



Guys and Dolls Out of Town

Or: Listen to Your Second Night

by *Frank Evans*

The Creative Team:

Frank Loesser (Music and Lyrics): Started in Hollywood as lyricist with many composers including Jule Styne, Hoagy Carmichael and Arthur Schwartz. First Broadway show and success: "Where's Charlie?" Major shows after "G&D": "The Most Happy Fella," "Greenwillow," "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying." Film score: "Hans Christian Andersen"

Abe Burrows: (The billing reads, "Book by Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows." But, in fact, Burrows had been hired to replace Swerling, and from rehearsals onward, the book was exclusively Burrows's. Earliest work as a radio writer: "Duffy's Tavern." Songwriter, humorist, Broadway playwright and librettist ("Forty Carats," "Cactus Flower," "Can-Can," "How to Succeed in Business..."). "G&D" was his first work

for Broadway.

George S. Kaufman (Director): Playwright of over forty plays, libretti and screenplays almost always working in collaboration. His writing partners included Moss

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Hart and Edna Ferber. ("The Man Who Came to Dinner," "Dinner at Eight" "The Royal Family," "Of Thee I Sing," "A Night at the Opera," "The Coconuts," "Strike up the Band," "Silk Stockings.") A director of nearly 60 shows, his uncredited script doctoring made its way into many of them. When not writing and directing, he was drama critic for *The New York Times*.

Other important personæ: Cy Feuer and Ernest Martin (producers) and Michael Kidd (choreographer), whose first show had been "Finian's Rainbow."

In the fall of 1950, when "Guys and Dolls" opened in Philadelphia, the critics raved. A pal wired Abe Burrows: "Bend down and pick up the money." There was a hefty advance sale and good word traveled to New York. Producers Feuer and Martin had had their first success with Loesser's "Where's Charlie?" and were determined that their second production be at least as successful. The initial book by Jo Swerling (whose credits included the Jean Harlow film "Platinum Blonde") was rejected by the producers but under contractual obligations, Swerling retained co-authorship credit. Nearly a dozen writers were called in to doctor the book before Abe Burrows was hired for the job. Burrows chose not to doctor Swerling's original draft, but started fresh, working around songs Loesser had composed based on Swerling's libretto and going back to the original Damon Runyon sto-

ries. Director Kaufman frequently met with Burrows and said, "The scene ought to go like this... go write it," and Burrows wisely did as he was told.

This was during the era of out-of-town tryouts, rather than long preview periods in New York. Shows opened out-of-town to critics after a series of dress rehearsals, often with friends and theatre insiders in the house. Then shows either came into New York or went to another city (or cities), finally to open to New York critics. After Philadelphia, "Guys and Dolls" had two New York previews, the first for a charity group, the second night for a mixed crowd: benefit audience and civilians.

Two dress rehearsals preceded the Philadelphia opening night. After the first dress rehearsal, the producers and the musical staff insisted on major book cuts at the top of Act I. Kaufman was dead set against them, insisting that the show play in front of a real audience before the paring down took place. No one listened to the most seasoned pro in the creative team. Reluctantly Burrows made cuts and gave them to Kaufman. Except for Michael Kidd's opening dance number the second dress rehearsal was a disaster. After a hasty meeting, the cast was asked to stay in the theatre that night and the cuts were restored between 11:30PM and 1AM. Rehearsal of the restored material took place the next day, but a

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Works

In Production

THE DEVIL'S MUSIC

After critically-acclaimed, sold-out runs in New York and Palm Beach, the award-winning play about blues singer **Bessie Smith**, written by **Angelo Parra** (Librettists), opens for a limited engagement from **July 12 to August 5** at the **Penguin Rep Company** in **Stony Point**, where it all began—in preparation for a larger and longer New York City run. Once again, the star is **Miche Braden** and the director **Joe Brancato**. For further information on tickets, performances and directions to Penguin Rep, log onto Mr. Parra's website: www.parrasite.homestead.com/Bessie.html.

DOWNTOWN DYSFUNCTIONALS (Episode One: The Sublet)

Music in a Box presents the first episode of a serial musical comedy. Book and some lyrics by **Cassie Angley** (alumna), additional lyrics by **Cheryl Davis**, **Fredric Marco** and **Davia Sacks**, music by Sacks, **C. Colby Sachs**, and **Lesley Stoller** (all Advanced); based on an original concept by Angley, Davis, Marco, **Sammy Buck** (Advanced) and **Chris Fields**. Performance times: **June 6, 13, 20, 27 at 7:00 p.m.** at **Cabaret 1050, 10th Ave at 50th Street**. For further information, call: **(212) 956-9456**.

ISLAND OF THE BLUE DOLPHINS

In February, **Theatreworks USA** mini-toured its new musical based on the classic young adult novel by **Scott O'Dell**, book and lyrics by **Beth Blatt**, music by **Jenny Giering** (both Advanced), direction by **Rob Ruggiero**, choreography by **Tanya Gibson-Clark**. The show's upcoming national tour has been so warmly received that all dates are reportedly already sold out.

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM: A ROCK OPERA

music and lyrics by **George Griggs** (Second Year), opens June 8 at **Northern Westchester Center for the Arts** in Mount Kisco, NY. For ticket information, call: (914) 241-6922. A CD of the score, distributed nationwide by **Original Cast Recordings**, is available in most Tower, Virgin, and Borders stores.

MOD

a rock musical with music and lyrics by **George Griggs** (Second Year), plus book by Griggs and director **Paul Andrew Perez** (non-member), had its world premiere engagement, between March 9 and April 1st, in a showcase production, at **Main Street Arts** in Nyack, NY.

THE ONCE AND FUTURE WEB

by **Jerry James** (Librettists) premiered at the **National Library of Medicine**, Bethesda, MD, on Monday May 21. Commissioned by the NLM in conjunction with its exhibition of the same name, the play tells the interwoven stories of the telegraph and the Internet. It will play at intervals through July 2002, when the exhibition closes.

TONY AWARDS

The music and orchestrations for the opening montage to the **PBS** portion of the **2001 Tony Awards** presentation were written by **Doug Katsaros** (alumnus). Mr. Katsaros is also currently represented on Broadway this season with the new orchestrations for **"The Rocky Horror Show,"** whose revival cast album has just been released on the **RCA** label.

SUNNY

a musical by **John Thomas Oaks** (Advanced), based on **Tommy Oaks'** modern-day, gender reversed version of the "Prodigal Son" story, had an informal reading, directed by **Gary Slavin** on Monday, May 21st.

In Progress

LOVE ME, LOVE ME NOT

a new musical comedy based on **Shakespeare's "Love's Labour's Lost,"** with music by **Raphael Crystal** (emeritus), lyrics by **Crystal Deloss Brown** (alumnus) and the aforementioned bard — and a book by its entire company of actors and creators—had four

workshop performances in April at the **John Housman Studio Theatre**. The musical director was Mr. Crystal, the director Mr. Brown, and it was produced under the ægis of **Ball State University's College of Fine Arts**.

THE MISTRESS CYCLE

book and lyrics by **Beth Blatt**, music by **Jenny Giering** (both Advanced), which was recently optioned by producer **Randall Wreghitt**, and selected as a finalist for this year's **Richard Rodgers Award**, will receive a workshop this summer at the **Williamstown Theatre Festival**.

SHOOT THE PIANO PLAYER

a new noir-musical by composer **David Sherman** (Advanced), lyricist **Lois Walden** (non-member) and librettist **Richard Corley** (non-member), based on the 1957 novel by **David Goodis** (basis for the **Truffaut** film) was given a workshop presentation on May 21st at **The Culture Project** on Bleecker Street. The musical tells the story of Eddie, a musician running from his past, the two beautiful women he loves, and his dangerous and charismatic brother Turley. The show began its development at the **Berkshire Theatre Festival**.

THE TUTOR

a new musical with book and lyrics by **Maryrose Wood** (First Year) and music by **Andrew Gerle** (non-member), has been selected for development at the **National Music Theatre Conference** at the **Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center**, August, 2001. (See also **"Eight is Enough"** under **Works: In Cabaret**.)

In Concert

BOUND FOR BROADWAY

Songs from upcoming and hopeful musicals comprise this evening, scheduled for **8:00 p.m. Monday, June 18** at **Merkin Concert Hall**, 129 West 67th Street (admission \$10). Presented by the **Elaine Kaufman Cultural Center** in association with BMI, the concert is hosted by **Karen Ziemba** and except where indicated below, its authors are active and alumni members of the Advanced Class. Featured projects and writers are:

- "Avenue Q" by **Jeff Marx & Bobby Lopez**
- "Cupid And Psyche" by **Sean Hartley & Jihwan Kim**
- "Doctor Sex" by **Larry Bortniker**
- "Far From the Madding Crowd" by **Gary Schocker & Barbara Campbell** (non-members)
- "Fastbreaks" by **David Bryan** (non-member)
- "Golden Gate" by **Richard Pearson Thomas** (non-member)
- "The Girl Most Likely To..." by **Marcy Heisler & Zina Goldrich**
- "Glimmerglass" by **Douglas J. Cohen & Ted Drachman** (non-member)
- "Musical of Musicals" by **Joanne Bogart & Eric Rockwell**
- "Suburban Folksongs" by **Clay Zambo**
- "Sunny" by **John Thomas Oaks**
- "3hree" by **Robert Lindsey Nassif**
- "Women" by **Brian Woodbury** (No Title Provided) by **Dan Martin & Michael Biello**

In Cabaret

AMANDA GREEN

The Advanced Workshop writer-performer continues to topline in cabaret evenings, one past, one to follow.

Past: On May 13th and 20th, Ms. Green and her songs were featured in the "**Wild Women, Divas and Broads**" series at **The Public Theatre/Joe's Pub**. She was joined onstage by Broadway veterans **Jesse Tyler Ferguson** ("Hair," "Newyorkers," "On the Town,") **Jonathan Dokuchitz** ("Bubbly Black Girl," "Tommy,") **Kim Lindsay** ("Titanic," "Les Miz," and First Year) and **Lisa Leguillou** ("The Vagina Monologues," "How to Succeed...") and composer **David Sherman**. Among the the composers represented were **Curtis Moore** and **John Bucchino**. The performers were backed by **Tom Kitt** on piano, **David Adler** on guitar and **Damien Bassman** on percussion. The performance was recorded live, and the CD will be released by **LML Music**.

Forthcoming:—"Monday Night Live With Amanda Green": Ms. Green, backed by the entire **Tom Kitt Band**, and again joined onstage by Dokuchitz, Ferguson and Lindsay, will appear in a special concert at the **Second Stage Theatre** at **8:00 p.m. on Monday, July 16th**. Also appearing will be **Brooks Ashmanskas**, **Mario Cantone**, **Billy Stritch**, **Mary Testa**, and others to be announced. Tickets are \$25 (\$15 for subscribers who order in advance), and the number for reservations is **(212) 246-4422**.

THE BRIAN WOODBURY SONG-BOOK RECORD RELEASE SHOW

Title tells it: The newly-available CD of songs by the Advanced Workshop writer was celebrated in a one night only show at **Fez** on Lafayette Street, on Friday, May 4. The evening featured more than ten performers including **David Yazbek** (composer-lyricist of "**The Full Monty**"). "The Brian Woodbury Songbook" is available at fine record stores or online at www.somephil.com.

DAVIA SACKS

The Advanced Class composer-lyricist continues having her songs featured in various venues. *When I Am In Your Arms*, performed by **Charles Pistone**, and *Glad to See You*, performed by **Amy Schmidt** (Advanced), were presented on Saturday, May 5th at the **Women's National Republican Club** for The **New York Sheet Music Society**, who are the keepers of **The American Songbook**. And on Monday, June 25th, her song *If You Die While in Savannah* will be performed by **Gerta Grunen**, in "TRU Faces Cabaret 2001" at **Don't Tell Mama**.

EIGHT IS ENOUGH

Three short musical theatre pieces with book and lyrics by **Maryrose Wood** (First Year), are featured in an anthology evening originally developed at the **National Music Theatre Conference** at the **Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center** last summer. The evening, featuring ten pieces by eight writers, played a sold-out

run at the **Duplex** earlier this season, followed by a sold-out one-night-only presentation at **Joe's Pub** in April. Ms. Wood's pieces of "Eight" are: "**Tempting Dishes**" (music by **Randall Eng**), "**Best Friends**" (music by **Curtis Moore**) and "**Exchange or Return**" (music by **David Rodwin**).

LIGHTER THAN EYRE

The cabaret act of acclaimed musical theatre character actress and "Jane Eyre" co-star **Mary Stout**, presented at **Studio 54 Upstairs**, featured songs by workshop writers **Jeff Blumenkrantz**, **Annie Kessler** and **Libby Saines** (all Advanced), **Rick Unterberg** (alumnus), the team of **Marcie Heisler** and **Zina Goldrich** (alumnæ), and **Lucy Coolidge** (Advanced and Librettists).

Personals

SEEKING COMPOSER for musical play set in 1930s Brooklyn. We have excellent book and lyrics, strong story line, recognizable characters. Need accomplished melodist with some theatrical experience to help create memorable songs. Call **Ted** at (201) **768-3951** or write to tedrox@hotmail.com.

(Continued on page 13)

It's Okay To Say No

by Judith M. Zocchi

As writers, we wait for the day when we are offered the “deal” of a lifetime—the one that we have worked toward, worried about and wished for. Most of us never entertain the notion that we might have to say no.

I thought I would share my experience—the torment of making a decision to say “no”—in hopes that you might find the information useful for your own deal making. Most of you are probably thinking, “That’s the job of the lawyers, managers and agents.” Absolutely, that’s what they do. They negotiate the deal. But *you* are the owner of your intellectual property, and sometimes there are elements of a deal that are important to you and not your counsel. Also, remember that they only get paid if you make money.

It had taken me eight months to pitch “Little Lee Lee,” one of my children’s properties, to one of the top children’s entertainment companies. The long-awaited day finally arrived and they made an offer. On the surface it looked like a dream come true. They offered me an option on the rights for worldwide, TV, film, MOW (industry jargon for Movie of the Week), home video, and merchandising. They already had a broadcast venue and they were geniuses at marketing. Any property that this company touched in the children’s world turned to gold. They com-

mitted to my property for a 2001 launch.

So what was the problem?

Even though the up-front money was fair, the points on the back end were based on the net (after they deducted all their expenses of which there was no definition in the contract). In the world of children’s properties, the *real* money is made on the merchandising. Just a few percent of the “adjusted gross revenue” can make you very wealthy—whereas signing the deal on the net, unless “net” is specifically defined, guarantees you nothing, even if the company makes millions of dollars on the property you created.

Many writers make this mistake. They invent something of great value and sell it down the river just to be produced. (Take note, though: a work-for-hire is a different story. In that case, someone pays you for your talent to develop an idea or property that *they* have conceived—and that *they* own. That’s not what I’m referring to here. What’s at issue here are, specifically, those properties that are *your* creation and that you try to sell to a producer or entertainment company.)

“Little Lee Lee” was clearly a winner. Every time I attended a trade show, I returned home with interest in the property—so I knew instinctively that there was something special about it. The company that made me the offer did it

from a reading of galley proofs, the book hadn't even been released on the market yet. These were all signals that "Little Lee Lee" had value.

My lawyer and I examined the pros and cons of accepting the deal. The list went like this...

PRO: High visibility project.

CON: The company wasn't attaching me to the project.

PRO: Up-front cash.

CON: The very real possibility of never seeing anything on the back end.

PRO: Worldwide credit for "based on a book by" me.

CON: I would not have the "created by" credit for the TV show which would decrease the TV royalty.

This was an awful, gut-wrenching decision—because I might be walking away from something that could launch my career in a big way. But I also knew that "Little Lee Lee" was my "golden egg." So I *listened* to my gut—and to my own disbelief *turned down the offer*. Which was an informed choice and a leap of faith all rolled up in one.

And what happened next...?

Weeks later I was commissioned to develop and write the TV and Audio concept for Golden Books' "Pat the Bunny," their premier children's property. The fee for this came to more money than the *other* company was offering me to own the rights of my own property. Furthermore, I am "attached" as a writer to this project and it brings me more credibility and faster recognition than the other deal

would have. (But wait; there's more...)

Days after the Golden Books commission, a worldwide toy company offered me a licensing deal to make a plush toy line of Lee Lee and her friends. She was debuted at Toy Fair last February. The advance on that was also more than the other company was going to give me to own all the rights.

And finally—saying "no" seemed to bring me more clout with certain people in the industry than saying "yes" would have. I was signed by AMG (Mike Ovitz's talent management company). They have several companies interested in Lee Lee, and confirmed my instincts—they told me they would never have let me take the original deal.

Of course, I never foresaw that any of this would happen when I was saying "no"—but I believe if you really know the market and what it bears, you have less chance of being taken advantage of. Oftentimes, ego drives a writer's decision either to be produced or to say no—don't let it. Mine was not about ego but about making a smart business determination. Understand the business you're writing for, the language of the industry and the terms of any deal that might be made for your intellectual property. Research the business the same way you research your project and you will make the decisions that are right for you. Here again are the basic principles:

(1) TREAT YOUR ART LIKE A BUSINESS AND YOUR BUSINESS LIKE AN ART

(2) MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS—NOT EGO-DRIVEN DECISIONS

(3) LISTEN TO YOUR GUT

(4) REMEMBER...*IT'S OKAY TO SAY NO!*

"Guys and Dolls"

(continued)

complete third dress rehearsal was cancelled

To compound the problems of the cast complaining about learning and unlearning, Robert Alda (Sky Masterson, and Alan Alda's dad) was upset about not getting any laughs during the two dress rehearsals for an invited audience of insiders who laughed at everyone else. Assured by Burrows and Kaufman that a "real audience" would respond, Alda did indeed get his laughs the first night.

Raw energy got the cast through the first show and the paying customers and critics responded favorably. But on the second night, the show fell apart again. (In today's terms, think second preview). The creative team was listening to the show differently now. Burrows describes the process as looking and listening—and looking for holes. Holes are not necessarily bad because they surround the good material and either need to be patched or eliminated.

FIRST NUMBERS TO GO

Travelin' Light, a duet intended for Nathan Detroit (Sam Levene) and Sky Masterson (Robert Alda) was meant to define Sky's character and very choreographed. Alda couldn't dance and Levene couldn't sing *or* dance.

In fact, Levene, the perfect Nathan Detroit, was forbidden from opening his mouth while any other actor sang because he would roam to a totally different key. Listen carefully to the original cast recording of *Sue Me* and you'll hear that Nathan and Adelaide (Vivian Blaine) never sing together, not even on the final "I love you."

Pat Rooney, Sr, (Arvide Abernathy, Sarah's boss at the mission) had a solo dance cut. Rooney was a beloved vaudevillian and it was a difficult cut to make, but necessary for the pace of the show.

NO LAUGHS FOR SKY

On Night Two, Alda delivered the same words as the night before, but got nary a chuckle. Credit Burrows and Kaufman for taking Alda aside, explaining that he was playing his lines to get laughs, rather than simply saying them. Alda played the reality, stopped punching and the laughs came back.

IF I WERE A BELL

The song Sarah Brown (Isabel Bigley) sings to Sky Masterson during their trip to Havana was not landing. Loesser loved the song and thought it had pop potential. First fix: Take the song away from Sarah Brown and give the number

to Adelaide as her reaction to Nathan Detroit's proposal. A few performances and the song went back to Sarah Brown. Credit Cy Feuer, the producer, for the solution. Why would uptight Sarah Brown change her mind about Sky Masterson, a man she has loathed until now? Feuer suggested they make her tipsy. Now she had a reason (or an excuse) for acting so freely with her emotions. The song landed. Some credit, too, to her costume: her straight lined Salvation Army skirt was constructed so that when she twirled, the pleats flared out like an open umbrella. (Warning: Props, costumes and staging can help clarify the character's emotional state, but they won't save a bad song.)

ACTION! (CUT AND REPLACE)

Action was a first act number sung by a number of crap game players and the number wasn't working. Loesser toyed with replacement songs which didn't go into rehearsal. One day Loesser and Burrows were in a hotel room, worrying about the problem when Burrows said "You know, I have Sam introduce himself as Nathan Detroit, sole owner and proprietor of *the oldest established permanent floating crap game in New York...*" Loesser repeated the phrase, found it scanned, interestingly, asked Burrows to take it out of the script, ran off to a piano and wrote the number. It proved to be one of the most successful songs in the score.

THAT PESKY TITLE SONG

The initial routing made the title song, *Guys and Dolls* a chorus number where the male chorus challenged the female chorus, an "argument" song. A glorious, unmotivated stage-wait. So it was cut. Again, the creative team asked similar questions to the ones they asked about *If I Were a Bell*. Who is singing and why? Wise heads decided that the event which might trigger the number could be the announcement of Nathan Detroit's engagement to Adelaide and/or Sky Masterson's falling for the "mission doll." So the number became a duet for two of the crap shooters, Benny Southstreet and Nicely-Nicely Johnson.

One problem: The theatre in Philadelphia was booked and the show could not be extended. There was not sufficient time to rehearse and stage the number before the move to New York. Today, the show would shut down for rehearsals and then start pre-viewing in New York. In 1950, the show moved to a different theatre in Philadelphia where the duet version of "Guys and Dolls" and one other number were rehearsed and put in front of paying customers.

KEEP WRITING THOSE PARTY SONGS

In 1949, Loesser was awarded a best song Oscar—for *Baby, It's Cold Outside*, performed in swimming star Esther Williams' vehicle "Neptune's Daughter." Prior to its official debut in the film, Loesser

and first wife Lynn frequently performed the song at Hollywood and New York parties.

The second act opening still wasn't working. Loesser remembered yet another party song, *Take Back Your Mink*, Kidd put it into rehearsal for Adelaide and the Hot Box Girls, orchestrations were written and Alvin Colt (who is still designing for "Forbidden Broadway") costumed the number. The show was ready to come in to New York.

The first preview landed with a thud, playing to a benefit audience who had been forced to pay for overpriced tickets because the performance was a charity event. [NB: The first preview of "Camelot" in Toronto was not only a charity event, but the opening of a new theatre, where the backstage equipment was still being broken in. It did not go well. The first New York preview of "Nick and Nora" was also a large charity event with media coverage. Not wise.] Despite the first preview reaction, cool heads prevailed and no changes were made. The second preview was much better, because the audience was made up of civilians as well as a benefit audience. Opening night was glorious, the reviews love letters and the show ran 1200 performances. In addition to London productions and New York City Center revivals, the show has had two major Broadway revivals and a new touring production is rumored to be heading to New York for next season.

WHY BOTHER

Remember, the Philadelphia critics raved. Why fix it when it ain't broke? Because "ain't broke" is often an illusion. Listen to your second night—and your third. Find the holes and do the work. "Guys and Dolls" might have been a modest hit in the 50's—but with diligence turned out to be one of a handful of classic shows. And one more note:

After the original production had been running for eight weeks, Kaufman insisted that Burrows write eight new lines to replace jokes that weren't working as well as they might. The show was already a smash hit. Did Burrows do the extra work?

Of course he did...

**BMI-Lehman Engel
Musical Theatre Workshop
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Life Class

While working on a first draft of "My Fair Lady" in London, Alan Jay Lerner recalled the following episode:

I ran into an old friend from Hollywood, Lewis Milestone (Millie, as he was called), the director of the immortal film "All Quiet on the Western Front." I told him what Fritz and I were doing in London and he asked if I had ever been to Covent Garden when the market opened. "Never," said I. "Well," said Millie, "it seems to me if you are going to write about a flower girl from Covent Garden, you ought to go there." "What time of the day?" I asked. Millie replied, "When the day's activities usually begin, of course. At four in the morning." Ergo, one night I brought Fritz and Millie to Ben's house where we kept everyone up until it was time to depart for Covent Garden.

It was cold that early morning and I had forgotten from my childhood schooldays how cold English cold can be. The celebrated English humidity responsible for the celebrated English complexion may have added a dash of English pink to our cheeks, but from the neck down I was a large dash of blue. Millie, for some reason, was impervious to the weather. "Keep walking," he said "and you will be all right." We walked around Covent Garden for three hours. It was the first time I heard the Cockney rhyme language in action. It is a fascinating invention

and for the uninitiated, worthy of a few lines of explanation.

Simply put, instead of a word they use its rhyme. "Wife" becomes "trouble and strife"; "man" becomes "pot and pan"; "stairs" are "apples and pears." So a typical sentence might be, "A pot and pan walked down the apples and pears with his trouble and strife." If that were not complicated enough, they then proceed to lop off the rhyming word. A "queer" is a "ginger beer," which becomes a "ginger." I had always wondered at the etymology of the expression "giving someone the raspberry," and I found the answer to it at Covent Garden that morning. The full rhyme is "raspberry tart." It takes little imagination to figure out what rhymes with "tart" and sounds like a "raspberry." They also insert words into the middle of words, as in "absobloodylutely." I made use of it in the lyric of "Wouldn't It Be Lovely?" but changed it to "absobloomin'lutely."

Newsletter Staff

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Shelf Life

AMANDA GREEN (CD)

See the related entry under
Works: In Cabaret .

THE BRIAN WOODBURY SONG-BOOK (CD)

See the related entry under
Works: In Cabaret .

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM: A ROCK OPERA (CD)

See the related entry under
Works: In Production .

Committee chooses the awardees in recognition of their presented work and contribution to the workshop environment in their respective classes.

This year's winners are **Tim Mathis** (First Year), **James Allen Ford** (Second Year), **Jeff Blumenkrantz** (Advanced) and **Craig Fols** (Librettists).

THE MISTRESS CYCLE

See the related entry under
Works: In Progress .

And The Winner Is...

The second annual **BMI Foundation Jerry Harrington Musical Theatre Awards**, given to selected members of the BMI-Lehman Engel Workshop, have just been announced. The Awards, funded by **Evelyn Buckstein** (Assistant Vice President and Counsel, Performing Rights at BMI), are established in honor of Ms Buckstein's late friend and colleague, **Jerry Harrington**, who was a great lover of musical theatre. The Awards consist of a \$400 award to a member or team from the First Year class, \$600 to a member or team from the Second Year class, \$1000 to a member or team from the Advanced class and a \$500 award to a member of the Librettists class. The Workshop Steering

"Richard's Almanac"

(continued from page 15)

"I've known J... for a long time, and like T... and I, J... and I have been trying to work together..."

Let *I* come back? Like *I*?

Here's one from *The Times*, a lawyer speaking: "...would make a decision on behalf of you or *I*."

What I'm trying to say is that in a few years the only people who will even know the difference between nominative and objective will be dinosaurs like me. When that has taken place, I suppose some wonderful old songs will be given new titles: *Here's to We...For I and My Gal...Someone To Watch Over I...Come Fly With I...Hey, Look I Over...A Hymn to He...They Can't Take That Away from I...You Took Advantage of I...and so on and so on.*

R₁ I₁ C₃ H₄ A₁ R₁ D₂ S₁
A₁ L₁ M₂ A₁ N₁ A₁ C₃

by Richard Engquist

People who moan and grumble that the American musical is dead or dying must be in some dark dream world.

Today, May 18, 2001, is as good a time for lovers of the musical theatre to be alive and in New York as any day in my memory. On Broadway we have seven classic scores (in alphabetical order): "Annie Get Your Gun", "Cabaret", "Chicago", "Follies", "42nd Street", "Kiss Me Kate" and "The Music Man."

Add to that two new smash hits, "The Full Monty" and "The Producers." And to that the long-running crows-pleasers "Beauty and the Beast", "Rent" and "The Lion King." Need we mention the everlasting tourist attractions "Les Misérables" and "The Phantom of the Opera"? Could we overlook the oddities, each with strong appeal for a particular audience: "Aida", "Contact", "Fosse", "The Rocky Horror Show", the very classy "A Class Act," and the substantial revival of a 50's favorite, "Bells Are Ringing"?

And that's not to mention Off-Broadway, where we could begin with "The Fantasticks!," still

bouncing along after more than forty years, and give a nod to the bizarre newcomer "Bat Boy."

Far from looking moribund, the American musical seems more alive than ever. These are great days for fans with a lot of free time and very deep pockets.

Today's *New York Times* announces that the Off-Broadway musical "Urinetown" is moving to Broadway in July. It will be interesting to see if this oddly wonderful new piece finds a mainstream audience. I was much taken with it for several reasons: the score and the book are robust and off-the-wall, the performance dazzling, and the show is actually *about* something important.

Watching it took me back to a lot of "thesis" shows of decades ago—"Of Thee I Sing," "Bloomer Girl," "Finian's Rainbow," "The Cradle Will Rock," and supremely "The Threepenny Opera." "Urinetown" has the high energy of pop culture coupled with a social conscience and served up with a generous dollop of burlesque and a dash of Grand Guignol—what a

weird and witty combination!

Satire? Of course, with the twin aims of all good satire: to poke holes in human folly and to preach. That "Urinetown" succeeds in both of these aims is a tribute to the two writers. Hats off to them!

(On a parochial note, the composer/co-lyricist Mark Hollmann "did" Skip Kennon's First Year workshop here, and part of the Second Year workshop as well.)

Musicals which deal with serious themes in a comic way are so rare nowadays that to encounter one is like getting a jolt of adrenaline. I spend a lot of time telling writers, "Don't preach!" Propaganda in the theatre is usually deadly. But "Urinetown" reminds me that preaching can be very stimulating.

It's also intriguing to trace the antecedents of a piece like "Urinetown," which clearly owes a lot to "The Threepenny Opera" of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill. But that masterpiece was modeled on John Gay's "The Beggar's Opera," which was a take-off on Italian opera of the period mixed with popular ballads and political satire. I suppose, with a bit of effort, we could trace the inspiration all the way back to Aristophanes, or even the acerbic writer of the Biblical book of *Jonah*.

At any rate, the re-emergence of shows that take pot-shots at corruption, pretension and conformity is a welcome sign. Thanks, Mel Brooks, for trashing political correctness! Now if we had a new crop of writers and performers who could put on the mantle of

Mort Sahl, Tom Lehrer, E. Y. Harburg, Marc Blitzstein, Lenny Bruce, Richard Pryor and (supply your own list), wouldn't that be fun?

Where is W. C. Fields, now that we need him? Where are Charles Chaplin, Dorothy Parker and Mae West? Oh, well, perhaps their spiritual successors are in the wings, getting ready to puncture the latest lies and pieties with a razor-sharp turn of phrase or an insouciant tilt of the eyebrow. Let's hope!

Some months ago in this space I commented on the—to me—inexplicable emergence of a new construction in English, substituting nominative-case pronouns for objective case, as in "between you and me" metamorphosing into "between you and I." It was my idea that younger writers with a more casual grounding in the language might want to know about THE-OBJECT-OF-THE-PREPOSITION, ETC., in order to have a better understanding of Standard English.

Well, kids, forget it! It's too late! It's not just young people who are turning English on its head, but professional writers of a certain age and other professionals as well. Here are some recent quotes from "The Dramatist":

"I'd rather do a draft, then let D... and I come back with a rough version..."

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