

Anything Goes

All the songs in this show are catchy and the characters are both **N**aughty and nice. The show is set on the liner “S.S American” and to whet **Y**our appetite the songs include “Anything Goes,” “Friendship”, “You’re the **T**op” and “I Get a Kick Out of You”. There is a delightful girl called Hope **H**arcourt who secretly has the “hots” for a guy called Billy Crocker although she **I**s engaged to be married to Lord Evelyn Oakleigh who is a really **N**ice Englishman, but with a bit of Gypsy thrown in! The exciting song “Blow **G**abriel Blow” is sung by the feisty Reno Sweeney, the onboard evangelist cabaret act.

Going along on the ship are Moonface Martin, (a gangster), Hope’s mother Evangeline, her **O**ld flame – Elisha Whitney, (who is Billy’s boss), Reno’s “Angelic” dancers and the sexy **E**rma (a gangster’s Moll). Oh... and 2 crazy Chinese gamblers!
So there is pretty much something for everyone, guests, sailors and Tap Dancing!

The Story

In a Manhattan bar short-sighted millionaire Elisha Whitney meets his assistant Billy Crocker who has organised his boss' transatlantic trip. Reno Sweeney, a club singer (turned Evangelist), arrives angry as Billy has stood her up and Billy admits to her that he loves another.

The S.S. American is about to set sail and Billy arrives just in time to deliver Whitney's passport. Evangeline Harcourt, an old flame of Whitney's, is also on board with her daughter, Hope and Hope's fiancé, Sir Evelyn Oakleigh. They plan to marry on board. This news is devastating for Billy as it is Hope that he secretly loves. In desperation he stows away.

Also on board are two more stowaways. World renowned gangster Moonface Martin and his moll, Erma. They help Billy out with a fake passport and also steal Whitney's glasses so that he cannot discover Billy's presence on board. As Billy and Moonface work their way through a number of disguises to prevent capture, Reno falls for Sir Evelyn.

Billy and Moonface are caught but instead of being locked up Billy is used to satisfy the passengers' hunger for celebrities, as the ship's biggest star, Snake Eyes Johnson - Public Enemy No 1!

When Reno puts on a show for the passengers, she asks for those present to confess their sins. Sir Evelyn, to Hope's horror, confesses to a fling with a Chinese girl and Billy confesses his true identity. He and Moonface are locked up in the ship's brig.

Two Chinese converts are also locked away for gambling and Billy and Moonface, after a quick game of strip poker, steal their clothes and escape. They arrive at the wedding in disguise and manage to break it up. There is a quick switch around and a triple wedding takes place instead of one!

So what's it all about?

Well, it's frothy to say the least, there isn't much of a meaningful plot but the show has lots of opportunities for lots of people, some good gags and of course some fantastic music.

COLE PORTER – The Man Behind the Music

Cole Albert Porter (June 9, 1891 – October 15, 1964) was an American composer and songwriter from Indiana.

Cole Porter was noted for his sophisticated (sometimes ribald) lyrics, clever rhymes, and complex forms. He was one of the greatest contributors to the Great American Songbook. He is one of the few Tin Pan Alley composers to have written both lyrics and music for his songs.

His mother started Porter in musical training at an early age; he learned the violin at age six, the piano at eight, and he wrote his first operetta (with help from his mother) at 10.

When *Anything Goes* started life it was solely the work of Bolton and Wodehouse. The story is based on a ship wreck and its impact on some 'off-beat' characters. Alas while it was in pre-production, a major sea disaster took place off the coast of New Jersey. The '*Morro Castle*' caught fire and one hundred and thirty four people died in the tragedy. A shipwreck became a taboo subject and therefore a totally unsuitable artistic venture, especially one that turned it into a humorous situation. The entire concept was changed and the libretto was completely re-written. A lucky quirk of fate allowed one of the most popular and successful pieces of American musical theatre comedy to be born.

Cole Porter's witty and sophisticated style has made him popular the world over. Although he did not achieve mainstream popularity until he was older. As a man, he was keen to follow adventures and lived a life of gaiety and wealth. Born into money, Cole was never the 'struggling composer type' but spent much of his time travelling Europe; experiences that show in the diversity of the style in his work. He was influenced by his trips abroad and by the time he spent living with wife, Linda Lee-Thomas, in France.

He studied at Harvard Law School where he was encouraged to change majors from Law to Music, as his whimsical approach was deemed unsuitable for the legal profession. He moved to Yale and whilst there he wrote two of the most famous school songs, pieces of which can be found in *Anything Goes* (BULLDOG), as a clear testament to the fondness he had for the establishment.

Cole Porter was born into wealth and never really felt the pinch of the Depression, if anything it only boosted his career. People wanted to be entertained and he was only too happy to oblige. The movie musicals of the period were lavish and suited to the affluence, wit and flair of Porter's writing. It was pure escapism from a time that was frugal and debilitating. Many of Cole Porter's works show the affluence of the rich, as this is what the people of America wanted and aspired to. Many of his shows were comedies as this too is what was in demand from a public who had enough struggle in daily life and wanted joy, adventure and excitement in their entertainment.

Many of the tunes in *Anything Goes* are believed to have been written for Porter's male lovers. Although married for 34 years he had many attachments to young men during this time and he and his wife Linda eventually split up.

In 1937, a riding accident crushed his legs and left him in chronic pain and largely crippled. Doctors told Porter's wife and mother that his right leg would have to be amputated and possibly the left one as well. Porter underwent more than 30 surgeries on his legs and was in constant pain for the rest of his life.

Despite this he wrote some of his most famous shows after the accident. Including *The Broadway Melody of 1940*, *Silk Stockings*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *High Society*.

Much of Porter's work was influenced by his own feelings and experiences. One of his most famous songs "Night and Day" made famous in Fred Astaire's last film, *Gay Divorce* in 1932 (although probably better known for being sung by Frank Sinatra) was said to have been rhythmically influenced by the sounds of the tom tom drums he heard when on a Nile cruise in Egypt.

After his accident Porter became more reclusive but was reunited with his wife, who continued to nurse him. Many people thought that after this accident he wrote fewer and fewer hits and that the peak of his career had been cut short by his tragic accident. In 1948, however, Porter made a great comeback with the Tony award winning musical *Kiss Me Kate*.

Comparing his later to earlier scores, his earlier work is much more flippant while his later works become more intense and even angry at times. This was probably due to the intense pain that he suffered from his accident and the many operations he endured.

Eventually, his injuries caught up with him. After a series of ulcers and 34 operations on his right leg, it had to be amputated and replaced with an artificial limb in 1958. The operation followed the death of his beloved mother in 1952 and his wife's death from emphysema in 1954. The combined hardships Porter endured proved to be too much. He never wrote another song after 1958 and spent the remaining years of his life in relative seclusion.

Cole Porter died of kidney failure on October 15, 1964, at the age of 73 in Santa Monica, California, and is interred in Mount Hope Cemetery in Indiana.

So that's where we started - but where are we going?

Anything Goes is a great show so why mess with greatness! Audiences have been enjoying it for years just the way it is and so there will be no fancy modernising or jazzing up. I'm looking for a big cast where everyone can be involved as much as possible. My only change will be a signature ending but you'll have to wait and see for that one!!!

There is a big misconception that Anything Goes is a massive tap show...IT'S NOT! Don't be put off if you can't tap. The title song is tapped and will be by everyone and *Buddie Beware* will be a soft shoe by the sailors but that's it. If you've never tapped before, don't worry I'll teach you, that's my job. I would rather see a well executed routine that has a whole stage of people tapping, than 4 excellent tap dancers and everyone else swaying around the sides...trust me, we're going to be fab! There is lots of "other dancing" too. Slow, partner, jazzy, show and acted dance. Don't forget it's my job to cater to my cast not get so fancy that people feel left out. However I'm a hard task master and I will expect energy and effort at all times. When in doubt smile and use your arms. That's what I do and I'm a hopeless tapper!

I will want everyone to have a character and a background and know why they are on the stage (I mean boat) and to enjoy doing the the show. When I direct and choreograph, I like to run a "happy ship" (*excuse the pun*).

So that's the plan so far. There are 50 parts in this show and that's with some doubling so come along, get involved.

Anchors Away!

Lucy xxx