

- The Company
- Mission Statement
- Ballet Master in Chief
- Dancers
- Orchestra
- Personnel
- Volunteers
- NYCB Alumni
- Repertory Index
- The Viewing Room
- Brief History
- NYCB Lyre
- Annual Reports
- Job Postings

Home > The Company > Repertory Index
Double Feature (A Ballet in 2 Acts)

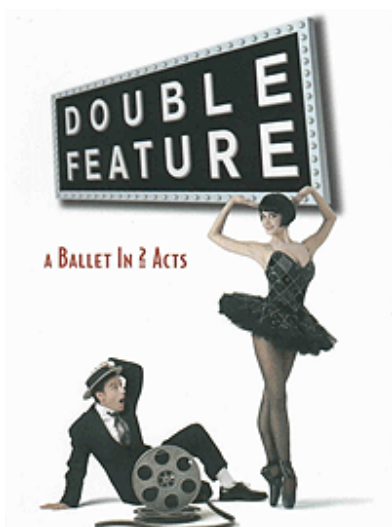


Photo © Paul Kolnik

Music Irving Berlin and Walter Donaldson "The Blue Necklace" (Berlin): Alexander's Ragtime Band, Always, What'll I Do?, How About Me?, Slumming on Park Avenue, Let Yourself Go, Everybody's Doin' It Now, All Alone, The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing, Mandy, Steppin' Out with My Baby, You're Easy to Dance with, No Strings, How Deep is the Ocean "Makin' Whoopee" (Donaldson): Makin' Whoopee!, My Baby Just Cares for Me, Borneo, Reaching for Someone, My Buddy, My Blue Heaven, The Daughter of Rosie O'Grady, He's the Last Word, You, Romance, Love Me or Leave Me, Yes Sir! That's My Baby, Carolina in the Morning

Libretto Susan Stroman and Glen Kelly

Orchestrations Doug Besterman

Arrangement Glen Kelly

Choreography Susan Stroman

Premiere January 23, 2004

Original Cast "The Blue Necklace": Maria Kowroski, Kyra Nichols, Jason Fowler, Damian Woetzel, Ashley Bouder, Megan Fairchild "Makin' Whoopee": Alexandra Ansanelli, Albert Evans, Arch Higgins, Tom Gold, Seth Orza

Average Length The Blue Necklace: 1 hr. 9 min. Makin' Whoopee: 43 min.

Double Feature is Susan Stroman's second ballet for New York City Ballet. She worked with NYCB last in June 1999 when she choreographed the Blossom Got Kissed movement of Duke! This work is Susan Stroman's first

"WHAT ATTRACTS ME VERY MUCH TO THE COMPANY IS THAT THERE ARE REALLY NO SET RULES."

— Peter Martins

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evening-long ballet and it features a cast of 60 dancers. It is an homage to the silent film era. The evening is a double bill—up first is *The Blue Necklace*, a gripping melodrama about an unforgettable sacrifice. Next is *Makin' Whoopee!*, a raucous comedy that asks, "What would you do for seven million dollars?" Robin Wagner is the scenic designer. Costumes are by William Ivey Long. Mark Stanley is the Lighting Designer. Biography

With a life that spanned more than 100 years and a catalogue that boasted over 1200 songs, Irving Berlin epitomized Jerome Kern's famous maxim that "Irving Berlin has no place in American music — he is American music." Irving Berlin was born Israel Beilin on May 11, 1888. One of eight children, his exact place of birth is unknown, although his family had been living in Tolochin, Byelorussia, when they immigrated to New York in 1893. When his father died, Berlin, just turned 13, took to the streets in various odd jobs, working as a busker singing for pennies, then as a singing waiter in a Chinatown Cafe. In 1907 he published his first song, "Marie from Sunny Italy," and by 1911 he had his first major international hit — "Alexander's Ragtime Band." Over the next five decades, Irving Berlin produced an outpouring of ballads, dance numbers, novelty tunes and love songs that defined American popular song for much of the century. A sampling of just some of the Irving Berlin standards includes "How Deep Is the Ocean," "Blue Skies," "White Christmas," "Always," "Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better," "There's No Business Like Show Business," "Cheek to Cheek," "Puttin' on the Ritz," "A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody," "Heat Wave," "Oh! How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning," "Easter Parade" and "Let's Face the Music and Dance." In a class by itself is his beloved paean to his beloved country, "God Bless America." He was equally at home writing for Broadway and Hollywood. He wrote seventeen complete scores for Broadway musicals and revues, and contributed material to six more. Among the shows featuring all-Berlin scores were *The Cocoanuts*, *As Thousands Cheer*, *Louisiana Purchase*, *Miss Liberty*, *Mr. President*, *Call Me Madam*, and the phenomenally successful *Annie Get Your Gun*. Among the Hollywood movie musical classics with scores by Irving Berlin are *Top Hat*, *Follow the Fleet*, *On the Avenue*, *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, *Holiday Inn*, *This Is the Army*, *Blue Skies*, *Easter Parade*, *White Christmas* and *There's No Business Like Show Business*. His songs have provided memorable moments in dozens of other films, from *The Jazz Singer* (1927) to *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003). Among his many industry awards were a special Tony Award (1963) and the Academy Award for Best Song of the Year for "White Christmas" in 1942. An intuitive business man, Irving Berlin was a co-founder of ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers), founder of his own music publishing company, and with producer Sam Harris, builder of his own Broadway theatre, *The Music Box*. An unabashed patriot, his love for — and generosity to — his country is legendary, and through several of his foundations, including *The God Bless America Fund* and *This is The Army Inc.*, he donated millions of dollars in royalties to Army Emergency Relief, the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and other organizations. His actions were acknowledged with such accolades as the Army's Medal of Merit from President Truman in 1945, a Congressional Gold Medal for "God Bless America" and other patriotic songs from President Eisenhower in 1955 and the Freedom Medal from President Ford in 1977. In 2002, he was posthumously commemorated on a United States postage stamp. Irving Berlin's centennial in 1988 was celebrated worldwide, culminating in an all-star tribute at Carnegie Hall benefitting the Hall and ASCAP, subsequently an Emmy Award winning special on CBS, and featuring such varied luminaries of the musical world as Frank Sinatra, Leonard Bernstein, Isaac Stern, Natalie Cole and Willie Nelson. On September 22, 1989, at the age of 101, Irving Berlin died in his sleep in his

town house in New York City. A widow since the death of 62 years, the former Ellin Mackay, had died the previous year at the age of 85, Berlin is survived by three daughters, nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. BiographyWalter Donaldson was a brilliant, quixotic, legendary songwriter who wrote nearly 1,000 songs over three decades. Those songs have become an integral part of the great patchwork quilt of 20th Century American culture. Indeed, of global culture and the 21st Century. Donaldson, born into a large musical family in Brooklyn in 1893, grew up in the heady, syncopated strenuous years of America's delirious growth and expansion, years of wonder and seemingly limitless possibilities. His early musical talent bloomed under the tutelage of his mother, a classically trained pianist and teacher. Nevertheless, following early jobs playing piano in nickelodeons, hotels and 5 and 10¢ stores, as a very young man he worked on Wall Street in the world of finance. But the pull was irresistible. He moved on to his chosen world of music and never looked back. He began work as a staff pianist in a Tin Pan Alley publishing firm. He wrote steadily, and found almost immediate success, with his songs introduced in Vaudeville by the greatest performers of the day. He wrote throughout his enlistment in the Army during World War I, capping the decade with the irreverent, peculiarly American WWI welcome home anthem, "How 'Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down On The Farm (After They've Seen Poree)?" introduced by James Reese Europe's syncopated brass band, "The Hellfighters' Regiment" (369th Infantry Division), in a New York City Victory Parade to uproarious throngs of people lining the streets. It marked, indelibly, a moment in time and became, overnight, a singular part of American culture and history. And it caught the spirit of a restless post-war generation eager to move on into the Jazz Age, the 20's. Donaldson, a dedicated bon vivant, a festive man of boundless and varied enthusiasms, enthralled with nature, an avid and knowledgeable stargazer, a superb golfer, a true populist in the best sense of the word, was also a workaholic. He embraced the new decade with gusto and his musical output was astonishing; among his hundreds of songs are: "My Buddy," "Carolina In The Morning," "Yes Sir, That's My Baby," "After I Say I'm Sorry," "At Sundown," "My Blue Heaven," "Don't Be Angry," "Reaching For Someone," "I Wonder Where My Baby Is Tonight," "Borneo," "He's The Last Word"; in 1928 he founded his music publishing firm, Donaldson Douglas and Gumble, and, with his lifelong friend and frequent lyricist, Gus Kahn, wrote the score for the smash hit Ziegfeld show, Whoopee, featuring the classics "Makin' Whoopee" and "Love Me Or Leave Me." In the Samuel Goldwyn film of Whoopee he added "My Baby Just Cares For Me." In the early 30's, as the music business moved West, Donaldson, following the sale of his publishing company, moved to Hollywood to write for the movies. In the midst of global turbulence he would at last find great love, marriage, children, home. And he continued to write, following "Little White Lies" and "You're Driving Me Crazy," more classic songs such as the Oscar nominated "Did I Remember" from the film Suzy, "Riptide," "I've Had My Moments," "Clouds," and "Hello Beautiful," along with music for many films including The Great Ziegfeld, Saratoga, and Kid Millions. Throughout the years of World War II, he entertained and actively participated in the USO, the Hollywood Canteen and numerous Allied Resistance Benefits; and, always hospitable, well known for his emotional and material generosity, he opened his Santa Monica home near the beach to welcome countless men and women from the Armed Forces who were on leave into his family and his life. Music, as always, was the constant. Never without his stubby pencil, a scrap of paper, a napkin, or his notebook, he wrote at all hours of the day and night wherever he was, on the golf course, at restaurants, clubs the race track, and, to be sure, at home at his piano, a process he took pains to

share with his children. Finally, his brilliant, colorful career was cut short when Donaldson, overtaken by illness, died at the relatively young age of 54. A connoisseur of life, love, laughter and melody, he left the superb legacy of his songs for the world to enjoy, to sing, to hum, to whistle, songs that make one want to dance.

**NEW YORK CHOREOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE
SCHOOL OF AMERICAN BALLET**

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