

“THE CENTURY GIRL” (1916)

“This is a lavish and vastly entertaining mixture of spectacle and vaudeville. It is something like a production of the ‘Follies’ magnified past calculation; it is altogether like nothing else to be seen in America.” [*The New York Times*, Tuesday, November 7, 1916, p. 9.]

***The Century Girl* was a musical revue in three acts, with music by Victor Herbert and Irving Berlin. It was produced by Charles Dillingham and Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., at the Century Theatre, overlooking Central Park from the West. It opened on November 6, 1916, and remained for 200 performances.**

New York’s finest producers of musicals, Charles Dillingham and Florenz Ziegfeld, combined their impressive talents to mount an opulent revue at the Century Theatre on November 6 [1916] and called it, appropriately, **The Century Girl**. A star-studded cast featured Hazel Dawn, Leon Errol, Elsie Janis, and Van and Schenck. [Joseph] Urban outdid himself creating breathtaking sets – including a staircase that became Ziegfeld’s trademark. Apparently the two top producers reasoned they needed two top composers. Irving Berlin and Victor Herbert were recruited to collaborate on the score. In a witty musical scene an actor portraying Herbert played “Kiss Me Again,” while an actor pretending to be Berlin offered a ragtime counter melody. The approaching war clouds prompted “When Uncle Sam Is Ruler of The Sea” and “Uncle Sam’s Children.” [Bordman, p. 318]

More coordinated¹ than the *Follies*, it was in essence an extension of them, with Urban’s designs at their most inspired. A brilliant cast represented the great women of many ages, including May Leslie as Boadicea, Simone d’Herlys as Helen of Troy, Hazel Lewis as Joan of Arc, Lilyan Tashman as the Empress Josephine, and – emerging from a trapdoor as all these proud beauties descended a great curving staircase – Hazel Dawn, ravishing as the twentieth century girl. . . . The staircase scene, reproduced in countless film musicals dealing with Ziegfeld’s life, was the most lavish of his career to date and brought the opening night audience to its feet. As usual, in one scene [“The Music Lesson”] Ziegfeld showed his two composers, Victor Herbert (played by Arthur Cunningham) and Irving Berlin (played by John Slavin) having a comic discussion. Urban’s settings ranged from the celestial staircase itself, with its setting of purple and pink clouds, to Grand Central Station, a glade full of exotic flowers and cool green leaves, and a perfect reproduction of Tenniel’s drawings in an *Alice in Wonderland* scene. [Higham, pp. 118-119]

Herbert’s ability to vary a single score is astonishing. He gave Ziegfeld’s revue *The Century Girl* (1916) the expected waltzes and marches (the latter taking in “When Uncle Same Is Ruler Of the Sea”. . .) but also unique forays into period pastiche (a gavotte for “Marie Antoinette”) and pounding minor-key primitiveness for a ballet, “The Stone Age.” [Mordden, p. 76]

In this exhibit you’ll see the sheet music covers and pages of the music, the lyrics, and, in some cases, you’ll be able to hear the actual songs. We hope you enjoy it.

¹ The pieces of the show fit together better than was done in the *Ziegfeld Follies*. Ed.

ACT I
The Birth of the Century Girl

Scene 1: The Celestial Staircase
Women of the Ages
Song: "The Century Girl"

Music by: Victor Herbert
Lyrics by: Henry Blossom

As the years have rolled on,
There have come and have gone,
Women fair past compare.
Some have made them a name,
So immortal in fame,
That we all may recall!
Ev'ry one in the hour of her beauty or pow'r
Reigned supreme!
But t'would seem that to rule us at last,
With a charm unsurpassed,
Comes the beautiful queen of our dreams,
'Tis the Century Girl!
Oh Century Girl, My Century Girl!
The world is in love with you!
For so rare you are, and so fair you are,
That you're sweet as the morning dew!
Your form, your face, your style, your grace,
Has set ev'ry heart awhirl!
And what rapture lies within your love-lit eyes!
Wonderful Century Girl!

Date: 1916

Publisher: T. B. Harms

Format: Large Format [10.5" x 13.5"]

Show Cover: Yes: Blossom/Herbert/Harms Cover

Performed by: Hazel Dawn and Chorus



Courtesy of *The Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection*
The Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University



ACT I

Scene 2: Garden of a Modern Girls' School

Song: "You Belong to Me"

Music by: Victor Herbert

Lyrics by: Harry B. Smith

I've looked all my life for a girl like you.
Ev'ry guess that I made was wrong.
So I'd made up my mind that I never should find
The right one, then you came along.
And now don't imagine I'll let you go
Because you say "No" to me.
"No" often means "Yes," I'll make you confess.
In time just wait and see.

So don't forget where-ever you are
That you belong to me.
Led by fate, soon or late
My own you're bound to be.
The flow'rs belong to the Sunlight,
The pearls belong to the Sea.
So don't forget that you'll love me yet
For you belong to me.

Date: 1916

Publisher: T. B. Harms

Format: Large Format

Show Cover: Yes: Blossom/Herbert/Harms Cover

Performed by: Hazel Dawn (as *Eva Brown*) and Irving Fisher (as *Howell Lauder, the singing teacher*)



Courtesy of *The Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection*
The Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University



ACT I

Scene 4: The Grand Central Station

Song: "It Takes an Irishman to Make Love"

Music by: Irving Berlin

Lyrics by: Irving Berlin & Elsie Janis

It takes a German to make Lager Beer,
It takes the French to make wine,
It takes a pale-faced man from old Japan,
To make a nice embroidered fan.
It takes a Turk to make the cigarettes,
For you American men,
It takes a blackeyed Hawaiian lad,
To make ukelele's, but then,

It takes an Irishman to make love,
It seems to fit them just like a glove,
I know you money makers are here in New York,
But all the heart breakers are over in Cork;
It is not the things that they do,
But how they do them fascinates you,
And when it comes to kissing sure they stand alone,
For years they've practiced on the Blarney Stone,
And you'll discover that the world's great lover,
Came from Ireland.

Date: 1917

Publisher: Irving Berlin

Format: Large Format

Show Cover: Yes: Irving Berlin/Berlin Cover

Performed by: Elsie Janis (as *Peggy O'Brien*), James Doyle (as *Will B. Rich*), and Harland Dixon (as *Wood B. Rich*)



Courtesy of *The Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection*
The Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University



ACT I

Scene 5: The Forest Glade

Finale: "Hunting for a New Dance"

Song: "The Chicken Walk"

Music by: Irving Berlin

Lyrics by: Irving Berlin

There's a dance that will soon be the talk,
Won't you kindly name it?
It is called the Broadway Chicken Walk.
Who's the one to claim it?
You and pretty girlies with Mary Pickford Curlies,
First started doing it in New York That chicken walk.
It's full of fun; Won't you tell us how it's done?

Scratch the ground with your feet
And then you gaze around,
Should you meet a millionaire don't stare,
Just tell him you won't stop,
Flap your wings start to talk about engagement rings
And then you fly back to your coop,
When you get there gently perch,
Don't forget to leave him in the lurch,
You can bet he'll hang around,
He's found where ever you're going, crowing,
Look out for auto racers
And Broadway chicken chasers,
Doing that Broadway chicken walk.

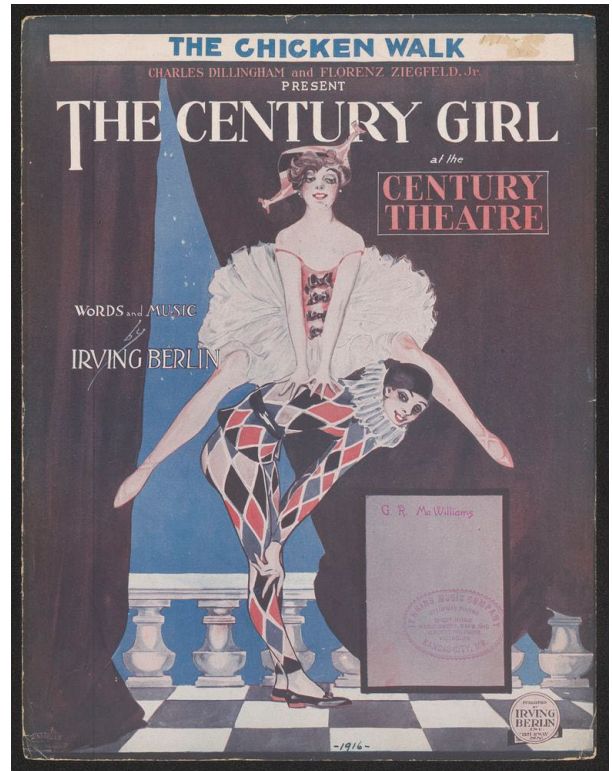
Date: 1916

Publisher: Irving Berlin

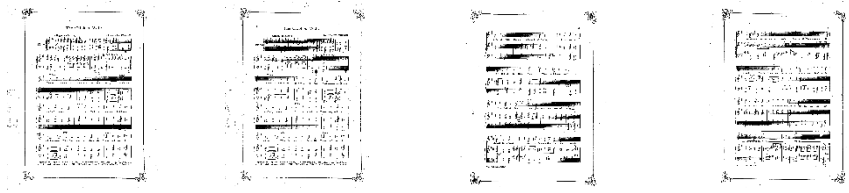
Format: Large Format

Show Cover: Yes: Irving Berlin/Berlin cover

Performed by: The cast



Stern Music Theatre Collection



The centerpiece of the second act belonged to Irving Berlin, who contributed one of his most lavish and unforgettable songs, a duet called “Alice in Wonderland.” Hazel Dawn and Irving Fisher sang to each other as a chorus representing the characters in the story filled the stage. [Bergreen, p. 138.]

ACT II

Scene 3: Alice in Wonderland

Song: “Alice in Wonderland” (Duet)

Music by: Irving Berlin

Lyrics by: Irving Berlin

Boy: Come little Girlie let's fly away,
Into the land of dreams.
Far from the whirly gay cabaret,
Up with the bright sunbeams.
Just let's suppose we are children again,
Just to the past let us gaze.
Come take a trip on a nursery train,
Back to our childhood days.

Let's wander hand in hand
To dreamy Wonderland
Upon a cloud we'll glide, Side by side we'll stand.
We'll float right through the air
And when we've landed there,
I'll build a Fairy Palace for you my Alice in Wonderland.

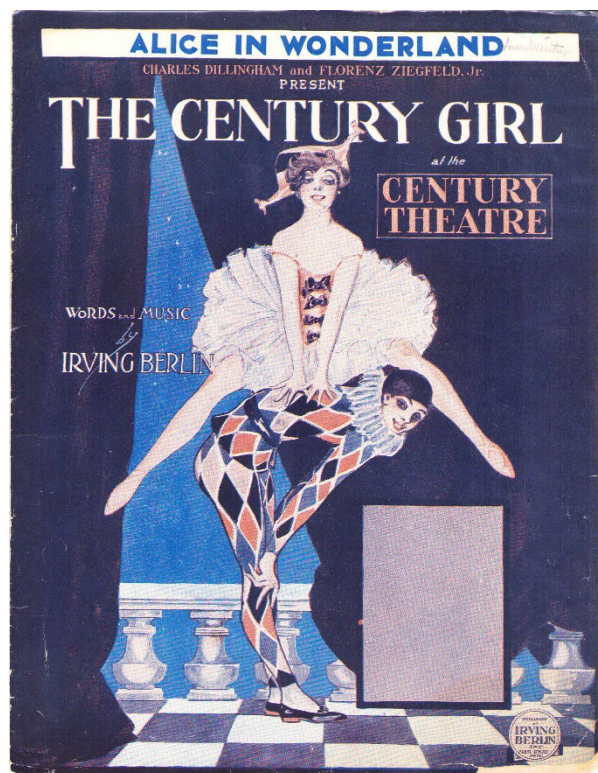
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Publisher: Irving Berlin

Format: Large Format

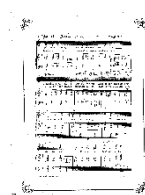
Show Cover: Yes: Irving Berlin/Berlin Cover

Performed by: Hazel Dawn (as *Eva Brown*) and Irving Fisher (as *Howell Lauder, the singing teacher*)



Stern Musical Theatre Collection

Once again the setting was the true star, with Urban offering an uncanny imitation of the original Tenniel illustrations.



Click on the record



label to hear the song



ACT II

Scene 8: Uncle Sam's Children

Song: “When Uncle Sam Rules the Wave” (When Uncle Sam Is Ruler of the Sea)

Music by: Victor Herbert

Lyrics by: Henry Blossom

Hear the trumpet sound with its militant call to arms!
All the world around is uneasy with vague alarms.
It may chance that we, by cruel Fate's decree
Maybe among them ere we see the end of the fray!
There are envious eyes Looking greedily toward our land!
'Twere a golden prize, As they readily understand!
But there's no mistake! Our Uncle Sam's awake,
A fighting chance to take with one or all; as he may
Uncle Sam has ne'er been known to lose a fight, boys!
For his “Cause” was ever just!
And for freedom and the right,
He again will gladly fight!
And again “In God We'll Trust!”
But we'll build a lot of battleships beside boys!
And the time is soon to be, When with ship and gun,
We're greater than anyone
And Uncle Sam is ruler from sea to sea.

Date: 1916

Publisher: T. B. Harms

Format: Large Format

Show Cover: Yes: Blossom/Herbert/Harms Cover

Performed by: Irving Fisher (as *Howell Lauder*, the singing teacher)



Stern Musical Theatre Collection



ACT III
Scene 4: “Jumping Jacks”
Song: “The Romping Red Heads”

Music by: Victor Herbert
Lyrics by: Henry Blossom

Night lies soft and the world's at rest
Children sleep in their cozy nest
Tho' in dreams of their childish joys
They still play with their funny toys
Buster Brown, Tom and Jerry, Dan and Dick
Teddy Bear and the monkey on a stick
We have to work all thru the day.
Ah, but the night is our time for play.
Up then! This is our play time
We know, soon, it will be day-time.
So romp and ramble a round about,
How we love to gambol when the lights are out
Each one's sweetheart is with him.
So come now moving in rhythm,
We'll dance all night
Till the broad day-light.
We're the Romping Red-head Kids!

Date: 1916

Publisher: T. B. Harms

Format: Large Format

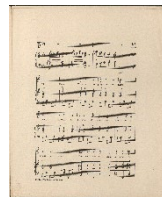
Show Cover: Yes: Blossom/Herbert/Harms Cover

Performed by: Leon Erroll and the Sunshine Girls



Courtesy of *The Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection*
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“The Romping Red Heads,” a curious piece about toys coming to life at night. [Mordden, p. 76]



Song: “Humpty Dumpty”

Music by: Victor Herbert

Lyrics by: Henry Blossom

You’ve read the story many times
In Mother Goose and nurs’ry rhymes
Of Humpty Dumpty’s tumble from the wall!
And what the tale would teach us is
That the altitude we reach is
Apt to make us hit the harder when we fall!
And though the story doesn’t tell
Exactly why or how he fell,
No doubt if you’ll investigate, you’ll find,
That some untrue or jealous friend,
To satisfy a selfish end,
Sneaked up on him and pushed him from behind!
Learn a lesson from the tale of Humpty Dumpty!
And the way in which he came to lose his seat.
For that sad and sudden cropper,
Must have jarred him, good and proper,
As I’m sure he never lit upon his feet!
Though the king with men and horses may have tried to,
They could never put him back upon the wall!
When he fell and he was bumped,
He put the hump in Humpty Dumpty
Se be careful how you’re pushed and where you fall!



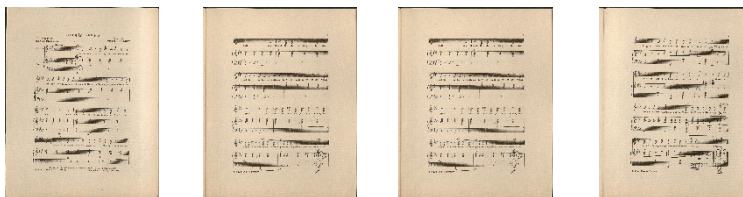
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FINALE

The lush “new art” movement, engendered in various ways by Reinhardt, the Ballets Russes, and Urban, was sumptuously represented on November 6, 1916, by *The Century Girl*, produced jointly by Dillingham and Ziegfeld to open the handsome new Colony Theatre, up above Columbus Circle. Part musical comedy and part revue, *The Century Girl* subsisted on typical Urban-Ziegfeld effects, such as the Celestial Staircase, which Hazel Dawn descended; the Crystal Palace, with a “Procession of the Laces of the World”; and, for spice, a scene in the Garden of a Modern Girls’ School. Victor Herbert and Irving Berlin provided the music; Leon Errol and Edward Royce directed; and Ned Wayburn staged the dances and musical numbers. Errol also displayed his comic ankle; Elsie Janis did her bit; Lillian (not Lilyan this time) Tashman offered her sophisticated beauty as a foil for Hazel Dawn’s fresh innocence; and comic chores were allotted to Sam Bernard, the classic Dutch comic, Frank Tinney, and—in their first of several ventures out of vaudeville under Ziegfeld’s aegis—Gus Van and Joe Schenck, the song pluggers. [Smith, pp. 199-200]

Charles Higham summed it up like this:

In the third act Urban dazzled the audience with an underwater sequence, in which a diver in a suit and helmet conducted a chaste romance with a shoal of mermaids. The lilting score, the witty lines, and the incredible spectacle made *The Century Girl* an unforgettable experience for the audience. [Higham, pp. 118-119]

THE CENTURY GIRL ONLINE EXHIBIT
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