

Family Guide



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Family Guide



# About WHITE CHRISTMAS

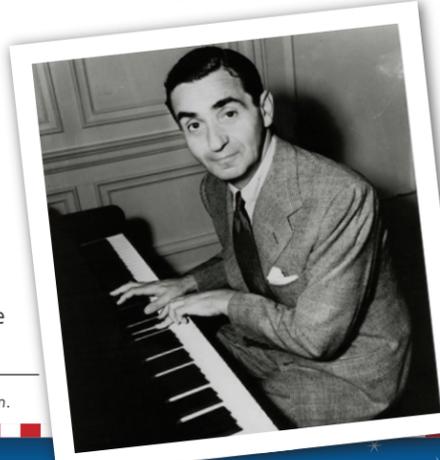
## WELCOME

**W**elcome to Irving Berlin's *White Christmas* Family Guide! You are about to see one of the most beloved holiday shows to ever hit the Great White Way! This handout is designed to help you introduce your children to the theater with a brief plot synopsis, character descriptions, fun discussion questions and drawing activities. We hope that with this guide (paired with the dynamic performances), you and your family will have a delightful experience at the theater. Enjoy the show!

## WHAT'S THIS SHOW ABOUT?

It's post World War II, and veterans Bob Wallace and Phil Davis are one of the hottest acts in show biz. But when Phil decides to try and set-up Bob with the stars of a stunning sister act (Betty and Judy), they find themselves in unseasonably warm Vermont, instead of sunny Florida, to work on their new show. Bob and Phil quickly discover that their former General is the owner of the Inn where they are staying, and he is dealing with two big problems: No

snow and therefore no guests. Bob and Phil enlist Betty and Judy's help. The four of them secretly plan a big Christmas Eve surprise performance to make the holiday one the General will never forget!



## Meet the CHARACTERS

- BOB WALLACE** – A major singing star, but has some trouble with romance
- PHIL DAVIS** – A fun-loving ladies man who will do anything for his friends
- BETTY HAYNES** – The responsible half of The Haynes Sisters
- JUDY HAYNES** – The younger, more ambitious Haynes sister
- GENERAL HENRY WAVERLY** – A retired U.S. General, adjusting to civilian life in post World War II America
- MARTHA WATSON** – Once a musical comedy star, now works at the General's Inn
- SUSAN WAVERLY** – The lovable and outgoing General's granddaughter
- RALPH SHELDRAKE** – An army buddy of Bob and Phil who now serves as a major television executive
- MIKE NULTY** – The neurotic Stage Manager of Bob and Phil's new show
- EZEKIEL FOSTER** – He takes life at a very slow pace



# That Was Then, THIS IS NOW

Irving Berlin's *White Christmas* takes place in the 1950s, when times and technology were certainly different than they are today. Here's some of the "cutting-edge" technology of the time:

## TRAINS

In the 1950s, everyone wanted to travel by trains. Commercial air travel was in its infancy and incredibly expensive, so trains provided people with the means to travel across the country in a convenient, inexpensive and enjoyable way. Many trains included parlor cars, which encouraged socializing between the passengers. Some trains even had sleeping cars with beds and dining cars complete with full restaurants. Today, trains are used more often for commuting to and from work, rather than vacation travel. However, companies like Amtrak still offer full service train travel to passengers hoping to remember a simpler time.

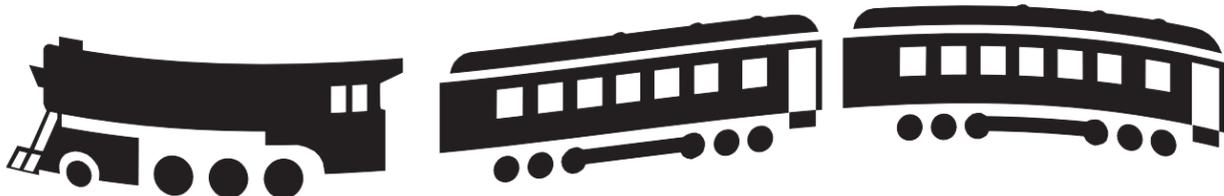
## TELEGRAM

Telegrams were the fastest way to deliver information in a hurry; they were like the emails or faxes of the early 1900s. To send a telegram, you would go to a telegram operator (like Western

Union), and the operator would then send your message electronically via a telegraph to a different operator in another city. This second operator would write out the message and have it hand delivered to the intended recipient. It seems like a lot of work, but for a long time it was the quickest way to get a letter, contract or even a birthday greeting from one place to another.

## TELEPHONE

Using the telephone in the early 1900s was different from the phones we know and love today. First of all, there was no such thing as a cellular phone or even a cordless phone. To make a call, you would pick up the phone in your house, which alerted your local switchboard operator. You would tell the operator who you wanted to talk to, and then the operator would manually have to connect you with your intended person via plugs similar to stereo cables. While this system worked well for many years, it allowed nosy operators to eavesdrop on other people's conversations. Eventually phone technology caught up with the demand to provide people with more privacy.



## How Did They Do That?

Anything can happen in the theater! And you're about to experience all its magic. Before the show begins, here are some fun theatrical brainteasers to discuss with your children:

1. When you entered the theater, you were given a "playbill." Listed in that playbill is every person that works to make the show happen night after night. Using your playbill, see if you can find the director!
2. It just wouldn't be a "White Christmas" without some snow. How do you think they make it snow onstage?
3. In the show, the characters Bob and Phil try to secretly plan a big holiday performance to help cheer up their former General. Have you ever done something really special for someone you cared about? If so, when and what did you do?
4. Unlike a movie, in the live theater the actors can hear you onstage. How do you think you can be a good audience member during the performance?
5. The actors in the show are a true team (or "ensemble"). How long do you think they've been working together?



## Community Giveback

In Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*, Bob Wallace and Phil Davis surprise the General with a dedicated holiday performance for the community. What are some ways you can give back to your community? It can be as small as helping a neighbor shovel the driveway to fundraising for a local cause or charity.

## Happy Holidays!

The holidays are the most wonderful time of the year! But what's your favorite part? Draw a picture of your favorite part of the holidays in the box below. This can be anything from a community event to the best present you ever received!

