

THE NEW
IRVING BERLIN
MUSICAL

HOLIDAY INN



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COMPANY

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YRS

UPSTAGE GUIDE

A publication of EDUCATION AT
ROUNDBOUT

UPSTAGE CALLBOARD

Holiday Inn, the New Irving Berlin Musical

Music and Lyrics by Irving Berlin Book by Gordon Greenberg and Chad Hodge
Directed by Gordon Greenberg

Jim leaves the bright lights of show business behind to settle down on his farmhouse in Connecticut... but life just isn't the same without a bit of song and dance. Jim's luck takes a spectacular turn when he meets Linda, a spirited schoolteacher with talent to spare. Together they turn the farmhouse into a fabulous inn with dazzling performances to celebrate each holiday, from Thanksgiving to the Fourth of July. But when Jim's best friend Ted tries to lure Linda away to be his new dance partner in Hollywood, will Jim be able to salvage his latest chance at love?

a note from Artistic Director Todd Haines

The title itself should tell you that the show is a fascinating combination of old and new. Yes, this is a brand new musical, but yes, it also has a score by none other than the great Irving Berlin, who did most of his songwriting in the first half of the 20th century. While fans of the original film will see their favorite moments and hear their favorite songs, writers Gordon Greenberg and Chad Hodge have updated some of the story and humor for today's audiences, with the added bonus of including even more Irving Berlin classic songs. With high spirits and romance to spare, *Holiday Inn* does something that musicals do better than perhaps any other form—they bring a smile to our face and allow us to forget reality, even for just a couple of hours.

when August 1946 - November 1947

where The Holiday Inn Hotel and Farmhouse in Midville, Connecticut, as well as other cities including Hoboken, Chicago, Las Vegas, and New York City

who

- Jim Hardy
- Ted Hanover
- Lila Dixon
- Danny
- Linda Mason
- Charlie Winslow
- Louise
- The Holiday Inn Dancers

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UPSTAGE CONTRIBUTORS

MANAGING EDITORS:

Kim Oria, *Senior Manager of Education Programs*
Jill Rafson, *Director of New Play Development*

WRITERS:

Jason Jacobs, *Teaching Artist*
Leah Reddy, *Teaching Artist*
Olivia O’Connor, *Artistic Associate*
Ali Leskowitz, *Marketing Promotions Associate*
Gracie Meier, *Education Intern*
Nick Mecikalski, *Artistic Intern*

INTERVIEWS:

Ted Sod, *Education Dramaturg*

GRAPHIC DESIGNER: Darren Melchiorre

EDUCATION STAFF:

Jennifer DiBella, *Director of Education*
Mitch Mattson, *Associate Director of Education*
Paul Brewster, *Assistant Director of Education,
Teaching and Learning*
Abby Case, *Education Program Manager*
Karen Loftus, *Education Program Manager*
Sarah Kutnowsky, *Education Coordinator*
Katlyn Rapini, *Education Assistant*

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INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR GORDON GREENBERG

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod talked to director Gordon Greenberg about his work on *Holiday Inn*.

Ted Sod: Tell us about yourself. Where were you born and educated? Why did you want to become a theatre director? Did you have any teachers who had a profound influence on you?

Gordon Greenberg: I was born in Texas but raised in New York, where I quickly became a theatre fan and then a performer. I appeared in my first Broadway show at age 12 and attended Stagedoor Manor, a magical summer camp filled with similarly passionate theatre kids. I lived for the summers and remain close friends with many of the people I met there, including my first theatre teacher, Jeanine Tesori (composer of *Fun Home*, *Caroline or Change*, and *Shrek*), my counselor Mark Saks (casting director on “*The Good Wife*”), and my roommates (we didn’t have bunks) Jonathan Marc Sherman (playwright), Shawn Levy (film director, *Night at the Museum*), and Josh Charles (actor, “*The Good Wife*” et al.). It was an idyllic place to cultivate your inner artist and share stories and hopes for the future. During high school, I also went to summer programs at Carnegie Mellon for musical theatre and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London for classics, before enrolling at Stanford University to study Western Culture as a freshman (how’s that for non-committal?). I later transferred to NYU, where I was able to major in Film and Art History. We were very fortunate, as part of an artists’ group that also travelled to China, to study with renowned film director Zhang Yimou, and to Russia to study at the Moscow Art Theatre. Our Dean used to rate us on the value of the questions we asked, to ensure that we were always circumspect and thoughtful. That sense of intellectual rigor was intimidating at first. I have always believed that art is first and foremost for the audience. But I eventually learned that respect for craft and quality goes hand in hand with accessibility to all art forms. Stagedoor, Stanford, and NYU began a great awakening to all the possibility of theatre and the value of hard work. But it’s a lesson that I am still learning from every collaborator I work with.

TS: Why did you choose to co-write and direct this stage adaptation of *Holiday Inn*?

GG: I was working with Universal on another project when this idea came up, and Chris (Herzberger, Universal’s Vice President of Live Theatricals) and I jumped out of our skins with delight. I always get excited when a film offers the raw material for a great stage musical without begging to be recreated literally onstage. And *Holiday Inn* was just that; a classic film with a classic score and a simple narrative that left room for development. It’s a show that is a sheer pleasure to direct, filled with humor and heart and humanity. I try to make the atmosphere in the rehearsal room as buoyant and spirited as the show itself. That’s how we fuel the joy machine that is *Holiday Inn*, *The New Irving Berlin Musical*.

TS: How did you research the world of the play? Can you give us some insight into your process as a co-writer and director?

GG: I grew up with a profound love for this period. My parents are big fans of musicals and the great American songbook, so this was the music that was always playing in our house. Those were the films that were always on our television. So that sense of nostalgia and romanticism for this period was very much alive for me. My



grandmother and her sister appeared once on *The Horn and Hardart Children’s Hour* television talent show. They didn’t win, but the legend seems to have grown inversely, looming large in my mind from a young age.

When we started this process, I immersed myself happily in films, books, and radio broadcasts of the era, although Chad Hodge (my co-writer) and I only ever watched the original film of *Holiday Inn* once, at the outset. That allowed us to approach the story with fresh eyes. Furthermore, I have spent much of the past four years directing the UK revival of *Guys and Dolls*, first at Chichester Festival Theatre and then in London’s West End. Since that show was written in the late 1940s, the post-war period in which we chose to re-set *Holiday Inn*, I felt very much in tune with the vernacular and silly sense of word play. It was also a gift to be able to develop the show at Goodspeed Musicals in Connecticut, where we were living quite literally in the world of the show, surrounded by that New England architecture, staunch Yankee sensibility, and beautiful scenery.

TS: What do you think the musical is about? How do you understand the relationship between Jim and Ted?

GG: Whenever I start working on a project, I ask myself what the play underneath the play is about. Why must these ideas be put into the world? With *Holiday Inn*, I was immediately drawn to the idea of what, in art and in life, is truth as opposed to artifice. And where do the lines get blurred? The notion of wanting to swap the frivolity and uncertainty of show business for something genuine and solid was also very much

alive for me. Both of these themes run throughout the show, as our protagonist Jim struggles with his desire to live authentically against his love for performing. In one of his moments of epiphany, he realizes that maybe it does take a little bit of performing to live a normal life. But he doesn't ultimately find happiness until he learns, as Rilke would say, to live in the questions.

Throughout the show, Jim has two love stories—a romantic one with Linda, a local school teacher who is not easily charmed, and a platonic one with his oldest and best friend Ted, whose life force energy has become entirely focused on his career, while Jim's is pointing in another direction. Jim and Ted experience the heartache of a friendship breakup and the ultimate joy in a reunion that shows growth on both of their parts and reaffirms their bond of mutual admiration.

TS: What are the major differences between this adaptation and the movie version? Will you talk about any songs from the Irving Berlin canon that are being interpolated into this stage adaptation? Why did you choose them?

GG: The stage musical is inspired by the original screenplay, but it's very freely adapted. Although we held onto all the beloved set pieces (songs, dances, ideas, and moments), we largely reimagined the story, characters, and tone. We have also added several fantastic songs from the Irving Berlin songbook. What a treasure trove to select from! The new songs in the stage musical are like a hit parade from the Irving Berlin songbook, including "Cheek to Cheek," "Blue Skies," "Shakin' The Blues Away," "Steppin' Out With My Baby," "Heat Wave," and "Easy To Dance With."

TS: What do you look for in a musical director and choreographer? Will you talk about working with your collaborators in these roles, Andy Einhorn and Denis Jones?

GG: First and foremost, you want to work with people who enjoy collaboration; people who derive joy from the spark of creating new ideas together, bouncing back and forth improving them. I am fortunate enough to have met Denis many years ago when we were both actors. He was always a bright light in the room and continues to be one in every room we work in. He is never shy with ideas or less than flexible—and always a source of good humor and spirit. We always see our work evolve as we discover more about how best to tell a story. For example, at one point the opening number of this show was a gigantic cavalcade of dancers, which was thrilling in and of itself, but ultimately confusing to an audience who needed to know that our protagonist was not at the top of his game and wanted to quit show business. There was an inherent mismatch of ideas, but it took a minute for us to see that. Denis is the rare choreographer who was able to turn on a dime, throw that spectacular number away, and whip up a rinky-dink cabaret sketch that set us up for narrative success—all with pleasure. Andy is new to the show but is a top notch musician and highly sensitive to the overall needs of the show. He listens not only as the music director, but also as an audience member experiencing the show for the first time. That's a crucial distinction, because it's easy to become myopic and obsess about your department specifically. Being able to see the big picture makes for great collaborators and, ultimately, a much better show.

TS: What did you look for in casting the actors?

GG: Because *Holiday Inn* lives in a specific time period, style, and vernacular, we looked for actors who connected with this language and sensibility; actors for whom the humor came naturally, and who could fill this style with truth and humanity. On top of that, they all had to do justice to this glorious music. And then there's the dancing. For the role of Ted, we needed someone who could command the stage as an actor and singer—and tap dance like a star. Indeed, trying to fill the shoes of Fred Astaire was a slightly terrifying prospect for us—but we ultimately freed ourselves in much the same way we did with the book – by embracing the idea that this is going to be its own new creation. And the more we take it in new directions, the better it becomes.

TS: How will the play manifest itself visually?

GG: We found a lot of great inspiration for the visual world of the show up in Connecticut, where there are a wealth of old farms, inns, bungalow colonies, and school houses that feel like we could find any of our characters living in, working in, and loving. In fact, the proscenium surround is a loving homage to the Goodspeed Opera House, where the earliest version of this show was performed. As far as the general aesthetic for the design of the show, we aimed a contemporary lens at the vintage world of 1946. The graphics, patterns, and colors are all little gems we found in vintage shops, online, and in some public buildings I happened upon in London. Camera phones have made trading ideas much easier!

TS: Any advice for young people who want to be theatre directors and who specifically want to direct musicals?

GG: Have a trust fund. I jest, but it's true that a career in directing takes time and mileage to cultivate. Be prepared to dedicate the time. If you want to become a professional theatre director, you should first and foremost take in all of the arts; visit museums, see every play, opera, ballet, musical, spectacle, prayer circle, paintball tournament, poetry reading, movie, and live event you can. It's all woolgathering. It will free you to dream up your own stories, and it will all come back in your work one day in ways you can't even contemplate right now. Also, live life outside of theatre. If you want to paint mountains, you have to go look at them. Don't settle for just looking at other people's paintings of mountains. Finally, write. Even if you think you're a lousy writer, write something every day. It will make you more sensitive to the process, and you may even find that you have a play or musical or novel in you.

TS: How do you keep yourself inspired as an artist?

GG: I teach. There's nothing more inspiring than inspiring someone else, helping them discover an unknown part of themselves. As a director, you are responsible for so many departments that you can sometimes get lost in the weeds and disconnect from the sheer joy of creation; the need to express something profoundly personal and human. So working with young artists becomes a great way to reconnect yourself; encouraging them to reach down deeper for the art in themselves; to tap into that soulful stream that runs through all of us. You don't realize how much life has beaten you up until you watch a group of kids experience something for the first time. That's pure—and theatrical. •

THE LIFE OF IRVING BERLIN



The composer Jerome Kern famously said of Irving Berlin, “Irving Berlin has no place in American music. He is American music.” That this legacy should arise from Berlin—a Russian émigré and Jewish son of a cantor who spoke English as a second language and survived his teens by saloon singing and newspaper hawking—is a reminder of the lasting cultural

contributions of American immigrants.

BEGINNINGS

Irving Berlin was born Israel Baline in May of 1888 in a small village near Siberia. The Baline family was forced to leave Russia soon after young Izzy’s birth; fleeing violent pogroms, they set sail for New York City in 1893. They settled in the Lower East Side, a neighborhood notorious for its crowding and filth. Just three years later, Berlin’s father died, leaving his mother to care for eight children alone.

Berlin lightened the burden by leaving school and heading for the streets, where he sold newspapers to help his family’s finances. He left home permanently at 14, finding shelter in boarding houses or, if business was slow, any empty hallway or park bench.

Berlin eventually moved past his newspaper gig. For a while, he worked as a sort of assistant to a street singer named “Blind Sol.” Berlin served as Sol’s eyes and record-keeper—and picked up some of his singing skills. Berlin’s voice carried him first to some Bowery-area bars, then to a Union Square music hall, and, in 1906, to the Pelham Cafe. The place was run by Mike Salter, another Russian-Jewish immigrant. Salter’s business practices were less than savory (the Cafe was eventually shut down by authorities), but he proved a catalyst in Berlin’s career. Hearing that some waiters down the street had composed an original song for their bar, Salter challenged Berlin to do the same. In 1907, with fellow employee Nick Nicholson, Berlin wrote “Marie From Sunny Italy.” He wrote the lyrics, Nicholson the music. The song was a hit amongst the local saloons, and a printer

error on the sheet music that credited “I. Berlin” created the pseudonym Berlin would go by for the rest of his life.

A MOVE TO MUSIC

Eventually, Berlin’s musical leanings found him a job beyond the sawdust-strewn floors of local saloons. He started working as a lyricist at the music publishing firm Waterson & Snyder in 1909. Many of his songs were about immigrants and used ethnic humor—a fact that would later embarrass him, though the practice was common at the time. His 1911 song “Alexander’s Ragtime Band” proved to be his first international hit; a 1940 *New York Times* article dubbed it “the overture to the Jazz Age.” Crowned the “King of Tin Pan Alley,” Berlin’s star began to rise. He wrote his first full score, for the musical revue *Watch Your Step*, in 1914.

In 1917, a few months after becoming a US citizen, Berlin was drafted into the Army. His military career, too, quickly became an opportunity to make music. Used to late-night hours, he despised the early mornings of the army. When the opportunity came to write a fundraising show for the troops, he jumped at the chance – and requested that he be allowed to work through the night and skip the morning wake-up call. His general agreed, and thus came the show *Yip, Yip, Yaphank* and the song “Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning.” (Apparently, Berlin *really* hated to get up in the morning; the song also appeared in his WWII show *This is the Army*.)

After the war, there was a new appetite for homegrown music, rather than imported operettas. In 1919, Berlin established the Irving Berlin Music Corporation so that he could publish his own songs. A natural businessman, Berlin recognized that retaining the copyrights for his own work was of major importance. Over the course of his career, he proudly bought back the copyrights to all of his early work, as well.

A PROLIFIC CAREER

Berlin was an immensely prolific writer, with a catalogue boasting some 1,500 songs. He could write four or five songs in a night and might keep one of ten efforts. He was unsentimental about his inspiration (more “make a living” than “honor the muse”) and unapologetic about reusing material. In his *New York Times* obituary, the paper noted that, “When someone admired one of his melodies, Mr. Berlin was quick to say: ‘I like it, too. I’ve used it lots of times.’”

“You know, I have an idea that the popular songs of a country give a true picture of its history. When you hear the ‘Marseillaise’ you can almost see the French Revolution. I think it would be worth while for some one to write a history of our country from its songs.”

-Irving Berlin, 1940

Never able to fully read or write music, Berlin could pick out a tune on a piano but couldn't write harmonies or transpose keys. Instead, he relied on the help of secretaries who transcribed his tunes as he played them—and on a Monarch transposing piano, which allowed Berlin to play in the only key he was able to (F sharp) and, with the twist of a lever, change the key without moving his hands. Berlin was so fond of his piano (which he dubbed his “Buick”) that he kept it with him for decades, taking it on trips around the US and Europe. Perhaps because of his own lack of training, Berlin was a populist when it came to musical merit. His songs (at first thanks to his shaky English) were written simply and directly, favoring everyday language and one-syllable lyrics. He aimed to please the masses and judged the success of a song by its popularity, proclaiming, “The mob is always right. It seems to be able to sense instinctively what is good, and I believe that there are darned few good songs which have not been whistled or sung by the crowd.”

Ever the businessman, Berlin opened his own venue—The Music Box Theatre—in 1921, with partner Sam Harris. The Music Box housed his many revues, for which Berlin was known to weigh in on everything from the costumes to the sets to the casting. He was also a co-founder of ASCAP, the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers—an organization that, like Berlin himself, carefully controlled the publication of music in order to protect composers' rights.

THE MAN BEHIND THE MUSIC

Berlin was exceptionally private; he didn't want to be written about during his life (though that didn't stop biographers) and rarely talked about himself in interviews. But some details couldn't be hidden—notably his two loves. His first was Dorothy Goetz, the sister of a fellow songwriter. Goetz and Berlin married in 1912 and honeymooned in Cuba. Goetz contracted typhoid fever on the trip and died just a few months later. Berlin almost never talked about the tragedy, though his song “When I Lost You” is assumed to be about his first marriage.

He met his second wife, Ellin Mackay, in 1925. She, too, was from an immigrant family, though her ancestors arrived in America a couple of generations before Berlin's. The intervening years marked a major difference in pedigree. Berlin was a self-made and self-educated man. Though he loved reading Shakespeare and books on American history and hung out with the likes of Dorothy Parker and George

S. Kaufman, he was, to many eyes, still an immigrant Jew. Mackay, by contrast, was an heiress, the daughter of wealthy Irish Catholics. And she was already engaged. Her father was enraged by her attachment to Berlin (he sent her to Europe for a few months, in hopes that she'd get over him). The public, however, was fascinated—and New York tabloids had a field day.

In 1926, Berlin and Mackay, ignoring public scrutiny and private disapproval, wed at City Hall. Their marriage proved to be a happy one; they stayed together 62 years, until Mackay's death in 1988, and had three daughters (a fourth child, named Irving, died in infancy). Mackay's father—and anyone else who judged Berlin on his immigrant heritage—had his misgivings proven wrong when Berlin sailed through the Depression on his royalty checks (and quite a bit of work from Depression-era feel-good cinema). Mackay's father didn't fare as well; Berlin lent him money after the Crash.

THE LATER YEARS

After the failure of his 1962 musical *Mr. President*, the ever-private Berlin stepped out of the spotlight for good. The music scene was changing drastically with the advent of rock and roll, and for all of his versatility, Berlin couldn't find kinship with the styles of Elvis and The Beatles. Later, Robert Kimball, the author of *The Complete Lyrics of Irving Berlin*, would remember that Berlin told him that, when the sixties hit, Berlin “felt very much as if he were like a storekeeper... and the people were no longer interested in buying what he had to sell.” As a result, Berlin “decided... to close down the store.”

For the last twenty-five years of his life, until his death in 1989, Berlin rarely left his Beekman Place townhouse, though he made frequent phone calls to keep in touch with friends and family. Always known for being generous of praise with his colleagues, he was known to make phone calls complimenting the work of his fellow musicians. Mackay stayed with him throughout, until her death a year before Berlin's. She perhaps forgave his eccentric behavior as just another unique aspect of their partnership. Years before, Berlin's daughter Linda recalled, her mother had told her to take her elbows off of the dinner table. When young Linda protested that her father had his elbows on the table, too, Mackay replied, “That's different. Your father is a genius.”•

INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR CORBIN BLEU

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke to actor Corbin Bleu about preparing for the role of Ted Hanover in *Holiday Inn*.

Ted Sod: Why did you choose to do the stage musical adaptation of *Holiday Inn* and the role of Ted Hanover?

Corbin Bleu: I have always been a fan of traditional musical theatre and Irving Berlin. When you think of Berlin's music, it is really the foundation of American musical theatre. *Holiday Inn* is based on the movie musical that starred Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire... two legends of that genre. Fred Astaire has always been a big inspiration for me, and tap dancing has been a huge part of my life since I was two years old. So, for me, the opportunity to tap as well as to originate a role on Broadway made it easy to say, "Yes!" I've taken over roles on Broadway before, and I loved being part of those shows. I felt like they were exactly what I needed at the time. Those shows gave me the chance to understand a Broadway schedule and what it takes to be in a Broadway musical, which requires every ounce of your being. I am very excited to create the role of Ted from scratch at Roundabout. I'm looking forward to the challenge.

TS: How much preparation do you do for a role like this?

CB: When I first started delving into the character of Ted, I was studying the time period and basing my ideas off of the movie. When Gordon Greenberg, the director, and I started working together, he really wanted to break that down and strip that away. He wanted it to be less about the period and more modern. It was a little bit of a shock at first. But when you see something through someone else's eyes, it can be a great awakening. It makes so much sense to approach the work naturally and relate it to our time. That's the thing with a lot of traditional musical theatre shows. People will go to them and it just doesn't translate anymore, it doesn't connect, and it can be very boring or it can feel contrived. Gordon is really trying to do this period musical differently. He is really trying to capture, stylistically, the music and dance of the time, but as far as the tone of the show, he really wants it to feel more contemporary.

TS: Can you talk a little bit about your process as an actor? What's important to you?

CB: It depends on the project. With a show like this, I think that the dancing is going to be a very big part of the equation for me. Ted Hanover is very suave and debonair and full of himself. The ladies love him, and a lot of it has to do with his talent and his ability. So the dancing is a huge aspect of the process for me. I think that when you watch Fred Astaire, it's mind-blowing. His dancing is so intricate and complicated, and yet he makes it look like it's effortless. That ease comes with time. It really is just putting in hours, so I'm going to be working diligently with Denis Jones, the choreographer. I know he's going to be pushing me, but my plan is to also push him. I really, really want to try and push the boundaries as far as I can with the dancing in this show. As far as character and the scene work is concerned, I really just want to pick Gordon's brain and understand his vision because we all just need to be on the same page. You try as an actor to do your own homework and research, but a lot of the time you've prepped something that's not necessarily what you needed. I think we have to ask ourselves: What's entertaining? What touches people? It's our job to tell a story that's interesting and that people connect and relate to.



Corbin Bleu

TS: A big part of the story is the relationship between Ted and Jim. Do you sense that they're like brothers and that they're somewhat competitive?

CB: I think that they're very competitive, Ted probably even more so than Jim. Ted is about himself; he wants the limelight, he wants to be a star, he wants to be the best, and it comes from greed. With Jim, I think it's something a bit deeper than that, and that's why he ends up leaving the business. I'm really looking forward to working with Bryce Pinkham, who is playing Jim. I saw him in *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, and I thought he was fantastic, and just getting a chance to read with him during the audition process was exciting.

TS: What do you think the musical is about?

CB: I think it's about how everybody approaches their life's work differently. Yes, the backdrop is American holidays and the hotel, but I think the audience sees what being alive means to each one of the main characters. *Holiday Inn* encompasses the entertainment industry through the lens of the holidays we celebrate. It's wonderful to be in a show that is about celebrating because we're in a time right now where we could use it. There's so much uncertainty and turmoil in the world, and sometimes just to be able to experience the joy of characters for a few hours on Broadway is a relief.

TS: What do you look for from a director, musical director and choreographer?

CB: What I love in a director, and I see it in Gordon, is someone who knows what they want. There's a big difference between a director

who knows what they want and is able to trust their actors to find it, and someone who just barks and doesn't also understand how to communicate. Gordon—I think because of his background—knows how to communicate with his actors, and he has a vision. Denis, the choreographer, is someone who doesn't just choreograph and teach, he really pays attention to the actors and story to find what can organically flow in the movement. And I think he wants to take the dancing up a notch and showcase it differently. As for the musical direction, I think that's where our footing is in terms of remaining in the classical world. Irving Berlin's music is hard to mess with. I know there are certain pieces that we're speeding up tempo-wise and we're giving them some zhoosh, but for the most part, the songs are classic and beloved by the audience.

TS: Where did you get your training? I read that you moved from Brooklyn, where you were born, to Los Angeles when you were about seven, is that true?

CB: Yes! Because I grew up in this industry, a lot of my teaching has been experiential. I was thrust into it at such a young age, and when I say thrust—I gravitated towards it. My father is an actor as well, and my mom used to do it. I have three younger sisters; none of them do it. They're all interested in the medical field, but from the get-go, I was always drawn to it. I was blessed and lucky enough to be able to start so young. I worked off-Broadway when I was six.

TS: And did you have any schooling prior to Los Angeles, or was all of your schooling in Los Angeles?

CB: All of my schooling was in LA. The high school that I went to is a performing arts school called LACHSA, Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. I didn't go to college, although I was accepted into Stanford. I started working and having a degree of success early on, and I needed to continue to push forward, so a lot of my schooling has been on my own. I've always tried to keep myself as well-rounded as possible and extend my work through all facets of the arts. I've always done everything from theatre to film and television and music, and more recently, hosting.



Corbin Bleu and Bryce Pinkham rehearsing for *Holiday Inn*

Photo: Jenny Anderson

TS: Was your father a role model for you as a performer?

CB: Yes, very much so. I still will go and run lines with him and take direction from him. From the beginning, he's always been there.

TS: I'm curious if you have advice for a young person who thinks that they might want to do what you do.

CB: Know your intentions. It's important to remember that every choice has a consequence, so you need to know your intentions—know why you're doing it. If you're doing it for fame and fortune, the times that that pans out are very few and far between. Do it because you know you can't live without it and that when you're performing, you're happy. Never stay in one place; it's important to break yourself down and rebuild yourself. You can't get better if you don't keep training. Give yourself time to change and grow.

TS: I think that's great advice, Corbin. I have one last question for you: is there a question you wish I had asked about yourself or about *Holiday Inn* that I didn't ask?

CB: I think you covered it. I'm actually about to get married.

TS: Wow! Congratulations.

CB: Thank you.

TS: You're getting married before rehearsals start?

CB: It's all happening at the exact same time.

TS: Who are you marrying?

CB: Sasha Clements, soon-to-be Sasha Reivers. Bleu is my middle name and my professional name.

TS: Are you going to get to have a honeymoon?

CB: No. I mean it's postponed at the moment. I feel terrible because of course I want us to go on a honeymoon. I'd love to have time for that, but, you know, she's an actress as well, a phenomenal one actually, and she's traveling today to film a movie. So we're in this crazy business together. She'll be coming to New York, and we'll get a chance to spend some time with one another, but I am determined to go on a real honeymoon at some point. •

BERLIN'S MUSICAL CALENDAR

Irving Berlin wrote many of the songs in *Holiday Inn* specifically for the 1942 film itself—but several of them took different trajectories from what he originally planned. The following traces select songs from the musical back to their roots and explores their lasting impacts.

FEBRUARY – "BE CAREFUL, IT'S MY HEART"

Berlin and Bing Crosby originally intended "Be Careful, It's My Heart" to become the standout hit from the *Holiday Inn* film, but "White Christmas" emerged as the runaway single instead. Written as an intentionally fresh take on a Valentine's Day love song, "Be Careful, It's My Heart" both celebrates romance and acknowledges its dangerous side.

FEBRUARY – "CHEEK TO CHEEK"

Berlin originally wrote "Cheek To Cheek" to accompany the ballroom dance in the 1935 film *Top Hat*, in which Fred Astaire famously sings the romantic melody to Ginger Rogers after proposing to her. The song went on to earn a 1936 Oscar® nomination and become the Billboard number 1 song of 1935—and Berlin wrote the entire thing in a single day. "Cheek To Cheek" did not actually appear in the original *Holiday Inn* film.

APRIL – "EASTER PARADE"

The melody to the "Easter Parade" refrain originally appeared in Berlin's 1917 song "Smile and Show Your Dimple." Berlin reused the tune for "Easter Parade," which he featured in his 1933 musical revue *As Thousands Cheer*, a satire of world events and newspaper headlines of the time. "Easter Parade" went on to be included in several films, including *Alexander's Ragtime Band* (1938) and *Easter Parade* (1948) in addition to *Holiday Inn*.



Judy Garland in the film *Easter Parade*



Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire in *Top Hat*, which featured the song "Cheek to Cheek"

JULY – "SONG OF FREEDOM"

The first Independence Day song added to the *Holiday Inn* film was an intentionally apolitical and wordless "fire-cracker ballet." After the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, however, Berlin, in the midst of shooting the film, quickly wrote "Song of Freedom" as a rallying cry for a nation at war. Inspired by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech earlier that year, "Song of Freedom" captures America's pro-war fervor at its entry into World War II.

OCTOBER – "BLUE SKIES"

The version of "Blue Skies" heard in this musical also contains parts of Berlin's song "Down Where The Jack-O'-Lanterns Grow," which Berlin wrote for *The Cohan Revue of 1918*. Berlin first wrote "Blue Skies" itself for the 1926 musical *Betsy*. At the opening performance, the audience was so enraptured by "Blue Skies" that actress Belle Baker ended up giving 24 encores of the song, the final one onstage with Berlin himself after she forgot the lyrics.

NOVEMBER – "MARCHING ALONG WITH TIME"

Berlin wrote "Marching Along With Time" as part of his first musical feature film, *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, the first ever musical film comprised of songs entirely by the same composer. Though Berlin's producers urged him to make *Alexander's Ragtime Band* an autobiography, the film instead primarily became a history of Berlin's compositions. Ethel Merman was supposed to perform "Marching Along With Time" for the film, but the song ended up being dropped from the score.



A "Four Freedoms" stamp from 1946

to his audience of the capitalistic and governmental forces at work behind even our most sacred holidays.

DECEMBER - "WHITE CHRISTMAS"

When Berlin penned "White Christmas"—perhaps in 1940, though the exact date is unknown—he had no expectations for its success. Nostalgic and melancholy, the ballad perhaps draws from Berlin’s conflicted feelings around the holiday, which in 1928 saw the death of his infant son, Irving Jr. The song became wildly popular when in 1942 Armed Forces Radio broadcast Bing Crosby’s version overseas to American GIs. Still a quintessentially American tribute to home, "White Christmas" is now the most-recorded and best-selling song of all time.

NOVEMBER - "PLENTY TO BE THANKFUL FOR"

In the *Holiday Inn* film, a cartoon sequence directly before the debut of "Plenty To Be Thankful For" depicts a confused turkey running back and forth between two different dates on a calendar—a reference to President Roosevelt’s failed attempt to move Thanksgiving to the third Thursday in November in order to extend the holiday shopping season. The contrast between the moment of political commentary and the song’s idealistic lyrics may well be Berlin’s reminder

DECEMBER - "HOLIDAY INN / HAPPY HOLIDAY"

Berlin wrote both "Holiday Inn" and "Happy Holiday" in 1942 as separate songs and only later combined them for the film. "Happy Holiday" is popularly considered a Christmas anthem, but in this musical, as in the original film, it serves as the New Year’s Eve number, intended as a blessing on all holidays over the course of the new year. •

Press photo of Irving Berlin (at piano) and performers from *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, 1938



Ethel Merman

INTERVIEW WITH CHOREOGRAPHER DENIS JONES

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke to choreographer Denis Jones about the steps taken to create *Holiday Inn*.

Ted Sod: Tell us about yourself. Where were you born and educated? Why did you want to become a theatre choreographer? Did you have any teachers who had a profound influence on you?

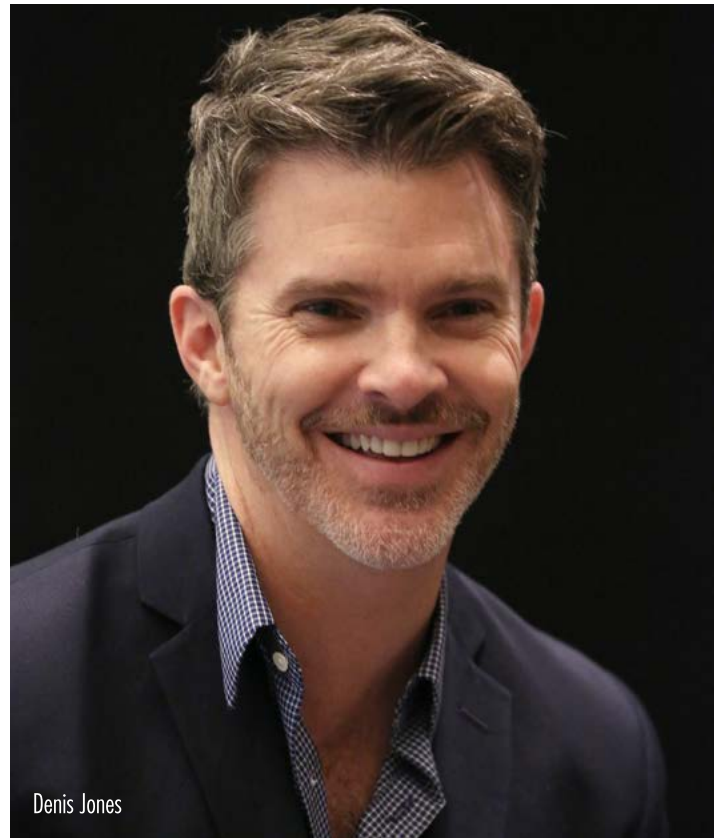
Denis Jones: I grew up in San Francisco and then moved to New York, where I went to NYU as an acting major. I was a theatre kid from my earliest memories, inspired by the movie musicals I saw on TV, as well as the local theatre and touring shows I attended. My parents were very supportive of my interest in theatre, and I started dance class when I was in third grade, as well as acting classes at ACT. I performed on Broadway in a number of shows over a period of 15 years and was fortunate to work with choreographers like Rob Marshall, Rob Ashford, Tommy Tune, Ann Reinking, Jeff Calhoun, and Jerry Mitchell. I later became Jerry's associate on *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* and *Legally Blonde*. He probably has had the most influence on me. His attention to the importance of choreography as an essential component of storytelling, as well as his relationship to his dancers as a compassionate leader, taught me a great deal, and I hope I carry that with me every day. I was very inspired by movie musicals as a kid. While my friends had posters of *Star Wars*, the walls of my room were covered with posters of Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly. Their stylish and smooth athleticism had an enormous impact on me.

TS: How did you research the world of the play? How did you prepare to choreograph a stage version of a movie musical like this? Can you give us some insight into your process as a choreographer?

DJ: I have seen the *Holiday Inn* film many times and certainly hope that the stage adaptation celebrates the original, but my goals are not in any way to replicate the choreography. I am very inspired by the dances Fred Astaire does in the film (and what choreographer wouldn't be?), but *Holiday Inn*, *The New Irving Berlin Musical* is its own thing, and the dances will be built for and on the amazing dancers in the cast. My only goal is to make them look good in a way that is authentic to them, not to try to impose someone else's style on them, while still honoring the genre and period. I often tell dancers, "If you don't look good, I don't look good." I see the film as an extremely exciting jumping-off place. My process always starts with the script and the music. I actually try to avoid doing any visual research of dance from the period until I'm very far down the road conceiving dances, as the work of others can get in my head in a way that hangs me up. I usually start in a dance studio alone with the music, and I walk around in a circle. I know that makes me sound like a crazy person, but that's what it is. I have a close circle of dancer friends/collaborators with whom I spend long days creating and filming dance, which I then spend my evenings poring over. There are hundreds and hundreds of short videos of dance vocabulary for *Holiday Inn*. A lot of it gets thrown out, but I use them as puzzle pieces to put together a larger picture.

TS: What do you think the musical is about?

DJ: I think the musical is ultimately about discovering your authentic self and giving that place a home. Whether that be Jim wanting a simple life to share with the woman he loves or Ted only being interested in the bright lights of show business. This creates a tug of war with the women in their lives, but in the end everyone finds home.



Denis Jones

TS: Will you talk about working with your collaborators: Gordon Greenberg, the director and co-librettist, and Andy Einhorn, the musical director?

DJ: Collaborating with Gordon (which I have a number of times now) and Andy is a pleasure. I think mostly because the departmental lines are a bit blurry such that we can all meet in a grey area of sorts to discover what's best for the show, not just for one department. I certainly don't have all the answers going into a process and am dependent on a strong collaborative relationship. I particularly enjoy that process early on when you don't necessarily feel like you have to solve problems but see what doors start to open when facing challenges.

TS: What did you look for in casting the dancers?

DJ: Honestly, casting the dancers for *Holiday Inn* (and I saw many wonderful, highly-skilled dancers for this) came down to who made me smile. It was a very important component when casting dancers for a show like this. There is a great deal of dancing in the show, and New York is full of excellent dancers, but the ones who dance with joy and abandon, who are playful and mischievous when they dance, who dance as if nobody is watching them, those are the ones I'm most attracted to.

TS: What inspires you as an artist?

DJ: I am continually inspired by the dancers I work with. Sometimes I'll come into the room with an idea that seemed amazing in my head but makes no sense on actual bodies, and then, through the collaborative

process with dancers and the sharing of ideas, a path starts to emerge and something magical happens. It's that collaboration that inspires me and is my favorite part. Some days it doesn't happen and we end up with nothing, but some days I walk out of the studio being the happiest guy in New York. •



Bryce Pinkham, Gordon Greenberg, and Denis Jones in rehearsal for *Holiday Inn*



Corbin Bleu, Bryce Pinkham, and Denis Jones in rehearsal for *Holiday Inn*



Photos: Jenny Anderson

The Company of *Holiday Inn* in rehearsal

LIGHTS, CAMERA, HOLIDAY!



Bing Crosby
in 1942

13 Sparkling Holiday Hits!
10 Bing Crosby Vocals!
6 Fred Astaire Dances!
2 Lovely Leading Ladies!



Fred Astaire in
Daddy Long Legs, 1955

Thus hails the original trailer for Paramount's 1942 film *Holiday Inn*. Opening just after America had entered World War II, *Holiday Inn* earned public adoration, critical acclaim, Academy Award® nominations, and record box office gross.

The original idea was hatched almost 10 years earlier. Following the success of the song "Easter Parade" in the 1933 Broadway revue *As Thousands Cheer*, Irving Berlin conceived a revue based on major holidays. Before it was produced, Berlin pitched the idea to film director Mark Sandrich, with whom he had worked on three Fred Astaire/Ginger Rogers films (*Top Hat*, *Follow the Fleet*, and *Carefree*) for RKO. Sandrich had become one of Hollywood's leading musical directors, and he thought it could be a vehicle for Bing Crosby. He worked with Berlin on a story about an inn that was only open on holidays, and Paramount signed on.

Berlin's original concept to debunk the holiday spirit may have played for a sophisticated Broadway audience, but Hollywood was another story. With the studio, the casting of Crosby, and the larger cultural shift away from Depression-era cynicism into wartime patriotism, *Holiday Inn* transformed into a more sincere celebration of American holidays.

With Crosby and Fred Astaire onboard, one studio agent described the impressive creative team as: "solid as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—and I think (it) will be remembered just as long." But the stars' salaries were so high that the film could not afford any female stars—Rita

Hayworth, Mary Martin, and Ginger Rogers had been under consideration—so the women's roles went to relative unknowns Marjorie Reynolds and Virginia Dale.



Song Hits From Holiday Inn. The studio album was released in 1942

In addition to "Easter Parade," Berlin wrote a selection of new numbers for each of the major holidays: "Plenty to be Thankful For," "Let's Start the New Year Right," "Be Careful, It's My Heart." He had already composed "White Christmas," but the script went through numerous rewrites before assigning Crosby the song in its now iconic scene. A less beloved song is "Abraham," performed for Lincoln's birthday, as a minstrel number with the cast, band, and even the inn's waiters in blackface. When aired on television, this scene is often cut, and

there was never any consideration of including this song in the new *Holiday Inn* production.

The film was shot from November 1941 through January 1942 on the Russian River in Northern California. America's entry to World War II influenced changes in the film, and likely contributed to its warm reception in August 1942. (See sidebar).

The film became one of the highest grossing musical films of its time in both the US and the UK. It received 3 Academy Award® nominations, and Berlin took home a Best Original Song Oscar for "White Christmas." The studio album, "Song Hits From Holiday Inn," was released in 1942. The movie is still adored by fans, and despite covering a full year of holidays, many people still regard it as a favorite Christmas film.

To see the original *Holiday Inn* trailer, click [HERE](#).

CROSBY AND ASTAIRE

Bing Crosby was one of America's most popular radio, film, and television stars from the 1930s through the 1950s. He rose to fame as a "crooner," a new, relaxed singing style that coincided with the wide use of microphones, and appeared in his first feature, *The Big Broadcast*, in 1932. He began performing a comedy routine with Bob Hope in 1932, and in 1940 the duo made their first film, *Road to Singapore*. It was so successful that Crosby and Hope made 7 more "Road" films. By the time *Holiday Inn* was made, his box office draw was listed as #10 among all Hollywood actors.

Fred Astaire started dancing with his sister Adele in vaudeville, then moved to Broadway and finally to Hollywood. By 1941 he had made three successful films with Sandrich and Berlin. He was considered Hollywood's preeminent—and most expensive—lead dance man. Paramount wanted to go with a lesser known star, but Sandrich held out for Astaire. Astaire had creative control over the dance numbers. In addition to his spectacular fireworks dance, the film is also noted for his "drunk dance," in which Marjorie Reynolds helps him to stay upright. Astaire also had control over the editing of his dance sequences. Once a dance started, the film could not cut away for dialogue or even a reaction shot from another character.



Fred and Adele Astaire, 1921

Crosby and Astaire teamed up again in 1946 for another Irving Berlin musical, *Blue Skies*. Then in 1954, Paramount tried to reunite them for *White Christmas*, a follow-up to *Holiday Inn*. Astaire wasn't happy with the script and pulled out of the project, so Crosby was ultimately paired with Danny Kaye.

You can watch Astaire's "drunk dance" from *Holiday Inn* [HERE](#).

A HOLIDAY FOR A COUNTRY AT WAR

On December 7, 1941, less than a month after filming began for *Holiday Inn*, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and America entered World War II. The film's creative team responded by expanding their Fourth of July segment. Berlin, a veteran of World War I, wrote "Song of Freedom" for Crosby, who was passionate about supporting the military. Some of the lyrics referenced President Roosevelt's 1941 State of the Union address. The song was accompanied by a montage of

patriotic images: factory workers, armed forces, and American leaders, unconnected to the characters or story. Then, in "Say it with Firecrackers," Astaire tapped around small explosions on the floor, hurling firecrackers from his pocket. Although this scene is the most visible response to the war, the idea of "dreaming of a white Christmas, just like the one I used to know" took on a deeper meaning for the many American soldiers deployed abroad.

A RETURN TO AN IDEAL OF CIVILIZED HAPPINESS

Though the movie *Holiday Inn* takes place in the early days of the United States' entry into World War II, the stage version of *Holiday Inn* is set just after the war, from August of 1946 through 1947. The post-war years were a time of adjustment in the United States, as the nearly 16 million men and 350,000 women who had served in the military returned home and wartime government regulation of the nation's economy ended. The average American lifestyle changed markedly in the years just after the war, and in many ways these changes created the present-day nation.

THE POST-WAR ECONOMY

WWII transformed the United States' economy for the better. Despite concerns about returning soldiers flooding the job market, the late 1940s were a time of economic prosperity. The United States was the only major economy that was stronger after the war than before.

The United States formally entered WWII in December 1941. Full-scale warfare required a coordinated national effort to manufacture and transport more goods and supplies than ever before. The federal government, which had become a strong economic force during the Great Depression, created "mobilization agencies" that directed the production of industries and imposed wage controls and price ceilings to limit inflation.

IN 1940, 9.34% OF THE GDP WAS GOVERNMENT SPENDING; IN 1945, IT WAS 41.56%

Increased demand for war materials created jobs, many in Union workplaces, and people moved across the country for work. As millions of men volunteered for or were



A war job recruitment poster, 1943

drafted into the military, the manufacturing industry was opened to women and African-Americans for the first time. Wages rose an average of 65% during the war. Federal income tax was levied at a higher rate and on a greater percentage of the population in order to support the war effort. These factors combined to create the Great Compression, an era of greater income equality between the rich and the poor than ever before.

UNEMPLOYMENT, WHICH PEAKED AT 24% IN 1932, THE HEIGHT OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION, AND HOVERED AROUND 10% IN 1941, DROPPED TO 1.2% IN 1944.

THE G.I. BILL

On June 22, 1944 the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the G.I. Bill, was signed into law by President Roosevelt. The bill was designed to help returning servicemen and women transition into civilian life by providing loan guarantees for the purchase of housing, farms, or businesses and paying for veterans' college, vocational, and technical education. Eight million service members—far higher than original projections—used the G.I. Bill to obtain an education. 2.2 million attended college or graduate school, and 5.6 million pursued vocational or technical training. In one generation, a college education ceased to be only for the children of the elite. Groups that had been excluded from higher education, including Catholics, Jews, those from rural areas, the children of immigrants, and the poor, suddenly had access to a university education. African-American veterans were also covered by the G.I. Bill's education provision, and when historically black colleges and universities became overcrowded, many sought an education at all-white schools, forcing integration of some institutions.

The G.I. Bill's loan guarantee made homeownership possible for millions of veterans, spurring the growth of suburbs. African-American veterans, while eligible for the loans, were largely excluded from their benefit because banks wouldn't back mortgages in predominantly African-American neighborhoods, and discrimination in housing sales was still legal.

AN END TO RATIONING

Cooperation of the entire American population was needed to win the war. Foods and materials needed for the war

effort were rationed: civilians were entitled to a limited amount each month. Sugar, coffee, butter, cheese, canned fish, canned milk, fats, canned and frozen vegetables and fruits, other bottled foods, and meat were rationed, requiring home cooks to carefully plan meals in advance. Tires and gasoline were rationed. A "Victory speed limit" of 35 miles per hour was imposed in hopes of lessening wear on tires. Scrap metal, paper, fabric, and fat were collected.

In 1942, Regulation L-85 was introduced due to fabric shortages. Hemlines and skirt circumference were limited by the regulations. Nylon and silk stockings became unavailable, as both fabrics were used in parachutes and ropes. Overall, wartime clothing was simpler and more functional than that of earlier eras. The number of women employed in industry and agriculture created a demand for women's work pants, suits, and jackets. Womenswear took on a more masculine look.

SOME ATTRIBUTE THE RATIONING OF FABRIC TO THE RISE IN POPULARITY OF BACKLESS, TEA-LENGTH DRESSES.

By the end of the war, Americans were worn down by years of sacrifice and eager for a world of material abundance that, thanks to the improved economy, they could afford. There were 25 million registered automobiles in 1945; 21 million more were produced by 1950.

This desire was also reflected in the famous "New Look" from fashion designer Christian Dior, which premiered in February 1947. Long, swirling, voluminous skirts were paired with jackets that emphasized women's curves. Shoes were no longer sensible, but slender and delicate. Femininity



Dior's iconic "New Look" bar suit on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art



Christian Dior floral gowns, 1953

was paramount in both color and cut. Dior described the look as "a return to an ideal of civilized happiness."



FAMILY AND LIFESTYLE

The nation's marriage rate was at an all-time high in the post-war years, and a "baby boom" soon followed. Couples who had been separated by the war were reunited, and a strong economy made it possible to support a large family. Women and men in their twenties and thirties at the end of WWII had struggled through the Great Depression, survived a terrifying world war, and faced a future threatened by nuclear warfare. Scholar Elaine Tyler May suggests that these events contributed to the nation's unprecedented rise in marriage and birthrates: "Americans turned to the family as a bastion of safety in an insecure world... cold war ideology and the domestic revival [were] two sides of the same coin."

The percentage of women in the workforce grew during the war, from 28% in 1940 to 34% in 1945. By 1947 it was back to pre-war levels, despite the fact that 75% of working women wanted to remain at their jobs. This decline in female employment was due in part to factories refusing to rehire women after they returned to producing peacetime goods, as well as their desire to ensure jobs for returning soldiers.

The idealized image of the happy post-war housewife grew out of both the urgency to push women out of the workforce, the psychological need to create a happy, secure home as a bulwark against the forces of a frightening world, and the higher wages brought on by the war, which made it possible for a sole working or middle-class breadwinner to support a family. •

DESIGNER STATEMENTS



Set model for *Holiday Inn*

ANNA LOUIZOS—SET DESIGN

I have had great affection for *Holiday Inn* ever since I first saw the movie as a child, and I would watch it every chance I had over the years. It is a remarkable movie of its time because of the tremendous number of seminal songs Irving Berlin introduced, many of which have become familiar anthems for our holidays and inextricably woven into 20th century American culture. Because the black and white movie is so well-known, it was important to distinguish *Holiday Inn* for the stage by taking my cue from the new script and giving the show a spin that tips its hat to the period of the 1940s. But with a 21st century creative team of collaborators, the use of color and texture, modern stagecraft, and hopefully with some wit and whimsy, we are paying homage to a 70-year-old, black and white, classic movie and giving it a whole new life on stage in living color. My hope is that a new generation of kids will discover the staying power of Irving Berlin's music and give audiences a chance to see *Holiday Inn* as a fresh new classic for the stage.

ALEJO VIETTI—COSTUME DESIGN

When designing costumes for a piece like *Holiday Inn*, you automatically start shaping and developing ideas and silhouettes for every character while reading the script. Then you meet with the director and hear his point of view carefully, to make sure you are telling the same story. In this case, Gordon Greenberg is the director, and he is also one of the co-writers of the libretto, along with Chad Hodge. Gordon and Chad want the audience to clearly understand who these characters are from the very beginning. Then I dive into my research, the part I really enjoy, both for history and inspiration. I find all things relevant during this creative process—books, paintings, movies, advertisements, photography—ideas come from many, many things. For example, I scoured candid and fashion photos taken during the post-World War II period, which is when the musical is set. Then, I design the show; I basically sketch it. Once sketches are approved by the director, we are budgeting, assigning costumes to shops, and we start picking fabric. Currently we're doing fittings in mockups, for which we use



Jim



Ted



Lila



Linda



"Steppin' Out" Ensemble

Costume renderings for *Holiday Inn*

muslin fabric and not the real fabric that will be used for the show, to establish silhouette and proportions. Soon we will have second fittings in the real fabric. Those will focus much more on the details and the behavior of the real fabric. Character always comes first, and for me, it's imperative that the audience understands who the characters are before they even talk, sing, or dance. They'll know because of what the characters are wearing, and how they are wearing it. And because of the makeup or the hairstyle they have. For *Holiday Inn*, we are creating approximately 450 costumes—it's a very big show!

JEFF CROITER—LIGHTING DESIGN

As the lighting designer of *Holiday Inn*, I get to bring focus, specificity, texture, and color to an already rich canvas. In addition to the classic songs, fun and exciting choreography, and beautiful scenery that continuously moves to new locations, designing this show is particularly appealing because the lighting combines a time-honored musical theatre style with the excitement and dynamics of a modern Broadway musical. Director Gordon Greenberg, set designer Anna Louizos, and I have worked together many times, and our process is always collaborative from the beginning. Having already designed the show at The Goodspeed Opera House together, we were able to strengthen the visual storytelling in planning for Studio 54. The lighting helps to create contrast between the world of intimate night clubs and the open space of a Connecticut farm. And then turn that old weathered farm house into a dazzling performance space.

KEITH CAGGIANO—SOUND DESIGN

Designing sound for *Holiday Inn* hinges on supporting the orchestration to allow the cinematic components of Irving Berlin's classic musical to shine through. The true romance of the story doesn't begin to unfold until the characters leave the city and arrive at the barn in Connecticut. Once there, the music swells into a new level of excitement and lushness, ushering in a sense of anticipation and setting the scene for the heart of the story. Sound is a key component of storytelling and can assist in focusing on certain components of the narrative. *Holiday Inn* centers on the rivalry between two male characters, a dancer (Ted) and a singer (Jim), both of whom are vying for the affection of a woman (first Lila, then Linda). In the opening number and throughout the show, the tap dancing needs to be treated as a character as much as the vocals, so that the combative nature of Ted and Jim's talents shines through. The story comes even more to life when the singing and dancing both read with an equal amount of intensity and energy. Studio 54 is a unique theatre. The band will be performing from what originally would have been box seating, making it not only a visual presence but also much more of an aural presence than when it's buried in a pit. With brass instruments and reeds coming from one side, and percussion and rhythm instruments coming from the other side, the mix requires a different approach to keep everything cohesive, allowing the music to build around the audience without distracting from the show as it unfolds. •

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES



HOW DOES A PLAYWRIGHT USE IRVING BERLIN'S SONGS TO HELP THE STORY PROGRESS IN A MUSICAL?

(Common Core Code: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3b)

LISTEN AND DISCUSS

Play students selections from a few of the Irving Berlin songs they will hear in *Holiday Inn*. (YouTube links to songs and lyrics on the [PDF HERE](#)) Provide an overview on Irving Berlin (Page 6-7 of this UPSTAGE). Ask students how and why these songs differ from popular music today. Then, explain that while *Holiday Inn* is based on the 1942 film, this show features a brand new script. In many cases, the writers created new scenes to integrate Berlin's songs into the story.

WRITE

Students may work in pairs or independently. Choose one of the selected songs and create a scene for their own Irving Berlin musical. The song should help the scene's story progress. Write 5-10 lines of dialogue, after deciding:

- WHO are the characters (at least 2)?
- WHAT is their relationship, and what happening between them in this scene?
- WHERE are they?
- WHY do the characters need to sing this song?

SHARE

Allow a few students to share their scenes and either read or sing (a cappella) the song they are using.

REFLECT

Why do characters sing in musicals? What is the purpose of a song in a musical?

HOW DOES A COSTUME DESIGNER CREATE HOLIDAY-THEMED COSTUMES FOR AN ENSEMBLE?

(Common Core Code: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.6)

Costume designer Alejo Vietti and his team created approximately 450 different costumes for *Holiday Inn*. Each ensemble member has a costume for each holiday featured in the story.

MATERIALS: figure templates, colored pencils, or other art supplies

BRAINSTORM

Ask each student to select a holiday on which to base their costume. What colors or patterns do they associate with that holiday? What silhouettes or outerwear might be appropriate? How will they ensure that ensemble members can move freely in the costume?

CREATE

Show students an example of a costume rendering. Allow ample time for them to create their holiday-themed costume designs.

SHARE AND REFLECT

Have students group together based on holiday. What are the similarities in the designs? The differences? What kind of character would wear your design, and why?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

FOR
EDUCATORS

HOW DOES A SONGWRITER CREATE CATCHY, HOLIDAY-THEMED LYRICS?

(Common Core Code: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5)

The song “White Christmas,” composed by Irving Berlin for the movie *Holiday Inn*, is just 84 words long. Despite its brevity, and the fact that Berlin could neither read nor write music, “White Christmas” was an instant hit.

- READ** If historical context is desired, have students read about the making of the film version of *Holiday Inn* on pages 14-15 of this Upstage Guide, and the biography of Irving Berlin on pages 6-7.
- ANALYZE** Download this [PDF](#) of the lyrics of “White Christmas.” What is the rhyme scheme? What is the mood of the song? What images are used to evoke the mood and holiday? Why do you think it was so popular?
- WRITE** Have each student select a holiday and a mood, and then draft a list of possible images to use in their lyrics. Then ask them to write a four-line verse modeled on Berlin’s “White Christmas” rhyme scheme.
- SHARE** Share lyrics out loud, poetry-slam style or in small groups. What mood do your lyrics evoke? How? Which lyrics are catchiest, and why?
-

HOW DO DANCERS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS TELL A STORY THROUGH MOVEMENT AND DANCE?

(Common Code: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1b)

After discussing how dance helped to tell the story in *Holiday Inn*, students create a short dance or movement piece that tells a story entirely through movement.

- DISCUSS** Ask students to reflect on how dance helped advance the story throughout *Holiday Inn*. Particularly, how was the romantic triangle between Jim, Linda, and Ted developed through several dance numbers?
- CREATE** Allow students to select their own music. Work in groups of 4 (3 movers/dancers, 1 choreographer). Students create a short movement piece about a romantic triangle with a beginning, middle, and end. The story should be told entirely through movement, with no speaking or dialogue. Depending on the class’s experience with dance, more dance elements may be layered into their pieces.
- SHARE AND REFLECT** Allow students to show their pieces. How would the audience describe the stories they saw? How is watching a story in movement different than through spoken dialogue or song?

GLOSSARY

CAVALCADE

a line of riders, vehicles, etc., moving along in the same direction
Ted and Lila perform in a Thanksgiving Musical Cavalcade in Las Vegas.

CAVIAR

the eggs of a large fish (like a sturgeon) that are salted and eaten as food
Ted sings that he has never tried caviar.

DOILY

a small ornamental mat made of lace or paper with a lace pattern, typically placed on a plate under a cake or other sweet foods
The Holiday Inn is covered in decorative doilies for Valentine's Day.

FORECLOSURE

the process of taking possession of a mortgaged property as a result of the mortgagor's failure to keep up mortgage payments
Jim is able to buy the barn thanks to a foreclosure.

PTOMAINÉ

any of a class of foul smelling nitrogenous substances produced by bacteria during putrefaction of animal or plant protein; formerly thought to cause food poisoning
Red Skelton can't perform because he has ptomaine poisoning.

ROTOGRAVURE

a printing system using a rotary press used for long print runs of magazines and stamps; a sheet or magazine printed by rotogravure, especially the color magazine of a Sunday newspaper
Linda sings about appearing in the rotogravure.

SCINTILLATE

emit flashes of light; sparkle.
Jim sings, "If I begin to scintillate, it's because I've got a date."

YUCKING

laughing, especially in a loud, hearty way; act so as to cause laughter; fool around.
Ted was yucking it up with a circle of girls around him.

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ABOUT ROUNABOUT

ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY - 50TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

Roundabout Theatre Company (Todd Haimes, Artistic Director) is committed to producing the highest-quality theatre with the finest artists, sharing stories that endure and providing accessibility to all audiences. A not-for-profit company founded in 1965 and now celebrating its 50th anniversary, Roundabout fulfills its mission each season through the production of classic plays and musicals; development and production of new works by established and emerging writers; educational initiatives that enrich the lives of children and adults; and a subscription model and audience outreach programs that cultivate and engage all audiences. Roundabout presents this work on its five stages and across the country through national tours. Roundabout has been recognized with 36 Tonys®, 51 Drama Desks, 62 Outer Critics Circle, 12 Obie and 18 Lucille Lortel Awards. More information on Roundabout's mission, history and programs can be found by visiting roundabouttheatre.org.

2016-2017 SEASON



ONE MORE
BROADWAY
PRODUCTION
TO BE ANNOUNCED

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: INTERVIEW WITH LAWRENCE JENNINO, HEAD OF PROPERTIES AT STUDIO 54

Ted Sod: Tell us about yourself. Where were you born and educated? How and when did you become the Head of Properties at Studio 54?

Lawrence Jennino: I was born in Paterson, NJ and soon moved to the mountains of Northwest NJ. I spent five years out of high school learning the carpentry trade with a renovation company. I took my new skill set and put myself through Rutgers' School of Business, earning a degree in Marketing. I worked in financial services for a few years but became disillusioned with the culture. Go back in time to the summer before my senior year when I was Master Carpenter for the Mount Washington Valley Theater Co in North Conway, NH... Summer Stock rekindled a love for theatre I gained acting in high school productions of *Oliver!*, *Godspell*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*. Well, the same friend who talked me into Summer Stock worked for the Roundabout at the Criterion Center and suggested giving stagecraft a try. It appealed to me on so many levels that I quit my job and loaded out *Picnic* in 1994. Soon I was Co-House Carpenter of our two stages in the heart of Times Square. In 1998 Roundabout won 6 Tony Awards® (thank you, Alan), resulting in our unionization. My card allowed me to work backstage on both *Cabaret* and *Assassins*, before applying for the Head Properties position at Studio 54 in 2004.

TS: Describe your job at RTC. What are your responsibilities?

LJ: My responsibilities lie mainly with helping create and maintain a high production value, along with actor safety and comfort. I also have a personal investment in improving and maintaining the beauty that was once the Gallo Opera House. I have spread gallons of spackle,

cement, and paint in this effort. When a new show comes in, I protect the floors, walls, and seats of the theatre I love so much. I keep a clean and safe work environment for the crew while the set is being installed. Soon this set needs to be dressed. Working with the Set Designer and the Production Prop person, we do just that. Next, props start coming into the theatre, often needing to be improved or modified during tech rehearsals.

During Tech, I work with stage management and the Prop crew to develop running tracks for the backstage choreography necessary to support the action on stage. Pre-set positions, actor handoffs, scene shifts, intermission changeovers, perishables (food/liquids), and traffic concerns all come into play. While part of my job is making actors feel at home by assembling dressing room furniture, hanging pictures and shelves or an occasional window treatment, more importantly I strive to make them more comfortable onstage. Tailoring props to an actor's exact needs and running tracks with military precision give the actor one less thing to think about. I also fear and love those critical moments when a prop breaks during the show and needs to work again two scenes later, enabling the show to go on.

TS: What is the best part of your job? What is the hardest part?

LJ: The best part of my job is the people. The backstage crew is comprised entirely of people we want to work with. I believe this luxury has led to one of the best crews on Broadway. The hardest part of my job is the people, having to say goodbye to new friends, old friends, and dear friends. •

Learn more at roundabouttheatre.org. Find us on:



WHEN YOU GET TO THE THEATRE

TICKET POLICY

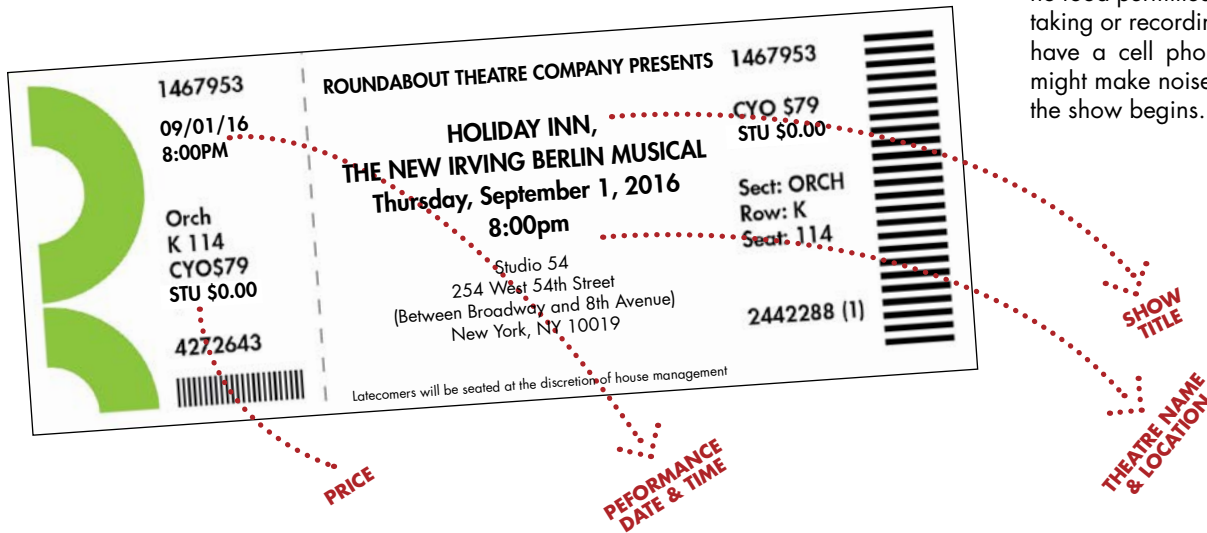
As a student, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. You will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row, and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat is located. These tickets are not transferable and you must sit in the seat assigned to you.

PROGRAMS

All the theatre patrons are provided with a program that includes information about the people who put the production together. In the "Who's Who" section, for example, you can read about the actors' roles in other plays and films, perhaps some you have already seen.

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

As you watch the show please remember that the biggest difference between live theatre and a film is that the actors can see you and hear you and your behavior can affect their performance. They appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. So please save your comments or need to use the restroom for intermission. Also, there is no food permitted in the theatre, no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a cell phone or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.



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