

## CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- 1888 Israel Beilin is born in Russia on May 11.
- 1893 Izzy arrives in America September 23. His last name is changed to Baline.
- 1901 Father Moses Baline dies July 21, forcing Izzy to quit school and go to work.
- 1905 Hired by Harry Von Tilzer to plug songs at Tony Pastor's Music Hall.
- 1906 Begins work at Mike ("Nigger Mike") Salter's Pelham Café. Starts writing parody lyrics to popular songs of the day.
- 1907 Changes his name to Irving Berlin with the publication of his first song.
- 1908 Writes both music and lyrics for the first time, for "The Best of Friends Must Part."
- 1909 Hired by the Ted Snyder Company as an in-house lyric writer.
- 1910 Makes his Broadway debut as a performer (with Ted Snyder) in *Up and Down Broadway*; 1910 Makes his first commercial recording, "Oh, How That German Could Love" in January
- 1911 "Alexander's Ragtime Band" published on March 28.
- 1912 Ted Snyder Company changes its name to Waterson, Berlin & Snyder in January; marries Dorothy Goetz on February 2; Dorothy dies on July 17 from typhoid fever contracted on their Cuban honeymoon; writes "When I Lost You."
- 1913 Makes West End debut in *Hello Ragtime* on July 7.
- 1914 Becomes a charter member of ASCAP; *Watch Your Step* opens on Broadway on December 8, the first show with a score completely by Berlin.
- 1919 Becomes an American citizen on February 26; On May 8, joins the army as a private and writes *Yip, Yip, Yaphank, Yip, Yip, Yaphank* transfers to Broadway on August 19.
- 1920 Irving and producer Sam H. Harris build the Music Box Theater.
- 1924 Meets Ellin Mackay in May; they marry on January 26.
- 1926 Mary Ellin Berlin is born on November 26.
- 1928 Berlins move to California in January and move back to New York in June; Irving Berlin, Jr., is born on December 1; dies on December 24.
- 1932 Linda Louise Berlin born on February 21.
- 1933 *As Thousands Cheer* opens on September 30.
- 1934 On May 28, makes the cover of *Time*.
- 1935 *Top Hat* opens on August 29.
- 1938 Kate Smith premieres "God Bless America" on the radio on November 10.
- 1942 On July 4, *This Is the Army* opens with Berlin in the cast.
- 1943 "White Christmas" wins the Oscar.
- 1946 *Annie Get Your Gun* opens on May 16.
- 1948 *Easter Parade* opens on June 30.
- 1951 *Call Me Madam* wins a Tony Award for Berlin.
- 1954 The film *White Christmas* is released.
- 1962 *Mr. President*, Berlin's last show, opens on October 20.
- 1966 Revival of *Annie Get Your Gun* opens in New York.
- 1973 Irving makes his last public appearance (at the White House), singing "God Bless America" to prisoners of the Vietnam War.
- 1988 Ellin Berlin dies on July 29.
- 1989 Irving Berlin dies on September 22.

## Song and Story

### ALL ALONE

When faced with the death of his first wife, Dorothy Goetz, and his mother, Irving Berlin decamped to the Ritz Hotel in Atlantic City. He wrote "All Alone" as an expression of his sadness.

### WHAT'LL I DO

"What'll I Do" came to Berlin when he was slightly drunk on champagne and feeling sorry for himself at a birthday party. It seems Berlin wasn't good enough for Clarence Mackay, the industrialist father of Ellin Mackay, Berlin's intended. Eventually, Berlin got the girl and a hit song in the bargain.

### ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND

Though it is considered a ragtime song, "Alexander's Ragtime Band" bears little relationship to traditional ragtime. After the huge success of Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" in 1899, the first white songwriter to capitalize on the new rhythms and counterpoint was Joseph E. Howard, in the song "Hello, Ma Baby," which he wrote that very same year. In 1902, Hughie Cannon wrote the ragtime tune "Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home." It took Berlin longer to absorb the rag influences but when he finally did he was generally accepted as the first white songwriter to incorporate ragtime. Songs like "Play Some Ragtime," (1910), "Stop That Rag," and "Yiddle on Your Fiddle" helped establish his reputation.

### BLUE SKIES

One of the most famous songs to come from a Rodgers and Hart show wasn't even written by them. Berlin's "Blue Skies" was interpolated into the show *Betsy* and sung by Belle Baker. The opening-night reception was tumultuous, with Baker enjoying twenty-four encores—the last with composer Irving Berlin, who was summoned up from the audience. Talk about stopping the show!



### REMEMBER

Never has a romance resulted in more great standards than that of Irving Berlin and Ellin Mackay. His three greatest songs were written at the beginning of the affair, when Berlin was trying desperately to overcome the objections of Ellin's powerful father. Mackay decided to send his daughter on a cruise, figuring that a long ocean voyage and crisp salt air would drive that skinny Jewish songwriter right out of her heart.

### GOD BLESS AMERICA

Mary Ellin Barrett, daughter of Irving Berlin, recalls: I was eleven years old when I first heard "God Bless America." Now, to me, this was a very strange Irving Berlin song because I knew my father as this jazzy, sophisticated or earthy vernacular writer of songs like "Alexander's Ragtime Band" and "Cheek to Cheek." And then

