



Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*: The Musical is the hit that keeps on coming

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Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*

Presented by The Blumenthal Performing Arts Center

Oven Auditorium December 7-12, 2010

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There is perhaps no other American song in history that has played a more iconic role in modern popular culture than "[White Christmas](#)." Penned by a Russian/Jewish immigrant named [Irving Berlin](#), "White Christmas" had a starring role in at least three celebrated Hollywood films. Making its movie debut in *Holiday Inn*, the tune also received airtime in *Blue Skies* as well as in the Technicolor film *White Christmas*, which was released nearly twelve years after the creation of the wildly successful titular song.

It has been covered and recorded no less than 500 hundred times by artists as diverse as Elvis Presley, Barbara Streisand, Kenny Rogers, [Mannheim Steamroller](#), Garth Brooks, and the Vienna Boys Choir. Bing Crosby's signature recording has sold over 100 million copies worldwide, making it the best selling record in history according to *The Guinness Book of World Records*.

The song embodies a chord and emotion that resonates so deeply across generations it simply begged to be used as the basis for a Broadway musical. Opening in San Francisco in 2004, the stage musical made it to the Great White Way in 2009 after pleasing crowds in many major U.S. cities, Canada, and the U.K. It now comes to Charlotte's Ovens Auditorium for a run that begins on December 7th.

The typical entertainment formula finds many successful Broadway shows turned into Hollywood films. Not so with *White Christmas: The Musical*, whose producers reversed this equation. They had access to the Berlin catalogue and cherry-picked hits to augment and advance the familiar story, virtually guaranteeing an instant holiday favorite for the stage. Charlotte audiences will be treated to no less than 21 songs in a fast-paced show that stars the eponymous tune along with a cavalcade of Berlin stalwarts such as "Happy Holiday," "Sister," "Blue Skies," "I Love a Piano" and "How Deep is the Ocean."

A family-driven musical, the plot features two WWII army buddies romantically pursuing two sisters. The pals are a successful song-and-dance team who find even more recognition after the war. A performance leads them to a snowless Vermont during the Christmas holiday; there they find a faltering inn about to bankrupt their former commanding officer and general. The couples set out to help. Comic mix-ups, patriotism, loyalty, and friendship all team together to create a heartfelt romantic comedy filled with great dance numbers and songs.

Veteran stage and screen actress [Ruth Williamson](#) plays the role of Martha Watson, a former Broadway performer who finds herself working for the general at the inn. "They refer to my character as Martha the megaphone," says Williamson, whom I spoke with recently. "She loves show business and is a bit smitten with the general." Williamson is in her fifth production of the show and loves inspiring warm memories and creating new ones with this feel-good production. "One of the truly wonderful aspects of this show is that in addition to the classic Berlin songs, we have an opportunity to share with audiences some great Berlin music that most are unfamiliar with," says Williamson. "Songs like 'What Can You Do With A General' are true gems that are rarely, if ever performed."

"The show is a valentine to the military," adds Williamson, who highlights the relevance of the patriotic theme from the forties to our troops engaged in battles today. "The two leads, Bob and Phil, really form a strong bond to the general



