

# MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL

MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL is one of the world's major dramatic licensing agencies, specializing in Broadway, Off-Broadway and West End musicals. Since its founding in 1952, MTI has been responsible for supplying scripts and musical materials to theatres worldwide and for protecting the rights and legacy of the authors whom it represents. It has been a driving force in cultivating new work and in extending the production life of some of the classics: *Guys and Dolls*, *West Side Story*, *Fiddler On The Roof*, *Les Misérables*, *Annie*, *Of Thee I Sing*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Damn Yankees*, *The Music Man*, *Evita*, and the complete musical theatre works of composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim, among others. Apart from the major Broadway and Off-Broadway shows, MTI is proud to represent youth shows, revues and musicals which began life in regional theatres and have since become worthy additions to the musical theatre canon. MTI shows have been performed by 30,000 amateur and professional theatrical organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada, and in over 60 countries around the world. Whether it's at a high school in Kansas, by an all-female troupe in Japan or the first production of *West Side Story* ever staged in Estonia, productions of MTI musicals involve over 10 million people each year.

Although we value all our clients, the twelve thousand high schools who perform our shows are of particular importance, for it is at these schools that music and drama educators work to keep theatre alive in their community. MTI shares with these educators the goal of raising the next generation of theatre artists and audiences. To help these educators, it has taken a leading role in theatre education by creating MTI THEATRICAL RESOURCES, a "theatrical tool box" designed to help not only ensure the success of each musical production, but also to establish the study of musical theatre as a permanent part of the school curriculum. These resources include: STUDY GUIDES designed to bring the study of specific shows into the classroom; MTI REHEARSCORES® which provide unlimited rehearsal accompaniment via an easy-to-use, fully interactive computer program on disk; professional TV SPOTS allowing companies to affordably advertise on television in local markets; LOGO PACKS to aide in poster and program design; TRANSPOSITIONS-ON-DEMAND to allow flexibility in casting and musical key changes; and VIDEO CONVERSATIONPIECES™ featuring video seminars with artists such as Martin Charnin, Stephen Sondheim and Scott Ellis discussing the creation of their shows from inception to production.

MTI is also a leader in providing materials to meet the increasing demand for symphonic arrangements of popular theatre music. The MTI CONCERT LIBRARY offers arrangements of selected songs, as well as full scores from Broadway shows.

Musicals are America's premiere contribution to the theatre and MTI is firmly committed to supporting and nurturing a musical theatre that will continue to develop and flourish into the next century.





MEREDITH WILLSON'S

**THE.  
MUSIC  
MAN**

Book, Music and Lyrics by  
MEREDITH WILLSON

Based on a story by MEREDITH WILLSON AND FRANKLIN LACEY

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## About The Music Man

*The Music Man*, which opened at the Majestic Theatre on December 19, 1957, established composer-lyricist-book writer Meredith Willson as a major talent of the Broadway musical. Produced by Kermit Bloomgarden, directed by Morton Da Costa and choreographed by Onna White, the show was hailed as one of the best musical comedies of its time.

*The Music Man* was based on Willson's recollections of his own childhood in a small Iowa town. Willson's friend, Frank Loesser, the composer-lyricist who created such monumental hits as *Guys and Dolls* and *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying*, encouraged him to turn his delightful anecdotes into a musical. After working for eight years and creating 30 drafts and 40 songs, Willson crafted his boyhood memories into what is widely regarded as one of the most accomplished works in Broadway history. It lovingly and humorously captured the lost innocence of America at the beginning of the 20th century.

*The Music Man* is the story of Professor Harold Hill and his impact on the sleepy town of River City, Iowa. Hill arrives in that small community on July 4, 1912, with every intention of fleecing the town's citizens. But even with nothing but the lowest of intentions, he inadvertently brings joy into their lives and into his own life, as well. His "con" is simple but effective: he convinces a town's residents he can teach their children to play in a marching band if they buy the instruments and uniforms he has for sale. Then he simply collects the money and escapes without fulfilling his promises. His best laid plans, however, go wonderfully awry when he falls in love with the town librarian, Marian Paroo, who makes an honest man of the perennial huckster. Trapped by his own love for Marian, Hill is literally forced to face the music when he is made to "conduct" his rag-tag orchestra. While the children can hardly play their instruments, the inner music that Hill and the band bring into the life of the town transforms River City.

The show's score has its roots in the music of the soft-shoe, of ragtime, of barbershop quartets and of the march — the sounds of the American heartland in the first years of the twentieth century. It is an original, fresh and warmhearted musical about basic American values. Its pace is brisk, its packaging brilliant.

Willson's view of the world was marked by a belief in the inherent goodness of people and the possibility of miracles. Merging the sounds and heart of middle America with the conventions of the Broadway musical, he created a masterpiece.

As critic Robert Coleman wrote in 1957, "If you want to be happy, spend an evening with *The Music Man*. It'll make your feet snap into a marching step to 'Seventy-Six Trombones,' make you reach for your hankie to mop moist eyes in 'Goodnight My Someone' and want to dance in the aisles to 'Shipooopi.' What a show! What a hit! What a solid hit!"

## The Characters in The Music Man

HAROLD HILL, a traveling salesman

MARIAN PAROO, a piano teacher and the librarian of River City, Iowa

MRS. PAROO, Marian's mother

WINTHROP PAROO, Marian's younger brother

AMARYLLIS, a piano student

MAYOR SHINN, the mayor of River City

EULALIE MACKECKNIE SHINN, the mayor's wife

ZANEETA SHINN, the mayor's oldest teenage daughter

GRACIE SHINN, the mayor's youngest daughter

MARCELLUS WASHBURN, an old friend of Harold Hill who works in the  
River City Livery Stable

TOMMY DJILAS, a teenager

### **MEMBERS OF THE RIVER CITY SCHOOL BOARD:**

JACEY SQUIRES, owner of the River City Livery Stable

EWART DUNLOP, owner of a grocery store

OLIVER HIX

OLIN BRITT

### **LADIES OF RIVER CITY:**

ALMA HIX

MAUD DUNLOP

ETHEL TOFFELMIER

MRS. SQUIRES

CHARLIE COWELL, a traveling salesman

CONSTABLE LOCKE

CONDUCTOR

TRAVELING SALESMEN

CHORUS



# Plot Synopsis

## Act I, Scene 1

The play begins on the morning of July 4, 1912. A railroad conductor announces the next stop, River City, Iowa, to a coach filled with traveling salesmen. Speaking rhythmically (keeping time with the movement of the train), the salesmen begin a conversation about the merits of cash versus credit and the ways their products and lives have changed as the result of “modren” merchandising (“Rock Island”). One of the salesmen, Charlie Cowell, asks if anyone has heard of Professor Harold Hill, a salesman who is ruining the reputation of all traveling salesmen. Cowell explains that Hill moves from town to town selling musical instruments, uniforms and the promise of lessons for a boy’s band, and then leaves town with the collected money before anyone has discovered that he is musically illiterate. As the train stops in River City, Cowell, who has been trying to find and expose Hill, mentions Hill wouldn’t get far with the stubborn Iowans. Before the train begins to move again, a salesman who has quietly been playing cards grabs his suitcase and announces that the conversation has prompted him to give Iowa a try. When asked his name, the stranger flashes his suitcase, bearing the name “Prof. Harold Hill,” and he quickly exits the train as it starts to move. He finds himself facing River City’s Main Street decorated with 4th of July bunting and crowded with townspeople.

## Scene 2

As workers move a pool table into the River City Billiard Parlor owned by Mayor Shinn, the townspeople greet the mayor and each other. They sing with pride of their contrariness (“Iowa Stubborn”). As they disperse, Hill enters the scene and tries to rent a horse and buggy at the livery stable. There he meets his old friend and one-time partner-in-crime Marcellus Washburn. Washburn, who knows Harold’s real first name is Greg, remembers Hill’s last sales gimmick was selling steam-powered automobiles. Hill tells Washburn he’d be selling them still if somebody hadn’t ruined his game by actually inventing such a vehicle! Marcellus has given up his old ways and has settled down in River City to work in the livery stable. After Harold explains his plans, Marcellus warns him to watch out for exposure by the town’s music teacher / town librarian, Marian Paroo. Harold asks him to point her out and then he sets about thinking of a way to convince the parents of River City of the necessity of a boy’s band. When Marcellus tells him about the new pool table in town, Harold recognizes his chance. He approaches Ewart Dunlop, the grocery store owner, and begins talking about the trouble that has entered River City in the shape of a pool table. To the fast-growing crowd Harold delivers a rapid-fire sales pitch / sermon about the corrupting

influence of a pool table on the young boys of the town (“Trouble”); as the townspeople join him, Marcellus signals Marian Paroo is passing by.

### Scene 3

Harold follows Marian home; she rejects his attempts to start a conversation with her on the street, finally slamming her front door in his face.

### Scene 4

As Marian enters the house, Amaryllis, her young piano student, is playing an exercise while Mrs. Paroo, Marian’s mother, continues with her household chores. Marian tells her mother about the strange man (Harold) who has been following her and trying to speak with her. While Amaryllis plays arpeggios, Mrs. Paroo scolds Marian for not speaking to the man, criticizing Marian’s high expectations, both for the townspeople and for men (“Piano Lesson/If You Don’t Mind My Saying So”). Winthrop, Marian’s little brother, enters the house and Amaryllis invites him to a party. Winthrop, who has a lisp and doesn’t like to speak, mispronounces Amaryllis’s name. When she giggles, he runs from the room. Amaryllis, upset that Winthrop never talks to her, starts crying and tells Marian she is worried she’ll never find a sweetheart to wish about on the evening star. Marian tells her to go on wishing, using the word “someone” until the right person comes along. As Amaryllis plays her cross-hands piece, Marian gazes at the evening star and wishes her unnamed “someone” good-night (“Goodnight, My Someone”).

### Scene 5

Inside the high school gymnasium Mayor Shinn is presiding over the Fourth of July celebrations. His wife, Eulalie Mackecknie Shinn, who is dressed as Columbia, holds a torch and has just finished leading a song. As the mayor begins his stentorian recitation of the Gettysburg Address, he is stopped by the constantly bickering school board, who remind him that the next presentation is an Indian costume spectacle. The spectacle concludes with his wife counting to twenty in the “Indian tongue.” Before she can finish counting, young Tommy Djilas lights a firecracker in front of her. The four school board members begin arguing as the mayor again tries his Gettysburg recitation. The mayor is foiled again, this time by Harold, who steals the crowd’s attention, continuing his earlier sermon about the pool table. He tells the crowd he has come to River City to organize a boy’s band as the solution to the corrupting influence of the pool table. He then entrances them with a story of when six of the

greatest marching bands in America came to town on the very same day (“Seventy-Six Trombones”). The townspeople join in, dancing and parading around the gymnasium.

The mayor, alarmed at seeing the Iowans so excited, orders the school board to get Harold’s credentials. As Tommy is being led out of the gymnasium by the constable, he is warned by the mayor to stay away from Zaneeta, the Shinn’s oldest daughter. Harold realizes if he can make an ally of Tommy he’d have the town’s youth on his side, too. He quickly intercedes on Tommy’s behalf and agrees to take responsibility for the boy. He asks Tommy to design a music holder for the piccolo. Harold then points out a passing girl and gives Tommy money to take her to the candy shop. After the teenagers leave, the constable tells Harold that the girl is Zaneeta Shinn.

The school board approaches Harold and demands his credentials; Harold, stalling because he has no credentials, asks them each to sing the words “ice cream,” which they do in perfect barbershop quartet harmony. Finding music more interesting than Harold, the quartet sings “Sincere” as Harold sneaks away to look for Marian.

## Scene 6

Harold follows Marian to the library where, before slamming the door in his face, she warns him she will check his credentials in the reference books. Marcellus appears to ask about Harold’s progress. Harold explains he’ll be in town for four weeks, which is the time required for the delivery of the instruments, uniforms and instruction books. He also mentions to Marcellus that he circumvents his musical ignorance by advocating his “revolutionary Think System.” This “System” replaces reading notes, and practicing scales with positive thought. Marcellus tries to convince him to settle down in River City, but Harold tells him he prefers worldly women to the wholesome, innocent women of River City (“The Sadder-But-Wiser Girl”).

The ladies of the town surround Harold, buzzing with excitement over the band. Mrs. Shinn, however, is still withholding her judgment until her husband receives Harold’s credentials. When she moves her foot to relieve the pain of her bunions, Harold comments on her grace and insists she lead the Ladies Auxiliary for the Classic Dance, with the other ladies as members. Mrs. Shinn immediately falls under Harold’s spell. She consents to head the committee and she, too, is now an ally of Hill. When Harold asks about Marian, the ladies huddle together like hens and begin to gossip. They accuse her of promoting Balzac, Chaucer and other authors of “dirty books” (“Pickalittle”). They also darkly suggest she had been involved with “Miser” Madison, a late River City resident who donated the gymnasium, picnic park, hospital and library to the town. The school board appears, again demanding Harold’s credentials, and again he deftly distracts them by saying goodnight to the ladies, prompting a song from the quartet (“Goodnight Ladies”).

## Scene 7

Harold enters the library and begins flirting with Marian, who wants nothing to do with him. He threatens to drop a bag of marbles on the floor if she continues to ignore him, and he sings of his love for her (“Marian The Librarian”). Marian and the other readers join Harold in dancing a very quiet soft-shoe ballet around the library.

## Scene 8 and 9

Harold has worked his usual magic on the River City citizens and with Tommy by his side, he’s made eleven sales. Harold sends the boy home while he continues his rounds. Harold meets Mayor Shinn as he is about to ring the mayor’s doorbell. Harold flatters the mayor about the shape of his hand, remarking that the laws of heredity mean that the mayor’s son is destined to be a great flugelhorn player. The mayor is ready to sign an order when he suddenly remembers he doesn’t even have a son. He again demands that Harold bring his credentials to City Hall later that day.

## Scene 10

Harold has moved on to the Paroo house. He flatters Mrs. Paroo on her facial muscles, suggesting this means Winthrop will be a great cornet player. After Winthrop asks if the uniform will have a stripe, Harold tries to engage him in a conversation, but the boy runs off. Mrs. Paroo explains that Winthrop hardly speaks at all. Thinking Harold’s gift of gab might mean he’s Irish, she asks Harold where he is from. As Harold tells her his alma mater is the Gary Conservatory of Gary, Indiana, Marian returns home and tries to dissuade her mother from ordering an instrument. Marian gets angry when Harold asks to speak to Winthrop’s father, who is dead. When she enters the house, Mrs. Paroo apologizes for Marian’s outburst.

After Harold leaves, Marian sends Winthrop to the library to get the reference book she needs to check on Harold’s credentials. Mrs. Paroo, who likes Harold, accuses Marian of not thinking of the future and of foolishly waiting for a white knight to appear. Marian explains she just wants a man who will love her (“My White Knight”).

## Scene 11

Tommy is making a date with Zaneeta to show her his music holder as Mayor Shinn enters, complaining to his wife that the whole town has been mesmerized by Harold. Marian appears with the reference book, but before she can hand it to the mayor, his

youngest daughter Gracie excitedly announces the arrival of the Wells Fargo Wagon. The townspeople line the street to greet it (“Wells Fargo Wagon”). Winthrop breaks through the crowd to express his hope that the wagon is bringing his band instrument. Harold, who has been riding in the wagon, jumps down and hands Winthrop his cornet. Winthrop, now seemingly unashamed of his speech impediment, turns and excitedly tells Marian how happy he is. Harold hands out the rest of the instruments to the boys. He tells them lessons will follow, but they should first get acquainted with their instruments and think about the *Minuet in G*. The mayor concedes Harold has won the day — for now — but he threatens Harold with a grand jury appearance if the boys aren’t soon playing. The mayor then turns his attentions to Marion and he asks her for the book. Marian, grateful to Harold for Winthrop’s new-found joy and confidence, secretly rips out the relevant page of the book before handing it to Mayor Shinn.

## Act II, Scene 1

In the gymnasium the Ladies Auxiliary Dance Committee is practicing for the upcoming Ice Cream Sociable; they form a *tableau vivant* as the school board sings (“It’s You”). Marcellus has been keeping the young people out of the gym but he can’t hold them out any longer. The young people burst in, forcing the Auxiliary Ladies into hasty retreat. At the young people’s insistence Marcellus winds up the victrola and he leads the crowd in a new dance Harold has shown him (“Shipooopi”); even Harold and Marian join in. The dance ends when Mayor Shinn objects to Tommy dancing with Zaneeta. When Marian rushes to defend Tommy and Zaneeta, Mayor Shinn tells her the reference book didn’t contain any useful information. He then turns to Harold and again demands his credentials. Marian, who has now warmed to Harold, thanks him for defending Tommy. She also asks him when Winthrop’s lessons will begin. Marian invites Harold to call on her to explain the Think System. The ladies, impressed with Marian after seeing her dance with Harold, ask her to join their committee. They also mention that at Harold’s suggestion they’ve read Chaucer, Rabelais and Balzac and adored them all (reprise: “Pickalittle”).

## Scene 2

The school board catches up with Harold and demands his credentials. Harold pretends he is about to hand them over when he casually mentions the name Lida Rose, once again prompting the quartet to sing (“Lida Rose”). Marian, sitting on her porch with her mother, sings to herself of her feelings for Harold as the quartet continues to sing (“Will I Ever Tell You”).

### Scene 3

Mrs. Paroo pushes Marian to tell Harold how she feels about him. Winthrop returns home from fishing and sings for his mother and sister the song Harold has just taught him (“Gary, Indiana”). He happily runs into the house singing the *Minuet in G*, followed by Mrs. Paroo. Charlie Cowell, the traveling salesman, arrives and asks Marian for directions to the mayor’s house. He mentions he has information about Harold Hill’s dishonest past, but he only has a few minutes in town to deliver that information before his train leaves. To protect Harold, Marian tries to delay Cowell by flirting with him. She kisses him just as the train whistle begins to blow. As he realizes what she’s done, he angrily runs off to catch the train, telling her she is but one of a long line of women who have fallen for Harold. After Cowell leaves, Harold arrives; he begins to talk about the Think System, but Marian asks him to explain what Cowell has said. Harold tells her not to believe rumors about traveling salesmen because they are the product of jealousy. Marian agrees, telling him the rumors about her and Mr. Madison are also the product of jealousy. Harold then asks Marian to meet him at the Footbridge, a favorite lover’s meeting place. She accepts. After Harold leaves, she tells her mother she has accepted his invitation; Mrs. Paroo remarks that the Think System, which she’s been using on Harold and Marian, really works.

### Scene 4

Marcellus shows up looking for Harold at the Footbridge. He tells Harold the uniforms have arrived. He also warns Harold that the parents will want to hear the band playing when the kids show up in uniform at the Ice Cream Sociable. Marcellus tells Harold all the money has been collected and he suggests Harold catch the last freight train, which leaves town in a little over an hour. Marian meets Harold and when they are alone, she confesses her love for him (“Till There Was You”). She also tells him she has known all about his phony credentials for weeks. And as a final loving gesture, she gives Harold the page she removed from the reference book.

### Scene 5

Alone, Harold absentmindedly sings to himself (reprise: “Seventy-Six Trombones”) as Marian, offstage, does the same (reprise: “Goodnight, My Someone”). Midway through the song Harold, realizing he has fallen in love with Marian, begins to sing her song. At the same moment she begins to sing his song. Marcellus rushes in holding Harold’s suitcase in one hand and holding Charlie Cowell back with his other hand. He tells Harold that Cowell has been trying to expose Harold’s past crimes to the mayor. When Cowell makes an insulting remark about Marian, Harold knocks



him down. Marcellus pleads with Harold to hurry to the waiting horse and buggy, but Harold doesn't move.

## Scene 6

The Ladies Auxiliary Committee is finishing its Grecian Urn *tableau* as the mayor enters with Charlie Cowell. Cowell tells the townspeople about Harold's plan to leave town with their money without providing lessons for the boy's band. The mayor sends the townspeople off to find Harold. After they all leave, Harold runs into Marian, who is looking for Winthrop. Marcellus distracts the crowd away from Harold as Winthrop runs by. Winthrop has heard Cowell's accusations and angrily asks if Harold can lead a band. Harold truthfully tells him he can't. He explains he wanted Winthrop in the band because it was a way for Winthrop to stop feeling sorry for himself. Marian tells Winthrop that Harold has offered the town a reason to be happy. She also tells the boy she's glad Harold came to River City. Harold sings of his love to Marian (reprise: "Till There Was You"). As they embrace, the constable and the townspeople arrive and Harold is put in handcuffs.

## Scene 7

The townspeople, gathered in the gymnasium, angrily await news of Harold's capture. The constable enters with Harold; Marian is at his side. The mayor suggests tarring and feathering, but Marian defends Harold, reminding the crowd of the excitement and joy Harold has brought to River City. The mayor then asks if anyone objects to tarring and feathering Harold; the constable, the Ladies Auxiliary Committee (including the mayor's wife), the school board, the mayor's daughter and Mrs. Paroo all stand up. The mayor reminds the crowd of Harold's promise to teach the boys to play and as he demands to know where the band is, the boys all enter in uniform and line up in band formation with their instruments. So there is a band after all, but can they play? Marian breaks a blackboard pointer, giving a piece to Harold to use as a baton. Harold pleads with the boys to think and gives the upbeat. Miraculously, they are able to play a barely recognizable *Minuet in G*. The townspeople, including the mayor, are all thrilled; all the parents proudly call to their sons. The mayor shakes Harold's hand and the crowd cheers; the play ends as Marian and Harold embrace.





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# Themes and Topics to Explore

## Questions and Assignments

Our study guide includes a wide-ranging list of themes and topics which are suggested by the style and content of *The Music Man*.

Avenues for exploring each theme and topic are suggested in the form of:

**QUESTIONS:** Designed to prompt in-class discussions before and after viewing or reading the show.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Designed to be researched and written out of class.

## The Music Man as Drama

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- Tell the story of *The Music Man* in one sentence.
- Tell the story in one paragraph — include all the characters.
- Tell the story as it develops, action by action, through the play.
- Tell the story as a series of causes and effects. List each action taken by a character (cause) and what happens in the story as a result (effect).
- When did the action of *The Music Man* first start to grab your attention? Where did you start to be interested, start to care, start to become excited or delighted?
- Turning points are key moments in our lives or in the lives of characters in musicals and plays. A turning point changes the course of our lives forever. What are the key turning points in the plot of *The Music Man*? Have there been turning points in your life? What were they?
- What is the theme of *The Music Man*? How are theme and plot different?
- How are the plot and theme of *The Music Man* connected?
- The opening moments of a dramatic work are referred to as exposition. List all the things you learn in the exposition of *The Music Man*.

### Assignment/Writing Prompts

- Retell the basic story of *The Music Man*, setting it in another geographical location in another time period. What impact does this retelling have on the basic dramatic structure of the plot?
- Meredith Willson describes the show as a “Valentine” and not a caricature. What is a caricature? What does he mean when he describes the show as a Valentine? How did the performers in the version of *The Music Man* you saw portray their characters? Did they respect the author’s intention that the show not be played as a caricature?
- Write an essay describing the theme of love in *The Music Man*.

## The Characters in The Music Man

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- What is the function of the characters in a musical play? Could you create a musical play, a story or a film without characters?

- What is the difference between a major and minor character? Who are the major characters in *The Music Man*? Who are the minor characters?
- Who was your favorite character? Why?
- With which character did you sympathize most? Why?
- Did you recognize anything that reminded you of yourself in any of the characters?
- How do Harold Hill and Marian Paroo change by the time the play ends? Which other characters undergo major changes? Try to identify the specific moments of change.
- What do you think is more important, the musical play as it is written down or the play as it is brought to life by live performers? Which one is the “real” play?
- Meredith Willson’s original title for *The Music Man* was *The Silver Triangle*. Which title do you think is better? Why?
- Imagine the characters in *The Music Man* in a contemporary suburban setting. Describe who they would become in such a setting.
- Do the characters in *The Music Man* think they are funny? What makes us find them funny?
- What dreams and problems do Amaryllis and Marian share?

### **Assignments/Research and Writing Prompts**

- Make a list of characteristics of Harold, Marian, Winthrop, Mayor Shinn, Eulalie Shinn, Zaneeta Shinn, Tommy Djilas and Winthrop Paroo. Indicate where you discovered these characteristics. (From dialogue, lyrics, music, or design elements such as costumes and sets?)
- During *The Music Man*, we follow each character on a journey. Tell the story of the development of Harold, Marian, Winthrop, Mayor Shinn, Eulalie Shinn, Zaneeta Shinn, Tommy Djilas and Winthrop Paroo during the show.
- Map the encounters between Marian and Harold in the show.
- Marian’s mother says she has concocted her ideal man from her “Irish imagination, her Iowa stubbornness and her liberry fulla’ books.” How do you see these aspects of Marian evidenced in her character? What three aspects of your life might define you in the same way?
- What do you think happens to each one of these characters after the show ends?
- When playwrights create characters, they often invent “character maps” before they begin to write. These maps list everything about characters; from their favorite color to their political beliefs. A character map tells us what is in that

character's pockets and that character's heart. Write a character map for Harold and Marian based on details of your own invention.

- "Back stories" are the histories of characters before we meet them. Tell Harold and Marian's "back stories."
- Create a character map for a character other than Harold or Marian. Does your map suggest ways in which that character could be more important in the show?
- Create a character map for a character of your own invention. Write a short story about the character using the map as a departure point.
- Describe a typical day in Harold Hill's life — perhaps the day before we meet him in *The Music Man*.
- Describe a typical day in Marian's life — perhaps the day before we meet her in *The Music Man*.
- Winthrop has a lisp. What is a lisp? Research its clinical causes. Can lisps be more readily corrected now than in 1912? Do you find the idea of portraying a speech defect on stage a problem? How do you feel the issue is handled in this show?
- Marian has an open yet defined vision of who an acceptable man would be as a potential husband. What does she learn about this vision? In what ways does Harold fulfill her vision?
- What is your vision of the person you would like to share your life with? Write about that vision.
- Write about a time when your expectations were completely reversed.
- Meredith Willson is said to have patterned the character of Marian after his own mother. Write a description of a character you model after one of your parents or grandparents.

## 1912

### Questions/Discussion Prompts

- Which elements of the plot and theme of *The Music Man* could only have happened in 1912? Which are universal?
- Name ten prop or set elements that indicate the year is 1912.
- Find ten phrases or examples of language usage that indicate that the year is 1912.

**Assignments/Research and Writing Prompts**

- Who was the President of the United States?
- What was happening internationally in 1912?
- What key events in American history took place in 1912?
- Read an issue of a local paper for a day in July, 1912. How does the world it portrays seem different from the world of River City? How is it the same?
- Who was Del Sarte? Read about the art form which he inspired and which was practiced by the River City ladies. How was his art form evocative of this time period? Could it flourish today? Do any elements of it survive?
- What is a patriotic *tableau*? Make up some patriotic *tableaux* as they might appear on a satirical T.V. show and present them.
- Kerosene lamps were widely in use in River City in 1912. Had electricity been harnessed for practical use? Write about how your life would change if you didn't have electricity in your home or town.
- What was a livery stable? What was its function? Do they still exist? What replaces them in your life?

**Life in River City, Iowa****Questions and Discussion Prompts**

- In what substantial ways has life in contemporary America changed from the life portrayed in *The Music Man*? Do you think life was really like it is portrayed by Meredith Willson in the musical? Do you think his is a romanticized portrayal? Think about films and TV shows that portray periods of the past from a romanticized perspective and those that portray them from a realistic perspective. Think about films and shows that portray current life in America from a romanticized perspective and those that portray it from a more realistic perspective.

**Assignments/Research and Writing Prompts**

- Research the history of Iowa. To what states is it adjacent? What are some noteworthy facts about Iowa? When was it settled? Why was it settled? Who migrated there? How are these facts reflected in the River City we see in *The Music Man*.

- Why does Iowa have the reputation for being stubborn? Does your state have a “reputation” or “image?” Is it justified?
- Is River City a real place? Read about Iowa in 1912 and pick a town that could have been River City. Write about it. Research the other towns mentioned in the show — Hawkeye, Dubuque, Des Moines, Davenport, Marshalltown, Mason City, Keokuk, Ames and Clear Lake.
- A painting by artist Grant Wood called “American Gothic” is spoofed in *The Music Man*. Read about Grant Wood and his work. Find a copy of the painting. Read about its history. Why does Meredith Willson include it in this show?
- Imagine you are writing about present day life in your town 75 years from now. What would you describe? Write one essay as a “Valentine” (from a romanticized perspective) and another that is realistic.
- The ice cream parlor was an institution in River City. What are the origins of the ice cream parlor? What similar institutions exist today?

## **The Salesman in American Culture**

### **Questions and Discussion Prompts**

- Harold Hill is a salesman. What is it he sells?
- How does the idea of being a salesman personify the essence of the American economy and the American dream?
- Have you ever held a “sales” position? What were the satisfying parts of the experience? The negative ones?
- Why is Charlie Cowell so intent on stopping Harold Hill? Do you sympathize with his efforts? How has Meredith Willson managed to evoke a different response to Cowell’s crusade from you than one you might have ordinarily experienced?
- Is Harold Hill an honest salesman? What are the steps in his customary process as described by Harold to Marcellus? What is Hill’s real name? Why do you think he has changed it?

### **Assignment/Research and Writing Prompts**

- Think of all the salesmen you have dealt with in your lifetime or watched others in your family deal with. Describe the salesman who was the most effective. The least effective?

- Read a book whose purpose is to promote effective salesmanship. What are the elements of effective salesmanship it describes. Would this book consider Harold Hill an effective salesman? What do you consider an effective salesman?
- Read *Death of A Salesman* by Arthur Miller, which is another great American theatre classic on the subject of sales and the American dream. Write an essay comparing the two central characters and the themes of these two works.
- Trace the evolution of “selling” in human history.
- Read about the peddlers who traveled across the country who were the spiritual forebears of Harold Hill and the other salesmen on the train.
- Describe the life of a professional traveling salesman today. Talk to a successful salesman who travels across the country. What is their daily life like? How do they feel about being a salesman?

## American Retailing

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- Since at the turn-of-the century most Americans lived rural or semi-isolated lives, traveling salesman were a necessary component of getting merchandise sold to customers. These men, like Harold Hill, sold their wares door-to-door. How do people now react if a salesman appears at the their door?
- Describe the role of the computer and home shopping networks on TV in contemporary retailing. What is their impact on the human contact aspect of the sales transaction?
- The arrival of the Wells Fargo Wagon caused great excitement in River City, because many of the citizens had ordered goods through catalogues which were delivered via the Wells Fargo service. What was the Wells Fargo company? Montgomery Ward was the source of the merchandise that some of the citizens of River City were waiting for. The company still exists as a retailing giant today. Research the history of the Montgomery Ward Company.
- Today we are again a mail-order catalogue economy in many ways. What factors have prompted this return to mail-order? What has replaced the geographical isolation of the citizens of River City?
- Imagine you are a resident of River City in 1912. Make a list of 20 things you might order from Montgomery Ward that could arrive on the Wells Fargo Wagon. Make a similar list of 20 things that you would like to order from mail catalogues or a television shopping channel today.

## Assignments/Research and Writing Prompts

- What were stores in America like in the early part of the century? When did the contemporary department store evolve?
- Read about the history of retail establishments in your town. Contrast those in 1912 to those that now exist.
- The salesmen in *The Music Man* talk about the progress of packaging and packaging techniques. How were goods shipped and displayed in the early 1900s? Trace the history of the American packaging industry.
- In the opening scene of *The Music Man*, the salesmen discuss the issue of cash as opposed to credit. How is the issue of credit buying still a major factor in American life?

## Quick Takes

- The following terms are used in *The Music Man*. Define them:

Noggins	Piggins	Firkins	Hogshead
Cash	Demijohn	Flypaper	U-needa biscuits
Cracker barrel	Sugar barrel	Pickle barrel	Milk pan
Tierce	Dan Patch	Cistern	Knickerbockers
Bevo	Cubebs	Sen Sen	Noah Webster
Saint Pat	Paul Bunyan	Stereopticon	

- Make a list of items from contemporary life that might seem this “foreign” to someone reading about them 75 years from now.
- What was “tarring and feathering?” How did the practice originate?

## The Image of the Band

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think Harold Hill has chosen to sell band instruments when he has no knowledge of music?
- What does the idea of a marching band represent to the town? Why is it so important to a small town in 1912 to have a band?



- In what sectors of American life are marching bands still important?
- Have you ever been in a band? What were the positive elements of the experience?
- What is the power of making music? How does the experience of making music affect Winthrop?
- Some people seek out experiences where they are part of a large ensemble such as a band or a chorus. Others choose individual pursuits like playing a piano or painting a picture. Which kinds of experiences do you prefer and why?
- Describe the “Think System.” Do you think positive thinking and will power have anything to do with musical skill? When the band plays at the end of the show, it is clear to the audience they sound terrible, but to the characters, that is, to the parent’s, the band sounds wonderful. Are the parents ignoring the flaws, or does their love for their children make them deaf to those flaws? When listening to, or looking at, or reading the creations of a loved one, are your perceptions ever colored by that love?

### **Assignments/Research and Writing Prompts**

- Trace the history of the concept of marching bands around the world and in America.
- John Philip Sousa is mentioned in the show. Research the Sousa band and listen to some of the music written by Sousa. Why was he called “the march king”?
- Who were some of the other famous band leaders of Sousa’s time? Harold Hill refers to Gilmore, Liberatti, Pat Conway, The Great Creator, and W.C. Handy. Who were they?
- Explore the role of music in the average American’s life in 1912. Was it greater or smaller than the role it plays today? Do you think more people actually made music then? Explore the role of the sheet music industry.
- What is ragtime? Why does Harold Hill equate it with an evil force in “Trouble”? Research the public response to ragtime when it began to spread as a popular form. Can you compare it to the advent of rock music?
- Explore the evolution of the instruments Harold describes in “Seventy-Six Trombones” — trumpets, trombones, cornets, tympani, double bell euphoniums, tubas, bassoons, and clarinets. Are these still the instruments in an average marching band today?

### **Barbershop Quartets**

### **Questions and Discussion Prompts**

- How does Harold's turning the bickering school board into a barbershop quartet advance his cause?
- How does his manipulation of the quartet display his ability to exploit human nature?
- What is a quartet a metaphor for in terms of human relationships?
- Do you enjoy the sound of barbershop music? Why or why not?
- What has replaced it in your own listening experience as a music consumer? Are there barbershop quartets today?

### **Assignments/Research and Writing Prompts**

- Trace the history of barbershop quartets.
- Write about some of the great barbershop quartets and give a lecture about the form illustrated with aural examples.
- Are there still barbershop quartets in your area? Learn about their activities.
- Is singing barbershop harmonies difficult? Find three friends and try singing a barbershop quartet arrangement.
- Try writing a contemporary song using a barbershop-style arrangement.
- If musical forms mirror the societies which produce them, what does barbershop music say about the society which spawned it?

## **Community Judgements of Good and Bad**

### **Questions and Discussion Prompts**

- The people of River City are quick to judge and categorize each other's behavior. What are some of the behaviors that were categorized as "bad"? Are those behaviors still categorized as "bad" by those in your community?
- Who tends to set standards of behavior in our society? Whose standards do you respect?
- What is "pool"? With what does Harold Hill equate "pool playing"? How is he playing into the community's psyche by attacking the billiard parlor? What similar pastimes have come under attack in contemporary America? Are there billiard parlors in your town? How are they perceived by the community?

- Harold cites “swell” and “so’s your old man” as examples of bad language. What makes language good or bad? Where do children learn “bad” language today?
- Harold mentions “Captain Billy’s Whiz Bang” as a publication that young people should not read. What publications are perceived that way today?
- Discuss the irony of Harold’s being the one to lead the community to pass judgment and their willingness to heed his words.
- Is Mayor Shinn an admirable character? Is he acting from a position of ethical responsibility or does he have some interests to protect?
- Harold uses the phrases “Remember the Maine, Plymouth Rock, and the Golden Rule” during the song “Trouble.” What are their connotations? Make a list of references that a politician or salesman might use in the same way today.
- The theme of books and literature as perceived forces for evil is present in this show. Why are the citizens of River City threatened by Marian’s knowledge of books and her interest in great writers such as “Chaucer, Rabelais, and Balzac?”

### **Assignments/Research and Writing Prompts**

- Cigarette smoking was illegal in Iowa in 1912. Read about the history of smoking in the United States and its status as either “legal” or “illegal.”
- In the United States, we have tended to legislate behavior that society perceives as dangerous to individuals (i.e., use of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana). Write an essay on your feelings about the responsibilities of government to protect both the user of these items and those bystanders who are effected by their use.
- Discuss the fact that a jockey riding on a horse was considered unwholesome as opposed to a trotting race where the driver rode in a separate conveyance. Learn about other activities and behaviors once perceived as unwholesome that are now completely accepted.
- Read about the history of American slang. Report on the evolution of twenty “slang” words.
- What is the role of gossip in defining behavior in River City? What is its role in your community? Would an unmarried woman with a platonic relationship with an older man, similar to the relationship that Marian had with Mr. Madison, be suspected in your community today?
- Many of the town’s misperceptions of Marian have to do with the fact that she is an “old maid” (at 20!). What defined an “old maid” in 1912? What defines one now? What are your community’s attitudes towards women who are not mar-

ried? What does defining a woman by her relationship status rather than her own individual integrity say about our societal perceptions of females?

- At the conclusion of *The Music Man*, is Harold Hill “good” or “bad”? What message do you think the author is trying to communicate about the meaning of “good” and “bad” in this piece?
- The mistrust of books evidenced in River City lives on today. Explore the movement to ban books from libraries in America. Write an essay about the delicate balance between the public’s responsibilities to monitor the reading matter available in public libraries and the Right of Free Speech.

## **The Music Man As Musical Theatre**

### **Questions and Discussion Prompts**

- Would *The Music Man* have been as successful as a play without music? Why or why not? How does the score heighten the basic storyline? How does it move the action of *The Music Man* forward? What do we know because of the music we might not know otherwise?
- How does the music contribute to our understanding of the larger themes of the show?
- Did the music and lyrics evoke and time and place for you?
- In what ways is the music indispensable to the plot?
- Why do some theatre song lyrics rhyme? Write a few verses in prose about something you wish would happen and then write it in rhyme. How is the experience of writing in the two forms different?
- In fact, rhythm is a more important organizing concept than rhyme in *The Music Man*. Discuss the use of the train rhythms in the opening song, “Rock Island.”
- Discuss the ways in which music and lyrics can compress and elevate the importance of information.
- What role does music play in your life? If you were to choose moments in your life worthy of being set to music, what would they be?
- One of the most fascinating things about the score for the show is the way Meredith Willson uses language from everyday speech and speech rhythms to create music. Name the songs in which he does this.

- Throughout the show, Meredith Willson brings back previously established musical themes to show how characters and situations continue to evolve. List examples of this and comment on how it unifies the whole work.
- Find examples of duets or shared songs in the show. How do these duets help to define relationships?
- “Good Night My Someone” and “Seventy-Six Trombones” are actually the same song played in different rhythms. Why do you think Meredith Willson chose to use the same song for both of these characters to sing?
- Musically, how does the sound of *The Music Man* compare with other musicals of the 1950s?
- Select one of the following songs or musical segments of *The Music Man*:

“Rock Island”

“Iowa Stubborn”

“Trouble”

“Piano Lesson”

“Goodnight My Someone”

“Seventy-Six Trombones”

“Sincere”

“The Sadder-But-Wiser-Girl”

“Pickalittle”

“Goodnight Ladies”

“Marian The Librarian”

“My White Knight”

“Wells Fargo Wagon”

“It’s You”

“Shipooopi”

“Pickalittle Reprise”

“Lida Rose”

“Will I Ever Tell You”

“Gary, Indiana”

“It’s You Reprise”

“Till There Was You”

“Seventy-Six Trombones and Goodnight My Someone”

“Till There Was You Reprise”

1. Summarize the contents. Discuss:

- a. What do we learn about the character or characters and their personal philosophies?
- b. What do we learn from the song about the larger themes of the show?

- c. What makes the character or characters sing at this moment? Why do they sing instead of talk? What is the emotional energy of the moment that pushes them into song?
  - d. What does the song accomplish in terms of the plot? Where is the action when the song begins and when it ends?
  - e. Every dramatic scene has a “main beat” or central moment of importance. Does the song become the “main beat” of the scene in which it appears?
  - f. Does this song exist in real time, suspended time or compressed time? In other words, does it represent the amount of time it would really take to express its contents? Does it magnify the moment? Does it speed up time?
  - g. What is the physical action of the character or characters during the song?
- What is the meaning of the word “reprise?” What is its function? What do you know when you hear the reprise of “Till There Was You” that you didn’t know the first time you heard it? Which of the songs are reprised. Why?
  - Imagine you have been asked to create a new musical segment for the show. Who would sing it? Where in the show would it take place? What would it be about? What kind of music would it involve?
  - The idea of a quiet library erupting into song and dance is the image that propels the song “Marian The Librarian.” Think of other places where certain behaviors are expected and create a scenario for a similar musical number that is totally at odds with the situation.

### **Assignments, Research, And Writing Prompts**

- Select a word or a sound prevalent in your culture such as “like” or “you know” or a local expression often used in everyday speech and build a lyric around it.
- Use a current sales pitch you hear in the media as the basis for a song.
- Harold Hill teaches the citizens of River City some new dance steps including the “Shipooopi.” Is it a real dance? What were some of the social dances popular in America in 1912?
- *The Music Man* is often compared to the earlier musicals of George M. Cohan because of its use of American characters in American locales, swift pacing, and contrast between city slickers and rural types. Read about George M. Cohan and his shows and make your own comparisons.

## The Creators Of Musical Theatre

### Assignments/Research and Writing Prompts

- While many musicals are written by two or three collaborators (composers, lyricists, and bookwriters), *The Music Man* was written by one man, Meredith Willson, who created the book, music and lyrics. Explore the history of musical theatre for other creators who were “triple threats” — talented in all three of these areas. Report on them.
- Research the life of Meredith Willson. Investigate the creation of *The Music Man*.
- The story was credited to Meredith Willson and Franklin Lacey. What is the “story” of a musical or film as opposed to the actual script?
- Read a biography or autobiography of a famous musical theatre collaborator or collaborative team. Report on the collaborative process.
- Read and listen to other works by Meredith Willson to obtain a broader view of his approach to his craft and a deeper understanding of his artistic sensibilities.

## The AABA Song Form

### Questions/Discussion Prompts

- Just as stories can be divided into paragraphs, songs can be divided into sections called stanzas. When we listen to a song, we are not always aware of its structure, but the arrangement of ideas into stanzas and the arrangement of these stanzas in relation to each other is very carefully thought out by the composer and the lyricist. Different songs are arranged in different patterns, depending on their meaning. One classic pattern is called AABA. “My White Knight” is an example of an AABA song.

- A      MY WHITE KNIGHT.  
         NOT A LANCELOT, NOR AN ANGEL WITH WINGS;  
         JUST SOMEONE TO LOVE ME  
         WHO IS NOT ASHAMED OF A FEW NICE THINGS.
- A      MY WHITE KNIGHT.  
         WHAT MY HEART WOULD SAY IF IT ONLY KNEW HOW.  
         PLEASE DEAR VENUS  
         SHOW ME NOW.
- B      ALL I WANT IS A PLAIN MAN.

ALL I WANT IS A MODEST MAN.  
 A QUIET MAN, A GENTLE MAN  
 A STRAIGHTFORWARD AND HONEST MAN  
 TO SIT WITH ME IN A COTTAGE SOMEWHERE IN THE  
 STATE OF IOWA.  
 AND I WOULD LIKE HIM TO BE MORE INT'RESTED IN  
 ME  
 THAN HE IS IN HIMSELF.  
 AND MORE INT'RESTED IN US THAN IN ME.  
 AND IF OCCASION'LY HE'D PONDER  
 WHAT MAKES SHAKESPEARE AND BEETHOVEN GREAT.  
 HIM I COULD LOVE TILL I DIE.  
 HIM COULD LOVE TILL I DIE.

A MY WHITE KNIGHT.  
 NOT A LANCELOT OR AN ANGEL WITH WINGS;  
 JUST SOMEONE TO LOVE ME  
 WHO IS NOT ASHAMED OF A FEW NICE THINGS.

A' MY WHITE KNIGHT.  
 LET ME WALK WITH HIM WHERE THE OTHERS RIDE BY;  
 WALK — AND LOVE HIM  
 TILL I DIE.  
 TILL I DIE.

- The stanzas or sections of this song are arranged as a classic “AABA” pattern. This means that the “A” sections are basically alike and one section (the “B”) is different. Can you find the “A” stanzas and the “B” stanza in the song?
- The last “A” stanza in an AABA song is often different in design from the earlier “A”s. Is this true in “My White Knight?” An “A” stanza that is slightly different in design from the other “A”s in an AABA song is called an “A’” (A prime).
- Each part of an AABA song has a job to do. The first part of the song, the first “A”, sets up the situation. How does the first “A” of “My White Knight” accomplish this?
- The second “A” of an AABA song tells more about the situation and deepens its importance to the singer. How does the second “A” in “My White Knight” accomplish this?
- The third section, the “B” section of an AABA song moves the action of the song forward. How does the “B” section of “My White Knight” accomplish this?



- The final sections, the last “A” and the “A’”, intensify the emotion and the stakes, summarizing the message of the song. They also deliver the character to a different place in that character’s understanding of the situation - the character has developed new insight during the song. In the process of the song, something has changed. How is all this accomplished in the last 2 sections of “My White Knight?”
- Listen to the music. How does the music for the “B” section differ from the “A” sections? How does the music for the “A’” section differ from the “A” sections? How does the music reinforce what is happening in the song?
- Many songs have a key or central idea around which they are organized. This idea is called a “hook” because it grabs the listener and brings them into the song. Often the hook is expressed in the same words as the title. What is the hook in this song?
- Meredith Willson repeats the lyrics of the first “A” section following the “B” section. What added meaning does the section have the second time you hear it?
- Do you think that understanding the form of a song would help you to appreciate it more or get in the way of your listening to it effectively?

### **Assignments/Research and Writing Prompts**

- Think of a current pop song that is arranged in an AABA format. Analyze it according to the process described above. Can you find the hook?
- Write a lyric and/or music for an AABA song on a subject that you feel deeply about for a character of your own invention. Be sure to begin with a hook.

## **Other Production Elements**

### **Assignments/Research and Writing Prompts**

- Design your own sets and costumes for *The Music Man*. Explain the reasons for your choices.
- Read about set designers and lighting designers to learn more about their role in creating musical theatre.

## Create Your Own Musical

- Write a story about a town and a group of people with whom you are familiar and set it in a period in American history which interests you. Use this story as the basis for a musical.

*or*

- Write a story about your town in 1912 and use that as the basis for a musical.
- Why would this story make a good musical? How would it “sing”?
- What role would music play in your work? What kind of songs would your characters sing?
- Outline your musical scene by scene.
- Make a list of the characters.
- Make a list of songs or musical segments you might include.
- Will your work include dance? How will dance be used?
- Try to write the first scene, a turning point scene, and the final scene of your musical.
- Try to write a lyric or melody for one of the songs or musical segments.

## Critical Analysis

### Assignment/Writing Report

- Write a review of a performance of *The Music Man*. You may wish to include any combination of the following elements in your review:
  1. Did the show hold your interest? Why or why not?
  2. Describe the manner in which the story was presented to the audience. What was the dialogue like?
  3. What was the structure of the story? Was there a simple story or were there multiple stories? Was anything about the story unexpected? How did the story begin and end?
  4. Describe the way music and lyrics worked in the show.
  5. Describe the sets, costumes, lighting and musical accompaniment. How did these elements add meaning to the show?
  6. Discuss the effectiveness of the performers.

7. Discuss the themes and ideas presented in the show. Analyze their importance to your reader.
8. Explain why your reader should make an effort to see the show.



## APPENDIX

The following background material and bibliography are designed to enrich your exploration of the Themes and Topics.

### About The Creators:

**MEREDITH WILLSON** (librettist, composer, lyricist): Willson was born in 1902 in Mason City, Iowa. He learned to play the flute as a child, and began playing semi-professionally while still in high school. After high school he left Iowa to study at the Damrosch Institute of Musical Art (later the Julliard School), receiving flute instruction from Georges Barrere, the world-renown flutist. While still attending the Institute, he was hired as principle flutist and piccolo player for the John Philip Sousa Band. He later joined the New York Philharmonic Orchestra where he was 1st flutist. He became musical director for various radio programs throughout the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, including Tallulah Bankhead's program, *The Big Show*, for which he wrote the hit song "May The Lord Bless and Keep You." He composed the scores for the movies *The Great Dictator* and *The Little Foxes*, as well as symphonic, band, and choral works, including *The Jervis Bay: Symphonic Variations on an American Theme* and *Anthem of the Atomic Age*. Willson wrote three Broadway musicals: *The Music Man*, his first and most successful; *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* (music and lyrics), and *Here's Love* (book, music and lyrics). As an author he has published two autobiographical works (*And There I Stood with My Piccolo* and *Eggs I Have Laid*), one novel (*Who Did What to Fedalia*) and a memoir about the making of *The Music Man* (*But He Doesn't Know the Territory*).

**ONNA WHITE** (choreographer): After making her professional debut as a member of the *corps de ballet* with the San Francisco Opera Ballet Co., White went on to dance in the chorus of *Finian's Rainbow* and *Guys and Dolls*. She assisted choreographer Michael Kidd with the London productions of both shows and later restaged the dances for 1955 New York revivals of both shows. She also danced in the chorus of *Silk Stockings*. In addition to *The Music Man*, among the many Broadway shows she has choreographed are *Carmen Jones* (1956 revival), *Whoop-Up*, *Take Me Along*, *Irma La Douce*, *Let It Ride!*, *Mame*, *1776*, *Gantry*, *70*, *Girls*, *70* and *Gigi*. She has also choreographed the movies *The Music Man*, *Bye, Bye Birdie*, *1776*, *The Great Waltz* and *Oliver!*, for which she won a special Academy Award.

**MORTON DA COSTA** (director): He studied acting and theater at Temple University. After graduation he made his professional acting debut with the Clare Tree Major Children's Theatre and went on to co-found the Civic Repertory Theatre in Dayton, Ohio. He made his Broadway acting debut in *The Skin of Our Teeth*. His other acting credits included *War President*, *Hamlet* (directed by Maurice Evans) and *Man and Superman*. In addition to *The Music Man*, Da Costa directed such Broadway shows as *Plain and Fancy*, *No Time for Sergeants*, *Auntie Mame*, *Saratoga* (for which he also wrote

the libretto), *The Wall* and *Maggie Flynn*. He directed the films *Auntie Mame*, *The Music Man* and *Island of Love*.

**KERMIT BLOOMGARDEN** (co-producer): Starting as a public accountant and general manager to producer Herman Shumlin, he began his producing career with *Heavenly Express*. Later shows included *The Music Man*, *Deep Are the Roots*, *Another Part of the Forest*, *The Crucible*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *The Most Happy Fella*, *Look Homeward, Angel*, *Toys in the Attic*, *Hot l Baltimore* and *Equus*.

## About Iowa

The Iowa region was part of the territory that the United States bought from France in 1803 in the Louisiana Purchase. The area had been home, grazing and hunting land to a number of Native American peoples, including the Salk, Mesquakie, Fox, Winnebago, Potawatomi, Sioux, Otoe, Pawnee, Missouri and Ayoway (Ioway) tribes. In 1830 President Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Policy gave the land west of the Mississippi to the Native people, forcing a migration of eastern tribes to the west and north. However, a series of treaties over the next 15 years succeeded in extinguishing Indian title from much of what later became Iowa. The land was opened to settlement by whites in 1845. The Compromise of 1820 stipulated that the territory, as part of the land north of Missouri, would be free of slavery. An early charter limited black migration to the region. Iowa was admitted to the United States as territory in 1838 and became the 29th state in 1846.

The first settlers were from the Upper South and New England. The interaction between these groups set the cultural tone of the state. Iowa's population grew rapidly between 1850 and 1900, in large part due to an expansion of railroad lines. The railroads provided accessibility to national markets for Iowa's booming corn producers and butter manufacturers. European immigration from Ireland, England, Germany and Austria accounted for much of the growth. By the 1890s much of Iowa had phone service and electricity.

Churches, dominated by Protestant denominations brought to Iowa by early Yankee settlers, acted as the major social control through much of Iowa's early history. The ideas of behavior which we now call typical Midwestern small town values flow directly from the influence of the churches on the social life of early Iowa.

## **About Traveling Salesman And The Small Town Retail Business**

Until the early decades of the 20th century most retail stores were independently owned and operated and specialized in one type of product, such as crockery, dry goods, hardware, etc. The necessity of the country store, a business which sold a number of lines, brought new pressures on the retailer. Before the advent of traveling salesmen and mail-order/parcel post, retailers had to make regular buying and ordering trips to manufacturers and producers. This situation was relieved by the introduction of the wholesaler, who might be an agent of one or more producers. The retailer now only had to visit a few wholesalers rather than a number of separate producers. The traveling salesman, also known as a drummer or commercial traveler, saved the retailer from making the trip at all.

The first traveling salesmen, in the 1860s, represented the manufacturers. They frequently found themselves harassed by anti-peddling laws enacted with the support of local merchants who feared losing business to itinerant peddlers. Soon, however, most merchants, particularly those located far from metropolitan centers, welcomed the salesmen. The expansion of rail service throughout the country meant that previously inaccessible towns could now be reached by the drummers and their new and plentiful products. The development of photography and its use in advertising, the drop in postage and advent of free delivery also helped encourage business. By 1877 there were, by some estimates, 100,000 traveling agents on the roads. Most represented wholesale houses specializing in one line of product (eg. shoes, groceries, dry goods, etc.). Some sold new inventions or books, scheduling one-time-only visits.

Traveling salesmen were important not only because they were a link between manufacturer and retailer; they were also a vital source of news and life from outside of the small town. Because their livelihood depended on personal interaction, traveling salesmen had to be charmers. They were seen as likable cosmopolitan sophisticates who stayed in hotels, wore nice clothes, told stories of the big city and ate fancy food. The legend of the traveling salesman was so embedded in American culture that hundreds of anecdotes and jokes developed all starting with the words, "Have you heard the one about the traveling salesman who...."

The rise of mail-order houses and the chain store in the late 19th and early 20th century marked the beginning of the end of the era of the traveling salesman. Chain stores supplied a standardized set of products which the rural consumer could order directly by mail. The increasing volume of merchandise that the store could order resulted in substantial discounts over what the independent retailer could offer. The advent of the automobile meant that a trip to the city to shop at a chain store was now an easy task. Finally, the chain stores didn't need an army of independent salesmen combing

the country visiting retailers. Even though there are still traveling salesmen operating today, their numbers are greatly reduced from the early years of the century.

## **About Marching Bands**

The marching band is modeled after the British military bands which came to America in the early 18th century. Those bands, attached to military divisions, frequently accompanied those divisions on long marches and occasionally into battle. During the French and Indian War, British bands consisted of oboes, bassoons, clarinets, and French horns. The Colonial Militia and later the Continental Army employed musicians modeled on the British bands. The United States Marine Band was formed in 1798 and sparked a popularity in band music throughout villages and towns. The bands of this time mostly featured woodwinds, horns and percussion. The 1830s introduction of valved brass instruments, which were invented in 1815 in Germany, led to the formation of all-brass bands. The saxophone was introduced after its invention in the 1840s. American bandleaders experimented with all-brass-and-saxophone bands, which were capable of creating tones from soprano to bass. These bands achieved a more uniform sound than the earlier mixed woodwind groups, and could play very loudly. By the mid-19th century, the bands evolved into the instrumentation familiar to us now: brass, saxophones, percussion and woodwinds.

In the late-19th century most large and small towns that could afford the expenditure had at least one marching band. The bands played for all sorts of occasions: picnics, patriotic functions, concerts and political events. The music ranged from patriotic marches and anthems to sentimental ballads to transcriptions of operas and symphonies. Marching bands owed their American popularity to a number of factors: they were seen as the music of the most patriotic of institutions — the military; the century-long rise in American nationalism; they were seen as a vehicle for improvement and enrichment of the common people. Like sports, the band movement was seen to promote physical and moral health, qualities believed necessary for fostering democracy.

Two of the greatest bandleaders were Patrick Gilmore, an Irish immigrant living in Boston in the mid-19th century, and John Philip Sousa, the “march king,” a prolific composer of band music as well as the leader of the most influential American band. The popularity of radio and film and the hardships of the Great Depression signaled the end of the marching band era. Marching bands had swept the country for over 100 years, training thousands of musicians, offering entertainment to countless audiences, and contributing to the growth of other American art forms.



## About The Music Man

Frank Loesser suggested that Meredith Willson turn his boyhood remembrances of growing up in a small Iowa town into a musical. After 8 years of writing and 30 drafts, *The Music Man* opened on December 9, 1957 at Broadway's Majestic Theatre. The show's original producers were to have been Cy Feuer and Ernest Martin, with Feuer scheduled to direct. The show was produced ultimately by Kermit Bloomgarden in association with Frank Loesser's production company, Frank Productions, Inc. It starred Robert Preston as Professor Harold Hill, Barbara Cook as Marian Paroo, David Burns as Mayor Shinn, Pert Kelton as Mrs. Paroo, Iggy Wolfington as Marcellus Washburn, Helen Raymond as Eulalie Mackecknie Shinn, and the Buffalo Bills as the School Board Quartet. It was a huge hit and ran for 1,375 performances. In 1958 a successful national tour began in Los Angeles, starring Forest Tucker as Harold Hill and Joan Weldon as Marian Paroo. This tour ended in 1962 in Boston. In 1962 the movie version was released, starring Robert Preston as Hill, Shirley Jones as Marian, Pert Kelton as Mrs. Paroo, and the Buffalo Bills as the Quartet.

The Broadway production won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award and 9 Tony Awards (Best Musical, Best Composer, Best Libretto, Best Producer, Best Actor, Best Supporting Actress, Best Supporting Actor, Best Musical Director, Best Stage Technician). The film version won an Academy Award in 1962 for Best Musical Adaptation.

## Critical Acclaim

It's the beat that does it. The overture of *The Music Man* drive off with a couple of good, shrill whistles and a heave-ho blast from half the brass in the pit, with the heartier trombonists lurching to their feet in a blare of enthusiasm. The curtain sails up to disclose the most energetic engine on the Rock Island Railroad (circa 1912) hurtling across the proscenium with real smoke pouring out of its smokestack and real steam rolling along the rails. The itch is upon us. Meredith Willson has whipped out an entire first choral scene without a note of music. The words, the hands, the knees, and the insane Rock Island roadbed do all the work: grunts, roars, gossip, and a form of St. Vitus Dance all merge into a syncopated conversation that is irresistible.... Mr. Preston is impatient with dialogue. Let a couple of people talk, and he fidgets. Let a split-second gap in chatter turn up, and his feet start working. A fairly fierce light turns up in his eyes, an urgent whisper begins to conspire with the under-scoring, and the first thing you know designer Howard Bay's attractively pastel Main St. is beginning to sway in the breeze. Mr. Preston is also indefatigable: he's got zest and gusto and a great big grin for another slam-bang march tune ("Seventy-Six Trombones") and for a wonderfully impish soft-shoe in the Public Library (it seems

that "Marian, the Librarian" is so hard-hearted she'd let his corpse lie on the floor till it turned to carrion). Mr. Preston, to pin the matter down, is jim-dandy.

Walter Kerr, New York Herald Tribune, December 20, 1957

Describe *The Music Man* and you run the risk of having it greeted by the presumably devastating epithet, "corn." And I suppose that's what it is. But Meredith Willson's new musical comedy, which opened last night at the Majestic Theater, is such fresh, genial and warm-hearted corn, so indigenously American in its 1912 Iowa atmosphere, its humor, breeziness, sentiment and good, old-fashioned tunefulness that it is not only delightful but, in some paradoxical manner, boldly original. It seems to me that there hasn't been in recent years a more complete example of musical comedy Americana than *The Music Man*, and that even includes the classic and more ambitious *Oklahoma!* To achieve this quality, it has to fall back on some familiar plot materials, but they are handled with such candor and sincerity that they become a virtue. From its easy-going humor and its frank sentimentality to its barber-shop ballads and its admiration for the likable swindler, Mr. Willson's show is a true native product, and proud of it.

Richard Watts, Jr., New York Post, December 20, 1957

The most important thing to be said about *The Music Man*, which opened at the Majestic Theatre last night, is that it is a whopping hit. It is a new musical in the old manner; it has blare and brass, it jiggles and jumps, it has speed and style, and its people are beguiling. This salute by Meredith Willson to his native Iowa will make even Oklahoma look to its laurels.

John McClain, Journal-American, December 20, 1957

Meredith Willson, eminent musicologist of the airwaves, has reached back into his boyhood and come up with a heart-warming song-and-dancer called *The Music Man*. The wonderful thing about *The Music Man* is that it will prove delightfully nostalgic for those who have lived in whistle stops, and provide fun-rate fun for city slickers.

Robert Coleman, Daily Mirror, December 20, 1957

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SARAH SCHLESINGER is the Associate Chair of the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program at New York University. She is a Lyricist and Librettist whose work has been seen off-Broadway and at Regional Theatres around the country. She has been commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera Guild to write the librettos for two new operas -- *The Amazing Adventures of Alvin Allegretto*, which premiered in 1995 and *Different Fields*, which will premiere in 1996. With Nashville composer Mike Reid, she has written *The Ballad of Little Jo*, a new musical developed in the Harold Prince-Denver Theatre Center Musical Theatre Program. She is the co-librettist and lyricist for *Love Comics*, a new musical which has been optioned for off-Broadway. She is also the author of recent non-fiction works published by Villard/Random House and William Morrow.

FRED CARL, co-author, is the archivist of the Harburg Foundation. He has worked as a researcher for the following book: *Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz? Yip Harburg, Lyricist* by Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg; *The Broadway Musical: Collaboration in Commerce and Art* by Bernard Rosenberg and Ernie Harburg; *Fascinating Rhythm: The Collaboration of Geroge and Ira Gershwin* by Deena Rosenberg. He has taught classes in the history of popular music in America at Ramapo College and New York University. He has composed the score for the short film *Over*, by Carl Capotorto; music for the jazz theatre piece *...in the waiting room of the 21st century*, text by Hattie Gossett; and a number of art songs for voice and piano. He is a graduate of the New York University's Musical Theatre Program.



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