



**Fort Wayne Civic Theatre
IN THE WINGS
Arts-In-Education Program
Study Guide**



**Music and Lyrics by Irving Berlin
Book by David Ives & Paul Blake**

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MUSIC AND LYRICS BY IRVING BERLIN

The American composer Irving Berlin produced over eight hundred songs, many of which attained worldwide popularity. His patriotic songs, especially "God Bless America," summed up the feelings of Americans at the time.

Irving Berlin was born Israel Baline in Temun, Russia, on May 11, 1888. He was the youngest of Moses and Leah Lipkin Baline's eight children. His father, a cantor who gave him singing lessons, was the first to expose Israel to music. The family fled the persecutions of Jews in Russia in 1893 and settled in New York City. The first years in America were very difficult—at one time every member of the family sold newspapers on the streets. Things got worse when Moses Baline died in 1896. At age fourteen Israel left home and began making money by singing in bars and on the streets of New York. He attended school for two years but had no formal musical education; he never learned to read or write music.

In 1906 Baline went to work as a singing waiter at a restaurant in New York's Chinatown. He waited tables and entertained customers by singing popular songs of the time with his own made-up lyrics. It was while working here that he wrote his first song, "Marie from Sunny Italy," which he worked on together with another restaurant employee. He also changed his name, becoming I. Berlin, lyricist. This was the name he chose to appear on the sheet music when the song was published shortly after in 1907.



Berlin began to gain recognition as a clever lyric writer. He provided words for "Queenie, My Own," "Dorando," and "Sadie Salome, Go Home." The last was something of a success, and he was hired by a publisher to write words for new songs. Although he had difficulty writing English and had to have someone who understood musical notation write down the melodies that he created with one finger, within a year Berlin was established as a rising talent in the popular-music business.

Around this time music publishers became interested in ragtime, the highly original creation of African American musicians in the South and Midwest during the 1880s and 1890s. Berlin contributed lyrics—and a few tunes—to several mild ragtime songs. In 1911 he wrote the words and music for "Alexander's Ragtime Band," which started toward worldwide popularity when sung by Emma Carus in Chicago, Illinois, that year. It is one of the most famous of all "rag-time" songs, with its sheet music having sold over one million copies.

Berlin's fame continued to grow. He wrote his first complete musical score in 1914, *Watch Your Step*, followed by *Stop, Look, Listen*. In the Army during World War I (1914–18) he wrote a successful soldier show entitled *Yip, Yip, Yaphank* (1919), which contained "Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning." In 1919 he founded his own music publishing company, Irving Berlin, Inc.

Berlin's most successful shows included *Ziegfeld Follies* (1919, 1920, 1927), *Music Box Revues* (1921–24), *As Thousands Cheer* (1933), *This Is the Army* (1942), *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), and *Call Me Madam* (1950). His best-known musical scores for films include *Top Hat* (1935), *Follow the Fleet* (1936), and *Holiday Inn* (1942). Among Berlin's best-known songs are "White Christmas" and "God Bless America," which are holiday favorites to this day.

Berlin's hundredth birthday was celebrated in a televised special from Carnegie Hall. When he died in New York on September 22, 1989, he was remembered as a symbol of the nation. As fellow songwriter Jerome Kern was quoted in Alexander Woollcott's biography of Berlin: "Irving Berlin has no place in American Music. He *is* American Music."

SELECTED COMPOSITIONS OF IRVING BERLIN

- Abraham
- After You Get What You Want, You Don't Want It
- Alexander's Ragtime Band
- All by Myself
- Always
- Any Bonds Today?
- Anything You Can Do
- Blue Skies
- But Where Are You?
- Change Partners
- Cheek to Cheek
- Colonel Buffalo Bill
- A Couple of Song and Dance Men
- Easter Parade
- Everybody Step
- The Freedom Train
- Get Thee Behind Me, Satan
- Getting Nowhere (Running Around in Circles)
- Happy Holiday
- He Ain't Got Rhythm
- Heat Wave
- The Hostess with the Mostest
- How Deep Is the Ocean?
- I Can't Tell a Lie
- I Left My Heart at the Stage Door Canteen
- I'd Rather Lead a Band
- I'll Capture Your Heart
- I'll See You in C-U-B-A
- I'm Marching Along with Time
- I'm Putting All My Eggs in One Basket
- I've Got My Captain Working for Me Now
- I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm
- I've Got Plenty to Be Thankful For
- I've Got the Sun in the Morning and the Moon at Night
- Isn't This a Lovely Day to Be Caught in the Rain
- It's a Lovely Day Tomorrow
- Lazy
- Let Me Sing and I'm Happy
- Let Yourself Go
- Let's Face the Music and Dance
- Let's Start the New Year Off Right
- The Little Things in Life
- Love You Didn't Do Right By Me
- Mandy
- Marie
- Not for All the Rice in China
- Play a Simple Melody
- A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody
- Puttin' on the Ritz
- Russian Lullaby
- Serenade for/to an Old-Fashioned Girl
- Shakin' the Blues Away
- Sisters
- Song of Freedom
- Steppin' Out with My Baby
- There's No Business Like Show Business
- They Say It's Wonderful
- This Is the Army, Mr. Jones
- Top Hat, White Tie, and Tails
- We Saw the Sea
- When That Man Is Dead and Gone
- White Christmas
- With My Head in the Clouds
- You Can't Get a Man with a Gun
- You Keep Coming Back Like a Song
- You'd Be Surprised
- You're Easy to Dance With
- You're Just in Love

BOOK BY DAVID IVES AND PAUL BLAKE

DAVID IVES is probably best known for his evenings of one-act comedies called *All In The Timing* and *Time Flies*. *All In The Timing* won the Outer Critics Circle Playwriting Award, ran for two years Off-Broadway, and in the 1995-96 season was the most performed play in the country after Shakespeare productions. His full-length plays include *Venus In Fur*, which recently enjoyed a vast critical and audience success Off-Broadway; *New Jerusalem: The Interrogation of Baruch de Spinoza*, which won the prestigious Hull-Warriner Award; *Is He Dead?* (adapted from Mark Twain); *Irving Berlin's White Christmas*; *Polish Joke*; and *Ancient History*. He has translated Feydeau's classic farce *A Flea In Her Ear* as well as Yazmina Reza's drama *A Spanish Play*, and his translation/adaptation of Pierre Corneille's *The Liar* premieres this spring at Washington's Shakespeare Theatre Company. He is also the author of three young-adult novels, *Monsieur Eek*, *Scrib*, and *Voss*. A graduate of Yale School of Drama and a former Guggenheim Fellow in playwriting, he lives in New York City.

PAUL BLAKE has produced several productions of *White Christmas* in the United States, including the 2008 Broadway production and 2009 revival as well as productions in Boston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. He also wrote a stage adaptation of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

SYNOPSIS

After World War II, song and dance men Bob Wallace and Phil Davis form a successful partnership eventually becoming top Broadway producers. Bob agrees to take in a nightclub act by the Haynes sisters, Betty and Judy, as a favor, so he thinks, for their brother who served with Bob and Phil in the war. Phil has always been trying to get Bob interested in a girl, usually one in the show but when he realizes that Bob is smitten with Betty, he arranges to accompany them to their show at a small Vermont Inn.

Imagine their surprise when they learn that their old commanding officer, Major General Tom Waverley, is the owner. He's sunk his savings and his pension into the venture but it has yet to snow and it looks like he's on the verge of bankruptcy. They come up with a plan to help the General out but a series of misunderstandings leads to a rift between Bob and Betty leaving it to Phil and Judy to try and get them back together.

**From the "White Christmas" page,
Steven Lewis' *The Bing Crosby Internet Museum*
(Excerpt, abridged)**

White Christmas was written in 1940 by Irving Berlin for the 1942 movie "Holiday Inn" starring Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire. Berlin's assignment was to write a song about each of the major holidays of the year. But Berlin, who was Jewish, found that writing a song about Christmas was the most challenging. He drew upon his experiences of the holiday in New York (including Christmas Trees erected by neighbors when he was a boy) and Los Angeles, but still felt that the end result was wanting. However, when Bing first heard Berlin audition "White Christmas" in 1941 he reassured Irving that he had created a winner. Bing's preliminary evaluation turned out to be a gross understatement.

Bing Crosby introduced "White Christmas" to the public on his NBC radio show, the Kraft Music Hall, December 25, 1941. Apparently, no recording of this broadcast survived the War. He then recorded the song for Decca on May 29, 1942, with the John Scott Trotter Orchestra. "Holiday Inn" was released in August, 1942.

By the end of the War it had become the biggest-selling single of all time. Bing's recording hit the charts on Oct. 3, 1942, and rose to #1 on Oct. 31, where it stayed for an amazing 11 weeks. In the following years Bing's recording hit the top 30 pop charts another 16 times, even topping the charts again in 1945 and January of '47. The song remains Bing's best-selling recording, and the best-selling Christmas single of all-time. The success of the song led eventually to a movie based on the song. The movie White Christmas was released in 1954 and became the leading box-office draw of 1954. The movie was supposed to reunite Crosby and Astaire for their third Irving Berlin extravaganza of song and dance. However, Astaire bowed out after reading the script (another source says that Astaire was ill at the time). Donald O'Connor was selected to replace Astaire, but he, too, had to exit because of a back injury. O'Connor was replaced by Danny Kaye.

Bing's single of "White Christmas" sold more than 30 million copies worldwide and was recognized as the best-selling single in any music category for more than 50 years until 1998 when Elton John's tribute to Princess Diana, "Candle in the Wind," overtook it in a matter of months. However, Bing's recording of "White Christmas" has sold additional millions of copies as part of numerous albums, including his best-selling album "Merry Christmas", which was first released as an L.P. in 1949.

The most familiar version of "White Christmas" is not the one Crosby recorded in 1942, however. Bing was called back to the Decca studios on March 19, 1947, to re-record "White Christmas" as a result of damage to the 1942 master due to its frequent use. Every effort was made to reproduce the original Decca recording session, once again including the John Scott Trotter Orchestra and the Ken Darby Singers. The resulting re-issue is the one that has become most familiar to the public. However, the 1998 MCA double-CD "Bing Crosby -- The Voice of Christmas," includes the original 1942 release as well as three other versions by Bing.

SAN FRANCISCO

by Richard Connema

***White Christmas* is a Knockout**

The Best of Broadway is presenting the world premiere of the all-singing, all-dancing holiday musical, *White Christmas*, at the Curran Theatre through December 26. The screenplay of the perennial favorite 1954 film by Norman Krasna, Norman Panama and Melvin Frank has been adapted for the stage by Paul Blake and David Ives. This is the perfect musical for the festive season, providing an uplifting feeling for all who attend. The old fashioned, rousing production has something for everyone. There are twenty-five Irving Berlin songs, and each one is a classic. Director Walter Bobbie's scenes are sheer perfection, and dancing to Randy Skinner choreography doesn't get any better.

I have always been of the opinion that Hollywood musicals don't make good stage musicals since they are different art forms. I cite as examples *Singing in the Rain*, *Gigi* and *Meet Me in St Louis*, all from the MGM lot. (One notable exception is *42nd Street*.) I also had certain misgivings when Paramount and the producers first considered transferring this classic holiday musical to the stage. I had worked as an assistant cameraman on the project in 1953-54 and watched the film's development. Originally, the two male stars were to be Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire, doing their third Berlin musical. Fred took sick and he was replaced by Donald O'Connor. Then Donald became ill and it looked like *White Christmas* was jinxed. However, Danny Kaye was between films and he came in and saved the day. The film became the top money maker in 1954.



A stage adaptation tried out at St. Louis' Muny Theatre about four years ago, but nothing came of the project after that run. In 2001, it was announced that the revised *White Christmas* would open in October at the Savoy Theatre in London. However, during the summer months, there were numerous problems and the show was cancelled. Producers Paul Blake, Dan Markley and Sonny Everett got it all together, with revisions and rewriting by playwright David Ives. I now have to change my opinion, because this creative team has successfully transferred this classic musical film. They have very wisely put in 25 of the Berlin's best songs, and they keep the story moving swiftly along. Nothing is out of place. Some songs from the film were eliminated and probably would not have added much. The additional 20 songs enhance the musical, making it one of the most tuneful productions of the season.

White Christmas' big production numbers of "Blue Skies" and "I Love a Piano" rival the big numbers in *42nd Street*. The opening of the second act, with the spectacular

old fashioned tap dancing number to “I Love a Piano,” is one of the best I have seen in a long time. Randy Skinner pulls out all the stops, and includes a little from *Will Rogers Follies* with a second tier raising up about halfway into the number, amid the energy-driven, tap dancing feet of the male dancers. This brings down the house. The “Blue Skies” number that ends the first act comes in a close second. Male and female dancers are decked out in white costumes, wearing white felt hats and carrying white canes, putting out invigorating power. The lovely “The Best Things Happen While You’re Dancing,” danced by Jeffrey Denman and Meredith Patterson, is pure magic.



The cast of *White Christmas* is outstanding. Brian d’Arcy James (Tony nominee for *Sweet Smell of Success* on Broadway) plays Bob Hartman (the Bing Crosby role). He does not copy the famous singer but makes the role his own. He is charming in this part, and his duet with nine-year-old Raquel Castro on “Count Your Blessings” is lovely. Anastasia Barzee (Broadway *Urinetown* and *Jekyll and Hyde*) gives a polished performance as Betty Haynes (played in the film by Rosemary Clooney). She is wonderful in her duets with Brian, especially in “Love You Didn’t Do Right by Me” which goes into “How Deep Is the Ocean.”

Jeffrey Denman (*The Producers* and *Cats* on Broadway) and Meredith Patterson (Broadway *42nd Street* and *The Underpants* in Los Angeles) are perfect together as Phil and Judy, especially in their stylish dance numbers. They don’t play the roles for laughs as did Danny Kaye and Vera Ellen. Both are terrific, and Ms. Patterson along with Ms. Barzee does a jazzy rendition of “Sisters.”

There is also a great supporting cast, including Susan Mansur (*Memphis* at Theatre Works plus Broadway credits) as the wise-cracking hotel manager. She has an Ethel Merman voice that is a standout in “Let Me Sing and I’m Happy.” Charles Dean (one of the Bay Area’s best actors) plays General Waverly and he gives an effective speech to the “troups” in the second act. Outstanding is young Raquel Castro who plays the General's niece. She is very appealing when she sings the reprise “Let Me Sing and I’ll be Happy.”

Choreographer Randy Skinner has assembled one of the best dancing casts, one that could rival any on Broadway. He has integrated top-flight chorus dancers with great biographies of Broadway and national touring shows, along with local talent. Director Walter Bobbie has managed speedy scene changes from World War II, New York, on the train, Vermont, back to New York and then the final scene. These transitions flow very smoothly.

Sets design by Anna Louizos are gorgeous, and many have that mid-fifties look, as does the main logo on the flat curtain. The last scene is picture perfect, something out of a Courier and Ives snow scene. Don’t rush up the aisle after the cast gets a standing ovation, or you will miss a breathtaking scene to “I Got My Love to Keep me Warm.” The lighting by Ken Billington is pure 20th Century Fox Technicolor and it is dazzling. Carrie Robbins' lavish costumes have a '50s look, especially the heavy wool, red and white sweaters with little red reindeer running across the front in one dance scene.

White Christmas is the perfect holiday musical, and I expect it will be around somewhere during the holidays for years to come (at present, there are no plans to tour the musical, but the producers are hoping other companies will pick up the production for holiday offerings in the future). It’s the uplifting musical that we need in today’s world. *White Christmas* also generates new appreciation for one of America’s greatest composers, Irving Berlin. Cole Porter said of Berlin, “I don’t know anyone who sits down to write a hit song except Irving Berlin. He can’t help writing hits.”

Photos: David Allen

Irving Berlin: Quotes From His Peers
From Irving Berlin’s *White Christmas The Musical* Official Website
www.whitechristmasthemusical.com

“America’s music was born at his piano.”
--Isaac Stern

CHARACTERS

- **BOB WALLACE** – A major singing star, Bob is the guiding force behind the song-and-dance team of Wallace and Davis. He wears his fame easily and is a born leader, but has some trouble with social and romantic interactions. Despite his occasional gruffness, he is a deeply kind and principled man who is searching for his true love.
- **PHIL DAVIS** – The fun-loving, go-getting song-and-dance partner of the team of Wallace and Davis. An irrepressible clown, operator, and incorrigible ladies' man who is determined to see his friend happy, even if it requires scheming and outright deception. He has a boyish charm and sex appeal.
- **BETTY HAYNES** – The sensible, responsible half of the upcoming song-and-dance team, The Haynes Sisters. Destined to be a star in her own right, she is nonetheless hesitant to take the spotlight for herself. A woman of decent, upstanding principles, she is devoted to her younger sister. Like Bob, she hides her yearning for true love under a protective shell.
- **JUDY HAYNES** – The younger, more ambitious, slightly scheming Haynes sister. While wholesome and adorable, she is sexy and flirty – a winning charmer whom no man can resist.
- **GENERAL HENRY WAVERLY** – A retired U.S. Army General, adjusting to return to civilian life in post World War II America. Once a powerful leader, he now struggles to run an Inn in Vermont. He remains a man of great principle and dignity. Beneath his curmudgeonly military exterior lies a warm, compassionate man in need of family and love.
- **MARTHA WATSON** – Once a Broadway star, now the General's housekeeper at the Inn, Martha has a very dry, wry, wisecracking sense of humor. Bighearted but completely unsentimental, she runs the General's life in spite of his protestations. She is an irrepressible meddler, but always for what she believes to be the other guy's best interests.
- **SUSAN WAVERLY** – The General's granddaughter, Susan is a lovable and outgoing real kid. She is very smart, wise beyond her years, and cares deeply about her grandfather. Once bitten hard by the showbiz bug, she demonstrates everything that is winning in the ultimate child performer.
- **RALPH SHELDRAKE** – Army buddy of Bob and Phil's, now a major television executive. Fast-talking, New York professional.
- **RITA AND RHODA** – Bob and Phil's two star chorus girls, they are brash, sexy, and fun, although perhaps not the smartest.
- **EZEKIEL FOSTER** – The ultimate taciturn New Englander, who helps out at the Inn and takes life a a very slow pace.
- **MIKE** – Bob and Phil's stage manager. Has a tendency to be over-dramatic and completely hysterical, but will get things done. Never seen without his whistle and clipboard, which he uses to attempt to keep order.

SCENES / MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT ONE:

Scene One: Somewhere on the Western Front of World War II – Christmas Eve, 1944

- HAPPY HOLIDAY – Bob, Phil, Sheldrake
- WHITE CHRISTMAS – Bob, Phil, Sheldrake, GIs

Scene Two: The Ed Sullivan Show – 1954

- HAPPY HOLIDAY/LET YOURSELF GO – Bob, Phil, Chorus

*Scene Three: Backstage at the Ed Sullivan Show – after the broadcast;
Backstage at Jimmy's, a None-Too-Classy Nightclub*

- LOVE AND THE WEATHER – Bob, Betty

Scene Four: Jimmy's Back Room, later that evening

- SISTERS – Betty, Judy
- THE BEST THINGS HAPPEN WHILE YOU'RE DANCING – Phil, Judy, Quintet

Scene Five: A Train Car – later that night

- SNOW – Phil, Judy, Bob, Betty, Snoring Man, Mrs. Snoring Man, Passengers

Scene Six: The Front Desk of the Columbia Inn in Vermont – later

- WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH A GENERAL? - Martha, Bob, Phil

Scene Seven: The Barn Rehearsal Hall – the next day

- LET ME SING AND I'M HAPPY – Martha

Scene Eight: The Front Porch of the Inn – that night

- COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS INSTEAD OF SHEEP – Bob, Betty

Scene Nine: Ralph Sheldrake's Office, New York; Martha's Switchboard – morning

Scene Ten: The Barn Rehearsal Hall – later that day

- BLUE SKIES – Bob, Chorus

ACT TWO:

Scene One: Onstage in the Barn Theater – the next day

- I LOVE A PIANO – Phil, Judy, Female Chorus

Scene Two: Betty's Room at the Inn – soon after

- FALLING OUT OF LOVE CAN BE FUN – Martha, Betty, Judy

Scene Three: The Barn Rehearsal Hall – shortly thereafter

- SISTERS (REPRISE) – Bob, Phil

Scene Four: The Regency Room, New York – the next evening

- LOVE, YOU DIDN'T DO RIGHT BY ME/HOW DEEP IS THE OCEAN – Betty, Bob

Scene Five: The Ed Sullivan Show – the evening after

- THE OLD MAN – Bob, Men

Scene Six: The Front Desk at the Columbia Inn – the next day

- LET ME SING AND I'M HAPPY (REPRISE) – Susan

Scene Seven: Backstage at the Barn Theater – that evening, Christmas Eve

- HOW DEEP IS THE OCEAN (REPRISE) – Betty, Bob
- THE OLD MAN (REPRISE) – Bob, Phil, Sheldrake, Men
- WHITE CHRISTMAS – Company

Scene Eight: Curtain Call

- I'VE GOT MY LOVE TO KEEP ME WARM – Company

Irving Berlin: Quotes From His Peers
From Irving Berlin's *White Christmas The Musical* Official Website
www.whitechristmasthemusical.com

“If a man, in a lifetime of 50 years, can point to 6 songs that are immediately identifiable, he has achieved something. Irving Berlin can sing 60 that are immediately identifiable. Somebody once said you couldn't have a holiday without his permission.”

--Sammy Cahn

AWARDS

2009 Tony Awards

- Best Choreography – [nominee]
 - *Choreography by Randy Skinner*
- Best Orchestrations – [nominee]
 - *Orchestrations by Larry Blank*

2009 Drama Desk Awards

- Outstanding Choreography – [nominee]
 - *Choreography by Randy Skinner*
- Outstanding Sound Design – [nominee]
 - *Sound Design by Acme Sound Partners*
- Outstanding Orchestrations – [nominee]
 - *Orchestrations by Larry Blank*
- Outstanding Set Design of a Musical – [nominee]
 - *Scenic Design by Anna Louizos*
- Outstanding Costume Design – [nominee]
 - *Costume Design by Carrie Robbins*
- Outstanding Director of a Musical – [nominee]
 - *Directed by Walter Bobbie*

**From the introduction to
White Christmas: The Story of an American Song
By Jody Rosen (Simon & Schuster 2002)**

Berlin's most famous song, by far the most valuable copyright in his (or anyone else's) catalog, is "White Christmas." But as I discovered in writing this book, it may be the Berlin hit least associated with him. Everyone I spoke to about "White Christmas" knew the song; everyone had Bing Crosby's dulcet, definitive recording lodged in his mind's ear. Yet few knew who composed it. This wasn't true just of my contemporaries, who like me had grown up with hip-hop and rock 'n' roll and whose only exposure to Irving Berlin may have been Taco's synth-pop travesty of "Puttin' On the Ritz." I met avowed Berlin fans who not only were unaware that the man had written the tune, but could hardly comprehend that it had been *written* at all. They assumed "White Christmas" was as old as the hills, its creator as ancient and unknown as the composer of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen."

But the song's power transcends its sales figures and commercial ubiquity. With "White Christmas," Berlin created an anthem that spoke eloquently to its historical moment, offering a comforting Christmastime vision to a nation frightened and bewildered by the Second World War. But it also resonated with some of the deepest strains in American culture: yearning for an idealized New England past, belief in the ecumenical magic of the "merry and bright" Christmas season, pining for the sanctuaries of home and hearth. Its dreamy scenery belongs to the same tradition as Currier and Ives's landscapes and Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." The song's images of sleigh rides and falling snow and eager children capture the mythic essence of the American Christmas.

"White Christmas" seems to have always existed, lurking, as one Berlin biographer has written, "just beneath the surface of national consciousness." Indeed, in writing "White Christmas," Berlin lit on a universal ideal: the longing for Christmas snowfall, now keenly felt everywhere from New Hampshire to New Guinea, seems to have originated with Berlin's song.

It can safely be said that London bookmakers didn't offer odds on the possibility of a white Christmas prior to "White Christmas."

Comparison of Songs Used Between Film and Stage

Film Version

- "White Christmas" (Crosby)
- "It's Cold Outside" (Crosby)
- "The Old Man" (Crosby, Kaye, & Men's Chorus)
- Medley: "Heat Wave"/"Let Me Sing & I'm Happy"/"Blue Skies" (Crosby & Kaye)
- "Sisters" (Clooney & Stevens)
- "The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing" (Kaye & Vera-Ellen)
- "Snow" (Crosby, Kaye, Clooney & Stevens)
- "Sisters (reprise)" (Clooney & Stevens)
- Minstrel Number: "I'd Rather See a Minstrel Show"/"Mister Bones"/"Mandy" (Crosby, Kaye, Clooney, & Chorus)
- "Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep" (Crosby & Clooney)
- "Choreography" (Kaye)
- "The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing (reprise)" (Kaye & Chorus)
- "Abraham" (instrumental)
- "Love, You Didn't Do Right By Me" (Clooney)
- "What Can You Do with a General?" (Crosby)
- "The Old Man (reprise)" (Crosby & Men's Chorus)
- "Gee, I Wish I Was Back in the Army" (Crosby, Kaye, Clooney & Stevens)
- "White Christmas (finale)" (Crosby, Kaye, Clooney, Stevens & Chorus)

Broadway Version

- "Happy Holiday" (Bob Wallace, Phil Davis)
- "White Christmas" (Bob Wallace, Phil Davis, Ralph Sheldrake & Ensemble)
- "Let Yourself Go" (Bob Wallace, Phil Davis & Ensemble)
- "Love and the Weather" (Bob Wallace, Betty Haynes)
- "Sisters" (Betty Haynes & Judy Haynes)
- "The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing" (Phil Davis, Judy Haynes & Quintet)
- "Snow" (Bob Wallace, Phil Davis, Betty Haynes, Judy Haynes, Mr. Snoring Man, Mrs. Snoring Man & Ensemble)
- "What Can You Do With a General?" (Martha Watson, Bob Wallace & Phil Davis)
- "Let Me Sing and I'm Happy" (Martha Watson)
- "Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep" (Bob Wallace & Betty Haynes)
- "Blue Skies" (Bob Wallace & Ensemble)
- "I Love a Piano" (Phil Davis, Judy Haynes & Ensemble)
- "Falling Out of Love Can Be Fun" (Martha Watson, Betty Haynes & Judy Haynes)
- "Sisters (Reprise)" (Bob Wallace & Phil Davis)
- "Love, You Didn't Do Right By Me/How Deep Is the Ocean" (Betty Haynes & Bob Wallace)
- "We'll Follow the Old Man" (Bob Wallace & Male Ensemble)
- "Let Me Sing and I'm Happy (Reprise)" (Susan Waverly)
- "How Deep Is the Ocean (Reprise)" (Bob Wallace & Betty Haynes)
- "We'll Follow the Old Man (Reprise)" (Bob Wallace, Phil Davis, Ralph Sheldrake & Male Ensemble)
- "White Christmas (Reprise)" (Bob Wallace & Company)
- "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm" (Company)

PHOTO CALL: Snow Falls on Broadway in *White Christmas*

By *Ernio Hernandez* 21 Nov 2008

Stephen Bogardus, Kerry O'Malley, Jeffrey Denman and Meredith Patterson star in *Irving Berlin's White Christmas*, currently playing Broadway's Marquis Theatre.

Walter Bobbie (*Chicago*) directs the reinvention of the 1954 movie musical with choreography by Randy Skinner (*42nd Street*).

"The musical tells the story of two showbiz buddies who put on a show in a picturesque Vermont inn, and find their perfect mates in the bargain," read show notes. The production features songs by Irving Berlin with a book by David Ives and Paul Blake.

Bogardus, O'Malley, Denman and Patterson head a cast of 33 that also features Charles Dean, Susan Mansur, Peter Reardon, Cliff Bemis, Sheffield Chastian, Melody Hollis, Phillip Attmore, Jacob ben Widmar, Sara Brians, Stephen Carrasco, Margot de la Barre, Mary Giattino, Anne Horak, Drew Humphrey, Wendy James, Amy Justman, Matthew Kirk, Sae La Chin, Richie Mastascusa, Jarran Muse, Alessa Neeck, Shannon O'Bryan, Con O'Shea-Creal, Athena Ripka, Kiira Schmidt, Chad Seib, Kelly Sheehan, Katherine Tokarz and Kevin Worley.

Here is a look at the Broadway production:



(front)

Kerry O'Malley, Stephen Bogardus, Jeffrey Denman and Meredith Patterson



Meredith Patterson and Jeffrey Denman



Stephen Bogardus (enter) with the cast



Meredith Patterson and Jeffrey Denman (center) with the cast

Kerry O'Malley and Meredith Patterson



The cast of *White Christmas*





Jeffrey Denman and Stephen Bogardus (center) with the cast



The cast of *White Christmas*

All photos by Joan Marcus

Talkin' Broadway's
Broadway Reviews

Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*

Theatre Review by Matthew Murray - November 24, 2009

What a difference a year makes! Following last year's premiere of *Irving Berlin's White Christmas*, you couldn't have convinced me that this show was anything more than a one-dimensional crowd-pleaser with nothing in its corner except a score of joyous Berlin tunes and better (and more plentiful) sets than most Broadway musicals these days bother to provide. But with hardly a change in material or creative team and a complete change in cast, this year's version - like last year's, at the Marquis - is an elegant and quietly moving holiday confection.

Yes, I said moving. That the actors this time around are playing for keeps in a way their predecessors didn't is evident from the opening scene. Performing a Christmas Eve variety show on a World War II battlefield, Bob Wallace (James Clow) and Phil Davis (Tony Yazbeck) aren't playing the sun, but rather trying to extract it from a sky of imposing gray. They plow through "Happy Holiday" and an abbreviated "White Christmas," with a marginally defeated air that acknowledges the likelihood that this will be the last Christmas they see. Their commanding officer, General Henry Waverly (David Ogden Stiers), attempting to cheer his troops to victory, looks so tired and beaten you instantly feel as though he knows the war is already lost.

History tells us something different, of course, and it's only a minute later in theatre time, when the calendar has jogged forward to 1954 and Bob and Phil are headliners on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, that everyone else learns it as well. But just that initial change of focus is enough to unfurl events in a very different way.

Because you believe that General Waverly rescued Bob, Phil, and indeed the entire American Army from an inevitable defeat at the hands of the Nazis, the debt Bob and Phil feel obligated to repay - by saving the General's Vermont inn with a makeshift Christmas show when it doesn't snow that year - becomes much more urgent. The fire the general inspires in everyone - including his wisecracking, protecting, Merman-esque manager at the inn, Martha Watson (Ruth Williamson) - kicks up enough heat to make you care whether Bob and Phil's gambit will succeed over both the weather and common sense.

And because there's now no question how close the men came to dying, their one-note character traits even make more sense. Bob's dour demeanor is really shell shock, and Phil's incessant skirt-chasing is his ultimate expression of *carpe-diem* joie de vivre. This lets their respective romances with the singing Haynes sisters they coax into their act, Betty (Melissa Errico) and Judy (Mara Davi), become a necessity of more than just plot - and, when Bob and Betty threaten to split, sad for reasons well beyond the usual manufactured ones.

That director Walter Bobbie has helped his cast unlock all these colors in David Ives and Paul Blake's unimpressive adaptation of the 1954 film is all the more amazing because almost none of them were on display last year. It is, however, an object lesson in how enough little changes can have a major impact. The most significant prevailing alteration has been the injection of exhaustion, and it's paradoxically energized the parts of the production that most needed them: the ones without stage-filling tap dancing.

The casting of Stiers, who elevates authoritative wooden weariness to an art form, adds great complexity to General Waverly, and explains much of what the book omits about how he came to be where he is. Clow, a top-flight baritone crooner who's a flawless vocal match for the score, and Yazbeck, a born musical-comedy man, wage truly fascinating battles as they either embrace or reject the apathy that's trying to consume Bob and Phil. Even Errico and Davi, in roles that are written as little more than shallow eye- and ear-candy, seem to appreciate the stakes of these two women who are putting more than just their careers on the line.

It's refreshing that the tortured humanity of the central characters is now treated with respect as grandiose as that accorded Anna Louizos's elaborate and colorful sets, Carrie Robbins's suave costumes, Ken Billington's warm lighting, and Randy Skinner's frenetic (sometimes too much so) choreography. And, of course, Berlin's score, juicily orchestrated by Larry Blank and conducted by Steven Freeman.

Even here, there are fresh nuances. Phil and Judy's ballroom spot, "The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing," takes on a pleasant cloud-stepping lightness when performed by two heavy souls who are determined to hide their emotional weight. Martha, Bob, and Phil's supposedly comic "What Do You Do With a General?" is a deceptively melancholy statement about how even the boldest American heroes eventually fade. And "Count Your Blessings" and "Blue Skies," both at the end of Act I, play like vital bookends of Bob's ever-evolving life philosophy.

There are more traditional pleasures, too, such as "Let Yourself Go," "Love and the Weather," "Sisters," "Let Me Sing and I'm Happy" (which the big-voiced Williamson more than lives up to), and the "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm" finale. And the sophisticatedly gorgeous Errico has rarely been better than here, singing a surprisingly seismic rendition of the torchy "Love, You Didn't Do Right By Me" that suggests Betty's life has been as tragic as Bob's in its own way.

But when one of the most memorable numbers is "We'll Follow the Old Man," a marching song sung largely by an offstage male ensemble, the usual rules are obviously not in force. The soldiers' devotion to the man who led them and their country out of the dark and into the light is palpable, making the show's goal seem one less about providing feel-good holiday fare than about firmly correcting of history. It's a highly memorable moment that shouldn't be one in a show that shouldn't have one. Yet it, like the other reconfigurations of this year's production, helps this *White Christmas* become something no amount of snow will make you easily forget.

Irving Berlin's *White Christmas* Top Show On Broadway

By Christopher Moore

As the snows fall inside the Marquis Theater during Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*, it marks the arrival of a new holiday classic and the completion of a Broadway odyssey that began several years ago in sunny California. This week the show was the top grossing production on Broadway. Irving Berlin is again the king of Broadway, as his *White Christmas* outsold *Wicked*, *Shrek*, *Billy Elliot*, *Jersey Boys*, *The Lion King*, *Speed-The-Plow*, *Daniel Radcliffe in Equus*, *Katie Holmes in All My Sons* and all the other shows currently playing on Broadway this past week.

Based on the hit 1954 film, Irving Berlin's *White Christmas* arrives on Broadway packed with memorable songs, elaborate production numbers, and a genuine feel for the warmth of the holidays. Sitting with Jeffry Denman and Meredith Patterson, half of the quartet that makes up the heart of the story (along with Stephen Bogardus and Kerry O'Malley), it is quickly apparent that their enthusiasm for the show is both genuine and contagious.

"It's all of our dreams come true really, being on Broadway," suggests Meredith, "That's what we moved to New York for. It's what we've done our whole lives, dancing this style. It's what we grew up as kids watching. It's so exciting. I keep saying I have to pinch myself."

Part of the joy for both actors is the opportunity to work together. Both triple-threats (a performer who can sing, dance, and act), Jeffry and Meredith share an affection for classic movie musicals in general, and Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in particular. Irving Berlin's *White Christmas* marks the 6th time Jeffry and Meredith have starred opposite each other on stage. "We both admire Fred and Ginger in terms of what you strive for. They did 10 films together and every time they danced together they got better and better and better. They'd do things that you can't do with someone that you just met," says Jeffry, who even looks a bit like a younger version of Fred Astaire.

"It's funny, you put things out in the universe, things you want to happen, and we'd always talked about wanting to do something like this show, a movie musical on stage, and it all came together," recalls Meredith. The two knew each other from the time when Jeffry was in *The Producers* and Meredith was starring in *42nd Street*. They first performed Irving Berlin's *White Christmas* in 2004. Since then, they've become quite a team. However, it almost never happened at all.

When Irving Berlin's *White Christmas* was first holding auditions in New York City, Jeffry was in Atlanta and was unable to attend. He thought his opportunity was lost. Then, a friend called from LA to ask for Jeffry's help in preparing her audition. What show is it for, he asked. "It's an Irving Berlin show, *White Christmas*," she told him. Jeffry saw his chance, and he hurried to secure an audition slot in LA, but still the odds were against him.

"I had no money," remembers Jeffry about that day, "...and so, I pulled out my credit card and said 'I just have to go. I just have to do this. I have to risk it.' I framed that ticket for about three years. I had that sitting on my mantle, because I went out there, auditioned for everyone, and went in for a call back the next day and by 3 o'clock in the afternoon Jay Binder [the casting director] called me and said I got the part.... It reminds me of risk. You don't enter this business to be secure, you have to take risks."

Directed by Tony-winner Walter Bobbie, with choreography by the celebrated Randy Skinner, producer Kevin McCollum and more, the creative forces behind Irving Berlin's *White Christmas* represent a Broadway Dream Team. Jeffry and Meredith both cite attention to detail as one of the highlights of the production, from Carrie Robbins costumes ("every little stitch is a Valentine to the 1950s," says Meredith) to the sets by Anna Louizos ("literally, it's one Christmas card turning onto another Christmas Card as the scenes go by," says Jeffry). The attention to detail even includes respectful winks to the stars of the film including a picture of Bing Crosby on one of the sets, and Rosemary Clooney calling on line 5.

"The show is a Valentine not only to Christmas, but to everything I grew up watching. The comedy that's in it, the style, the witty 50s banter, I've always wanted to teleport myself back to that era...so to be able to come back to Broadway and do this show with Jeffry. It couldn't be better," smiles Meredith.

"We look back on the 1950s with that kind of innocent veneer over it, which I think this show does very well...it's a love letter really," offers Jeffry.

"It's not commenting on the style of the 50s, it is simply looking through a keyhole at the past," agrees Meredith. It is a nostalgic journey that includes some of the most famous Irving Berlin songs ever written, including *Blue Skies*, *White Christmas*, *Sisters* and *I Love A Piano*, just to name a few. With its buoyant energy and spirited optimism, Irving Berlin's *White Christmas* arrives at a perfect time on Broadway.

"Song and dance folk are generally happy people, because most often you are drawn to material that is inherently positive," says Jeffry.

"Well, tap dancing is positive. I don't know of any melancholy tap dancers," smiles Meredith as she puts on her coat.

"This is a collaboration around Christmas, and it becomes a family with all the good and bad parts of a family," says Jeffry, pausing as he puts on his hat. "But it is a family, more so than any other show I've done. You come back year after year to do it, and you get excited." As the snow begins to fall inside the Marquis theatre, the audiences are getting excited too.

See additional written and video features on Irving Berlin's White Christmas and all the shows on Broadway at www.Broadway.TV.

**Just Like the Ones You Used to Know:
Song, Dance and Fluffy White Endings**

By Charles Isherwood Published: November 24, 2008

Given the grim tidings from everywhere these days, a longing for the seasonal comforts of happier yesteryears is understandable. If only Perry Como could come back — cardigans and all — and bring with him the prosperity of the dear old 20th century.

Still, you'd have to be in a desperately, even pathologically nostalgic mood — trawling the Internet in the wee hours for VHS copies of Lawrence Welk holiday specials, say — to derive much joy from the stage retread of “White Christmas,” a synthetically cozy trip down memory lane that opened Sunday night at the Marquis Theater on Broadway.

This efficient but bland theatrical version of the Bing Crosby-Danny Kaye movie from 1954, directed by Walter Bobbie and choreographed by Randy Skinner, has been spreading cheer to kitsch-friendly audiences in various cities since its premiere in San Francisco in 2004.

It comes trimmed in extra numbers from the Irving Berlin songbook, as has been the custom for newfangled old-fashioned musicals for years, at least since “My One and Only” remixed the Gershwin songbook back in 1983. In addition to numbers from the movie — including the title tune, the saucy duet “Sisters,” “Snow” and the gentle lullaby “Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep” — we hear “Let Yourself Go,” “Blue Skies” and “I’ve Got My Love to Keep Me Warm,” among others.

The plot is a modified version of the durable let’s-put-on-a-show formula used in the movie. Bob Wallace (Stephen Bogardus, in the Crosby role) and Phil Davis (Jeffrey Denman) are ex-servicemen buddies who have become a top Broadway performing duo. Bob’s wry about romance, and Phil’s a skirt-chaser, but both meet their romantic matches when an old Army pal asks them to check out his sisters, a sister act. (How do we know that Betty’s the one with personality? She’s a redhead.)

The blond Judy (Meredith Patterson) is soon swooning around a fantasy dance floor in Phil’s arms, all Fred-and-Gingery, while Bob and Betty (Kerry O’Malley) trade the kind of tart remarks that guarantee a firm attachment by the fade-out, or in this case the climactic snowfall. When the guys accompany the gals to a gig in Vermont, they discover that their old commander, Gen. Henry Waverly (Charles Dean), is now the proprietor of the inn where the sisters are to perform. Business is bad — it’s unseasonably warm, and bookings are scarce — so Bob and Phil hatch a plot to turn things around.

The Broadway veteran Mr. Bogardus is a sensitive singer with a light, clear voice nicely suited to the crystalline charms of Berlin's lyrics. He leads the Act I tap finale, "Blue Skies," and makes fine use of a solo spot on the sublime "How Deep Is the Ocean." That number, paired with Ms. O'Malley's torchy "Love, You Didn't Do Right by Me" in a scene set at a New York nightclub, is the evening's vocal highlight.

Mr. Denman, lanky and lithe, dances with sleek facility in the airborne Astaire style. He opens the second act leading a buoyant production number set to "I Love a Piano." (The colorful, spangly sets are by Anna Louizos.) With less to do, Ms. Patterson is, well, there. And blond.

But the leading roles are really just place holders for star personalities, and none of the principals brings much in the way of wattage to their assignments. The romantic heat generated by both couples put together wouldn't melt a snowflake.

The book, by David Ives, the serial adapter of the revivals in the Encores! series, and Paul Blake, is equal parts corn and syrup. Much of the wheezy humor is handled by Susan Mansur as Martha Watson, the ex-general's wisecracky, lovable aide-de-camp at the inn. In exasperated mode Ms. Mansur tosses off such witticisms as "You can shove it up your vacuum cleaner and turn it on high." Fear of sugar shock precludes me from describing some of the cloying business entrusted to the able young Melody Hollis, who plays the general's showbiz-smitten granddaughter.

Certainly the Berlin songs are sweet to hear, in nicely varied arrangements by Larry Blank. Mr. Skinner's choreography does not dazzle with originality, but a stage-filling approximation of period style is all that's required.

If some old-school Broadway escapism is what you're looking for, and the prospect of singing the title tune along with a bright-beaming Broadway cast in festive sweaters fills you with seasonal cheer — at a time when cheer of any kind is in scant supply — "White Christmas" should be put somewhere on your wish list. For anyone else, however, the show will seem about as fresh and appealing as a roll of Necco wafers found in a mothballed Christmas stocking.

Irving Berlin: Quotes From His Peers

From Irving Berlin's *White Christmas The Musical* Official Website

www.whitechristmasthemusical.com

"Irving Berlin has no place in American music. He is American music. Emotionally, he honestly absorbs the vibrations emanating from the people, manners and life of his time, and, in turn, gives these impressions back to the world – simplified, clarified and glorified."

--Jerome Kern

QUIZ

1. What day and year does the show start?
 2. Where does the opening take place?
 3. What is the name of the club where Bob & Phil meet Betty & Judy?
 4. What is the name of the famous song that Betty & Judy sing at the club?
 5. What is the name of the city the train conductor keeps announcing that finally makes Bob realize he's not headed to Florida?
 6. What is the name of the inn where Betty & Judy are contracted to perform?
 7. In what city and state is this inn?
 8. What had the area been without when they all arrived?
 9. What is the name of the concierge/innkeeper of the inn?
 10. Who owns the inn?
 11. What relative of the owner is staying at the inn and where is she from?
 12. Why is she staying at the inn?
 13. What is the name of Bob & Phil's friend in the TV industry?
 14. What show does he work for?
 15. What is his favorite phrase to use when discussing business?
 16. What does Bob propose he and Phil do to help the inn owner?
 17. Why did Betty leave for New York the day after kissing Bob for the first time?
 18. What is the name of the club where Betty was hired to sing solo?
 19. How does Bob end up appealing to the people he's trying to reach?
 20. What day and year does the show end?
- EXTRA CREDIT: By what name is Martha known on Broadway?

FINISH THE LINE OF THE SONG

1. I'm dreaming of a _ _ _ _ _ .
2. While the merry bells keep ringin,' may the _ _ _ _ _ '
3. Love and the weather, _ _ _ _ _ , can't be depended upon.
4. Come, get together, let the dance floor _ _ _ _ _ .
5. Butcher, banker, clerk and grocer, _ _ _ _ _ !
6. Sisters, Sisters, _ _ _ _ _ .
7. The best things _ _ _ _ _ ,
8. Snow! It won't be long before we'll all be there with snow! I want to wash my hands, _ _ _ _ _ .

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Christmas Eve, 1944
2. During World War II, someplace near the German front, or as General Waverly put it: "...this little corner of hell."
3. Jimmy's Back Room
4. "Sisters"
5. Providence
6. Columbia Inn
7. Pinetree, Vermont
8. Snow
9. Martha Watson
10. (General) Hank Waverly
11. Waverly's niece, Susan, who is from California,
12. She is writing a report on the American Revolution and New England is here it began. But, she came more for the snow.
13. Ralph Sheldrake
14. Ed Sullivan
15. "A million dollar proposition"
16. Bring in men from their former army unit to fill the inn and cheer up the general.
17. She gets the idea from Martha that Bob is planning to buy the inn out from under the general and leave him homeless.
18. The Regency Room
19. He goes on the Ed Sullivan show and puts out a plea for the men and their families to come help the general.
20. Christmas Eve, 1954

FINISH THE LINE OF THE SONG

1. I'm dreaming of a white Christmas.
2. While the merry bells keep ringin,' may the calendar keep bringin'
3. Love and the weather, birds of a feather, can't be depended upon.
4. Come, get together, let the dance floor feel your leather.
5. Butcher, banker, clerk and grocer, let yourself go!
6. Sisters, Sisters, the were never such devoted sisters.
7. The best things happen while you're dancing.
8. Snow! It won't be long before we'll all be there with snow! I want to wash my hands, my hair and face with snow.

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