



The Guide to Musical Theatre

CALL ME MADAM

Music and lyrics by Irving Berlin, book by Howard Lindsay and Russell Crouse

Imperial Theatre, Broadway - Oct. 12, 1950 644 (perfs)
London Coliseum, 15 March, 1952



One of the great musicals of all time - the story of Sally Adams, "The hostess with the mostest", who becomes US Ambassador to the tiny duchy of Lichtenburg, captivating the handsome Prime Minister and encouraging the romance of her aide with an enchanting young Princess. Of course, the 'stuffed shirts' in Washington conspire to get her recalled, but all ends happily, helped along by songs such as "You're Just in Love", "It's A Lovely Day Today" and "Marrying For Love".

SYNOPSIS

The action of this play, according to the authors, is laid in the two mythical countries of Lichtenburg and the United States of America, and tells the story of Sally Adams, an exuberant, wealthy widow appointed Madam Ambassador to the Grand Duchy. Her outrageous lack of knowledge of etiquette and tradition makes most amusing entertainment. Sally Adams has such songs as "The Hostest With the Mostest", "Washington Square Dance", "Can You Use Any Money Today?", "The Best Thing For You Is Me" and "You're Just In Love". All of these, though undemanding in range, need punching delivery by a full-voiced mezzo. Other numbers are "The Ocarina", "Once Upon a Time Today" and the famous "It's A Lovely Day Today" shared by the juvenile girl and boy, both of whom should be competent singers and move well. The role of Cosmo Constantine, who becomes Prime Minister of the Duchy calls for an actor with baritone voice. There are many small, non-singing roles including an excellent opportunity for two elderly performers in the roles of the Grand Duke and Duchess who make their first appearance just before the end of the play to prove that Madam Ambassador, despite her unorthodox behaviour is, after all, a very great diplomat. The dignified playing of this little episode provides great contrast to the brashness that has preceded it and makes a delightful climax.

The master craftsman who created *Annie Get Your Gun* serves not only his principals as well in *Call Me Madam* but is equally kind to his chorus. He gives them some excellent ensembles on their own, demanding nothing in return except good signing from medium range voices, fine diction and a sense of modern rhythm.

STORY:

Sally Adams, Washington's "hostess with the mostes'," is named Ambassador to the Grand Duchy of Lichtenburg - a tiny kingdom steeped in royal custom and rapidly changing coalition governments. Kenneth Gibson, an eager young diplomat, is assigned to be her aide. True to her almost total disrespect for protocol, Sally arrives late in Lichtenburg. There she encounters foreign minister Cosmo Constantine, not, however, to the degree her romantic nature would like. Worse yet, Cosmo refuses American foreign aid. Sally gets talked into a scheme to get Cosmo elevated to Prime Minister to make way for a new foreign minister eager to accept American money to "save" the country.

When the loan is all but consummated, Cosmo finds out about it and resigns. This ruins all possibilities for another coalition, and the country must hold its first general election in twenty years. Sally openly campaigns for Cosmo, forcing her recall to Washington for becoming involved in another government's internal affairs. Kenneth, too, commits a grave diplomatic error by falling in love with the Princess Maria and arranging secret meetings with her. However, a spirit of democracy is over Lichtenburg. The princess is granted permission to ask Kenneth to marry her. Elected Prime Minister, Cosmo visits Sally in Washington to grant her the royal order of Dame and revive their "acquaintance."

CAST:

6 men, 3 women, (20 speaking parts, 8 principals), chorus

Sally Adams, carries the show with good acting and powerful voice.

Kenneth, strong, handsome singer.

Cosmo Constantine, warm character actor, sings little.

Princess Maria, good voice.

Three touring senators, mostly straight roles, but lead one number.

Pemberton Maxwell, straight role.

Four principal dancers.

Several ocarina players.

Separate singing and dancing choruses.

Total cast, 30-45.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. OVERTURE
2. OPENING CHORUS AND DANCE "Mrs. Sally Adams"
3. SONG (Sally) "The Hostess with the Mostes' on the Ball "
4. ENCORE (Sally) "The Hostess with the Mostes' on the Ball "
5. SONG AND DANCE (Sally and Chorus) "The Washington Square Dance"
6. MUSIC TO CHANGE SCENE.
7. SONG (Cosmo and Chorus) "Lichtenburg"
8. SONG (Sally) "Can you use any money today "
9. DUET (Cosmo and Sally) "Marrying for love "
10. FANFARE-OPENING SCENE 6 .
11. SONG and DANCE (Princess Maria and Chorus) "The Ocarina"
12. DUET (Kenneth and Princess Mama) "It's a lovely day today"
13. ENCORE-SONG AND DANCE (Kenneth and Chorus) "It's a lovely day today"
14. CORRIDOR SCENE
15. REPRISE (Kenneth and Princess Maria) "It's a lovely day today"
16. SONG (Sally) "The best thing for you "
17. FINALE-ACT I (Sally) "Can you use any money today?"
18. ENTR'ACTE

ACT II

19. OPENING-(Cosmo and Chorus) "Lichtenburg"
20. SONG AND DANCE (Sally and Chorus) "Something to dance about"
21. REPRISE "Something to dance about"
22. SONG (Kenneth) "Once upon a time, today "
23. TRIO (Wilkins, Brockbank and Gallagher) "They like Ike "

24. REPRIS-DUET (Kenneth and Princess Maria) "It's a lovely day today"
25. DUET (Kenneth and Sally) "(I wonder why) You're just in love "
26. ENCORES (ad lib) "(I wonder why) You're just in love "
27. REPRIS (Sally) "The best thing for you "
28. REPRIS "The best thing for you "
29. REPRIS-DUET (Kenneth and Princess Maria) "It's a lovely day today "
30. REPRIS (Chorus) "Mrs. Sally Adams"
31. FINALE (Sally and Chorus) "You're just in love "
32. CURTAIN MUSIC

INSTRUMENTATION:

Reed I (flute, piccolo, clarinet, alto sax), Reed II (clarinet, bass clarinet, alto sax), Reed III (clarinet, oboe, cor anglais, tenor sax), Reed IV (flute, clarinet, tenor sax), Reed V (clarinet, bass clarinet, alto sax, baritone sax, bassoon), horn, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones, piano, guitar, percussion, strings.

SCENES AND SETTINGS:

2 acts, 13 scenes, 5 full stage sets, 3 drop sets, which are a series of painted cloth panels rather than 1-piece drops, and 1 partial stage set (Sally's sitting room in Lichtenburg).

ACT I

- Scene 1: Office of the Secretary of State.
- Scene 2: Sally's Living Room in Washington.
- Scene 3: Public Square in Lichtenburg.
- Scene 4: Reception Room in the American Embassy.
- Scene 5: Public Square in Lichtenburg.
- Scene 6: The Lichtenburg Fair.
- Scene 7: A Corridor in the Palace.
- Scene 8: Sally's Sitting Room in the Embassy.

ACT II

- Scene 1: The Public Square.
- Scene 2: The Embassy Garden.
- Scene 3: The Public Square.
- Scene 4: Sally's Sitting Room.
- Scene 5: Sally's Living Room in Washington.

PERIOD AND COSTUMES:

The mid-1950s in two mythical countries; one is called Lichtenburg, the other the United States of America:

- Washington party gowns and formal wear,
- Bright folk costumes,
- Royalty everyday dress,
- Festival costumes,
- Potato bug costumes (2)

CHOREOGRAPHY:

Square dance, folk, dance specialties, couples dance interludes during the festival, brief passages of waltz, tango, Charleston, blues, rumba, fox trot.