple beginnings as a Russian immigrant working as a singing waiter and song-plugger in the lower east side of New York City, he became the world's foremost songwriter. Incredibly he never learned to read or write music!

He was born Israel Baline, but his name changed when his first song, "Marie From Sunny Italy" was published. A printer's error showed his name as I. Berlin. He liked it so much that he changed his first name to Irving to sound more American. But he always answered to "Izzy" when called by his friends.

Irving wrote a song that reintroduced ragtime to the American public. It failed to catch on right away in New York, but surprisingly became a hit in Chicago and sold more than a million copies of sheet music in its first three weeks. Young George Gershwin told his music teacher, "This is the way an American should write. This is the kind of music that I want to write."

## **SONG #2 -- ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND, #7093**

EMCEE: Irving wrote most of his music between midnight and dawn by sitting at a piano and playing only the black keys to develop his tunes. He claimed that it was only natural to do that because the black keys were right there under his fingers and easy to find. This trait as much as anything symbolized Irving's black and white approach to life.

Therefore, it seems appropriate that we symbolically represent him in a silhouette to capture Irving as we best remember him. Gentlemen, I present the silhouette portrait of Irving Berlin *(fly drape to reveal shadow box of Irving Berlin at his piano. EMCEE gestures to the shadow box as the drape rises.)*

For a hundred dollars Irving bought a transposing piano which had a lever that could change keys automatically. That piano, affectionately referred to as his "Buick," now rests in the Smithsonian Institute. He was able to play in the key of F# Major and sample whatever key he wanted with a simple adjustment of the lever. His tunes were then written down by his musical secretary, Helmy Kresa, who worked for Irving more than 60 years.

VOICE #1: *(from the chorus)* Yeah, Helmy was quite a songwriter himself. In fact, a lot of people thought that Irving paid him to ghost-write some of Berlin's songs. Why, there were even rumors that Irving had a young man hidden away that wrote all of his songs, especially the ragtime stuff!

*(Chorus reacts with "Nonsense", "Really?", etc.)*

EMCEE: Of course that's foolish! We all know that!

But Irving knew that not every song was destined to be a hit right away.

Like many of his Tin Pan Alley friends, he would often store songs away and later cannibalize them or rewrite parts of them to form new tunes. One such song, entitled "*Smile And Show Your Dimple*," resurfaced with a new title and different lyrics 15 years later to become a hit in his Broadway show *As Thousands Cheer*. Ironically it established the Jewish Irving Berlin as a Christian holiday songwriter for the world.

**SONG #3 -- EASTER PARADE, #7114**

*(Sung by a quartet)*

EMCEE: Irving nearly always wrote songs that touched the hearts of his listeners. Some of them evoked memories of home; others were unabashedly patriotic. Some of them were even corny!

BERLIN: *(testily)* Hold it right there! *(Figure in shadow box comes to life, but only as a shadow. everyone else freezes.)* Who is he calling corny?!?! I invented the term corny, and what I meant was something that was "corn-fed" and wholesome. There could be corny ideas, but never a corny song!

Sure, some of my topics were corny, but all I wanted to do was write hits. *(brags a little)* And I got pretty good at it; too. One day Dorothy Goetz came into my office looking for one of my songs, any song at all. She had hardly begun to speak when another Broadway adorable swept into the room, heard what Dorothy wanted, and rushed to my desk grabbing the music away shouting, "No, no, I want it!" Now Dorothy was a woman of spirit. . She swung around a haymaking left and slapped the newcomer across the face. A full-fledged melee ensued. I was nearly powerless to stop it. I couldn't help but think how ironic it was. *(amused)* I had dreamed of people fighting for the right to sing my stuff, and now it was coming true.

Finally, I gave the song to the starlet and began to date Dorothy. Soon we were married, and five months later ... she died. With her went my will to write anymore. Then one day, her brother Ray convinced me to write from my emotions. I did, and my memory of Dorothy established me as America's ballad writer. *(spoken with pride, but in a matter-of-fact way. shadow returns to his original pose)*

**SONG #4 -- WHEN I LOST YOU, #7110**

*(Sung by a quartet)*

*(Chorus becomes "live" again)*

EMCEE: Who can forget Irving's uncanny knack with" rhyme schemes?

*(Everyone in the chorus freezes again as the silhouette comes to life)*

BERLIN: Once when I was in England· I was challenged to write a rhyme for the word "orange." A few minutes later I had it:

**Brother Bill and I once stole a cellar door;  
And Bill was eating an orange.  
He stole the hind hinge,  
And I stole the fore hinge.**

By 1912 I had firmly established myself as a hit maker and that was all right with me. I could write songs at will. Why, I once wrote a tune called "*I Want To Go Back To Michigan*" even though I had never seen the place. When someone asked me, "Why Michigan?" I told him that it was the only state that rhymed with "wish again!" But Michigan wasn't the only place that I hadn't seen. I could write about almost anything, and did!

*(Chorus becomes "live" again as silhouette returns to his original pose)*

### **SONG #5 -- WHEN THE MIDNIGHT CHOO CHOO LEAVES FOR ALABAM', #7221**

EMCEE: Yes, my friends, it is safe to say that Irving Berlin wrote more hits than anyone else!

BERLIN: *(voice only, no freeze)* Yeah! And I wrote more flops, too! Does anyone remember "*I Just Came Back to Say Goodbye*" or "*Poor Little Rich Girl's Dog*"? (pause) I didn't think so!

VOICE #2: *(from the chorus)* Not only did he write more hits, but he helped a lot of people, too. Why, I remember that he donated all the money from his show *This Is The Army* to the war effort.

BERLIN: *(again, voice only, no freeze)* And don't forget that every nickel that "God Bless America" ever earned went to the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America.

VOICE #3: *(from the chorus)* I remember Irving's contribution to the war effort in 1918. His all-Army production, *Yip, Yip, Yaphank*, was unprecedented in show business.

BERLIN: *(everyone else freezes)* Yeah, that was something, all right. Here I was in the Army getting up at five in the morning. I was used to staying up all night writing music. When I saw five a.m., it usually meant it was time to go to bed, not get up! The men in my outfit didn't like me at first, thought I was a big shot getting big shot treatment. It wasn't until I wrote *(sings in a high-pitched voice)* "Oh how I hate to get up in the Morning!" that the average doughboy accepted me as part of the outfit. That one song proved to many critics beyond a doubt that I did not have a young writer secretly composing songs for me. The song was not reminiscent of black music, or Jewish, or Irish, or Italian as so many of my former hits had been. It was simply "American" ... simple, straightforward and masculine. It was the one song that I actually sang during the show. But it was only one show-stopper; this was another:

### **SONG #6 -- MANDY, #7109**

*(Main curtain closes)*

EMCEE: Irving wanted to be the best in the music world. He wanted to be in control of anything that bore his name. After working with Ziegfeld on the Follies, he decided to build the finest theater in New York. When the Music Box opened its doors, it was more than anyone could have imagined. It was simply elegant. And Berlin's Revues for that stage matched the elegance of the theater and gave him the control that he desired.

Irving always favored quartet acts. *(EMCEE leads into the introduction of the first feature-quartet.)*

### **FEATURE-QUARTET #1**

*(Feature-quartet #1 sings in front of closed main curtain)*

## **INTERMISSION**

## **ACT II**

*(Quartet enters from stage left to center stage in front of closed main curtain)*

**SONG #7: WHEN IT'S NIGHT TIME IN DIXIE LAND, #7095**

*(Sung by a quartet)*

*(Exit quartet stage left, enter EMCEE stage right)*

EMCEE: Irving was a driven man who seldom found time for anything but his music. He remained lonely following his wife Dorothy's untimely death until he met Ellin Mackay, the daughter of a powerful business magnate. Following a hectic courtship, the two eloped and left on a honeymoon trip to England. As a gift to his bride Irving composed the song "Always." When some of his colleagues heard it, they scoffed. "Why not write something more believable, like 'I'll be loving you, Thursday'," they mocked. But Irving persisted and turned the ownership of the song over to his bride. That act alone earned her a fortune during her lifetime

*(Main curtain opens)*

**SONG #8: ALWAYS, #7645**

VOICE #1: *(From the chorus)* That song was always special to Irving. So special that he didn't want anybody meddling with it. When MAD Magazine decided to publish an issue that featured over 50 parodies, he became enraged to see his wife's wedding gift being reduced to a spoof of psychiatry: *(sings to the tune of "Always")*

He'll be seeing me Always!  
2:15 to 3:00 Always!  
I've become aware  
He's a millionaire;  
He'll get daily care  
Always! Always!

*(Everyone else freezes as the silhouette again comes to life)*

BERLIN: *(growing icily angrily)* When I saw that, I met with a dozen other composers and together we sued *(throws a magazine to the floor of the shadow box)* the magazine for copyright infringement. The lawsuit dragged on for two years and eventually went to the Supreme Court. *(sits and seethes)* I lost, 6 and I renewed my vow to never relinquish control of my songs or allow them to be changed in any way.

*(Chorus comes to life again as the silhouette freezes in his original pose)*

EMCEE: World War II found Irving again serving his country. His show *This Is The Army* raised millions of dollars for the armed forces, and Irving eventually received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his work. It was the sweetest moment of his entire career. Honor was one thing that Irving took more seriously than wealth.

*(Chorus begins loosing the chorus of "White Christmas" in the background)*

During the war his greatest song-writing achievement was featured in a movie entitled *Holiday Inn*. The song has since become one of the most popular Christmas songs the world has ever known second only to "*Silent Night*."

*(Chorus continues to 100, but remains in a frozen position as the silhouette again comes to life)*

BERLIN: What made it so special was that it came at a time when we were at war. It became a peace song in wartime, nothing I'd ever intended. (chorus stops loosing, wherever they are in the song) It simply was nostalgic for a lot of boys who weren't home for Christmas.

### **SONG #9 -- WHITE CHRISTMAS, #7701**

*(Sung by a quartet)*

*(Total blackout at the close of the song. Berlin speaks with only the shadow box lit)*

BERLIN: *(spoken during the blackout)* When I created that, I was convinced that it was the greatest song that I had ever written.

*(Lights up Oil the chorus and EMCEE as silhouette returns to his original pose)*

EMCEE: In 1938 Irving was asked to provide a song for an Armistice Day celebration. He remembered a tune that he had filed away from his show *Yip, Yip, Yaphank* back in 1918. He took it out and revamped it slightly so that it would not reflect the events of World War I. He then presented it to Kate Smith, and within weeks America had a new, unofficial national anthem.

### **SONG #10 -- GOD BLESS AMERICA, #7641**

*(Verse begun by an octet who is joined by the chorus at the chorus of the song. after first time through, invite audience to sing along)*



*(Main curtain closes)*

EMCEE: *(introduces feature-quartet #2)*

## **FEATURE-QUARTET #2**

*(Feature-quartet #2 sings in front of closed main curtain)*

*(Main curtain opens following the quartet act)*

BERLIN: Throughout my career, people always asked me to reveal my secret to song-writing success. I formulated nine rules for writing popular songs:

*(Chorus begins to vamp the opening of "Simple Melody")*

1. The melody should be within the range of most singers.
2. The title should be attention-getting and be repeated within the body of the song.
3. The song should be "sexless"-able to be sung by either men or women.
4. The song requires "heart interest," something to capture the romantic side of life.
5. It should be original in idea, lyrics, and music.
6. Stick to nature, not in an abstract way, but in everyday manifestations.
7. Sprinkle the lyrics with "open vowels" so that they will be euphonious.
8. Look at your song as a business and work, work, work it!
9. Make the song as simple as possible.

*(As the last point is finished, the lyrics to the song begin. chorus comes to life as the silhouette returns to his original pose)*

## **SONG #11 -- SIMPLE MELODY, #7725**

*(Sung with a quartet)*

*(An alternate version to this arrangement is designed for a quartet or chorus only. It is written in four parts, not contrapuntally as is stock number 7725. The stock number for the alternate arrangement is 7728.)*

*(Silhouette comes to life as everyone else freezes)*

BERLIN: I've always thought of myself as a songwriter. What else would I want to be? I'm a songwriter, like dozens and dozens of others, and as long as I'm able, whether the songs are good or bad, I'll continue to write them, because song-writing is not alone a business or a hobby with me. It's everything.

*(drape drops in front of the shadow box. While the drape is down, Berlin leaves the shadow box)*

EMCEE: During his career, Irving Berlin wrote more than 3,000 songs, and 1,500 of them were hits. He also produced 18 stage productions on Broadway and 16 films that featured his music. He did it all.

Here is a letter that was written some time ago by Jerome Kern that pretty well sums up Irving's place in the music business. Part of it reads:

"In short, what I really want to say is that Irving Berlin has no place in American music. (pause) He is American Music."

### **SONG #12 -- *THE SONG IS ENDED*, #7311**

*(drape flies to reveal an empty shadow box at the beginning of the tag)*

*(at the close of the song, main curtain closes)*

*(main curtain re-opens for reprise and curtain calls)*

### **REPRISE -- *THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOW BUSINESS***

*(begin with words and repeat the chorus as necessary on a neutral vowel sound as the quartets, actors, and performers take their bows. last time through with lyrics. close main curtain.)*

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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