



In the early years of The Great Depression, when Americans desperately needed a laugh, beloved composer Irving Berlin and celebrated playwright Moss Hart collaborated on a hilarious topical revue entitled *As Thousands Cheer*. Every scene, song, and gag was inspired by a different section of the newspaper. *As Thousands Cheer* opened on Broadway at the Music Box Theatre on September 30, 1933 to rave reviews. This newspaper-style format was lauded as innovative, and the show ran for more than 400 performances. In one scene, Berlin and Hart placed the cast in an Easter parade as the orchestra played the now-familiar Berlin ballad of the same name. The scene planted an idea in Berlin's mind: why not develop a revue based on American holidays?

Years later, in May of 1940, Berlin approached Paramount Producer-Director Mark Sandrich with the concept. Sandrich had worked with Berlin on three RKO films — *Top Hat* (1935), *Follow the Fleet* (1936), and *Carefree* (1938) — so he was adept at staging Berlin numbers for the camera. Sandrich was intrigued by the idea, and they began working on an outline for a film.

They agreed that it would be an appropriate vehicle for leading Hollywood crooner Bing Crosby. Crosby was contracted to Paramount at the time, so it would be a somewhat cost-effective measure to hire him to play a leading role. However, Sandrich had the extravagant idea of hiring the foremost Hollywood dance man, Fred Astaire, to play Crosby's romantic rival and ex-vaudeville partner. Having directed five Astaire-Rogers films at RKO, Sandrich was comfortable working with Astaire and he felt he could lure him onboard. Irving Berlin's *Holiday Inn* would mark the first pairing of Crosby and Astaire. Yet Astaire would come at a high financial price. As a concession to satisfy the studio, they agreed to cast lackluster leading women, virtually unknown: Marjorie Reynolds and Virginia Dale.

Despite the light script and unbalanced casting, Berlin composed more than a dozen songs for the film including the timeless classic "White Christmas." The score also featured such gems as "Happy Holiday," "Be Careful, It's My Heart," "You're Easy to Dance With," and "I Can't Tell a Lie." *Holiday Inn* was sure to be a hit, particularly paired with Mark Sandrich's brilliant direction and the boundless talent of the two leading men.



Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, Virginia Dale, and Marjorie Reynolds

In the 1970s, Universal Pictures acquired *Holiday Inn* along with a number of titles from Paramount's catalog. In the winter of 2013, Universal Stage Productions, the live theatre division of the renowned motion picture studio, invited Goodspeed to be the developmental home of the stage adaptation of this wonderfully tuneful film, and we eagerly agreed. Goodspeed has long offered theatre gypsies a bit of respite from their hectic lives trodding the boards in New York City and other bustling cities. Our quaint surroundings share some resemblance to the Connecticut sanctuary sought by Jim Hardy (Crosby) in *Holiday Inn*.

We are happy to welcome you to the first-ever performances of the stage adaptation of *Irving Berlin's Holiday Inn*! We're sure glad you're here.