

YANKEE DOODLE BOY

(or Young George M. Cohan)

**WRITTEN, ARRANGED,
AND ORIGINALLY DIRECTED BY
CHIP DEFFAA**

**MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
GEORGE M. COHAN**

(WITH ADDITIONAL LYRICS BY DEFFAA)

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2004, 2005, 2006 BY CHIP DEFFAA**

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**For David W. Barth, the original "Yankee Doodle Boy,"
and Seth Sikes, who grabbed the spotlight**

***YANKEE DOODLE BOY* MUSICAL NUMBERS**

- 1. THE MAN WHO OWNS BROADWAY (OPENING)**
- 2. HELLO BROADWAY!**
- 3. GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROADWAY**
- 4. YOU CAN TELL THAT I'M IRISH / THE DANCING MASTER**
- 5. MUSICAL MOON**
- 6. THE BELLE OF THE BARBER'S BALL**
- 7. NELLIE KELLY, I LOVE YOU**
- 8. I WON'T BE AN ACTOR NO MORE**
- 9. YOU WON'T DO ANY BUSINESS IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT A BAND**
- 10. THE NEW YORK TWO-STEP**
- 11. THE HINKY DEE**
- 12. IF I WERE ONLY MR. MORGAN**
- 13. MY HONEY BABE**
- 14. THAT'S SOME LOVE**
- 15. THE AMERICAN RAGTIME**
- 16. YANKEE DOODLE BOY**
- 17. FORTY-FIVE MINUTES FROM BROADWAY**
- 18. I'M MIGHTY GLAD I'M LIVING AND THAT'S ALL**
- 19. OVER THERE / YOU'RE A GRAND OLD FLAG**
- 20. HELLO, BROADWAY!**

THE COMPANY IN THE FIRST PUBLIC PRODUCTION

The first production of *YANKEE DOODLE BOY* opened at Danny's, 346 West 46th Street, New York City, on February 13, 2005 with the following all-Equity cast:

George M. Cohan..... RYAN SWEARINGEN

Jerry Cohan..... HAL BLANKENSHIP

Nellie Cohan.... JOAN JAFFE

Josie Cohan.... DAWNE SWEARINGEN

Theater manager, clerk, school principal, et. al.... MICHAEL T. WRIGHT

Percy Helton.... SETH SIKES

CHIP DEFFAA was the writer/director/arranger.

DAWNE SWEARINGEN was the choreographer; JUSTIN BOCCITTO provided additional choreography.

Music and lyrics by GEORGE M. COHAN (with lyric revisions by DEFFAA).

RON L. HACKEL was the musical director, and provided additional arrangements and music preparation.

BRETT KRISTOFFERSON provided music preparation and additional arrangements, based on scores by Cohan and Charles Gebest.

MARY ANN LOPINTO was the stage manager.

DON SCHAFFER/Don Schaffer Public Relations served as press representative.

LARRY SCHIFF served as legal counsel.

The playwright is represented by THE FIFI OSCARD AGENCY /PETER SAWYER, 110 West 40th Street, New York City, 10018, 212-764-1100.

***YANKEE DOODLE BOY* was originally produced by
THE GEORGE M. COHAN PROJECT/
CHIP DEFFAA PRODUCTIONS, LLC.**

Production Associates: Jon Peterson, Jed Peterson, Chase Baird, Peter McMurray, Ryan Lammer, Luis Villabon, Dave Warren, Ellery Bakaitis, Sterling Price-McKinney, Darren Guenther. Office manager for Chip Deffaa Productions LLC: Jennie Dolegowski. Cohan project catalyst: Chase Brock. A tip of the hat to Bighead Productions, Sam MacKinnon, president. Audience-research assistance by Max and Julia Deffaa. Company physician: Dr. Braden Gibbs. Special thanks to Larry O'Keefe, composer of *Bat Boy*, who suggested the idea of writing this script, and to Eric Millegan ("Uncle Broadway"), who provided additional motivation. Our gratitude to Jennie Cohan Ross and the Cohan family, Tristan Viner-Brown, Tommy Tune, and Carol Channing. Thanks to the late Percy Helton, whose recollections inspired our play; Ed Grimm (son of Cohan actor Lore Grimm), for additional information; Cohan experts John Kenrick, Philip Chevron, and Dave Collins; David "Slim" Eugene; and Nicholas and Nathaniel Stannard-Schenk. Special assistant to the director: Justin Eisbrenner, A.B.F. This production was made possible with support from Chashama (Anita Durst, Artistic Director). And thanks, always, to Charlotte Moore and Ciaran O'Reilly of the Irish Repertory Theatre.

Original Cohan sheet music/memorabilia from the Chip Deffaa collection; our thanks to Marq Stankowski, Danny Walker, and the Museum of the City of New York for additional music and more.

THE COMPANY IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

After being workshopped at Harlequin Studios, New York City, in 2003, *YANKEE DOODLE BOY* was presented in its first public reading at the Theater Row Studios on 42nd Street, New York City, on October 19th, 2004 by the following company:

George M. Cohan..... JON PETERSON

Jerry Cohan..... HAL BLANKENSHIP

Nellie Cohan.... JOAN JAFFE

Josie Cohan.... DAWNE SWEARINGEN

Theater manager, clerk, et. al.... MICHAEL T. WRIGHT

Percy Helton.... RYAN LAMMER

CHIP DEFFAA was the writer/director/arranger.

STERLING PRICE-McKINNEY was the musical director.

Music and lyrics by GEORGE M. COHAN (lyric revisions by Deffaa).

BRETT KRISTOFFERSON provided music preparation and additional arrangements.

YANKEE DOODLE BOY

by Chip Deffaa

This play is designed for six singing actors: one will portray the dynamic showman George M. Cohan (1878-1942), the lead character; another, Jerry Cohan, George's father; another, Nellie Cohan, George's mother; another, Josie Cohan, George's sister. The family performed together for many years as "The Four Cohans." Another actor will portray Percy Helton, a boy who is appearing in his first Cohan production at the age of 13. Percy's narration frames this play. (As a youth, he provides someone for younger audience members to relate to from the start.) One versatile character actor with a comic touch can "double" all of the remaining small roles: theater manager, hotel clerk, school principal, song publishers, vaudeville performer, etc. By making simple changes of costume--perhaps now donning a derby hat and glasses, now a fedora, now a clerk's visor, now a loud jacket, etc.--and making distinctive changes in manner of speaking, this actor should clearly establish different characterizations. (Although this script is written for a cast of six, if you wanted to use more performers you could assign the small roles to individual performers rather than having one actor "double" them, and have a larger ensemble to sing the opening number and the finale; thus the show could easily be performed by a dozen or more.)

Set requirements are minimal. At the start of the play, we are watching the stage of a Cohan play in rehearsal. The stage is essentially bare, except for a couple of simple folding chairs, upstage. These chairs will later be used when Cohan shares reminiscences with Percy--and thus the audience--while incidents he recalls from his past are enacted upstage. (The lighting should shift whenever the action shifts from Cohan--sharing his reminiscences with Percy downstage left--to scenes from Cohan's life, enacted using the greater part of the stage area. Actors should be brought on and offstage quickly for these vignettes.)

At the beginning of this play, downstage right, there is also an easel or music stand, which can be used to hold placards (the way vaudeville acts were traditionally announced). Most of the placards that will be used in the play are kept as props in the wings, to be carried onstage by the theater manager

when needed. But several signs are discreetly preset onstage (perhaps leaning next to the piano, or atop the piano, with the words on them out of the audience's sight), to be put into use at selected moments later in the play by GMC or Percy.

Cohan's music is eminently danceable; the director or choreographer has opportunities to stage musical numbers with as little or as much movement as desired. Numbers can be expanded, for extra dance breaks if the director or choreographer so chooses.

It is recommended that the musical director sustain moods by continuing to softly play the melodies as underscoring, after the performers have finished singing certain songs: "Give My Regards to Broadway," "I Won't Be an Actor No More," and "I'm Mighty Glad I'm Living and That's All." There are other points in the script when underscoring is recommended, while GMC and/or Percy speak.

YANKEE DOODLE BOY

(or Young George M. Cohan)

For the start of the show, the house lights should be darkened. Actor move into place for the opening number. The music then begins--the spirited strains of Cohan's "The Man Who Owns Broadway." The lights come up and we discover all members of the cast, except for George M. Cohan--hereafter referred to as "GMC"--on the stage. We are watching the rehearsal for a musical comedy. The year is 1908. A vaudeville-style placard on the stand or easel, downstage right, informs the audience of the setting: "In rehearsal, at the Liberty Theater. New York City, January 30, 1908." The actors are dressed in dark blue pants or skirts and white shirts. The actors might be stretching, warming up, one or two perhaps using a chair for balance. Percy steps forward and begins singing, soon joined by the others. This is a number they are practicing for their show; the number also servesto tell us in the audience who Cohan is.

PERCY. *(Sings, directly to the audience:)*

HE IS THE MAN WHO OWNS BROADWAY,

THAT'S WHAT THE DAILY PAPERS SAY.

THE ENSEMBLE. *(Sings):*

THE GIRLS ARE TURNED AWAY

AT EV'RY MATINEE.

THEY GO TO SEE THE PLAYER NOT THE PLAY, THEY SAY--

(At the final, sustained note of the music above, the cast members freeze in place on stage. The youngest cast-member, Percy, walks downstage center and addresses the audience; it is recommended that the music be continued softly as underscoring as Percy says the following lines.)

PERCY. *(To the audience.)* I was 13 the first time I got to perform in a Broadway show. That was also the first time I got to work with George M. Cohan--the biggest man in show business. He was my idol. He wrote and starred in his own musicals. He wrote the scripts, he wrote the songs. He made up the dances, he directed, he produced. No one in show business had ever done so many things, so well. They called him "the man who owns Broadway." *(Percy takes a few steps to downstage right. His mood becomes a bit more subdued; the underscoring may grow a bit more serious in feeling.)* He knew my father,

who had just died. And he made a little part for me in the new show he was rehearsing. He was actually busy supervising two shows at the same time. And that day we had to start rehearsals without him. I was *so* nervous....

(Percy steps back and rejoins the others onstage to resume singing.)

THE ENSEMBLE. *(Sings, hushed to help build tension:)*

HE IS THE MAN WHO OWNS BROADWAY,

THAT'S WHAT THE DAILY PAPERS SAY.

THE GIRLS ARE TURNED AWAY

AT EV'RY MATINEE.

THEY GO TO SEE THE PLAYER NOT THE PLAY, THEY SAY.

KINGS ON THEIR THRONE MAY ENVIOUS BE,

HE'S GOT THE POPULARITY.

IF THERE'S ANYTHING IN NEW YORK THAT YOU SEE YOU WANT JUST SAY.

DROP A LINE OR WIRE

TO THE SOLE PROPRIETOR,

THE MAN WHO OWNS BROADWAY.

THEY SAY.....

(Dressed in a very dapper suit, perhaps carrying a cane, GMC enters from the back of the auditorium and strides up the aisle towards the stage, singing out--in a ringing voice--the concluding line of the refrain.)

GMC. *(SINGS:)*

... I AM THE MAN WHO OWNS BROADWAY!

(GMC heads up to the stage--bristling with energy and self-confidence--talking and then singing to one and all.)

GMC. *(Talking.)* Sorry I'm late, everybody. I'll take it from here, cast. The next chorus, you know, will be mine alone to sing. *(As GMC begins singing the next chorus, to his fellow cast members and to the audience, he is greeting them--perhaps shaking hands with some, nodding to others, giving Percy a pat on the back or tousling his hair, and so on.)*

GMC. *(Singing, to cast and to the audience:)*

I AM THE MAN WHO OWNS BROADWAY,

THAT'S WHAT THE DAILY PAPERS SAY.

THE GIRLS ARE TURNED AWAY

AT EV'RY MATINEE.

THEY GO TO SEE THE PLAYER NOT THE PLAY, THEY SAY.

KINGS ON THEIR THRONE MAY ENVIOUS BE,

I'VE GOT THE POPULARITY.

IF THERE'S ANYTHING IN NEW YORK THAT YOU SEE YOU WANT JUST SAY.

DROP A LINE OR WIRE

TO THE SOLE PROPRIETOR,

THE MAN WHO OWNS BROADWAY.

THEY SAY I AM THE MAN WHO OWNS BROADWAY.

(Segue immediately into next song, "HELLO BROADWAY," as an exultant song/ tap-dance routine for GMC.)

HELLO, BROADWAY!

GEE, YOU'RE GOOD TO SEE.

YOU LOOK GOOD TO ME.

I'VE BEEN LONGING, LONGING FOR YOU NIGHT AND DAY.

I'VE JUST BEEN WAITING FOR A CHANCE TO SAY...

(GMC dances....)

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE BROADWAY,

ESPECIALLY IF IT'S HOME, SWEET HOME."

(The other cast members clap for GMC.)

GMC. *(To the cast.)* All right, listen up everybody. You know, our show opens in two weeks--

A MALE CAST MEMBER. --Which means you'd better finish writing the script soon, George!

GMC. Don't you worry about that! But we've got another challenge to face. Donald Brian has just quit the show.

(The cast members appear anxious.)

JOSIE. And he's got the next biggest part, after yours, George.

GMC. Well, I've decided that if I rewrite the part a bit, with a little work young Percy Helton here *(GMC puts a hand on Percy's shoulder)* can take over that role--

PERCY. *(Nervously.)* I can't, Mr. Cohan! I'm just 13. I've never done a big show before.

GMC. *(Grabbing Percy and shaking him.)* Listen, Percy, I've watched you. You're a natural, like your father was. I'm giving you a priceless opportunity. Most folk are too scared to say yes when the best opportunities come their way. They go through life always feeling they've missed out on something--and never knowing quite what it is. You want a career in show business? If a director asks if you can do anything--*whatever* it is--you say yes. Understand?

PERCY. *(Stammering, nervous, uncertain.)* Yeh-Yeh--YES, Mr. Cohan.

GMC. I'll help you. We'll work day and night if we have to. The rest of the cast can go home for the day. I need to talk with young Percy. *(Everyone except for GMC and Percy exits. GMC gestures that he wants Percy to take a seat, as he brings the two chairs from upstage to a spot, downstage left. GMC and Percy sit down on the chairs.)*

PERCY. Mr. Cohan, I just can't do any more. I cry myself to sleep every night since my father died. You don't know what that's like.

GMC. Don't I, young man?... Let me tell you, Percy, we do our best work when challenged.

PERCY. But you've got it easy, Mr. Cohan. You're the man who *owns* Broadway. You sing and dance, and the whole country imitates you. President Teddy Roosevelt invites you to entertain at the White House. Me? I've been thinking about giving up show business, altogether. I don't know if I'm good enough.

(GMC rises.)

GMC. *(To Percy.)* What made you want to be a performer, Percy? Was it because your

father was one? Last summer, I watched you help your father out in his song-and-dance act at Tony Pastor's Music Hall. You reminded me of myself at your age.

PERCY. I loved working with my father. But the truth is--I knew I wanted to make performing my career the first time I saw you in a Broadway show. My father and I rode on the train for 45 minutes, from our home in New Rochelle, so we could see you in "Little Johnny Jones." I didn't blink, for fear I'd miss something. I loved the way you strutted, like you owned the stage. I got home, and for a long time I was imitating the way you'd sing "Give My Regards to Broadway." I sang that song of yours so many times with my Dad, at our family's piano.

GMC. *(To Percy, gently.)* You still remember the words?
(GMC gets Percy to stand up with him.)

(Song. GMC begins singing "GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROADWAY," tenderly, with compassion for a boy mourning his father; Percy will join in. The song starts off slowly, freely. The mood is wistful at first. It gets a bit brighter as they get further into the song, but we should still sense that Percy is somewhat unsure of himself.)

GMC. *(Sings:)*

**GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROADWAY,
REMEMBER ME TO HERALD SQUARE.**

(GMC gestures for Percy, who seems hesitant, to sing.)

PERCY. *(Sings:)*

**TELL ALL THE GANG AT FORTY-SECOND STREET
THAT I WILL SOON BE THERE.**

GMC. *(Sings:)*

**WHISPER OF HOW I'M YEARNING
TO MINGLE WITH THE OLD-TIME THROG.**

PERCY. *(Sings:)*

GIVE MY REGARDS TO OLD BROADWAY

AND SAY THAT I'LL BE THERE E'ER LONG.

GMC. *(Sings:)*

**SAY HELLO TO DEAR OLD CONEY ISLE, IF THERE YOU CHANCE TO BE,
WHEN YOU'RE AT THE WALDORF, HAVE A SMILE AND CHARGE IT UP TO ME.
MENTION MY NAME EV'RY PLACE YOU GO,
AS 'ROUND THE TOWN YOU ROAM.**

PERCY. *(Sings:)*

WISH YOU'D CALL ON MY GAL...

GMC. *(Sings:)*

NOW REMEMBER, OLD PAL...

PERCY. *(Sings:)*

WHEN YOU GET BACK HOME,

GMC and PERCY. *(Sing:)*

**GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROADWAY,
REMEMBER ME TO HERALD SQUARE.
TELL ALL THE GANG AT FORTY-SECOND STREET
THAT I WILL SOON BE THERE.
WHISPER OF HOW I'M YEARNING
TO MINGLE WITH THE OLD-TIME THRONG.
GIVE MY REGARDS TO OLD BROADWAY
AND SAY THAT I'LL BE THERE E'ER LONG.**

(Percy crosses to GMC, who hugs him.)

(The music to "Give My Regards to Broadway" should be continued softly under the dialog to provide nostalgic underscoring as GMC and Percy chat.)

GMC. You've got the talent, Percy. You just have to develop it.

PERCY. I remember, I made my Dad take me back to the theater to see you again, and again.

GMC. You had a very good father, Perce.

PERCY. I wanted to *be* you, Mr. Cohan. But I could never be you. You're the biggest star in America. Every song you write and sing becomes a hit. Everyone says you were an overnight sensation.

GMC. What they don't tell you, Perce, is that it often takes 20 years of hard work to become an "overnight sensation." Everyone reads in the papers about George M. Cohan, "The Man Who Owns Broadway."

(GMC and Percy sit down again, GMC bidding Percy to sit down as he says, "Let me tell you the story...")

Let me tell you the story most people don't know--the story of *young* George M. Cohan. If you understand what I've gone through to get here, maybe it will help you with your life. *(The underscoring ends.)*

My father, Jerry Cohan, loved being a song-and-dance man.

PERCY. Just like my father.

GMC. Well, when my father was young, he really had to struggle to make a living. He'd tour from town to town, appearing on the bill in variety theaters, wherever he could find work to support the family. My earliest memories are of my father, singing and dancing.

PERCY. Mine, too. I loved hearing my Dad sing.

GMC. Many nights I'd fall asleep listening to my Dad practicing the songs and dances he made up for his act. And--as early as I can remember--I loved to watch from the wings, as he performed on stage.

(A theater manager steps a bit out from the wings, stage right. He removes the vaudeville placard that says "In rehearsal..." and replaces it with a new placard. He announces the words that are written on this placard: "Jerry Cohan: Singer, Dancer, Philosopher," and then exits. The lights come up on the vaudeville placard--and on Jerry Cohan as he makes his entrance--and go down on GMC and Percy. The lights will shift whenever the action of the play shifts from GMC and Percy talking in the present, to scenes from Cohan's youth.)

MANAGER. Jerry Cohan: Singer, Dancer, Philosopher.

(SONG. JERRY COHAN, jauntily carrying a cane and wearing a derby, strolls onto the stage from upstage right, and sings "YOU CAN TELL THAT I'M IRISH," segueing seamlessly into an excerpt from "THE DANCING MASTER," doing a bit of a dance as well.)

JERRY. *(Sings:)*

YOU CAN TELL BY THE TOUCH OF THE BROGUE,

YOU CAN TELL, BY THE WINK OF THE ROGUE;

YOU CAN TELL ALL THE WHILE,

BY THE STYLE, BY THE SMILE;

YOU CAN TELL, BY THE WIT OF THE TALK,

YOU CAN TELL, BY THE SWING OF THE WALK,

YOU CAN TELL VERY WELL,

WHILE I FEEL MIGHTY SWELL,

THAT I'M IRISH.

[SONG. "THE DANCING MASTER" (excerpt)]

IT'S EASY, VERY EASY,

IF YOU WATCH EV'RY TWIST, EV'RY TURN.

KEEP YOUR EYES UPON ME.

AND SURPRISED YOU WILL BE

AT THE DANCING YOU HAVE YET TO LEARN.

(We hear, repeated, the music corresponding to the last three lines-- "Keep your eyes upon me, / And surprised you will be, / At the dancing you have yet to learn" -- and Jerry dances to them. He then freezes in places, while GMC continues with his narration, while the music continues as underscoring. As a general rule, characters in scenes from Cohan's past will freeze in place when he is talking to Percy in the "present" in the play.)

GMC. *(To Percy.)* My mother, Nellie, gradually learned more and more about singing and dancing, until she became my father's equal partner in the act.

(Nellie steps onstage from the stage-right wings, taking her place beside her husband. The vaudeville placard is now changed by the manager to read: THE TWO COHANS.)

NELLIE. *(Sings, and dances the same way Jerry did:)*

IT'S EASY, VERY EASY,

IF YOU WATCH EV'RY TWIST, EV'RY TURN.

KEEP YOUR EYES UPON ME.

AND SURPRISED YOU WILL BE

AT THE DANCING YOU HAVE YET TO LEARN.

(We hear, repeated, the music corresponding to the last three lines-- "Keep your eyes upon me, / And surprised you will be, / At the dancing you have yet to learn" -- and Nellie dances to them. She then freezes in place while GMC continues with the narration, while the music continues as underscoring.)

GMC. *(To Percy.)* I was born 29 years ago, Percy--on the Fourth of July, 1878. The first present I remember my father giving me was a pair of dancing shoes. It meant a lot to me that I would be learning to sing and dance like my father and mother. But that also meant I would be going to work, helping the family earn money for food. And at a very early age, my older sister Josie and I were added to the act....*(Josie steps out onto the stage from the wings, and GMC takes a place by her side.)*

(The placard is now changed by the manager to read: "THE FOUR COHANS.")

GMC and JOSIE. *(Sing:)*

KEEP YOUR EYES UPON ME.

AND SURPRISED YOU WILL BE

AT THE DANCING YOU HAVE YET TO LEARN.

(We hear, repeated, the music corresponding to the last three lines-- "Keep your eyes upon me, / And surprised you will be, / At the dancing you have yet to learn" -- and GMC and JOSIE begin dancing to them. They are doing the dance that they have learned from their parents. By the end of the dance, they are joined by the parents, and all four bow together at the conclusion of the number; so we feel we are seeing the formation of the "Four Cohans" act.)

GMC. *(To Percy.)* Our family was billed as The Four Cohans. While touring, we learned every bit of theatrical life. We'd pass out handbills on street corners, telling people to see the show. We'd sing our own songs, sew our own clothes, paint our own scenery. We had no money--but as my pop would say:

JERRY. It's a lucky family that gets to sing and dance together every day.... Now, everyone gets a hug before we go onstage. *(The Four Cohans hug. Then Jerry, Nellie, and Josie freeze for a moment, while GMC delivers the following line to Percy.)*

GMC. *(To Percy.)* And every time we took the stage--with costumes and props we'd made ourselves--I felt so proud. *(GMC can bring out on stage from the wings a big "Musical Moon"--it can be a large papier mache prop, or a piece of painted canvas--and can hang it in place. Or the prop moon can be preset on the back curtain.)*

(SONG. THE FOUR COHANS sing "MUSICAL MOON.")

THE FOUR COHANS. *(Sing:)*

THAT GOOD OLD MUSICAL MOON,

THAT THEY SING ABOUT IN EVERY TUNE,

NEVER WEARING OUT,

PAINTED ON THE SCENERY OF A MUSICAL PLAY,

FUNNY MOON, HONEY MOON,

ALWAYS-GETS-THE-MONEY MOON.

MUSICAL MOON,

THAT RHYMES WITH SPOON AND JUNE AND LOON.

EVEN IF OUTSIDE IT'S 10 BELOW

YOU'LL STILL FEEL A WARMTH AND GLOW,

KNOW YOU'RE GONNA SEE YOUR KINDA SHOW

WHEN YOU SEE THAT MUSICAL MOON!

(The piano plays the music corresponding to "Even if outside it's 10 below / You'll still feel a warmth and glow," and then the family sings the final two lines of the number:)

THE FOUR COHANS. *(Sing:)*

KNOW YOU'RE GONNA SEE YOUR KINDA SHOW

WHEN YOU SEE THAT MUSICAL--THAT GOOD OL' MOO-OON!

GMC. *(To audience.)* My father thanks you, my mother thanks you, my sister thanks you, and I thank you. *(Each member of the family bows to the audience when he or she is introduced by GMC. Then Jerry, Nellie, Josie remain onstage, but frozen in place while GMC talks to Percy.)*

GMC. *(To Percy.)* While other kids were out playing baseball or football, or learning their A-B-C's in school, I was learning how to put on stage makeup, how to change costumes as quickly as possible. I never did learn how to throw a baseball well.

PERCY. Me, neither.

GMC. And I still don't understand every rule of football.

PERCY. Same here.

GMC. *(To Percy.)* But even as a boy, I could change costumes as fast as anyone. *(GMC changes his costume slightly while talking, perhaps putting on a vest which he'll wear in the next number.)* We were learning new songs every week. And I *loved* it. My dad was always writing new songs, poems, and skits for us. He only felt good, he said, if he was creating something every day. He'd give songs to other performers, too. I started making up songs myself when I was four years old; my Dad would write down what I sang.

As a boy, I was certain I was as good as any performer alive--and I said as much to everyone we worked with. I guess I was pretty cocky. But I sure was having fun.

(Lights shift.)

GMC. *(To Jerry.)* Did you hear, Pop, when we took our bows for that last number, I got the most applause of anyone in the family! *(GMC should speak in a very youthful voice here; he is supposed to be eight years old.)*

JOSIE. That's just because you're the youngest. You think you're some big star like Chauncey Olcott or Sir Henry Irving. People will always clap for a cute little kid. *(She is talking to her kid brother with all the wisdom of one two years older than him.)*

GMC. Well, I *am* a pretty cute little kid. Can't help it, sis...I was born that way.

JOSIE. Oh, George!

GMC. *(Playfully.)* I'm sorry, no autographs for my fans today....

(The music begins to "The Belle of the Barber's Ball.")

Now, there's our music. Break a leg, everybody!

(SONG. THE FOUR COHANS sing "THE BELLE OF THE BARBER'S BALL.")

THE FOUR COHANS. *(Sing:)*

**GUYS FROM EVERY CITY AT THE BARBER'S BALL,
GALS SO GAY AND PRETTY AT THE BARBER'S BALL,
TOUGH FOLK, ROUGH FOLK, DEAD-SWELL FOLK,
WALTZES, TWO-STEPS, IT'S NO JOKE!
THERE AIN'T A GONNA BE ANY SLEEP AT ALL.
THERE AIN'T A GONNA BE ANY EARLY CALL,
UNTIL THE STARS ARE GONE,
UNTIL THE BREAK OF DAWN,
WE'RE GONNA DANCE AT THE BARBER'S BALL.**

THE FOUR COHANS. *(Sing with voices hushed:)*

**THERE AIN'T A GONNA BE ANY SLEEP AT ALL.
THERE AIN'T A GONNA BE ANY EARLY CALL,
UNTIL THE STARS ARE GONE,
UNTIL THE BREAK OF DAWN,
WE'RE GONNA DANCE AT THE BARBER'S BALL.**

(The family members--except for GMC--exit.)

GMC. *(To Percy.)* I loved hearing the applause. I loved being patted on the back and told, "Good show." I loved watching the other acts on the variety bills--the jugglers, acrobats, singers, comics. I was just a kid, but I knew I *belonged* in show business. We did two shows a day--sometimes more. I was proud that I could do anything anyone asked me to.

(Nellie and Jerry enter; Nellie is carrying a dress behind her back.)

NELLIE. George, you know that Sister Act that has been opening the variety show lately? The Craft Sisters?

GMC. *(To Nellie.)* Yeah, I should be opening the show, not them! I can sing way better than them, any day. I've been telling them that, too.

NELLIE. Well, today you're going to have your chance. They've come down with the Flu. The manager says if you and Josie can fill in for them this week, it will mean five extra dollars for our family. So for this week only, the "Craft Sisters" are going to be you and Josie. *(She hands GMC a full-length skirt--which he can quickly put over his pants in the wings--and nudges him into the wings, so he can change.)*

GMC. But Ma.....

NELLIE. No, "But Ma." Go!

JERRY. If you and Josie want careers in the show business, you have to learn to say "yes" to any opportunity offered you.

(Nellie and Jerry exit. The manager puts a new placard in place, which reads, "The Craft Sisters.")

MANAGER. And now, for something new and different: The Craft Sisters.

(Josie emerges from the wings and starts singing "Nellie Kelly, I Love You." She is singing the song directly to the audience, but soon sneaks some glances into the wings, and even finally--looking a bit perturbed--makes a beckoning motion towards the wings; she is trying to get her reluctant brother to join her onstage in singing this number with her.)

(SONG. Josie--joined eventually by GMC--sings "NELLIE KELLY, I LOVE YOU.")

JOSIE. *(Sings:)*

IT'S THE SAME OLD SONG THEY SING, "I LOVE YOU."

THE BOYS ARE ALL MAD ABOUT NELLIE--SWEET NELLIE--

THE DAUGHTER OF OFFICER KELLY.

AND IT'S ALL DAY LONG THEY BRING,

FLOWERS ALL DRIPPING WITH DEW.

AND THEY JOIN IN THE CHORUS OF NELLIE KELLY

"I LOVE YOU."

(The piano plays the music corresponding to the lines, "And it's all day long they bring, / flowers all dripping with dew...." GMC, wearing a skirt and a curly girl's wig--and looking none too happy about being dressed as a girl--emerges from the wings, to skip and dance as Josie keeps singing. Josie mutters to him: "You're late!" as he finally joins her onstage. The "sisters" dance, and then sing the final line together, GMC singing in a girlish voice.)

JOSIE and GMC. *(Sing:)*

AND THEY JOIN IN THE CHORUS OF NELLIE KELLY

"I LOVE YOU."

(GMC and Josie bow.)

(Nellie and Jerry step out from the stage-right wings, and shake hands with their kids, congratulating them on a good performance.)

GMC. *(To Nellie.)* Did you hear that applause, Mom? I *told* you I'm a much better performer than those Craft Sisters!

(Josie exits, with an exasperated look; her brother, who'd hardly even been in much of that number, is taking full credit for its success.)

NELLIE. George, I'm getting a little tired of your boasting. Everybody is.

GMC. Aw, Ma, you know I was just being...serious.

JERRY. George, your mother and I have been thinking some things over. You're eight years old now. You've never been in school, not one day of your life. Shouldn't you be learning reading and writing and 'rithmetic, the same way most children do?

NELLIE. And it would do you good to be around other kids. You're getting spoiled. Each week we perform in a different town, with different acts. You never get a chance to form any lasting friendships. You're not close to anyone except your father and me, and your sister.

GMC. Awww, you know *you're* all I need... *(He turns his head to gaze longingly at the audience.)* Plus, a good audience!

NELLIE. George, as of today, you are retiring from the show business. *(Nellie removes the girl's wig from GMC's head.)* We have some friends who will let you live with them while we travel. You can go to school and church in your own neighborhood, make friends, play ball, and do chores like other boys.

JERRY. I'm going to form my own company of actors. We'll tour New England doing plays, and if we're good enough, maybe someday we'll make Broadway. In the meantime, you'll be learning so much in school, you'll forget you ever wanted to be an actor.

GMC. No, Pop! I love performing. All my life, I've traveled with you and Mom and Josie. I don't want to go live with strangers, in some strange little town, and go to *school* like everyone else.

NELLIE. While we're struggling to get our tour going, taking our theater company from one little Con-nec-ti-cut town to another, trying to get people to come see our show, you'll be enjoying school and playing ball, and being just like every other kid.

GMC. Why would I ever want to be just like every other kid?

(Jerry and Nellie Cohan exit, appearing frustrated they haven't gotten through to their son; they carry the "Craft Sisters" vaudeville placard offstage with them.)

GMC. (Talking aloud to himself--one unhappy little kid.) I *hate* giving up show business. Retiring--at age eight! With the applause still ringing in my ears. Who'd have thought...

(GMC walks over towards the piano, he picks up a vaudeville placard that has been preset against the piano, turns it so the audience can now see the words on it, and sets it on the stand; it reads: "Master Georgie Cohan.")

(Song. GMC sings "I WON'T BE AN ACTOR NO MORE.")

GMC. (Sings, wistfully:)

WELL, I WON'T BE AN ACTOR NO MORE,

SCHOOL IS NOW JUST WHAT I'VE GOT IN STORE

I'VE BEEN A GOOD TROUPER FOR ALL THESE YEARS

I'VE ENJOYED THE BACKSLAPS, THE LAUGHS, THE TEARS.

NO TRAVELING AROUND FOR ME.

I'M GOING TO SETTLE DOWN YOU SEE,

GOOD-BYE, THEATRICAL BUSINESS

I'M DEAD SURE,

WELL I WON'T BE AN ACTOR NO MORE...

(The pianist begins playing the music the music corresponding to the words, "Good-bye

theatrical business / I'm dead sure," while GMC shuffles about the stage a bit, forlornly. He goes to the vaudeville placard bearing his name, picks it up, looks at it longingly, and finally sets it down for good--he is resigned to his "retirement"--as he finishes the song.)

GMC. *(Sings:)*

WELL I WON'T BE AN ACTOR NO MORE...

(The music to "I Won't Be An Actor No More" should be continued softly under the dialog--virtually up until the start of the next song--to provide wistful underscoring as GMC and Percy chat. GMC takes a seat, to continue talking with Percy.)

GMC. *(To Percy.)* Let me tell you, Percy, school was *hard*.

PERCY. For me, too. I was never the best student. I'd daydream about the summers I'd spent performing with my Dad. I was always more interested in singing than schoolwork.

GMC. Me, too. And the school year had already started when I got there. I'd missed a lot. While everyone else worked on reading and writing and 'rithmetic, I felt lost. And I was always the last kid picked for baseball.

Believe me, Percy! Every time a traveling show came to town, I'd be wishing I was part of it. This was back before movies were invented. There was nothing more exciting than having a show come to town.

In the big traveling shows, the actors all doubled as musicians and singers. In the afternoons, they'd parade through your town--marching in bright red uniforms, and playing their instruments and singing, so you were dying to see their show.

(The underscoring should quicken in tempo, showing his mounting excitement at the thought of these street parades.)

Sitting in the schoolroom one afternoon, I could hear a parade approaching--it was Lew Dockstader's big traveling show. I wanted to run away and join it.

(The underscoring of "I Won't be an Actor No More" stops. After a brief pause, the music will begin for the next number, "You Won't Do Any Business if You Haven't Got a Band.")

And I wondered how my parents, with their little ragtag troupe of actors, were doing, traveling from town to town. *(GMC walks across the stage, and puts a new vaudeville placard on the stand. The placard reads: "Out On the Road...")* When I got a letter from my Dad, I learned they were struggling pretty hard.

(SONG. GMC and others sing "YOU WON'T DO ANY BUSINESS IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT A BAND." The cast members act out the situations described in the song.)

GMC. *(Sings, to Percy and to the audience:)*

MY PARENTS, THEY LEFT THE TOWN

PLANNING TO ROAM AROUND

TRYING OUT THEIR NEW DRAMATIC PLAY--OUT ON THE ROAD.

(Jerry leads Nellie and Josie out onto the stage, Nellie is carrying a suitcase; they are taking in the sighs; they are clearly traveling--"out on the road.")

THEY TOOK THEIR TROUPE TO HAZELNUT

WAY DOWN IN CON-NEC-TI-CUT,

WITH DREAMS OF SOMEDAY PLAYING ON BROADWAY.

WHEN THE TRAIN ARRIVED WITH ALL,

THE MANAGER WHO RAN THE HALL

MET THEM AT THE DEPOT WITH A FROWN.

(The manager, wearing a derby, enters, looking none to happy.)

SAID HE AS HE PUT OUT HIS HAND,

MANAGER. *(Sings:)*

"I HEAR YOU HAVEN'T GOT A BAND.

THE FOLKS EXPECT A STREET PARADE IN TOWN."

GMC. *(Sings:)*

MY DAD LAUGHED AND BOWED HIS HEAD.

THE LOCAL MANAGER HE SAID,

MANAGER. *(Sings:)*

"YOU WON'T DO ANY BUSINESS IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT A BAND.

THE FOLKS EXPECT A STREET PARADE, AND UNIFORMS SO GRAND.

TO THE WHOLE PROFESSION, WELL, IT MAY SOUND FUNNY,

BUT IT'S JUST THE THING THAT'LL GET THE MONEY,
WHEN YOU PLAY AN OLD NEW ENGLAND ONE-NIGHT STAND
IN CON-NEC-TI-CUT.

SIR HENRY IRVING PLAYED THE TOWN,
AND STARVED TO DEATH LAST FALL.

HE CAME BACK HERE WITH A BAND,
AND HE PACKED THEM TO THE WALL.

THE TOWN IS SAD, BUT YOUR HOUSE IS SADDER,
BUT IT WOULDN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE IF YOU'RE LEW DOCKSTADER.
WELL, YOU WON'T DO ANY BUSINESS IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT A BAND."

GMC. *(Sings:)*

THE MANAGER, HE SAID,

MANAGER. *(Sings:)*

"YOU GUYS

SHOULD GET SOME POSTERS, AND GET WISE,

POSTERS SHOWING CHORUS GIRLS IN TIGHTS

OR SHOWING SOMEONE WITH A KNIFE,

THREAT'NIN' TO TAKE THE HERO'S LIFE,

WITH THAT YOU'D PACK 'EM IN HERE 20 NIGHTS!"

(The actor playing the manager exits briefly into the wings, so he can replace his derby with clerk's visor; he will step out onstage again in a moment, wearing the visor and using a different speaking voice, as the clerk. Or, if you prefer, the change can be made on stage, with the actor simply grabbing a new hat from atop the piano, or a hatrack.)

GMC. *(Sings:)*

WHEN TO THE HOTEL MY FOLKS GOT.

THE CLERK WAS JOHNNY ON THE SPOT.

SAID HE:

CLERK. *(Sings:)*

"YOU'LL PAY YOUR BILL NOW, UNDERSTAND.

YOU SEE, WE NEVER TAKE A CHANCE.

WE CHARGE THE ACTORS IN ADVANCE.

THAT IS, OF COURSE, UNLESS THEY'VE GOT A BAND."

GMC. *(Sings:)*

MY DAD LAUGHED AND HELD HIS BREATH.

THE CLERK SAYS:

CLERK. *(Sings:)*

"YOU'LL ALL STARVE TO DEATH.

YOU WON'T DO ANY BUSINESS IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT A BAND.

THE FOLKS EXPECT A STREET PARADE, AND UNIFORMS SO GRAND.

TO THE WHOLE PROFESSION, WELL, IT MAY SOUND FUNNY,

BUT IT'S JUST THE THING THAT'LL GET THE MONEY

WHEN YOU PLAY AN OLD NEW ENGLAND ONE-NIGHT STAND

IN CON-NEC-TI-CUT."

JOSIE. *(Speaking.)* I think we know what you're talking about. Ready, Mother?

JOSIE and NELLIE. *(Sing:)*

SIR HENRY IRVING PLAYED THE TOWN,

AND STARVED TO DEATH LAST FALL.

HE CAME BACK HERE WITH A BAND,

AND HE PACKED 'EM TO THE WALL.

THE TOWN IS SAD, BUT YOUR HOUSE IS SADDER,

AND IT WOULDN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE IF YOU'RE LEW DOCKSTADER.

WELL, YOU WON'T DO ANY BUSINESS IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT A BAND.

(Josie exits.)

GMC. *(To Percy.)* Meanwhile, Percy, I didn't want to be in school, I wanted to be back traveling around with my family. I was lonely. I missed performing. And the school was getting fed up with me, too. My parents came to town and had a meeting with the principal, Mr. Orlando F. Eugene.

(The principal, Orlando F. Eugene, enters from the wings, stage-right. As he enters, he places a new vaudeville placard on the stand, in front of the one that reads: "Out on the Road..." The new placard reads: "The Principal's Office." The principal has an exaggerated sense of his own importance.)

JERRY. Well, sir, my son has been in school a month and a half. How is he doing?

PRINCIPAL. Well, it *pains* me to say it; honestly, it just pains me... but George is one of these highly active children--fidgety, can't keep still, can't keep his mind on his work. And noisy--

NELLIE. Do you mean, he talks too much?

PRINCIPAL. Oh, he jabbars and he jabbars! And when he's not jabbering, sometimes you'll hear him singing to himself. And moving his feet, like he wants to dance. I won't have *my* students singing and dancing.

JERRY. Have you spoken with him?

PRINCIPAL. And on the playground, he knocked down one boy who called him a sore loser. I assure you, I gave him a mighty thorough scolding. Hmpf! Then later, I caught him giving other children an imitation of me scolding him.

JERRY. Oh, he *is* good at imitating people.

PRINCIPAL. But I know just how to handle a case like this. There's a medicine you can give him--Laudanum. Put some in his soup, and it will calm him right down. He'll be so quiet, no one will even notice him.

NELLIE. I don't want my boy to be so quiet no one will notice him!

JERRY. He's a Cohan! And let me tell you, sir--Cohans were meant to be noticed!

PRINCIPAL. But if he's medicated--

JERRY. He doesn't need to be medicated! He needs to be back in the show business--singing and dancing with his family.

PRINCIPAL. Show business! Hmpff!

(The principal exits into the stage-right wings, in a huff. As he exits, he takes with him the vaudeville placard that reads: "The Principal's Office." So now, once again, the stand shows a placard reading, "Out on the Road..." Jerry and Nellie briefly freeze in place while GMC delivers the next line to Percy.)

GMC. *(To Percy.)* And my father pulled me out of school. I never went back. Those six weeks were the only schooling I ever got in my life. I was so happy.

GMC. *(To Jerry.)* Gosh, Dad! You mean I don't have to go to school ever again? I don't have to learn anything, *ever*?

JERRY. You can stay just as ignorant as you like!

GMC. Gosh! I feel like the luckiest boy on Earth!

JERRY. *(Handing son a fiddle.)* Well, there may be a *little* work you'll have to do. For starters, son, you *are* going to learn how to play a musical instrument--maybe two. First, I'm going to teach you how to play the fiddle. Your mother and sister are learning to play instruments, too.

GMC. Why?

JERRY. Well, from now on everyone in this family's acting company is going to have to play some kind of instrument, too. When we enter a town, we'll raise a ruckus with a big street parade. People will know that the Four Cohans and their Company have come to put on a show. You see, son, if there's one thing I've learned, it's....

JERRY. *(Sings)*

WE WON'T DO ANY BUSINESS IF WE HAVEN'T GOT A BAND.

THE FOLKS EXPECT A STREET PARADE, AND UNIFORMS SO GRAND.

TO THE WHOLE PROFESSION, WELL, IT MAY SOUND FUNNY,

NELLIE. *(Sings:)*

BUT IT'S JUST THE THING THAT'LL GET THE MONEY

JERRY. *(Sings:)*

WHEN YOU PLAY AN OLD NEW ENGLAND ONE-NIGHT STAND

JOSIE. *(Sings.)*

IN CON-NEC-TI-CUT.

THE WHOLE FAMILY. *(Sings:)*

SIR HENRY IRVING PLAYED THIS TOWN,

AND STARVED TO DEATH LAST FALL.

HE CAME BACK HERE WITH A BAND,

AND HE PACKED 'EM TO THE WALL.

THE TOWN IS SAD, BUT YOUR HOUSE IS SADDER,

AND IT WOULDN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE IF YOU'RE LEW DOCKSTADER.

WELL, WE WON'T DO ANY BUSINESS IF WE HAVEN'T GOT A BAND.

(Jerry, Nellie, and Josie march offstage to the music, pantomiming playing their musical instruments.)

GMC. *(To Percy.)* We were now the Four Cohans and their Company of Mirthmakers. And that season, we were not just singers, dancers and actors--we were all in the band as well, parading in each town we reached, to drum up business.

I said: "At least there's no more school for me. I'll never have to work so hard again!"

PERCY. *(To GMC.)* And you really didn't have to go to school?

GMC. Well, Percy, my Dad soon had me learning piano, too. And many afternoons I'd be inside, practicing music lessons. I'd look out the window and see kids--all finished with school for the day--just playing. And sometimes I'd cry. I worked all day.

PERCY. But at least your Dad didn't force you to learn to read or write or do arithmetic.

GMC. He said...

(Jerry enters.)

JERRY. *(To GMC.)* Son, you may not be in public school anymore, But you're in the "School of Cohan." You've chosen to be in show business. And you're going to give it 100%. And one thing I'm going to ask is that you create something, every day. If you get restless creating songs, you can create poems...or dances...or scenes for a play.

(Jerry exits.)

PERCY. *(To GMC.)* That sounds fun.

GMC. *(To Percy.)* Percy, my Dad never *made* me learn to read or write. I realized I *wanted* to learn. I wanted to be able to write down the songs and jokes and skits I kept dreaming up. Here are a few lines from the very first song I ever wrote down:

(GMC stands on his chair, and declaims dramatically. The pianist can, if desired, accent the drama with a few well-placed chords.)

THERE'S A FRENCH GIRL NAMED MCCARTHY,

HER FIRST IS MARY ANN.

HER MOTHER IS HER FATHER'S WIFE,

HER FATHER HE'S A MAN.

THOUGH MARY'S VERY HOMELY,

SHE HAS A PRETTY FACE....

PERCY. That doesn't even make sense!

GMC. Percy, I was 10. Do you think I started writing masterpieces right away? My first songs were *terrible*. But, like my Dad, I wrote every day. And if you practice anything long enough, you get better. When I was wasn't making up songs, dances, jokes or skits, I was watching the other acts--from song-and-dance teams like Flatrock and Brock, to Madame Dooley Holzman and her Troupe of Thoroughly Educated Monkeys. Or I'd walk into town and just watch people--note how they'd stand, walk, and talk. Imitate 'em.

(Instrumental excerpt: "THE NEW YORK TWO-STEP." This is a pantomime sequence. To the beat of the music, a man wearing a derby, and twirling a cane, walks across the stage

and back to the music, perhaps tipping his hat and bowing as well. GMC then mimics all the actions. Next, a woman--played by the actress playing Nellie--walks across the stage and back, walking a dog, fanning herself, flinging a boa over her shoulder. GMC then mimics all the actions.)

(Jerry steps onstage from the wings.)

JERRY. You're really studying people. Good. We'll count that as an acting class in the "School of Cohan."

PERCY. (To GMC.) If you ask me, the "School of Cohan" sounds pretty easy.

GMC. You think you could take it? Don't forget--there are no days off, Percy, once you enroll in the "School of Cohan." One time, when we were playing Barth's Theater in Washington, the manager gave me some grief. (The manager walks onstage from upstage left.)

MANAGER. You Cohans work too hard. You're always making up new stuff for your act. Audiences don't care. Once you get west of New York City, this country is filled with hicks and hayseeds, and rubes--places like Missouri grind 'em out like sausages. You can tell those hayseeds the same tired old jokes and songs year after year--they won't know any better. Some performers haven't changed their acts in 20 years.

JERRY. Audiences deserve better! We're going to cross this country time and again. And every time people come see us, they'll know they're going to see something fresh.

(The manager exits into wings, stage-right.)

GMC. While I was growing up, we crossed the entire U.S. 10 different times. (Josie and Nellie come onstage.) Before too long, we were singing in our act songs I was writing myself. Because I'd learned to dance first, I'd often start by making up dance steps first, then fit music to the dance steps, then the words. I still enjoy working that way. We had fun introducing new dances in our act. (GMC teaches dances steps to his family, which they pick up, as they sing and dance to "The Hinky Dee.")

(SONG. THE FOUR COHANS perform "THE HINKY DEE.")

THE FOUR COHANS. (Sing:)

WHEN YOU DO THE HINKY DEE,

YOU'RE SURE TO FIND IT JUST AS EASY AS IT CAN BE.

WHEN YOU DO THE HINKY DEE,

IT'S JUST A FUNNY LITTLE TRICK OF BENDING THE KNEE.

ONE, TWO, THREE, YOU SEE,

THEN YOU BEND THE KNEE.

KEEP YOUR EYES UPON ME.

RIGHT TO LEFT TO RIGHT.

DON'T YOU HOLD HER TIGHT,

MAKE HER EASY AND FREE.

WHEN YOU DO THE HINKY DEE,

YOU'RE SURE TO FEEL AS IF YOU'RE SAILING OVER THE SEA.

WHEN YOU DO THE HINKY DEE

I WISH YOU'D SEND FOR ME.

BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT TO GET THE GAIT, GET THE GAIT, GET THE GAIT OF IT.

WHEN YOU GET THE GAIT DON'T YOU WAIT OR HESITATE A BIT.

BABY, LOOK A HERE, LOOK A HERE,

YOU'VE ONLY GOT TO FOLLOW ME TO HINKY DEE.

(A vaudeville performer enter from the stage-right wings. Josie exits.)

A VAUDEVILLE PERFORMER. *(To Jerry Cohan.)* Say, that's some song, Jerry! I'd like to buy it from you and perform it in my act.

JERRY. We'll be glad to *give* you a copy of it.

GMC. I actually created that song myself.

VAUDEVILLE PERFORMER. A young sprout like you? I don't believe it.

GMC. I'm the best songwriter in this business.

JERRY. The most modest, anyway--that's my George.

(The vaudeville performer exits into the wings, stage-left. Jerry and Nellie remain frozen in

pce while GMC talks with Percy.)

PERCY. *(To GMC.)* Writing and performing your own songs--it sounds like by then you really had it made.

GMC. Percy, we were pretty happy. But we often had no money. Sometimes we had to walk from one town to the next, because we could not even afford to take a train or trolley. My Dad was the kindest man I ever met. He'd give his last dime to help someone. But he wasn't a businessman. With our talent, we should have made a good living. Yet when I was a boy, we really struggled to get by.

PERCY. Our family struggled, too.

GMC . *(To Nellie.)* Ma, someday, I want to manage our act. Handle all the bills, handle all business with the theater owners. I could help work the box office, too, selling tickets before the show.

NELLIE. Fine. But if you want to do all that, son, you're going to have to master arithmetic first.

GMC . *(To Percy.)* And there I was, Perce--having plenty of fun, all right, but working harder than any kid in regular school.

Birthdays flew by. Each year, in our family, I knew to expect the same birthday present from my Dad.

JERRY. *(To GMC.)* Son, you're 13 now. And for your birthday I've got you--

GMC. I know, I know. A new pair of dancing shoes.

(Jerry gives GMC a pair of dancing shoes, which he puts on.)

JERRY. Even if I had as much money as Rockeller, or Vanderbilt, or Carnegie, or even ol' Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan himself, I don't think I could give you a better present, son. Happy is the man who can dance through life.

NELLIE. *(To GMC.)* I wish there was more we could give you, George, but money isn't everything.

JERRY. Look at us. We are as happy as any people I've ever met. Now you take a tycoon like J. Pierpont Morgan--he's probably worrying all day about whether his railroads and steel mills are making him enough money. No, you'd never catch me trading places with ol' Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan. For we do what we love. Each night, George, you get to sing songs that you make up. What could be better than that?

GMC. You've given me a lot to think about, dad. I'll put my thoughts into a song in tonight's show....

(GMC steps downstage as his parents exit. He puts a new vaudeville placard in place. It reads simply: "George M. Cohan." And he begins to sing, reflectively..)

(SONG. GMC sings "IF I WERE ONLY MR. MORGAN.")

GMC . (Sings:)

HOW FEW MEN THAT WE MEET ARE REALLY HAPPY,

AND HOW FEW ARE FREE FROM EV'RY CARE AND STRIFE

FOR THE MOST OF MEN ARE SAUCY, SAD, AND SCRAPPY.

IT SEEMS THEY'RE NEVER SATISFIED WITH LIFE.

THO' I'VE NEVER BROKEN BANKS NOR BEATEN RACES,

I'M CONTENTED IN MY OWN WAY JUST THE SAME.

AND THERE IS BUT ONE WITH WHOM I WOULD CHANGE PLACES.

AND MISTER PIERPONT MORGAN IS HIS NAME.

THEN I'D HAVE

EIGHTY THOUSAND DIFFERENT KINDS OF SERVANTS AT MY HEELS.

I'D HAVE CHAMPAGNE SAUCE ON EVERYTHING THAT'S SERVED AT ALL MY MEALS.

I'D HAVE CARNEGIE TO RUN MY ERRANDS,

PRETTY GIRLS TO POSE.

I'D HAVE VANDERBILT AND ROCKEFELLER, BRUSHING OFF MY CLOTHES.

I'D HAVE SWEETLY DANCING MAIDENS JUST TO GREET ARRIVING FOLKS.

I'D HAVE ACTORS ALL ABOUT THE PLACE TO TELL ME FUNNY JOKES.

WITH NO WORRIES ABOUT CASH,

I'D USE PRIME RIBS FOR BREAKFAST HASH,

IF I WERE ONLY MR. MORGAN.

I'D BUY UP EV'RY RACE TRACK I WERE ABLE

THEN I'D PURCHASE ALL THE HORSES RIGHT AWAY.

THEN I'D HAVE A BUNCH OF EXPERTS IN MY STABLE

TO GUESS THE WINNERS FOR ME EV'RY DAY.

AND IN FACT I'D TAKE A MORTGAGE ON THE NATION.

AND I'D RUN THE THING TO SUIT MY OWN IDEA.

AND INSTEAD OF GOING TO PARIS FOR VACATION,

I'D BUY THE PLACE AND BRING IT OVER HERE.

AND THEN THE

GRAPES I'D EAT WOULD COST ME FORTY DOLLARS BY THE BUNCH.

I'D HAVE CHAUNCEY OLCOTT SING TO ME WHILE I WAS EATING LUNCH.

I WOULD BUY THE BROADWAY CABLE LINE,

NO FARE AT ALL I'D CHARGE.

I'D HAVE LADIES FOR CONDUCTORS

SO THAT BUSINESS WOULD BE LARGE.

I WOULD PRINT A NEW YORK PAPER,

ADVERTISEMENTS WOULD BE FREE.

AND I'D CRITICIZE THE CRITICS

WHO'D BEEN CRITICIZING ME.

JOHN PHILIP SOUSA I WOULD HIRE

TO PLAY ME MUSIC, TO INSPIRE...

IF I WERE ONLY MISTER MORGAN.

(The same vaudeville performer we saw earlier steps onstage from the stage-right wings.)

A VAUDEVILLE PERFORMER. *(To GMC.)* Say, that song's got something fresh, sprout. Did you really write it yourself?

For the rest please purchase script.