

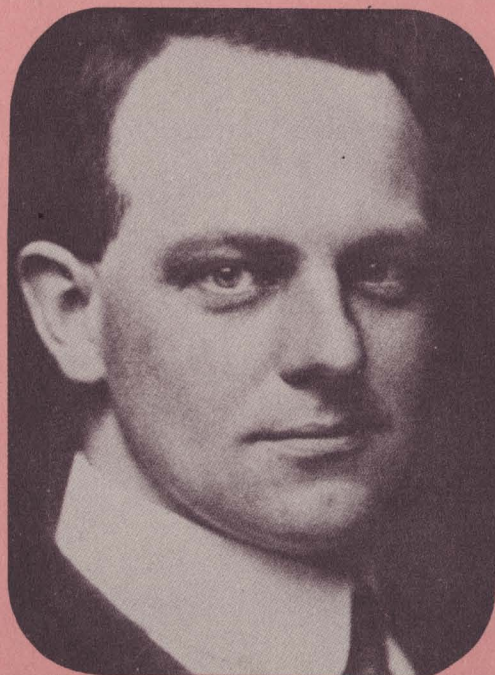
FOLKWAYS RECORDS RFS 601

The
Theatre Lyrics of
P.G. WODEHOUSE

*Featuring
Music by Jerome Kern*

Compiled and Annotated by
DAVID A. JASEN

PUT ME IN MY LITTLE CELL • MY CASTLE IN THE AIR • HAVE A HEART MEDLEY
NAPOLEON • AND I AM ALL ALONE • YOU SAID SOMETHING
OH, BOY! MEDLEY • TILL THE CLOUDS ROLL BY • LEAVE IT TO JANE MEDLEY
BUNGALOW IN QUOGUE • OH, LADY! LADY! MEDLEY • BILL



P.G. WODEHOUSE AT 21, AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS WRITING CAREER

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

SIDE ONE — Total Time: 22:20

1. PGW *talks about his start in musicals*
2. PUT ME IN MY LITTLE CELL — *Billy Murray*
3. MY CASTLE IN THE AIR — *George MacFarlane*
4. HAVE A HEART MEDLEY
5. NAPOLEON — *Billy Murray*
6. AND I AM ALL ALONE — *Irving Gillette*
7. YOU SAID SOMETHING — *Green & MacDonough*

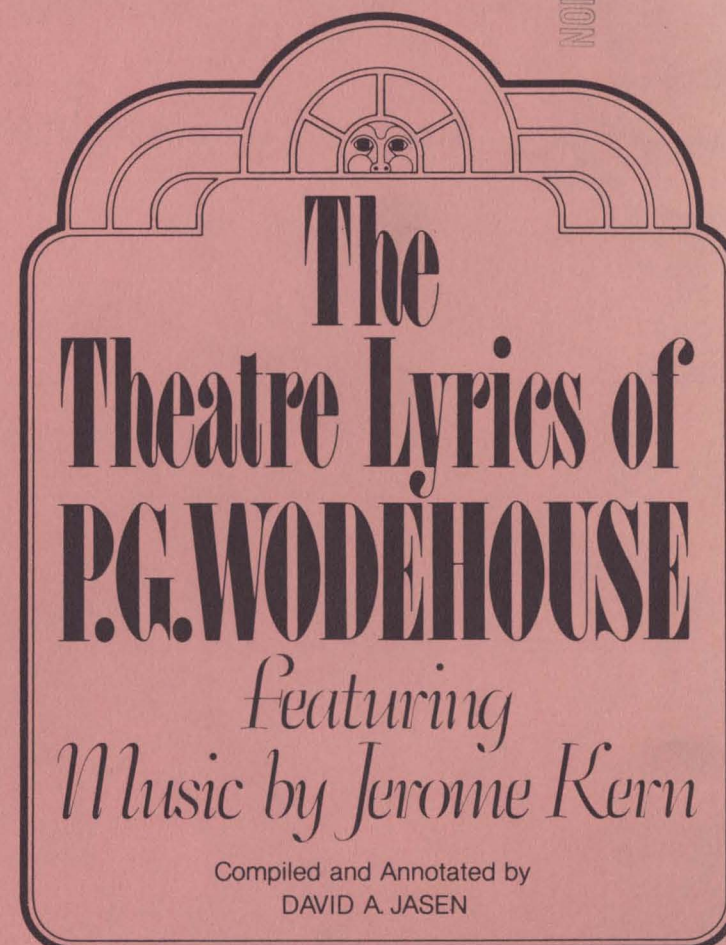
SIDE TWO — Total Time: 22:51

1. OH, BOY! MEDLEY
2. TILL THE CLOUDS ROLL BY — *Lillie & Powers*
3. LEAVE IT TO JANE MEDLEY
4. BUNGALOW IN QUOGUE — *Grant & Murray*
5. OH, LADY! LADY! MEDLEY
6. BILL — *Helen Morgan*

Compiled & Annotated: David A. Jasen
Remastering: Carl Seltzer

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left to right:

Morris Gest, P.G.W., Guy Bolton, Ray Comstock, Jerome Kern.

P. G. Wodehouse, the most famous and successful humorist of the twentieth century, had an important career in the theatre. Indeed, with Guy Bolton and Jerome Kern, he created what became the American Musical Comedy.

He was born Pelham Grenville Wodehouse one hundred years ago in Guildford, England, on October 15, 1881. He made his debut in the theatre when Owen Hall asked him to write a lyric for a comic song to be interpolated into the score of *SERGEANT BRUE*. Much to everyone's surprise, the song was such a hit with the audiences that it was published. We have even included a rare recording of it!

Before the triumverate of Bolton-Wodehouse-Kern took charge, American musicals were either musical burlesques of then current unmusical theatrical productions (e.g. Weber and Fields) or else heavy imported, usually Viennese, operettas which were neither humorous nor colorful. As a result, the American musical very much resembled a group of vaudeville specialists hired to do their renowned routines dressed up in outlandish costumes.

Elisabeth Marbury, a charming and resourceful literary agent had an idea to produce musicals on a small scale: have only one or two sets, eleven musicians, a small cast and a strong book. She convinced F. Ray Comstock, lessee of The Princess Theatre, a 299 seat house, to produce such a show. Naturally, they couldn't afford top names, but she knew the Trio and thought they could provide the proper material, especially since they had been airing their views on what constitutes a proper musical to whomever would listen. And, what constituted a proper musical comedy was a very strong book, funny dialogue, lyrics which either carry the plot along or else further characterization, and each chorus girl her own person.

The Princess musicals caught on and established the team of Bolton-Wodehouse-Kern as the leading creators of musical comedies. In 1917, Wodehouse had five shows on Broadway at the same time! Guy Bolton (1884-1979) wrote the book, Wodehouse helped him with the dialogue and wrote the lyrics, and Jerome Kern (1885-1945) composed the sparkling music.

Wodehouse's theatrical career was such that in the course of his 33 musicals and 18 straight plays, he worked with every major theatrical composer of his time and was associated with all of the major producers.

His co-workers and other future-lyricists have praised his efforts through the years: "Before Larry Hart," wrote composer Richard Rodgers, "only P. G. Wodehouse had made any assault on the intelligence of the song-listening public." And, songwriter Howard Dietz wrote, "Over the years I have held Wodehouse as the model of light verse in the song form." Several Wodehouse novels

have a theatrical setting and several others have been turned into plays.

After a long professional life which included 97 books and 285 short stories, he was knighted by the Queen of England six weeks before he died in Remsenburg, New York on February 14, 1975.

RECORDINGS

SIDE ONE

We open this unique tribute to the lyrics of P. G. Wodehouse by offering part of an interview where he tells of his start in musical comedy. The interview was done on April 15, 1961 in his home in Remsenburg, Long Island, New York on an early portable-carrying tape recorder.

PUT ME IN MY LITTLE CELL was the first of several hundred lyrics PGW was to write during the course of his extremely long life. It was also the first of his songs to be published and recorded. This particular recording was a result of the English production of SERGEANT BRUE coming to the United States and running on Broadway for 152 performances, a most respectable run for 1905. The singer for the recording was Billy Murray (1877-1954), who started his recording career as a tenor at the turn of this century and who made his last recording during the second world war! This tune was an interpolation into the regular score of Wood and Lehmann. While PGW did the lyric, the English musical director, Frederick Rosse, composed the music.

MY CASTLE IN THE AIR represents another interpolation. This time, Jerome Kern was the composer. The show, MISS SPRINGTIME, was the first show in which the team joined forces, but it was not the first show to be entrusted entirely to them. The score was mostly done by Emmerich Kalman with lyrics by Herbert Reynolds. Since original cast recordings came into being during the second world war, and it was usual for recording artists, not Broadway stars, to record favorite popular songs, it is fortunate that we can offer a few Broadway stars actually singing numbers on discs

they introduced on the stage in their shows. The first is George MacFarlane, who was born in Montreal, Canada in 1877 and died in Hollywood, California, in a car accident on February 22, 1932. His baritone voice was first heard in opera houses, then he went into operettas and finally musical comedies.

HAVE A HEART was the first musical entirely done by the Trio: Bolton and Wodehouse did the book, Wodehouse the lyrics, and Kern the music. It opened on January 11, 1917 at the Liberty Theatre, N.Y. and ran for 78 performances. But when the original cast took it on the road, it ran for over five years. The songs comprising the medley are "I'm So Busy," "And I Am All Alone," "The Road That Lies Before," "Honeymoon Inn," and the hit "You Said Something."

NAPOLEON was PGW's first big historical comic number. It featured Billy B. Van who was born in Pottstown, Pennsylvania on August 3, 1870 as William Vandegrift. He made his first appearance in the chorus of H.M.S. Pinafore when he was nine years old. He joined a circus, played in burlesque and was taken from vaudeville to perform his role as Henry, the elevator boy, in this production. He got raves for this number, which, fortunately, he recorded. He went to California early in the twenties and helped form the M-G-M studios. After years of show business, he retired and died in Newport, New Hampshire on November 16, 1950.

AND I AM ALL ALONE was one of Kern's most beautiful ballads and was touted by his publisher in the backs of other pieces of sheet music for many years. The prolific recording tenor, Henry Burr, used the pseudonym Irving Gillette to make this version.

YOU SAID SOMETHING was clearly the hit song of HAVE A HEART. Alice Green and Harry MacDonough sing this duet, recorded just after the show opened. The disc was released in April, 1917.

SIDE TWO

OH, BOY! was the triumverate's biggest hit. It opened at the Princess Theatre on February 20, 1917, and ran continuously for a remarkable (at that time) 475 performances. Needless to say, it also found favor on the road where it played for many seasons. It opened in London, England, on January 27, 1919, where it ran for 167 performances under the title OH, JOY! Tom Powers (born in Owensboro, Kentucky on July 7, 1890 and died in Manhattan Beach, California on November 9, 1955), who created the leading role of George Budd in America, went to London to recreate that role for the English production. The Medley, released in September, 1917, consists of Kern's favorite song, "Till the Clouds Roll By," "An Old Fashioned Wife," "You Never Knew About Me," "Rolled Into One," and a reprise of "Till the Clouds Roll By." Kern thought so highly of that song, that he chose it as the title of his movie biography.

TILL THE CLOUDS ROLL BY was among those tunes recorded by the English original cast. In this case, it fell to American Tom Powers and Canadian Beatrice Lillie (born in Toronto on May 29, 1898), who had made her theatrical debut in 1914 but who achieved stardom with her role of Jackie Sampson in this show.

LEAVE IT TO JANE contains Wodehouse and Kern's most consistently rich and rewarding collaborative efforts. It opened at the Longacre Theatre in New York on August 28, 1917 and ran for 167 performances. When it was revived Off-Broadway at the Sheridan Square Playhouse on May 25, 1959, it ran for an astounding 928 performances! The medley consists of "Just You Watch My Step," "The Crickets Are Calling," "What I'm Longing To Say," "The Sun Shine Brighter," "The Siren's Song," and the rousing title song, "Leave It To Jane."

LET'S BUILD A LITTLE BUNGALOW IN QUOGUE was written for THE RIVIERA GIRL, which premiered at the New Amsterdam Theatre on September 24, 1917. The lyrics commemorated the part of Long Island where PGW was to spend most of his life in the United States. This recording of March, 1918, was made by Rachel Grant and Billy Murray.

OH, LADY! LADY! was the trio's answer to its predecessor OH, BOY! at the Princess Theatre. Opening night was February 1, 1918. And while it ran for 219 performances and another cast performed it at the Casino Theatre simultaneously, it didn't generate the same excitement as OH, BOY! But it did have some lovely tunes, as this medley indicates. The songs are "When the Ships Come Home," "Not Yet," the charming "Before I Met You," "Some Little Girl," "You Found Me And I Found You," and a reprise of "When the Ships Come Home."

BILL was originally written for OH, LADY! LADY! but dropped on the road before the show reached Broadway. However, it was published as part of the show, and Kern used some of its music as an interlude during that show. The song had to wait nine years before Helen Morgan made it her own in SHOW BOAT. Helen (born in Danville, Illinois in 1900 and died October 8, 1941 in Chicago), started performing in honkytonks and graduated to night clubs. Her singing this song atop a piano (where she was used to singing in clubs) stopped the show each night and made her famous. Without doubt, this plaintive lament is Wodehouse's most famous lyric.

Credits

We should like to thank David A. Jasen and George Blacker for the use of their rare recordings.

Documentation: THE THEATRE OF P. G. WODEHOUSE, by David A. Jasen.

Compiled & Annotated: David A. Jasen

Remastering: Carl Seltzer

FOLKWAYS Records

AND SERVICE CORP., 43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C. 10023
Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33 1/3 RPM

**THE THEATRE LYRICS OF
P. G. WODEHOUSE**

Featuring the Music of Jerome Kern
Compiled and Annotated by David A. Jasen

Side 1

RFS 601-A

1. PGW talks about his start in musicals
2. PUT ME IN MY LITTLE CELL / Billy Murray
3. MY CASTLE IN THE AIR / George MacFarlane
4. HAVE A HEART MEDLEY
5. NAPOLEON / Billy Murray
6. AND I AM ALL ALONE / Irving Gilette
7. YOU SAID SOMETHING / Green & MacDonough

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Side 2

RFS 601 B

1. OH, BOY! MEDLEY
2. TILL THE CLOUDS ROLL BY / Lillie & Powers
3. LEAVE IT TO JANE MEDLEY
4. BUNGALOW IN QUOGUE / Grant & Murray
5. OH, LADY! LADY! MEDLEY
6. BILL / Helen Morgan

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