



# We're Puttin' on the Ritz!

... "So, come, let's mix!"



The Blue Ridge Chorale and Youth Chorus concert this season is made up of sing-able, memorable music by the well-loved American composer, Irving Berlin.

The performance will be directed by our Music Director, Bob Burnett, Cathy ter Weele, our Youth Director, and Wanda Osborn. Our wonderful and talented Brittany Bache will accompany us on piano, with guest accompanists: Steve Graham on bass, Jeff Wolf on the drums, and Debbie Gilbert on the flute.

This fast-paced, fun program will also include a dance performance by the Marie School of Ballet in Culpeper.

We will perform our concert at the Warrenton Community Center on May 6<sup>th</sup>, and on May 7<sup>th</sup> at the State Theatre. At the State Theatre, we'll have a special evening which, for those who want, will combine our concert with the Kentucky Derby. We'll also draw for a beautiful, handmade quilt (see page 5 for more about the quilt).



## CHORALE NOTES Spring, 2016



Spring: Sale, Sings, Wings & Things	p. 1
Director's Corner, President's Notes	p. 2
Yard Sale!!! with Authors!	p. 3
The Chorale Community – Writers!	p. 4
The Quilt!!	p. 5
Irving Berlin Musical Trivia	pp. 5-7
The Last Page (with a photo)	p. 8

### BRC's 2016 Spring Events and Performances

Big, Classy, Chorale Yard Sale – with book signing! Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 7:00 am to 2:00 pm. (see page 3 for more information).

Private concert for residents at Dogwood Village on Monday, April 28<sup>th</sup>.

Concert: Friday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm at the Warrenton Community Center.

Concert (& more! See below) on Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm at the State Theatre, Culpeper.



### Bowlers and Top Hats: A Derby Day Celebration with the BRC

(excerpted from announcement by the State Theatre)

The State Theatre and the Blue Ridge Chorale will combine forces on May 7<sup>th</sup> - Kentucky Derby and Virginia Gold Cup day.

The day will begin at 5pm with light appetizers sponsored by Buffalo Wild Wings for State Theatre Members/Patrons and Blue Ridge Chorale Members/Patrons to celebrate the American tradition of horse racing. Activities will (tentatively) include a silent auction, raffle with door prizes, derby hat contest and horseshoe contests.

The afternoon will transition into the auditorium at 6pm to seat for the running of the derby and the BRC Concert. The Derby Broadcast will play at 6:32. Immediately following (roughly 6:50) we will transition the screen and curtains to start the BRC Spring Concert, *Puttin' on the Ritz*.

The 90 minute concert will include many of Irving Berlin's most popular numbers sung by members of the Chorale and the Youth Chorus.

The evening ends with a rendition of Berlin's stirring, "God Bless America".

Tickets are available through the State Theatre website. Proceeds benefit the State Theatre and the Chorale.



## Directors Corner

– **Bob Burnett**

*“The lyric makes a song a hit; the melody makes it last.” – Irving Berlin*

As we count down to the first of our performances, our private concert at Dogwood Village in Orange on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, the above quote is manifesting itself more and more in our selection of Irving Berlin’s songs. While Cole Porter has, perhaps, more sophisticated lyrics, and George and Ira Gershwin, perhaps, more intricate and complex harmonies, Berlin’s works draw from, and meld, the best of them both. Consider the melody and lush harmonies of “(I’ll Be Loving You) Always” and the driving rhythm and tight lyrics of “Puttin’ On the Ritz” ... with the joy of “Easter Parade” and nostalgia of “White Christmas”. Irving Berlin is truly a composer for all seasons!

The Chorale’s program of 34 songs will feature 13 different singers in solo, duet and trio form. Additionally, the Youth Chorus will perform joint numbers with the Chorale as a prelude to their own program. Backing up the performances and our accompanist Brittany Bache will be Jeff Wolfe, percussion, Steve Graham, bass, and flutist Debbie Gilbert.

In this report, the word “concert” may appear to be conspicuous by its absence... deliberately so, for we feel that our Spring program, in the same spirit at the Christmas show, lends itself far more to the description of a Performance... with costuming, staging and audience interaction. Irving Berlin’s music calls for singing from the performer’s Heart to the listener’s Heart; there is not “lockstep” attitude on the part of the Blue Ridge Chorale or its Musical Director....trust me on this one!

We are excited to perform this music, and we suspect the excitement is contagious. Let’s enjoy Irving Berlin’s genius together!

## Notes from the President

– **Patti Christie**



As we’re preparing for *Puttin’ on the Ritz*, a tribute to Irving Berlin, I recall that he lived to be over a hundred years old and wrote hundreds of songs and musical scores over more than 60 years. He was a Russian Jewish immigrant who came here at the age of five, had to work to help support his family and had no marketable skills even for that time. But he could sing, and he taught himself to play the piano and the rest is history. Aren’t we fortunate? Even those relatively young among us should recall some of his music.

Then I began to think about first listening to music on the radio and the phonograph that played 78’s and finally the TV. We heard classical, swing, “hillbilly”, pop, and rock and roll. My brother and I were taught how to waltz, foxtrot, jitterbug, and polka.

On TV we had “The Voice of Firestone” with symphonies and opera singers (which convinced me I could be the next opera star), and on Saturday nights, we had the Hit Parade - a count down of the most popular songs of the week. And then, there was Porter Wagner and Dolly Parton, and a show from Richmond, Virginia with Loretta Lynn.

But one of my favorite shows was “The Arthur Murray Party”, a dance show put on by the founders of the Arthur Murray Dance Studios. Arthur was tall and thin and not much to look at and his wife Kathryn was short and not much to look at either, but when they danced you were transported with rhythm and grace of their movements and you forgot about everything but the flow of the couple and the music.

It is amazing how music joyfully colors my life, and I hope yours, too. Thank you Mr. Irving Berlin, and thank you, Blue Ridge Chorale.



*“Never underestimate the power of a woman (or man!) with a map and a wallet full of small bills on a Saturday morning.”*

**Come to the Blue Ridge Chorale Yard Sale on Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> from 7:00 am to 2:00 pm, at 14445 Glen Verdant Drive in Culpeper (Rt 229 a mile or so north of Culpeper, near Rixeyville).**

*A yard sale is as special as what you put into it, and this one is very special! It will be made up entirely of items which have never, or only very gently, been used, or are select vintage items, possibly antiques.*

Items we'll be selling include: an ice cream maker, an onyx chess set with board, Silver Radiance candelabrum, 10 Strawberry Street china, a LaCera dress with tags on, a metal wine rack, a doggie raincoat with tags on, a small desk, an Onion Machine, a bacon/grill machine, replacement filter for a Ridgid or Craftsman Wet/Dry vacuum, dozens of clear glass votive candle holders with candles, an iced tea maker, a Fry Daddy, a glass hummingbird feeder, and there's much, much more!

Also, local authors from our Chorale Family: Alex ter Weele and Rob Stone, will be there to visit with you about, and sign their books (see the next page for more information).

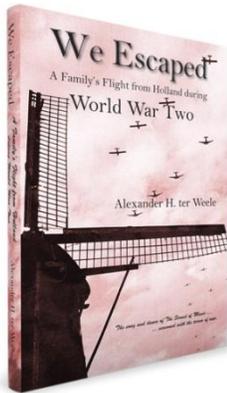
If you're interested in participating in the Yard Sale with **your** table, or have new or gently used items to donate to the sale, contact us! [info@brcsings.com](mailto:info@brcsings.com)

***This is going to be fun! Come to enjoy, look, and buy!***

## Authors among Us

“The world is but a canvas to the imagination.” — Henry David Thoreau

It seems that the creativity which brings us to sing manifests itself in many other ways, as well. One symptom of that creativity is that several Chorale singers, and members of our Chorale Family, are published authors. Three of them are benefitting the Chorale this spring through the sale of their books, and Alex and Rob will be at the yard Sale on April 23<sup>rd</sup> to sign and discuss their work.



Bass **Alex ter Weele**'s book, *We Escaped: a Family's Flight from Holland during World War Two* came out last fall. It's an absorbing, suspenseful story of his family's flight from Holland after the Nazis invaded the country.

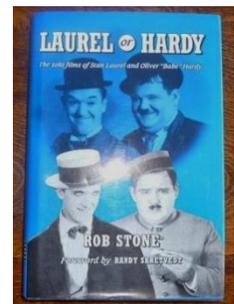
Alex's father, an officer in the Dutch Army, needed to be able to exit the country on very short notice, but to balance that with the need to keep his family safe and together. The constant tension generated from the hazards they faced, the risks to others and risks to themselves which had to be taken, and unpredictable turns of fortune, is balanced by a family's day-to-day practicalities and the high spirits of small children. Alex brings this out by vividly writing each chapter in the first person from the different perspective of each family member. It is a powerful book.



This story is a vital reminder of how precious freedom is and how much it needs protecting in the face of totalitarian ambition. It is also a view of a loyal soldier's commitment to his country, and of a family's commitment to each other. Its descriptions take you from Holland to America to Canada and the Caribbean, all impacted by World War II. It's a book you'll remember long after you finish reading it.



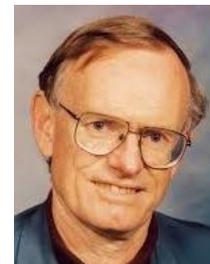
**Rob Stone**'s wife, Jodi, is an Alto, past Chorale President and active Chorale volunteer. Rob's book, *Laurel or Hardy: The Solo Films of Stan Laurel and Oliver "Babe" Hardy*, is a film buff's delight: a loving compilation of plots, reviews, credits and comments of the films these two great comedians made before they teamed up. It's illustrated lavishly with old photos, some of them quite rare, and covers hundreds of films which had been forgotten over time.



The Silent Film era (1890s to 1928) was a very rich, creative and productive time, but it's estimated that about 70% of those films are lost. Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy appeared in a plethora of films before they joined forces in 1927. *Laurel or Hardy* celebrates a greatly forgotten and all-too-unappreciated period in the development of comedy on film. This book would be a great, and fascinating, gift, especially for a family member who loves comedy, films and film making.

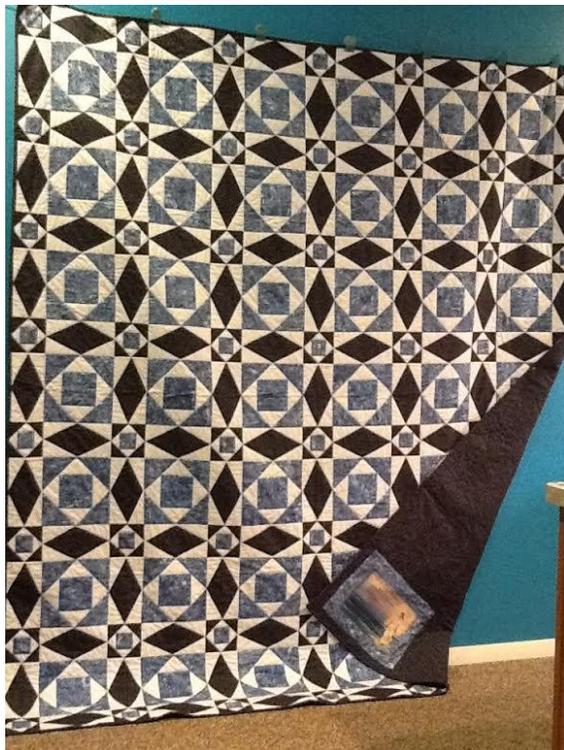


Tenor **Steve Clapp** published *Africa Remembered* in 2008. It's an open-eyed narrative of Steve's time as a Peace Corps teacher in northern Nigeria in the 1960s. It was a fascinating, hopeful time, and the book gives an on-the-ground view of the old and new: change coming about in Nigeria as a new independent nation and the decline of British colonial influence. His adventures, the people he came to know and the rich culture he was working in are vivid and engaging. The book is lavishly illustrated with Steve's vivid photos, and those of his Peace Corps housemate Lowell Fewster.



This is a striking, glossy book, with contents to match. It, too, would be a great gift. Though Steve cannot be at the Yard Sale, a few copies of his book will be available there.

## A Cozy Storm at Sea!



This Spring the Chorale will be raffling a double size quilt which is being made and hand quilted for us by Peggy Carpenter, soprano and her daughter Sara Ryaprol, Chorale Family member and Chorale volunteer. The pattern, called “Storm at Sea,” is cut in such a way that it seems to move like waves in a storm. Raffle tickets are \$1 each, or 10 for \$5. Tickets can be purchased at our Yard Sale, from Chorale members or at our concerts. The Drawing will be held at the State Theatre performance on Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you, Peggy and Sara!



## Berliniana

### *Facts and fancies about the works of Irving Berlin*

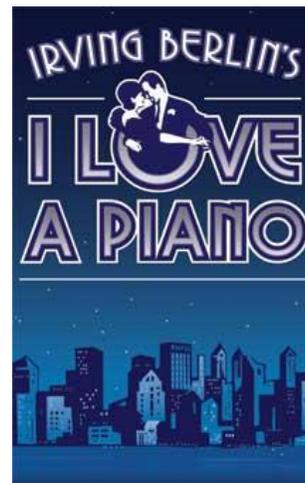


In 1910, Irving Berlin wrote a song called “Alexander and his Clarinet,” but he didn’t like it very much. He was asked to re-write it in 1911 for the Friars’ Club, and the result was “**Alexander’s Ragtime Band.**” Although more than 100 ragtime songs had been composed between 1890 and 1911, and Berlin had himself written a lot of ragtime, “Alexander’s Ragtime Band” really popularized the genre. Ironically, the song is not a genuine ragtime song, as William Zinsser points out in his book, *Easy to Remember*, but it has “a high-octane American energy, especially in its opening theme... and its radical jump after four bars. Berlin had an immigrant’s ear, tuned to every tone of his adopted country.”

Although jazz had supplanted ragtime by the 30’s, the movie *Alexander’s Ragtime Band*, which came out in 1938, was a great hit.

The movie, which Berlin co-wrote, tracks the development of jazz from the popularization of ragtime to the acceptance of swing in the 1930’s. The all-Berlin movie score included Berlin’s “We’re Having a Heatwave,” “Blue Skies,” “Easter Parade,” and “A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody.”

Though Berlin, prolific composer that he was, must have loved his piano, it seems he was not formally skilled on it. It is said that Berlin never learned to really read music, or to play in two keys. He actually had a piano which was adapted with a special transposing lever to change keys. It seems he did all right, though, and “**I Love a Piano**” has been recorded over and over.



## More Berliniana

“Play a Simple Melody” is from Berlin’s first stage musical, *Watch Your Step*, composed in 1914, and is the song best remembered from that musical. A big part of the song’s appeal is the use of counterpoint, which is fairly unusual in American music (Berlin himself only wrote two counterpoint pieces). In the printed music, first the “Simple Melody” plays alone, then comes the contrasting melody, “Musical Demon”, then the two play together. The lyrics of “Play a Simple Melody” and “Musical Demon” underscore the counterpoint: one singer is nostalgic for the songs mother sang in an older, sweeter style, while the other singer maintains that such classic fare lacks interest and rhythm. The punchline is that this song, a counterpoint, is not a simple song at all.



Berlin composed “A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody” at the request of Florenz Ziegfeld, for a scene in his famous *Follies*. The song soon became the theme song of the *Ziegfeld Follies*, and became thoroughly entrenched in show business and in the listener’s minds. But, people usually only know the refrain. The actual first verse is pretty much forgotten, which many of those who do know it say is a good thing!

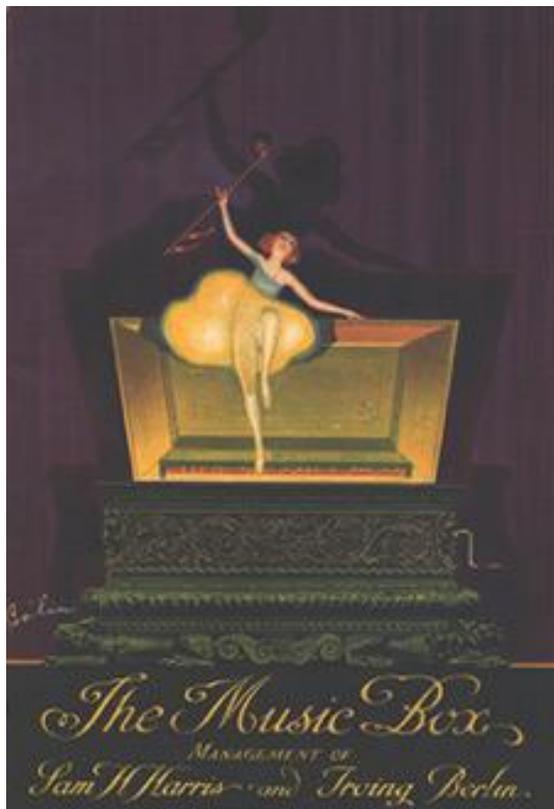
Subsequent verses of this song were “patter” lyrics which Berlin wrote, set to classical themes, and have been lost. This treatment was was stylish in Tin Pan Alley at that time. So, the actual presentation of the song originally was: a first verse, now discarded; the refrain, well-loved; then now long-gone patter lyrics to musical themes from Dvorak’s “Humoresque”, Mendelssohn’s “Spring Song”, Massenet’s “Elegy” from *Les Erinnyes*, Offenbach’s “Barcarolle” from *The Tales of Hoffman*, Schubert’s “Serenade” from *Schwanengesang* and Schumann’s “Traumerai” from *Kinderszenen*.

“There’s No Business Like Show Business” was written for the 1946 musical, *Annie Get Your Gun*. The show is based on the lives of sharpshooters Annie Oakley and Frank Butler in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show. Ethyl Merman starred in the first production, and in the 1954 movie.

The song’s a rather cynical salute to the glamor and excitement of theatre life. In the musical, members of the Wild West Show sing it, hoping to persuade Annie Oakley to join their cast. It’s reprised three times during the musical. Other songs from the show include “Anything You Can Do”, “I Got the Sun in the Morning”, “Moonshine Lullaby”, “Doin’ What Comes Naturally”, and “They Say It’s Wonderful”.

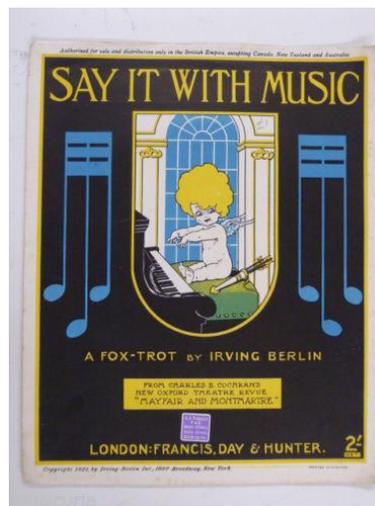


Berlin published “Puttin’ On the Ritz” in 1929. It was introduced in his musical film *Puttin’ On the Ritz*, in 1930, where it is said to be the first song in film sung by an interracial ensemble. The title derives from the slang expression “putting on the Ritz,” meaning to dress very fashionably, and was inspired by the opulent Ritz Hotel in New York City. Along with many other performances, most of us fondly remember Gene Wilder and Peter Boyle performing the song in Mel Brooks’ *Young Frankenstein*. (editor’s note: I just had to put that in!)



## Berliniana: *The Music Box Revues*

For actors, directors, and writers becoming their own producer is a dream as old as theatre is, but a composer building his own theater, as his personal risk, had never been done before. When Irving Berlin teamed up with Sam Harris not only to produce shows of his own, in direct competition to Florenz Ziegfeld, Gershwin, and others, but to build the theater for these shows, he committed himself to a huge financial risk and put his musical reputation on the line.



He did it, though. Berlin and Harris built The Music Box, in the New York City Theatre District, a theater designed especially to showcase Berlin’s productions. His plan was to produce a revue annually for the Music Box. Many notable writers including George Kaufman and Robert Benchley submitted skits and scripts for performance, and Berlin brought in famous performers including Fanny Brice, John Steel (who first sang “A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody” for Ziegfeld), Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby, Charlotte Greenwood, and many more. The *Revue*s were performed at the Music Box Theatre from 1921 through 1924, and were hugely successful. Berlin closed the show down after 1924, to work on other projects. The *Revue*s are thought to have been



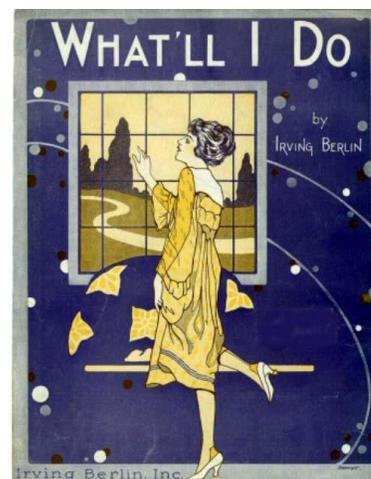
Berlin, with the Eight Little Notes.

formative of Berlin as a showman, rather than a Tin Pan Alley composer.



Berlin was himself a feature of the *Revue*s. The shows started with routines by eight dancers, “The Eight Little Notes”, representing notes of the scale. Toward the show’s end, the “Notes” played the role of newspaper reviewers interviewing Berlin about how he “Says It with Music.”

“Say it with Music” was the main theme of the Music Box *Revue*s, where it was featured in 440 performances.



“What’ll I Do” was written by Irving Berlin in 1923. It was introduced late in the run of Berlin’s third *Music Box Revue* and also was included in the following year’s *Revue*.

## and... the last page....

Irving Berlin composed wonderful, tuneful, happy music. It touches our lives so often, sometimes in unexpected ways. It is an absolute joy to perform his songs!

We hope we'll see you at our Yard Sale on April 23rd and for *The Blue Ridge Chorale Puttin' on the Ritz* on May 6<sup>th</sup> in Warrenton or May 7<sup>th</sup> in Culpeper!



### Sources

Wikipedia, of course!

<http://americanclassicsmusic.org/music-box-revues-1921-192>

[www.songfacts.com](http://www.songfacts.com)

Google Images

Photo of Bob Burnett (page 2) courtesy of Studio C Photos

Quilt photo (page 5) courtesy of Sara Rayaprol

# Happy Spring!

