

## On Irving Berlin

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Irving Berlin (1888-1998)—born Israel Beilin in Russia--was an American composer and lyricist. On his 100th birthday tribute, famed broadcast journalist Walter Cronkite said Berlin "helped write the story of this country, capturing the best of who we are and the dreams that shape our lives." Composer Douglas Moore offered that Berlin—more than Stephen Foster, Walt Whitman, or Carl Sandburg –was the great American minstrel, who "caught and immortalized in his songs what we say, what we think about, and what we believe." Composer Jerome Kern declared "Irving Berlin has no *place* in American music—he *is* American music."

To get a sense of the story of this country Irving Berlin helped to write, consider, first, traditional and then Berlin's lyrics on America, Christmas, and Easter.

### **America**

*Traditional:*

My country 'tis of thee  
Sweet land of liberty  
Of thee I sing  
Land where my fathers died  
Land of the pilgrim's pride  
From every mountainside  
Let freedom ring

My native country, thee  
Land of the noble free  
Thy name I love  
I love thy rocks and rills  
Thy woods and templed hills  
My heart with rapture fills  
Like that above

Let music swell the breeze  
And ring from all the trees  
Sweet freedom's song  
Let mortal tongues awake  
Let all that breathe partake  
Let rocks their silence break  
The sound prolong

Our Father God to Thee  
Author of liberty  
To Thee I sing  
My country 'tis of Thee  
Sweet land of liberty  
For all eternity  
Let freedom ring

*Irving Berlin:*

God bless America, land that I love  
Stand beside her and guide her  
Through the night with the light from above  
From the mountains to the prairies  
To the oceans white with foam  
God bless America, my home sweet home

*and this:*

America has opened up her heart  
To every nationality  
And now she asks of every nation  
Their appreciation  
It makes no difference now from where you came  
We are all the same

## **Christmas**

*Traditional:*

The First Noel the Angels did say  
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay  
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep  
On a cold winter's night that was so deep  
Noel Noel Noel Noel  
Born is the King of Israel!

They looked up and saw a star  
Shining in the East beyond them far  
And to the earth it gave great light  
And so it continued both day and night  
Noel Noel Noel Noel  
Born is the King of Israel!

And by the light of that same star  
Three Wise men came from country far  
To seek for a King was their intent  
And to follow the star wherever it went  
Noel Noel Noel Noel  
Born is the King of Israel!

This star drew nigh to the northwest  
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest  
And there it did both pause and stay

Right o'er the place where Jesus lay  
Noel Noel Noel Noel  
Born is the King of Israel!

Then let us all with one accord  
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord  
That hath made Heaven and earth of nought  
And with his blood mankind hath bought  
Noel Noel Noel Noel  
Born is the King of Israel!

*Irving Berlin:*

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas  
Just like the ones I used to know  
Where the treetops glisten and children listen  
To hear sleigh bells in the snow

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas  
With every Christmas card I write  
May your days be merry and bright  
And may all your Christmases be white

*and this:*

Happy holiday  
Happy holiday  
While the merry bells keep ringing  
Happy holiday to you

It's the holiday season  
And Santa Claus is coming 'round  
The Christmas snow is white on the ground  
When old Santa gets into town  
He'll be coming down the chimney, down

It's the holiday season  
And Santa Claus has got a toy  
For every good girl and good little boy  
Santa's a great big bundle of joy  
When he's coming down the chimney, down

He'll have a big fat pack upon his back  
And lots of goodies for you and for me  
So leave a peppermint stick for old St. Nick  
Hanging on the Christmas tree

It's the holiday season  
So hoop-de-do and dickory dock  
And don't forget to hang up your sock  
'Cause just exactly at twelve o'clock  
He'll be coming down the chimney, down

He'll have a big fat pack upon his back  
And lots of goodies for you and for me  
So leave a peppermint stick for old St. Nick  
Hanging on the Christmas tree

It's the holiday season  
So hoop-de-do and dickory dock  
And don't forget to hang up your sock  
'Cause just exactly at twelve o'clock  
He'll be coming down the chimney

Happy holiday  
Happy holiday  
While the merry bells keep ringing  
Happy holiday to you

## **Easter**

*Traditional:*

Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!  
Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!  
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!  
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!  
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!  
Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!  
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!  
Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia!  
Where's thy victory, boasting grave? Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!  
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!  
Made like him, like him we rise, Alleluia!  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

Hail the Lord of earth and heaven, Alleluia!  
Praise to thee by both be given, Alleluia!  
Thee we greet triumphant now, Alleluia!  
Hail the Resurrection, thou, Alleluia!

King of glory, soul of bliss, Alleluia!  
Everlasting life is this, Alleluia!  
Thee to know, thy power to prove, Alleluia!  
Thus to sing, and thus to love, Alleluia!

*Irving Berlin:*

In your Easter bonnet, with all the frills upon it,  
You'll be the grandest lady in the Easter Parade.  
I'll be all in clover and when they look you over,  
I'll be the proudest fellow in the Easter Parade.

On the avenue, Fifth Avenue, the photographers will snap us,  
And you'll find that you're in the rotogravure.  
Oh, I could write a sonnet about your Easter bonnet,  
And of the girl I'm taking to the Easter Parade.