

Cole Porter, the composer and lyricist of *Anything Goes*, honed his distinctive style during the 1920s while living the gilded life of a bon vivant and socialite abroad. Porter was part of the "lost generation" of expatriate artistic and literary minds who fled the austere materialism of American cities for the more permissive artistic and intellectual scene, which flourished in places such as Paris and Venice. Porter's travels and opulent experiences enriched his work and helped set the stage for shows that would establish him in the upper echelon of musical-comedy writers.

For example, he was cruising down the Rhine River in Germany in 1934 while he wrote the classic music and iconic lyrics to the song "You're the Top" from *Anything Goes*. Purportedly, he asked fellow passengers to name their favorite objects and places to help him pen the topical lyrics to the song. The score to *Anything Goes* proved to be one of his greatest. It is full of hits including "I Get a Kick Out of You," "You're the Top," "It's De-Lovely," and "Blow, Gabriel, Blow."

Porter's first hit musical was *Paris*, which premiered on Broadway in 1928. One slightly risqué song from the show, "Let's

Do It, Let's Fall in Love," was a smash, and its success helped propel him to a new level of notoriety and acclaim. The following year brought the panic of the stock market crash and the subsequent Great Depression. Yet, Porter's songs during the trying 1930s served to lift the spirits of the downtrodden and affluent alike. In fact, of all the shows during this tumultuous and challenging period, none proved to be more closely associated with the decade than *Anything Goes*.

In 1933, the year before *Anything Goes* opened on Broadway, Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated as president, and Prohibition ended. These monumental events brought glimmers of hope to a people reeling from economic catastrophe and failed government policies. Theatre historian Miles Kreuger described *Anything Goes* as "the bright and cheerful embodiment of Roosevelt recovery." It was exactly what people yearned for at that moment in history. They needed a show with sophisticated tuneful songs that would allow them to forget their troubles, laugh, and enjoy the affluent lifestyle most could not afford. However, it was anything but smooth sailing to steer *Anything Goes* to Broadway success.

Early in 1933, producer Vinton Freedley was on the lam to avoid creditors after suffering considerable financial losses from his production of *Pardon My English*. Freedley was in Panama when he conceived of an idea for a musical comedy that could change his fortune. He imagined a hilarious story about oddball characters on an ocean liner that experiences a bomb threat. Freedley returned to New York and assembled an outstanding team of performers and writers to bring his dream to fruition.

Unfortunately, about two months before *Anything Goes* was to open, a fire on the S.S. Morro Castle sank the ship off the coast of New Jersey, killing 137 people. Freedley knew he needed to change the plot drastically in light of this terrible tragedy. There is also evidence that he was unsatisfied with the script he received from veteran writers P.G. Wodehouse and



Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse



Guy Bolton. In desperation, Freedley recruited the show's director, Howard Lindsay, as well as Russel Crouse, a Theatre Guild press agent, to perform a rapid revision of the libretto. The show actually went into rehearsal with only a portion of the first act completed. However, the joining of Lindsay and Crouse on *Anything Goes* resulted in one of the greatest writing partnerships in theatre history and a quarter-century of collaboration. They went on to write such great shows as *Red, Hot, and Blue*; *The Sound of Music*; and *Life with Father*.

*Anything Goes* opened on Broadway at the Alvin Theatre on November 21, 1934 with William Gaxton as Billy Crocker, Ethel Merman as Reno Sweeney, and Victor Moore as Moonface Martin. The show ran for 420 performances and was widely lauded by critics. *Anything Goes* was revived Off-Broadway in 1962 at the Orpheum Theatre and on Broadway at the Vivian Beaumont Theater in 1987. Different Porter songs were interpolated into each of these versions. A member of the original writing team, Guy Bolton, thoroughly revised the 1962 libretto. John Weidman and Timothy Crouse wrote yet another new book for the 1987 revival and significantly increased the amount of dance music in the show. *Anything Goes* received an additional Broadway revival in 2011 at the Stephen Sondheim Theatre. Both the 1987 and 2011 revivals won three Tony Awards.

Goodspeed's *Anything Goes* is directed by Daniel Goldstein, whose previous direction credits include Goodspeed productions of *Damn Yankees*; *Hello, Dolly!*; *Snapshots*; and *The Unauthorized Autobiography of Samantha Brown*. Goldstein believes in the poignancy of *Anything Goes* and its ability to bring renewed joy to audiences during these trying and uncertain times. You will notice some bold changes when you enter The Goodspeed auditorium. Goldstein places the orchestra on stage front and center and extends the stage over the orchestra pit. These differences highlight Goodspeed's outstanding musicians and enable the audience to enjoy Kelli Barclay's miraculous choreography more close up than ever. In addition, these adjustments align with the uniqueness of Goodspeed productions by accentuating the audience's feelings of intimacy and togetherness in powerful and exciting ways. Bon voyage!



Ethel Merman as Reno Sweeney in the original Broadway production of *Anything Goes*.



Colin Donnell, Sutton Foster and Joel Grey in Roundabout's 2011 Broadway revival of *Anything Goes*.