



CHORALE NOTES

April, 2013

Join us in
A New York State of Mind
on Friday, April 26th!!!!

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Our only full performance of our "New York State of Mind" concert will be Friday, April 26th at 7:00 pm at Open Door Baptist Church in Culpeper. Admission will be: \$10 adult, \$5 child and \$25 family. We hope you'll come!



The Director's Corner — Carole Tomhave

*Give my regards to Broadway
Remember me to Herald Square*

Hello!

This refrain is running through my head today (that's called an earworm, by the way), and it's making me think about my many memories of New York City. Last time around, I wrote about the great food that is to be had in the Big Apple. Today, I'm thinking more of the city itself, with her many faces and moods.

I remember performing there—at Carnegie Hall with the Paul Hill Chorale, and in the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade a few different times, while chaperoning my daughters and other students with the "America Sings" group. We sang right at Herald Square, while Willard Scott and

Katie Couric opened the broadcast, then got all 800-900 students on the subway together to go to the parade route and march in front of Santa Claus—quite a feat!

I remember seeing wonderful shows there—and I remember the heavy negotiations with family members as we decided which shows made the list to take along to the half-price ticket booth! And I remember standing in line for hours, in really cold weather, to get those tickets.

I've been to the top of the Empire State Building. During a college visit trip with my daughter and son (we visited Fordham and NYU), I finally took the ferry to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island—a very poignant afternoon that everyone should experience. I've had the fun of visiting Chelsea Market with another daughter. But the one thing I never did, and now never will, was visit the World Trade Center. I regret that...

I hereby affirm that I will visit the memorial on the site of the Trade Center on my next trip, and I know my earworm that day will be Rene Clausen's beautiful "Kyrie" that we will be singing in our spring concerts, written in memorial to those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001. We look forward to sharing that piece with all of you soon, and many more!

Carole Tomhave

PS —when doing our taxes, we found the receipt from the restaurant I raved about in my last letter, but all I could remember was that the name started with an "m"). It is Maison, at 1700 Broadway, specializing in the seafood recipes of Brittany. Delicious! www.maisonnyc.com

More Little Things About Musicals

About South Pacific

🌿 The Broadway show was Rogers & Hammerstein's 4th stage collaboration. 🌿 It was based on a James Michener book, *Tales of the South Pacific*. 🌿 The story is a commentary on racism. 🌿 The character Bloody Mary got her name because her teeth were stained red from chewing betel nuts. 🌿 The male and female leads only actually sing together once in the entire play: the rest is back and forth. 🌿 "South Pacific" ran for 1,925 Broadway performances. 🌿

"S Wonderful"

🎤 This song, by George and Ira Gershwin was introduced in 1927 in the Broadway musical *Funny Face*, by Adele Astaire and Allen Kearns. 🎤 It was included in the 1951 movie *An American in Paris* where it was sung by Gene Kelly and Georges Guétary, as well as in 🎤 the 1957 American musical film *Funny Face*, in which it was performed by Audrey Hepburn and Fred Astaire and in 🎤 *Starlift* (1951) by Doris Day. 🎤

Break a Leg! Some Theatre Superstitions

In the October 1, 1921 edition of the *New Statesman*, in his article "A Defence of Superstition", Robert Wilson Lynd said that theatre was "the second-most superstitious institution in England, after horse racing." A very common saying is "Theatre is a madhouse, and Opera is the Incurables Ward."

With no hope of a clever edit or re-take to cover mistakes and accidents, live performers can be understandably superstitious. A case in point we've all heard is using the expression "break a leg" in place of positively worded wishes. Actors are recorded as wishing each other "break a leg" starting as early the 1920s. There are of course, lots of creative and speculative ideas as to where that expression came from. Here are some:

👉 **Bowing:** To "break the leg" or "break a leg" is archaic slang for bowing or curtsying; placing one foot behind the other and bending at the knee "breaks" the line of the leg. In theatre, pleased audiences may applaud for an extended time allowing the cast to take multiple curtain calls, bowing to the audience.

👉 **Stomping:** In ancient Greece, audiences didn't clap, they stomped their applause, and, at least in theory, if they stomped long enough, they could break a leg.

👉 **Or,** some believe that the term originated in Elizabethan times when the audience would bang their chairs on the ground. If they liked the show enough, the leg of the chair would break.

👉 **Fighting:** In Ancient Rome, gladiator fights, sometimes to the death, became a form of popular entertainment. Spectators would sometimes shout "quasso cruris," the Latin equivalent of "break a leg," wishing the gladiators the good luck of keeping their lives by crippling their opponents' legs.

👉 **German:** Opera great Lawrence Melchoir would not go on stage until someone wished him "Hals- und Beinbruch," an expression in common use in German theatre. Some etymologists believe that's an adaptation from the Yiddish phrase "Hatsloche un Broche" ("success and blessing") which was picked up into German theatre use and became the

phrase "Hals- und Beinbruch" ("neck and leg fracture"), because of its similar pronunciation. In the autobiography of Baron von Richthofen, during the First World War, pilots of the German Air Force are recorded as using the phrase "Hals- und Beinbruch" to wish each other luck before a flight.

👉 A similar idea is that it comes from a mistranslation of the Yiddish theatre's "mitn rekhtn fus" "[get off on] the right foot

👉 **The Lincoln Theory - discredited:** One cynical, popular, but (I'm glad to say) discredited theory derives the phrase from the 1865 assassination of Abraham Lincoln. It's said that John Wilkes Booth, actor turned assassin, claimed in his diary that he broke his leg leaping to the stage of Ford's Theatre after murdering the President, so wishing an actor to "break a leg" is to wish them a performance worthy of remembrance. By the way, some historians contend that Booth broke his leg when he fell from his horse trying to escape, and they also say that Booth often exaggerated and falsified his diary entries to make them more dramatic.

👉 **Stage curtains:** Another theory comes from the side curtains of the theater being called "legs." The idea is that the company of actors should rush onstage through the curtains to take a considerable amount of bows, thus "breaking a leg (side curtain)" in the process.

And..

👉 Another expression which is used in the Metropolitan Opera is "In bocca al lupo," "your head in the wolf's mouth," an expression which is widely used in Italian theatre. The proper response is not "thank you," it's "Crepi al lupo!"

👉 Spitting three times, or saying "toi, toi, toi" as a polite equivalent is also popular among Italian artists.

👉 Among professional dancers, the traditional saying is not "break a leg," but the French, "merde".

👉 Famed tenor Enrique Caruso would always drink a sip of water and a sip of bourbon and eat a quarter of an apple for luck right before he went on stage.

👉 Black cats are considered good luck in the theatre and the old Haymarket Theatre in London is known to have always kept one on premises. In Opera, though, black cats are considered very bad luck and are usually banned from any opera theater.

Credits: **Wikipedia**, of course!, *A Front Seat at the Opera*, by George R. Marek, Allen, Towne & Heath, 1948 - for Opera factoids.



The Song of the City

"New York, New York" is the theme song from the Martin Scorsese film *New York, New York* (1977), composed by John Kander, with lyrics by Fred Ebb. It was their second try at the theme song, after actor Robert DeNiro rejected their original song because it was "too weak." During a meeting at Caesars Palace, Paradise, Nevada, in 1977, English television producer Howard Huntridge suggested to Kander that he compose the song.

"New York, New York" was written for, and performed in the film by, Liza Minnelli. In 1979, it was recorded by Frank Sinatra, for his album *Trilogy: Past Present Future*, and became one of his signature songs. The single peaked at #32 in June 1980, becoming Sinatra's final Top Forty charting hit.

There are signature differences between the versions Minnelli and Sinatra sang. Minnelli's original recording of the song uses the following closing line:

If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere,
Come on come through, New York, New York.

In Sinatra's version, the song concludes with the line:

If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere,
It's up to you, New York, New York.

The Sinatra version also includes the phrase "A-number-one," which does not appear at all in the original lyrics. It's sung twice at the song's climax, where the phrase is both the first and fourth on a list of four superlative titles the singer wants to achieve "A-number-one, top of the list, king of the hill, A-number-one," where Ebb's original lyrics (performed by Minnelli) were "king of the hill, head of the list, cream of the crop, at the top of the heap." Despite Sinatra's version becoming more familiar, original singer Minnelli had two of the tune's most memorable live performances: during the July 4, 1986 ceremony marking the rededication of the Statue of Liberty after extensive renovations, and in the middle of the seventh inning of a New York Mets game, that was the first pro sports event in the metro area after the September 11, 2001 attacks. She also sang it in the Olympic stadium during the 1984 Summer Olympics, accompanied by 24 pianos and strobe lights.

The song has been embraced as a celebration and even a symbol of New York City. It's often heard at New York-area social events, and at sporting events, both home and away, of New York teams. The song was played on the loudspeakers in Tampa Stadium after the New York Giants beat the Buffalo Bills in Super Bowl XXV, at played at every New York Yankees' home game and every win. For this reason, Mets fans tended to disapprove of the song until it was performed at the end of the first Mets game played after the September 11, 2001 attack. Now, it continues to "belong" to both teams. The song is also played at New York Knicks games, and at New York Rangers games at Madison Square Garden. It was played at the opening faceoff of Game 7 of the 1994 Stanley Cup Finals at the Garden.

From 1997 to 2010, the song was also performed during the post parade of the Belmont Stakes, replacing "Sidewalks of New York" as the horse race's signature song. An instrumental version of the song is used as the main theme music for NBC's broadcasts of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. "New York, New York" is also played a few seconds after the ball drop in Times Square every New Year's, right after "Auld Lang Syne."



Broadway November, 2009 (4449Broadway.jpg studentrush.org)

***Shall We Dance (1937)* (Gershwin-iana)**

"They Can't Take That Away from Me" was introduced by Fred Astaire in the film *Shall We Dance*. The song is performed by Astaire, singing to Ginger Rogers on the foggy deck of the ferry from New Jersey to Manhattan. The bittersweet song notes some of the things that Peter (Astaire) will miss about Linda (Rogers).

"Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" was also introduced by Astaire and Rogers in the film, as part of a celebrated dance duet on roller skates. The song is most famous for "You like to-may-toes and I like to-mah-toes" and other verses comparing their accents, and, therefore, their social class. At that time, what we consider American pronunciation was thought of as too unrefined for use by the "upper" class, who favored a speech style similar to an English accent.

"They All Laughed" was also introduced in *Shall We Dance* as part of an Astaire/Rogers dance routine.

From the *Fort Wayne News*, Sept 6 1912: ***NEW YORK TO BE CITY OF PERPETUAL LIGHT***

***GREATEST GAS PLANT IN THE WORLD TO BE
ERECTED—WILL MAKE IT CITY THAT NEVER
GROWS DARK.***

NEW YORK, Sept. 6.—In addition to the greatest electric lighting plant New York is now to have the greatest gas plant in the world, surpassing even that which supplies the needs of London, and as a result is soon to add to its title of the city that never sleeps that of the city that never grows dark.



This 1934 plaque came from the Big Apple Night Club at West 135th Street and Seventh Avenue in Harlem.

Old New York Was Once New Amsterdam

(from "Istanbul, not Constantinople, lyrics by Jimmy Kennedy)

New York City started its existence as a fur trading post set up by the Dutch West India Company on the southern tip Manna-Hatta a nice green island at the mouth of the river Henry Hudson had explored. It was an ideal location, with an excellent bay and natural harbor, and the broad river offered easy access inland. Manna-Hatta belonged to the Lenape Tribe of the Algonquians, but soon became the provincial capital of the Dutch colonial settlements on the East Coast of North America.

In 1626 Peter Minuit made one of the most legendary real-estate deals ever made: he traded goods valued at 60 guilders then (which was worth \$24 in 1846, and about \$1,000 in 2002) with the local population and reported that he had purchased it from the natives. Although this was really rather misleading, as the Algonquians did not view land, air or water as things they could sell, it was a peaceful transaction, it met the requirements of the Dutch West India Company, and both parties were reportedly happy with it. Minuit ordered the construction of Fort Amsterdam at the Island's southern tip.

The port city outside the walls of the fort, New Amsterdam, in time became a major hub for trade between North America, the Caribbean and Europe. There, goods from Europe and African slaves, sugar and rum from the West Indies could be brought in and raw materials such as pelts, lumber, and tobacco could be shipped out. Sanctioned privateering would also contribute to its growth. When given its municipal charter in 1653 the Commonality of Nieuw Amsterdam included Manhattan, Staaten Eylandt (Staten Island), Pavonia (now Hudson County, New Jersey) and the Lange Eylandt (Long Island) towns. In 1667, Fort Amsterdam was formally surrendered to the English and the city followed suit.

While early English settlements in the American northeast were founded for freedom to follow their religion and also to convert the natives, the Dutch were unashamedly all about commerce. The seal of the Massachusetts Colonies was an Indian holding a bow and arrow and saying "Comes over and help us." The seal of Nieuw Nederland was a beaver in a ring of wampum. Interestingly, the Dutch colonies were known to be much more tolerant of other cultures.

Nieuw Nederland, the totality of Dutch-settled lands in Eastern North America, included lands from the Delmarva Peninsula to southwestern Cape Cod with settled areas in what are now New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Connecticut, and small outposts in Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. The inhabitants of New Netherland were Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans, the latter chiefly imported as enslaved laborers. Descendants of the original settlers played a prominent role in colonial America. For two centuries, New Netherland Dutch culture characterized the region (today's Capital District around Albany, the Hudson Valley, western Long Island, northeastern New Jersey, and New York City). The concepts of civil liberties and pluralism introduced in the Dutch province became mainstays of American political and social life.

Many prominent US citizens are Dutch American, directly descended from the Dutch families of New Netherland. The Roosevelt family, for instance, which produced two Presidents, descended from Claes van Roosevelt, who emigrated around 1650.

The tradition of Santa Claus is thought to have developed from a (gift-giving) celebration of the feast of Saint Nicholas on December 6 each year by the settlers of New Netherland. The Dutch Sinterklaas was Americanized into "Santa Claus", a name first used in the American press in 1773, when, in the early days of the revolt, Nicholas was used as a symbol of New York's non-British past. However, many of the "traditions" of Santa Claus may have simply been invented by Washington Irving in his 1809 *Knickerbocker's History of New York from The Beginning of the World to the End of The Dutch Dynasty*.



Sources: *The Wordy Shipmates*, by Sarah Vowell, & Wikipedia

On Broadway, Part II

Les Miserables

Les Misérables (*The Wretched Ones*), often called *Les Mis* is a “sung-through” (basically presented entirely in song) musical based on the 1862 historical novel by French poet and playwright Victor Hugo. The show’s music was composed by Claude-Michel Schönberg, the original French lyrics were by Alain Boublil and Jean-Marc Natel, with an English-language libretto by Herbert Kretzmer.



19th Century French illustrator Gustav Brion’s representation of Javert in the 1862 edition of Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*.

Set in early 19th-century France, it is the story of Jean Valjean, a French peasant of abnormal strength and a potentially violent nature, and his quest for redemption after serving nineteen years in galley labor for having stolen a loaf of bread for his starving sister’s child. Valjean decides to break his parole and start his life anew after a kindly bishop inspires him to, but he is relentlessly tracked down by a police inspector named Javert. Along the way, Valjean and an assortment of characters are swept into a revolutionary

period in France, where a group of young idealists make their last stand at a street barricade.

The musical was originally conceived and produced in 1980 in France. Its English-language adaptation opened in London, England in 1985, where it gained poor reviews. The production overcame the bad reviews through word of mouth, the box office received record orders for tickets, and the show became extremely successful. Critics’ reviews improved when the 3-month engagement sold out. As of March 2013, the London production, has run continuously, and is the second longest-running musical in the world after *The Fantasticks*, and the second longest-running West End show after *The Mousetrap*. It is the longest-running musical in the West End followed by *The Phantom of the Opera*. By 2010, its 25th anniversary, *Les Misérables* had played ten-thousand performances in London.

The Broadway production of *Les Misérables* ran from 1987 to 2003, closing after 6,680 performances. A Broadway revival ran from 2006 to 2008. It is the fourth longest-running Broadway show in history and was the second-longest at the time. The show won eight Tony Awards, including Best Musical and Best Original Score. A film version directed by Tom Hooper was released at the end of 2012 to positive reviews. It won 4 Golden Globes and 8 Oscar nominations.

The Symbol: Book, Play, Movie



This etching by Gustav Brion illustrated Hugo’s 1862 publication of *Les Misérables*.

It shows the waif Cosette sweeping the doorway of Thénardiens’ inn. The little girl’s face inspired the symbol of the musical and the movie as well.

The Source of Les Mis

People tend to assume that *Les Misérables* takes place during the French Revolution, but this isn’t the case. The storming of the Bastille, which began the French Revolution, was 50 years old in 1832, when this story was set. During that 50 years, the hopes and zeal of the French Revolution had been overridden by the Reign of Terror (guillotine and all), by Napoleon Bonaparte with his wars and aspirations of Empire from 1789 to 1814, by the restoration of the Bourbons as monarchs in 1815 and their unseating in the July Revolution of 1830, and with the ascendance of the very popular “Citizen King,” Louis-Phillippe. It turned out that Louis-Phillippe’s “July Monarchy” (1830–1848) was dominated by bankers, financiers, industrialists and merchants, and was not beneficial to the lower classes. During that 50 year stretch, hopes rose and

fell in extremes many times, the economy was strained pretty consistently, and as always, the lower middle class and poor suffered the most. A cholera epidemic in 1832, the continued widening of the income gap and the continuing deterioration of working and living conditions under Louis-Philippe left activists seething and the majority of the lower economic classes in despair.

On the morning of June 5, 1832, crowds of workers, students, and others gathered in the streets of Paris. The trigger event was the death of General Jean Maximilien Lamarque, who had been an outspoken advocate of the poor and downtrodden of France, and most of the crowd had come to see Lamarque's hearse and accompany it through Paris as a sign of respect. Mourners as well as those with a political agenda numbered in the tens of thousands, possibly as many as 100,000.

That morning, writer Victor Hugo, then 30 years old, was sitting in a park in Paris and working on a

play when he heard gunfire. More curious than cautious, and unaware that the mob had taken half of Paris, Hugo followed the sounds of gunfire through empty city streets, finally finding himself surrounded by barricades, with gunfire flying from both sides. All the shops and stores had been closed and he took shelter between two columns for a quarter of an hour while the bullets whizzed by. Thirty years later, the memory of this experience was part of what drove his writing *Les Misérables*.



From - Stanford University: [The Book Haven](#), Cynthia Haven's blog for the written word. & Wikipedia.



© Sally Davies

Photo of a coffee shop on 14th Street by English photographer Sally Davies. Davies moved to New York in 1983 and says there is 'no place on earth like this city' (dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2293696)

We hope we'll see you on Friday, April 26th at 7:00 pm at Open Door Church! And... come see us, and other local choral groups, perform at the State Theatre on May 7th at 7:00 pm!

