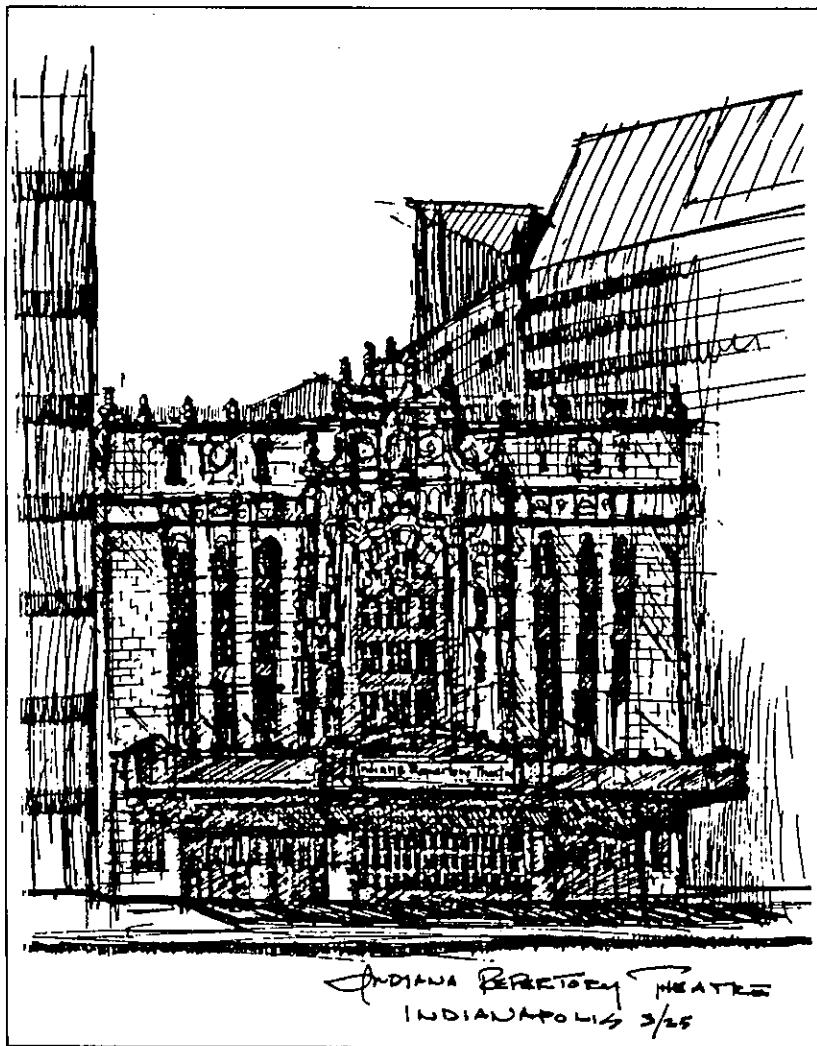


Study Guide



Indiana Repertory Theatre

Guys and Dolls
(A Musical Fable of Broadway)

Based on a Story and Characters by Damon Runyon

Music and Lyrics by Frank Loesser

Book by Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows

April 12 to May 7, 1989

Directed by Tom Haas
Choreography by Karen Azenberg
Musical Direction by Thomas Barthel

Scenic Design: Charles McCarry
Costume Design: Connie Singer
Lighting Design: Don Holder

Sound Design: Michael Bosworth
Production Stage Manager: Joel Grynheim
Assistant Stage Manager: Augie K. Mericola

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Cover Art created by G.W. Mercier

Musical Numbers

Act I

Opening

Fugue for Tinhorns

Follow the Fold

The Oldest Established

I'll Know

A Bushel and a Peck

Adelaide's Lament

Guys and Dolls

Havana

If I Were a Bell

My Time of Day

I've Never Been in Love Before

INTERMISSION

Act II

Take Back Your Mink

Adelaide's Second Lament

More I Cannot Wish You

The Crapshooters Ballet

Luck Be a Lady

Sue Me

Sit Down You're Rockin' the Boat

Reprise: Follow the Fold

Marry the Man Today

Reprise: Guys and Dolls

Ensemble

Nicely-Nicely, Benny, Rusty Charlie

Sarah, Arvide, The Mission Group

Nathan, Nicely-Nicely, Benny, Ensemble

Sarah and Sky

Miss Adelaide and the Hot Box Dolls

Adelaide

Nicely-Nicely and Benny

Ensemble

Sarah

Sky

Sarah and Sky

Scene

Guys and Dolls takes place in the vicinity of Broadway in New York City and in Havana, Cuba, sometime in the 1930's.

Synopsis of *Guys and Dolls: A Musical Fable of Broadway*

Miss Sarah Brown is in charge of a Salvation Army Mission near Times Square and she holds street-corner meetings in the same vicinity where Nathan Detroit and his cronies (Nicely-Nicely Johnson, Benny Southstreet, Rusty Charlie, Harry the Horse, etc.) hang out. Nathan is the operator of a floating crap game that at the moment is temporarily homeless because police officer Brannigan is waging a campaign on crap games in this neighborhood. Miss Adelaide, a singer at the Hot Box nightclub, is tired of her fourteen-year engagement to Nathan and wants him to go legit and marry her. If Nathan can raise \$1000 he can get a place to hold the game. He hits upon an idea. Sky Masterson is passing through town on his way to Havana and Nathan knows Sky will bet on almost anything. Nathan tricks Sky into a bet whereby Nathan says that he can name a "doll" that will not go to Havana with Sky. Sky is sure of himself not only in gambling but particularly with women and takes the bet. Nathan names Miss Sarah!

Sky discovers that Miss Sarah's Mission is going to be closed because the Mission attracts no sinners. He cleverly promises her his marker for twelve genuine sinners for a special prayer meeting if she will have lunch with him. General Matilda Cartwright is coming to this special meeting and will rescind the order to close the Mission if they have a sizable turnout. To save the Mission, Miss Sarah agrees to have lunch with Sky not realizing the lunch will be in Havana.

The crapshooters are assembling and are impatient for the game, but Nathan cannot take them to The Biltmore Garage (the location arranged for the crap game) until he collects the \$1000 from Sky.

Things become tense when Brannigan shows up and immediately suspects why they are gathered. The fortuitous arrival of Miss Adelaide gives Benny an idea. He says they have come there to give Nathan a bachelor dinner. Miss Adelaide suggests that they elope right after her new show opens the following night. Though obviously not happy about it, Nathan agrees.

Meanwhile, Sky and Miss Sarah have arrived in Havana. She asks for milk, and he orders milk with Bacardi flavoring. She finds it so tasty she drinks Sky's as well. Sky quickly orders several more, and Miss Sarah loses the battle. She admits she's in love with him, and kisses him.

Sky refuses to take advantage of Sarah's condition, and they return to New York on the late plane. They arrive at the Mission just as the Mission Band is returning from an all-night crusade against the Devil. Suddenly police sirens are heard and the escaping crapshooters pile out of the Mission. Brannigan accuses them of being in on the plan to use the Mission as the location for Nathan's game. Miss Sarah, thinking Sky is in league with Nathan, walks out on him.

Sky, nevertheless, still intends to redeem his marker. He goes to the Hot Box, seeking Nathan. Nicely-Nicely is there. He tells Sky he will take

him to where the game is in progress as soon as he delivers a message to Miss Adelaide that Nathan cannot elope with her as planned. Nicely-Nicely and Sky go underground to a spot in the city sewer system where the game is in progress.

Sky tries to tell the crapshooters about the Mission, but no one shows the slightest interest in going. Sky chivalrously tells Nathan he did not take Miss Sarah to Havana and pays Nathan the \$1000. As he is leaving, Sky gets an idea. He returns to the game and offers to bet on one roll—\$1000 cash against every soul in the sewer. If he wins, all have to show up at the Mission at midnight.

At two minutes before midnight, just as Miss Sarah is throwing in the sponge, the crapshooters begin to appear. Sky forces them in and departs for places unknown, leaving Nathan in charge. General Cartwright is delighted with the turnout and asks the sinners to testify. Nathan confesses he's sorry for betting a certain "guy" that he could take a certain "doll" to Cuba even though he won the bet.

Miss Sarah is deeply touched by Sky's noble character and leaves the meeting. Outside the Mission she meets Miss Adelaide who is looking for Nathan. To themselves, they admit, for better or worse, they've both got it bad. As Miss Adelaide goes into the Mission after Nathan, Miss Sarah starts a search for Sky.

Their efforts are successful and the ever-patient Miss Adelaide marries Nathan and Miss Sarah weds Sky.

Facts About the Original Production

New York run: 46th St. Theatre, opened Nov. 24, 1950; 1200 performances.
Director and Choreographer: George S. Kaufman and Michael Kidd
Original Cast included: Vivian Blaine, Robert Alda, Stubby Kaye, Sam Levene

Though it turned out to be one of Broadway's most hilarious musical comedies—as well as an acknowledged classic in the field—*Guys and Dolls* was originally planned as a serious romantic story. Much impressed by the success of *South Pacific*, producers Cy Feuer and Ernest Martin felt that if such a compelling musical play could be written about the unlikely romance between naive Nellie Forbush and sophisticated Emile de Becque, an equally affecting story could be created out of the unlikely romance between a pure-at-heart Salvation Army reformer and a slick Broadway gambler, the two leading characters in Damon Runyon's short story "The Idylls of Miss Sarah Brown." For the score, the producers enlisted Frank Loesser (with whom they had been associated on an earlier project), then

which is why his name always appears on programs. After so many script rejections, Feuer and Martin changed their minds and now decided that *Guys and Dolls* could only work if it were played for laughs. This led them to Abe Burrows, who wrote an entirely new book that he fitted to Loesser's already existing score.

Stories abound from the rehearsal process of the original production. Playwright George S. Kaufman, who directed it, is credited with helping the writers fashion a tight and fluid script. Kaufman, who was a writer of comedies (with collaborator Moss Hart) was most interested in the comic sides of the script. "Make it funny," he remonstrated to Abe Burrows on more than one occasion. "But not too funny," countered Loesser, who saw the tale of Sky and Sarah as a ripe opportunity for writing beautiful love songs. "I'm in the romance business," Loesser yelled at the producers. The creative tension between Kaufman and Loesser resulted in a well-written musical, which was somewhat of an anomaly for the time. Runyon, who did not live to see this musical adaptation of his stories, would, no doubt, have enjoyed the result: he is recorded as saying "Forget plots. People remember the characters." And this is certainly true of *Guys and Dolls*.

In this so-called "Musical Fable of Broadway," the high-minded lowlives and spunky do-gooders of Damon Runyon's world come colorfully alive in such characters as Sky Masterson, the bet-on-anything gambler; Nathan Detroit, the perpetually harried organizer of the oldest established permanent floating crap game in New York, who bets Sky that he can't make the next girl he sees fall in love with him; Miss Sarah Brown, of the Save-A-Soul Mission on Times Square, who is the next girl Sky sees and who does succumb; and Miss Adelaide, the main attraction at the Hot Box nightclub, whose psychosomatic perpetual cold stems from her being engaged to Nathan for 14 years. One of the show's memorable scenes occurs in the mission where Nicely-Nicely Johnson confesses his sins in the rousing "Sit Down, You're Rocking the Boat."

Guys and Dolls was the fifth longest-running Broadway musical of the 1950's. Its touring company traveled for over two years. A Broadway revival of *Guys and Dolls* with an all-black cast was mounted in 1976. The film version, released in 1955, starred Marlon Brando, Vivian Blaine, Frank Sinatra and Jean Simmons. A 1981 revival in London at Britain's acclaimed National Theatre, garnered critic Kenneth Tynan's attention: "Guys and Dolls is America's second best play [honors for first place going to *Death of a Salesman*]."

About the Writers and Composer

Damon Runyon (1880-1946), whose stories of colorful Broadway characters provided the inspiration for *Guys and Dolls*, was a renowned journalist and short story writer of the 1920's, 30's and 40's. Born in Colorado, Runyon eventually found his way to New York City in 1910, where he was hired by William Randolph Hearst to write for his newspaper, the *New York American*. Runyon quickly gained a following through his unconventional and highly entertaining rendering of the baseball world. Runyon's reporting soon expanded to cover a variety of events: his coverage of World War I campaigns, heavyweight boxing championships, and famous murder trials made him one of the best known reporters in the country.

Runyon's success as a fiction writer began in 1929 with his Broadway stories, which he sold to such well known magazines as *Colliers*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Saturday Evening Post* and *Liberty*. In these stories, Runyon exhibited his knowledge of and affection for the strange and exciting world of Broadway, a world which he loved and inhabited for the greater portion of his life. Dream Street Rose, Louie the Lug, Harry the Horse, Little Miss Marker, Big Butch and Sky Masterson are only a few of the characters who populate Runyon's tales of the Broadway night-life and underworld. Many of his short stories, and a play which he co-wrote with Howard Lindsay called *A Slight Case of Murder*, later appeared in Hollywood film versions, some of which were produced by Runyon himself. Remaining active and productive until ill health prevented it, Runyon died on December 10, 1946, after a difficult fight with cancer. In response to his request, Runyon's ashes were scattered along his beloved Broadway.

Frank Loesser (1910-1969), composer and lyricist of *Guys and Dolls*, was well known as a master lyricist and had written hit song after hit song with a succession of composers including Burton Lane, Jule Styne and Hoagy Carmichael, before he surprised the music industry by blossoming into a composer in his own right in the early 1940's with "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," one of the most popular songs to come out of America during World War II. After serving in the Army, Loesser returned to Hollywood, but in 1948 he was invited to do the lyrics for a show Cy Feuer and Ernie Martin were producing based on *Charley's Aunt*. Harold Arlen, who was set to do the music, backed out at the last minute, and Loesser decided to proceed on his own, turning out both words and music. With *Where's Charley?*, which featured Ray Bolger's wonderful rendition of "Once in Love with Amy," Frank Loesser joined the exclusive company of Irving Berlin, Cole Porter and Noel Coward as the only men since George M. Cohan to be successful in writing both words and music.

Loesser wrote two more hit songs in 1948, "Slow Boat to China," and

the Oscar-winning "Baby It's Cold Outside." Feuer and Martin had meanwhile started work on a new musical based on Damon Runyon's Broadway stories and had hired Jo Swerling to work on the book. Loesser, interested in the project but with no formal agreement with the producers, turned out four songs and showed them to Feuer and Martin. The four songs changed the producer's conception of the show; by the time they replaced Jo Swerling with Abe Burrows, Loesser had completed the entire score of *Guys and Dolls*.

Frank Loesser continued his success through the 50's and 60's with his Broadway hits *Green Willow*, *The Most Happy Fella* and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.

Abe Burrows (1910-1985), librettist of *Guys and Dolls*, worked as a Wall Street messenger and garment district salesman before breaking into the entertainment business selling material to radio comedians. His wit earned him staff writer positions on many prominent radio programs. When Cy Feuer and Ernie Martin, who had worked with Burrows in radio, decided they needed a different approach to the book of *Guys and Dolls* than original librettist Jo Swerling had created, they invited Burrows to join them. Having never worked in the theatre before, Burrows hesitated, but then made the decision that led to a long and successful career in the theatre. After *Guys and Dolls* he was in demand as a director and a play doctor, and worked on *Silk Stockings*, *What Makes Sammy Run?*, *Two on the Aisle* and *Forty Carats*, and wrote and directed *Can-Can* and *Cactus Flower*. Burrows' career reached its peak with *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, which he wrote and directed, and which earned him and composer Frank Loesser the Pulitzer Prize.

Damon Runyon's Guys and Dolls: *delightful descriptions, from Damon Runyon's short stories, of the 1930's characters that came to sing and dance their way into one of America's finest musicals.*

Dream Street: . . . and this Block is called Dream Street. . . . In this street you see burlesque dolls, and hoofers, and guys who write songs and saxophone players, and newsboys, and newspaper scribes, and taxi drivers, and blind guys, and midgets, and blondes with Pomeranian pooches, or maybe French poodles, and guys with whiskers, and night-club entertainers and I do not know what all else. And all of these characters are interesting to look at, and some of them are very interesting to talk to, although if you listen to several I know long enough, you may get the idea that they are somewhat daffy, especially the horse players.

Sky Masterson: "Of all the high players this country ever sees, there is no doubt but that the guy they call The Sky is the highest. In fact, the reason he is called The Sky is because he goes so high when it comes to betting on any proposition whatever. He will bet all he has, and nobody can bet any more than this. He is maybe thirty years old, and is a tall guy with a round kisser, and he always looks as innocent as a little baby. But The Sky is by no means as innocent as he looks. In fact, The Sky is smarter than three Philadelphia lawyers, which makes him very smart, indeed, he is well established as a high player in New Orleans, and Chicago, and Los Angeles, and wherever else there is any action in the way of card-playing, or crap-shooting, or horse-racing, or betting on baseball games, for The Sky is always moving around the country to follow the action.

Sarah Brown: And after a couple of ganders at this young doll, The Sky is a goner, for this is one of the most beautiful dolls anybody ever sees on Broadway, and especially as a mission worker. Her name is Miss Sarah Brown. She has a first-class shape, and her eyes are like I do not know what, except that they are one-hundred-per-cent eyes in every respect. Furthermore, she is not a bad cornet player. . . . Well, The Sky stands there listening to Miss Sarah Brown tooling on the cornet for quite a spell, and then he hears her make a speech in which she puts the blast on sin very good, and boosts religion quite some, and says if there are any souls around that need saving the owners of same may step forward at once. But no one steps forward . . . but she never seems to find any souls to save.

Now from this time on, The Sky does not take any interest in anything but Miss Sarah Brown, and any night she is out on the corner with the other

The Oldest Established . . . : Now Nathan Detroit's crap game is what is called a head-and-head game, although some guys call it a fading game, because the guys bet against each other rather than against the bank, or house. It is just the same kind of game as when two guys get together and start shooting craps against each other, and Nathan Detroit does not have to bother with a regular crap table and a layout such as they have in gambling houses. In fact, about all Nathan Detroit has to do with the game is to find a spot, furnish the dice and take his percentage, which is by no means bad.

. . . It is a very dirty room over a garage and full of smoke, and the crap game is on an old pool table; and around the table, and packed in so close you cannot get a knitting-needle between any two guys with a maw, are all the high shots in town, for there is plenty of money around at this time, and many citizens are very prosperous. Furthermore, I wish to say there are some very tough guys around the table too, including guys who will shoot you in the head, or maybe in the stomach, and think nothing whatever about the matter.

Big Jule: I wish to say I am very nervous indeed when Big Jule pops into my hotel room one afternoon, because anybody will tell you that Big Jule is the hottest guy in the whole world at the time I am speaking about. In fact, it is really surprising how hot he is. They wish to see him in Philadelphia, Pa., about a matter of a mail truck being robbed, and there is gossip about him in Minneapolis, Mn., where somebody takes a fifty-G pay roll off a messenger in cash money, and slugs the messenger around for not holding still. Then there is something about a department store in Canton, Oh., and a flour-mill safe in Toledo, and a grocery in Spokane, Wash., and a branch post office in San Francisco, and also something about a shooting match in Chicago, but of course this does not count so much, as only one party is fatally injured. However, you can see that Big Jule is really very hot, what with the coppers all over the country looking for him high and low. In fact, he is practically on fire.

Nicely-Nicely Johnson: I do not say that Nicely-Nicely is the greatest eater in all history, but what I do say is he belongs up there as a contender. In fact, Professor D., who is a professor in a college out West before he turns to playing the horses for a livelihood, and who makes a study of history in his time, says he will not be surprised but what Nicely-Nicely figures one-two. Professor D. says we must always

Gangsters, chorus girls and do-good missionaries: Musical Director talks about the genius of *Guys and Dolls*

By Thomas Barthel

A trumpet blares the "all horses to the starting gate" riff, a man steps forward with a betting form and the familiar words of the "Fugue for Tinhorns" pour forth: "I've got the horse right here, the name is Paul Revere..."

It's the opening trio of *Guys and Dolls*, following an unusual montage of Damon Runyon characters dancing and moving through the mythical fableland of Broadway between Times Square and Columbus Circle somewhere in the early 1930s. Gangsters, chorus girls, tourists, vendors, policemen, well-heeled ingenues, photographers, hoods and even select do-good missionaries inhabit this world drawn by Frank Loesser's lyrics and music.

How does one approach a standard such as *Guys and Dolls*, one of the most-produced pieces in the history of the American Musical? What is it in the show that makes it unique, that makes it tick like no other musical theatre piece? What makes the show what critic Brooks Atkinson calls a "landmark in the development of Broadway musical plays"? And, most important for me, what is the responsibility of the musical director in mounting the work?

I began by tracing the career of Frank Loesser, who penned both the lyrics and the music for the show. Loesser moved into the genre of the Broadway musical for *Where's Charley?* in 1948. With *Guys and Dolls*, his second musical, he found words and patterns of speech that sharpen and intensify characters as well as move the plot in new directions. Take, for instance, his turn-of-a-phrase: "when a bum buys wine like a bum can't afford, it's a cinch that the bum is under the thumb of some little broad;" or lyrics that emanate distinctively from the plot: "Sit Down, You're Rocking the Boat" when gangsters visit the mission; and "Sue Me" serving as Nathan Detroit's feeble attempt to placate Miss Adelaide.

No nugget is too small in this show, whether it be colloquial ("Gotta have the game or we'll die from shame") or highbrow English ("from his strong moral fibre to the wisdom in his head, to the homey aroma of his pipe").

Not only is Loesser a brilliant lyricist, he is also a gifted musical craftsman. Coming from a musical family (both his father and brother were pianists), Loesser bypassed formal musical training, preferring as a youth to improvise on the piano and compose on the harmonica as a youth.

However, the nuts and bolts of the craft must have come naturally to him, as his technique in *Guys and Dolls* testifies. At the top of the show,

three gangsters sing a contrapuntal trio, meaning that three voices each enter at different times and create interest in their relationship to each other. The "Fugue for Tinhorns" is followed immediately with a square, monochromatic hymn, "Follow the Fold," the Save-a-Soul Mission's theme song.

The character of these two opposing forces continues throughout the show, with the streetwise gents keeping a jazzy, polytonal outlook and the good folk of the mission singing within the confines of ballads, hymns and folk song. The musical "melting pot" finally occurs in the second act when "Sit Down, You're Rocking the Boat," combines a revival setting and pseudo-religious text with Nicely-Nicely's Broadway jazz interpretation.

Mr. Loesser's musical skills are equally evident in his instrumental writing. The Havana sequence employs five different Latin American dances through the musical scene: the Rhumba, Samba, Conga, Tango and ever-popular Shango. The opening "Runyonland" ballet combines the honking of horns, fits and starts of traffic and people, street vendors hawking their wares and various petty mishaps—all part of the musical fabric.

Choosing the orchestral requirements of the show was a particular challenge. We have decided to use a tight, 1930s jazz combo, centered on piano, bass and drums with brass and reeds as solo instruments. The two reed players will each play three instruments—clarinets, saxophones and a flute—and the orchestra parts have been shaped to provide as much flavor as Mr. Loesser's music indicates.

The real fun begins with the arrival of the cast, when we discover lyrics and playful words, hear and shape Loesser's musical phrases and match movement and dance to the vocabulary of notes and rhythm.

With such a succinct and well-crafted work, the musician's job is very easy. Mr. Loesser was no fool. He has written exactly what he wanted. Our job is merely to listen, discover and enliven.