You Can't Take it With You Dramaturgical Website

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YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU
THEATREUNI

HOME
Fireworks in the 1930's

Throughout the play, the creation of homemade fireworks is a common activity that takes place in the Sycamore home. The family is later arrested for "manufacturing fireworks without a permit [1]." The Sycamore family has a multitude of hobbies. The creation of homemade fireworks is done primarily by Mr. Sycamore and Mr. De Pinna. What will be discussed here is the practice of fireworks used in the 1930’s, the safety of
homemade fireworks, and the legality of homemade fireworks.

Business in the 1930’s firework industry gradually declined due to the economic and political issues of the time. “In the 1930’s, economic development was hampered by turbulent international politics and persisting warfare. Many firework factories went bankrupt, product range shrank and sales were poor. Over time, the firework industry declined [2].”

Some places that sold fireworks remained open longer than others. “Believe it or not, you could still buy fireworks on Park Place as late as the 1930s. However the once-bustling Firecracker Lane had been whittled down to just two shops — the Unexcelled Manufacturing Company and Pain’s Fireworks Display [3].” Park Place would most likely be the place where Mr. Sycamore and Mr. De Pinna purchased their materials for the fireworks since Park Place is 7.7 miles away from Columbia University,[4] where Grandpa typically frequents, and is listed in the text as being located “just around the corner from Columbia University [5].”

It was determined by government officials that homemade fireworks created by those with no professional experience in the pyrotechnics field were inherently dangerous. The fireworks were incredibly unpredictable and generally unstable. The unauthorized personnel were not only putting themselves in danger but also the people around them. "Illegal explosives associated with the fireworks season are inherently dangerous because of their composition and unpredictability. Homemade explosives can pose a particular risk for injury because the people making them often lack knowledge and experience in manufacturing fireworks [6].”

New York became more strict about the use of fireworks after numerous injuries were reported due to individual firework usage. Eventually, Park Place closed down after fireworks became increasingly prohibited.

“The Legislature has recognized that the unsupervised discharge of fireworks is so fraught with serious dangers that their possession or use, not in compliance with stringent requirements, has been made a crime. (Citing N.Y. Penal Law §1894-a) [7]." The government recognized that the activities occurring were dangerous for the general public and not to be taken lightly. [8] The New York penal code states that "The term "dangerous fireworks" means any fireworks capable of causing serious physical injury and which are: firecrackers containing more than fifty milligrams of any explosive substance, torpedoes, skyrockets and rockets including all devices which employ any combustible or explosive substance and which rise in the air during discharge, Roman candles, and bombs, provided, however, that in cities with a population of one million or more, the term "dangerous fireworks" shall also include sparklers more than ten inches in length or one-fourth of one inch in diameter,
or chasers including all devices which dart or travel about the surface of the ground during discharge [9]."

Overall, fireworks in the 1930’s were loved by the public as they are now. However homemade fireworks were incredibly dangerous and therefore rightfully illegal. Currently, we have more resources available to create a safer environment to create and use fireworks in; the basement of your house is not a safe or legal place to dabble in the creation of fireworks. Therefore, the characters who were "manufacturing fireworks without a permit" were correctly apprehended [10].

Notes


3. Boys, Post author By Bowery, Courtneysays: and Name *.


5. You Can't Take It with You, 8


8. Having a Blast: Child Actor Jackie Cooper Loads up on Fireworks for a July 4 Party in the 1930s. n.d. Photograph. CORBIS.


10. You Can't Take It with You, 68.

Fashion and the Great Depression

The Great Depression was a catastrophic time for Americans. Americans spent more money than they had and were driven into poverty. This is reflected heavily in the wardrobe of the people...
of the time. Fashion in America was dramatically altered after World War 1, from the “glitz and glamour” of the Roaring 20’s to hand-me-downs generations old.

The Great Depression in America was the result of the stock market crashing in October of 1929. The crash was the result of a period of time called the “Roaring Twenties”, where there was an economic boom, driven by post-war prosperity (1). During this time, the national wealth was doubled and America became a “consumer society” (1). A “consumer society” is a society in which people buy new goods that they may not need, and there is a much larger emphasis on owning things (2). In other words, America became a very materialistic country. Because of this, the Stock Exchange on Wall Street (New York City), was being overflowed with everyone buying stocks. However, because of this sudden and swift expansion and employment quickly slipping, low wages, and production declining, stock prices were higher than the stock’s actual value (3). People could not sell back their stocks and break even, and were quickly falling from the glitz of the 20’s and landing heavily into poverty.

The clothing of the 20’s became the lower class’s rags and hand-me-downs of the 30’s. The motto of the era was, in many ways, “Repair, reuse, make do, and don’t waste anything” (4). Despite this, women in the industry still found ways to make themselves look presentable for themselves while still using old clothing. The hemline fell back down to around their ankles, a
change from the knee-length 20’s, and the waist settled back on women’s natural waists, rather than a “drop waist” (5). This made the silhouette more of a softer, feminine look rather than the boxy, boyish look of the 20’s (6). The look was very simple, but meant to exemplify femininity in a time where there was little else people could control more than what they looked like.

“You Can’t Take It With You” takes place in roughly 1936. This is approximately 3 years before The Great Depression ended in 1939 (3). Because of this, it is entirely possible the clothing within the Vanderhof-Sycamore-Carmichael household is shared and passed down between family members. This small clan seems to have a bit more money than lower-class families would have in the era, so they also have probably been able to splurge a little on “newer” clothes and looks for the sake of looking nice. Follow this link for an interview with the designer and a look at the renderings!

Work Cited:


**For More Information:**

Men and Women’s fashion in the 1930’s:


More on the Roarin’ 20’s and the social climate of America during this time:


More on the Great Depression:

Beginning in 1617, the Romanov family’s regime endured over a three-hundred-year period. Throughout this period, many famous royals sat on the throne, including Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, and Alexander I.[1] However, their dynasty came to its tragic during Czar Nicholas II’s reign. When the Czar came to power in 1894, he possessed a poor reputation, commonly viewed as an inexperienced, indecisive, weak leader. Shortly
following his coronation, he married Queen Alexandra Feodorvna, the granddaughter of the English Queen Victoria. However, the queen struggled to adapt to the Russian culture. This, in addition, to her brusque temperament added to the unpopularity of the family with the public.

The pair of them had five children: Olga, Tatiana, Maria, Anastasia, and Alexei. Unfortunately, their only heir, Alexei, inherited hemophilia, a disease where the blood is unable to clot properly, resulting in easily prompted, disproportionate bleeding.[2] Seeking a cure, the Queen finds solace in Rasputin, a Russian monk, who claims to have mystical powers, including the ability to tell the future. While, he successfully alleviated Alexei's pain, Rasputin warned the royal family that their fate was intrinsically linked with his own, further amplifying the Queen's reliance of him.[3] Within the royal family, Rasputin adopted a humble facade. However, once outside the palace, he embraced immoral actions, including manipulating women and public intoxication. Rasputin’s influence over the royal family continued to grow, angering valuable members of the Russian community: the aristocrats, religious leaders, and peasants. This, ultimately led several failed assassination attempts of Rasputin at the hand of Russian nobles, until he was ultimately killed in 1916. [4]

Alongside the Rasputin controversy, the fall of the Romanovs stemmed from several other key factors. Russia, in the early part of the 1900’s, was severely poverty-stricken, containing an increasing number of peasants. In addition to growing financial uncertainties, intermittently throughout the Czar’s reign, he would dissolve the Russian parliament, taking away citizen representation within the government. Moreover, Russia’s involvement in World War I created further conflicts amongst the people. Russia possessed a weak military compared to the Western European nations. This caused both immense, unsustainable casualties and food shortages, stabilizing the country’s economy. [5] [6]

As a result of these factors, in 1918 riots formed within the nation’s capital, forcibly removing Czar Nicholas II from the Russian throne. Subsequently, the next royal in line, the Czar’s brother, Grand Duke Michael, declined to take his place, ending the Romanov dynasty.[7] Consequently, the Czar, his wife, and their five children were forced to live under house arrest in various locations, until their execution several months later. However, the remains of the family were not discovered until 1991, over 70 years later, in the Ural Mountains. At that point in time, the couple
and three of their children’s identities were verified through DNA testing. It wasn’t until 2007, that the two other children’s remains were found, Alexei and one of the daughters (most likely Maria or Anastasia), further off from the rest of the family’s grave.[8]

As a result of the Soviets in power refusing to reveal the fate of the Royal family until after the fall of the Soviet Union, rumours circulated about the possible survival of the family members.

Most famously, Anastasia Romanov was thought to have evaded the execution. Fueling conspiracies of her disappearance, several women claimed to be Anastasia. A Polish woman, Anna Anderson, claimed the duchess' identity in the mid 20th century, unsuccessfully attempting to obtain the family fortune. However, several years after her death in 1984, DNA testing falsified her claim. Ultimately, Anastasia's conspiracy endured for 89 years, fueled by various elements of popular culture: books, films, plays.[9]

Links for Further Exploration:

**The Romanovs:**
- https://www.history.com/topics/russia/romano-v-family
- https://www.britannica.com/topic/Romanov-dynasty

**Rasputin:**
- https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/rasputin-is-murdered

**The Russian Revolution:**
- https://www.history.com/topics/russia/russian-revolution
- https://www.britannica.com/event/Russian-Revolution

**Disappearance Conspiracies:**
- https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/anastasia-arrives-in-the-united-states

End Notes:

[5] Ibid 1

[7] Ibid 6

[8] Ibid 2


[10] Figure 1: https://tinyurl.com/t77jj2b

[11] Figure 2: https://tinyurl.com/qmtuuunu

[12] Figure 3: https://tinyurl.com/vp338z6
Music in 1936

Biggest Hits of 1936

1. Pennies from Heaven - Bing Crosby
2. The Way You Look Tonight - Fred Astaire
3. Summertime - Billie Holiday
4. Goody Goody - Benny Goodman
5. Glory of Love - Benny Goodman

Characteristics of Music in 1936

“The 1930s were shaped by the contrasting moods of the Great Depression and the glamorous beginnings of Old Hollywood. Popular music was equally impacted by these forces and as home radios became more common, the music industry began to keep track of and measure the popularity of sheet music and records through sales.”

The radio program *Your Hit Parade* debuted in 1935. The idea behind *Your Hit Parade* was that each week, the station’s orchestra and featured singers performed the week’s most popular songs. Legendary singers such as Frank Sinatra, Doris Day, and Dinah Shore sang on this show. Later on in the 1950s, *Your Hit Parade* turned into a TV show.

Throughout the 1930s, jazz music evolved into different styles of Swing and Big Band. "Big Band refers to a jazz group of ten or more musicians, usually featuring at least three trumpets, two or more trombones, four or more saxophones, and a 'rhythm section' of accompanists playing some combination of piano, guitar, bass, and drums."

Notable Big Band Artists are Count Basie, Woody Herman, and Duke Ellington. "Swing is the
Songs in *You Can't Take It With You*

Raymond Scott Quintette: *Microphone Music*
Glory By Love by Billy Hill

Billy Hill is a songwriter. Hill’s best known for the song, “The Last Roundup”, sang by Gene Kelly. This song was featured on Your Hit Parade in 1933. Hill wrote the lyrics for Glory of Love, it was later sang by Benny Goodman and Helen Ward. 

Click here to listen to Glory of Love.
Footnotes

3. Ibid
5. Ibid
8. Ibid
15. “Raymond Scott: Composer, Inventor, Pianist, Visionary.”
17. The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Xylophone.”
Immigration in the 20th Century
During the late 1700’s Congress passed the Naturalization Act of 1790, which allows any free white person of “good character,” who has lived in America for more than two years to apply to become a citizen of the United States. Without this citizenship, nonresidents were denied constitutional protection like, the right to vote, and owning property. The first huge wave of immigration, was the Irish immigration between 1820-1860, followed by German immigrants a couple years after. The first act of anti-immigration came from the Know Nothing Party in 1849 as a form to rebel against the religion the Irish was bringing to the United States. [3]The Irish immigrants were pictured as inferior compared to the "Nativist."

This idea of inferiority against immigrants produced such a stigma against any immigrant, wanting to keep America "pure," that the Page Act of 1875 was passed.[4] This act prohibited the importation of laborers and women in the country, but was only strongly enforced against the Chinese immigrants. In 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, which banned Chinese immigrants from entering the United States altogether. This act of exclusion would begin an endless cycle of "purest behavior" and the idea that every immigrant is inferior to the American citizens.

In 1891, the Federal Office of Immigration was created and immigration inspectors were placed along entry points to enforce the immigration restrictions. By 1907, U.S. immigration had peaked with 1.3 million people, having entered through Ellis Island, the first Immigration station. In 1917, the Asiatic Barred Zone Act, a new immigration restriction was passed that required all immigrants entering the Country to take a literacy exam. If over the age of 16, they had to be able to read about 30 to 40 words to be able to enter, as well a pay $8 dollars per person, but the key fact in this act was that “Any country not owned by the U.S. adjacent to the continent of Asia” along specified longitudes and latitudes were restricted from immigrating.” This new act also restricted anyone that was viewed as “undesirables” like; beggars, poor people, ecliptic's, alcoholics, and aliens [5] "who have a physical disability that don’t permit them to work for a wage." This act gave the captains on the boat the right to collect this information and this act further cemented the gross display of hated or "stigma" toward immigrants that is still prevalent in our society today.

In the twentieth century, the third wave of immigrants brought over many Eastern Europe and Russian into the country [6]. Many of these newcomers put down roots in New York City, Chicago, or Boston, receiving jobs in factories as garment workers. Many Russians or Eastern Europeans were seeking refuge and hoping
to escape the ongoing persecution. The last huge immigration act before The Great Depression hit, was the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924. In this act, quotas were put in place to limit the number of visas available for each country. These quotas favored the “desirable” immigrants, about 70% of visas accepted during the time were from Great Britain, Ireland, and Germany, while immigrants from many southern, central, and eastern Europe visas were prohibited from entering [7]. While Visas coming from some parts of Europe and Asia were denied, the visas from Canada and Mexico were still being accepted. This acceptance of Mexican immigrants fueled the hatred of Mexicans and many other immigrants as many Americans were worried that what was left of their jobs and work would be taken away.

Origins of Immigration

Treatment of Immigrants

When the first wave of immigrants arrived to the United States, the Irish was met with backlash and resistant to their arrival. There were several restaurants or employers that refused to hire Irish and would put up signs saying "Irish No Need Apply," this stigma and discrimination always followed the new wave of immigrants, something that is still done today. Something that became very common in the United States was this concept of “Americanization” that the government and society placed on immigrants. The goal was to essentially strip away the nationality of the immigrants and instead put in place this concept of “becoming American” or learning American values. Many programs were put in place to help immigrants assimilate into American culture and the English language. Huge companies like Ford Motor Company would require their workers to join an after-work program in hopes of instilling American values.[8]

This process still goes on today, it has become a common procedure that has been passed along for generations, along with the stigma that immigrants are hurting our country instead of helping it grow. This discriminatory atmosphere is something that is so embedded into American history, Especially, the belief that we need to keep America “American.” it's no wonder why many people still view immigrants as “job stealers” and “freeloaders.” This idea is so old and outdated, and as we see in UNI production of You Can't Take It With You, this old idea, is thrown away. Just like the Sycamore family, we should all be accepting of everyone despite people’s differences, quirks, or nationalities.

References


[F1]

[F2]


Further Reading


Great Depression Crisis
American's all over the United States suffered when the stock market crashed in 1929. This day is also known as “Black Tuesday”. It affected American’s differently depending on their social status. There are many actions that lead to the crash sending the country into downward spiral. The earliest contribution being the loans given to Europe after World War I. War is an expensive game and loaning money to other countries in their hour of need is just as risky of a battle. The debt would slowly increase to the crisis that swelled like a wildfire. How this country entered the Great Depression is just as interesting as how we ended it. (1)

The play is set in New York “The trouble began in earnest four years earlier with the Wall Street crashes of September and October 1929”(2). In the play, certain characters talk about Wall Street in a positive and negative manner. Since the play is set in 1936 the audience gets to see the point of views of these characters on the topic that is overwhelming the country. In the play You Can’t Take It With You, Mr. Kirby, De Pinna, and Grandpa are primarily the ones who talk about Wall Street.

Connection to the Play:
In Act 1, scene 1, a comedic character by the name De Pinna gets rather skeptical when meeting Tony Kirby (vice-president to a company on Wall Street). He asks Tony, “Wasn’t I reading about your father in the newspaper the other day? Didn’t he get indicted or something?”(3). Tony replies that all his father did was testify before the Securities Commission. This is a serious accusation to make of someone if not to know that people that work on Wall Street can’t be trusted. This reference of the Great Depression is smart because it shows the current state of the social classes. People of all classes are still working on digging themselves out of the country’s current state.

Who better to give an insider opinion on the current state of the depression than Mr. Kirby, president of his company. In Act 2, after awkward tensions have arose, Grandpa asks Mr. Kirby to talk of the current state of the depression. From his point of view he states, “Broadly speaking, yes. As a matter of fact, industry is now operating at sixty-four per cent of full capacity, as against eighty-two per cent in 1925” (4). Now, Mr. Kirby is describing the general statistics of industry itself. Industry took a big hit in major categories to keep a company running such as: decrease in employment rate, price increase, increase in debt. The 1930s was a slow climb out of the hole the country was in. On the other hand, Grandpa’s conversational contribution is more based on his personal views about the world. Grandpa quit the business thirty-five years prior to the setting of the play. He talks about how he was not having any fun and that one should always enjoy life. Now, Grandpa’s philosophy is a radical one at that, but he does make very good point. In Act 3 he says, “There are always people to do the work—you can’t stop them” (5). His view points on relaxing are what peaks the interest of Mr. Kirby. Grandpa is a symbol of optimism.

End of the Depression:

By 1936, the Great Depression had
already hit its peak and had finally begun to journey towards an end. There were two main contributions to ending the depression: Franklin D. Roosevelt and World War II. The election of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 sparked hope for the people who expected change. He brought forth the “New Deal” which created new jobs, organized unions and put forth motions to stabilize the economy. History says, “His speech gave many people confidence that they’d elected a man who was not afraid to take bold steps to solve the nation’s problems” (6). He was a hero to most and even in the play the character, Ed, makes a mask of Mrs. Roosevelt. A tie in to Ed’s mask making hobby and the hope the presidency had bestowed onto the nation (7).

Another contribution to the end of the depression was the rise of World War II. Now, there are many to argue this point, but it was the rise of this war that seemed to play a hand in stability. FEE says, “Those war jobs seemingly took care of the 17 million unemployed in 1939” (8). Some researchers may say that the war only put a hold on the whole crisis, but by the time WWII started the country was in better shape than it was in 1936. Even the Roosevelt said, “Franklin Roosevelt recognized that the war only provided a short-
term fix for the economy” (9). War is never a good thing and it’s expensive, but ironic that it is a contribution to the end of the depression. Well into the 1940’s, the nation’s new president, Truman, continued where Roosevelt had ended.

Work Cited


4. Ibid 3

5. Ibid 3


7. “You Can’t Take It With You”. 3


9. Ibid 8
Photos:
Entertainment Idols of the 1930's

by Thayne Lamb

The Great Depression took its toll on The United States mercilessly, and the world of entertainment was no exception to its financial destruction. In 1932, 66% of New York’s theatres closed and 80% of stage productions failed to turn a worthwhile profit. Competition in the industry was bare as people did not have money to spend on entertainment.

Live theatre was not the sole victim; at the time, Hollywood had just transitioned to ‘talkies,’ films with actors audibly speaking their lines. With all the purchases of new technology that came with developing talkies, the movie industry took a massive toll financially when the Depression hit.

However, there was hope. President Roosevelt’s New Deal was unveiled, a government plan to overcome the struggles of the Depression through legislative action, seeking to deal with banking and agricultural struggles as well as provide relief efforts to aid those without work. It was almost as if Roosevelt had breathed life back into America, and a massive wave of new culture swept the nation and the entertainment industry.

The common people became a great source of inspiration: the trials and tribulations in the life of the hard worker. People were motivated to create and be artists, making new, wild strides in their fields (1).

Here, you can read about some of the popular entertainment figures mentioned in George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart's You Can't Take It With You.
FRED ASTAIRE

Fred Astaire, born 1899, was an actor, dancer and singer who performed on television, stage and film. Fred began his work on stage at the age of four with his older sister Adele on Broadway and in Vaudeville. Later in his life we moved into the film industry where he would bear great success alongside actress Ginger Rogers, appearing in nine films together and becoming one of the most recognizable film pairings of all time. Fred Astaire’s work in the industry heavily influenced the way we see dance in film today. Fred Astaire changed dance in the movie industry by convincing directors to change the way they filmed dance scenes. Rather than filming dances between partners with various cuts and close-up shots of the actors faces, Fred Astaire insisted on filming the whole dance in one take while keeping the whole body of the actor(s) on screen the entire time. His contributions to musical theatre won him an Academy Award in 1950 and five Emmy awards. Fred Astaire passed away in 1987, age 88, from pneumonia (2).

Learn more about Fred Astaire here!

GINGER ROGERS

Ginger Rogers, born 1911, began her acting journey being the winner of a Charleston contest in 1925, age 14. Until she was 17 she appeared in vaudeville acts, where she discovered a real passion for acting. In 1929 she hired an agent and went on to perform in short films and stage theatre. Ginger Rogers got her big break in the industry when she met Fred Astaire and co-starred in several films together. Until 1940 she worked intensively with Astaire, but broke away to pursue work on her own. She won an Academy Award that year for her role in the film Kitty Foyle (1940). Through 1965 she performed in film and on Broadway before

Learn more about Ginger Rogers here!

**MONTE CARLO BALLET**

Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo was founded in 1932 by Serge Diaghilev and directed by Colonel W. de Basil. The company took great strides in the art of ballet, pushing boundaries by bringing audiences new music by musicians Leonide Massine and George Balanchine.

In 1938, the company split into two: one directed by de Basil and the other directed by Massine. Because of this split, the company went under several name changes; De Basil renamed his company first to the Royal Convent Garden Ballet Russe, and then to the Original Ballet Russe in 1939. De Basil's company would go on to tour internationally before leaving the stage permanently in 1948.

Massine's company performed primarily in the United States, working with American choreographers and dancers. Massine’s company declined in the 50s and stopped producing altogether in 1963 (6).

Learn more about the Monte Carlo Ballet here!
END NOTES

2. "Biography Of Mr. Fred Astaire." Fred Astaire, April 8, 2019.
   https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ballet_Russe_de_Monte_Carlo_Nutcracker_1940.JPG.
In You Can’t Take It With You, Ed has worries that he is being followed when he is delivering Essie’s candies. At the end of Act II, Government Agents come into the Sycamore home under the suspicion of Ed being a communist. They believe he has plans to attack Washington D.C. The agents found in Ed’s Pamphlets in Essie's candy boxes that read, "DYNAMITE THE CAPITOL", "DYNAMITE THE WHITE HOUSE", "DYNAMITE THE SUPREME COURT", and "GOD IS THE STATE, THE STATE IS GOD" (1).

Earlier in the play Ed tells Grandpa that "God is the State and the State is God", is from a Trotsky play. However, it is actually from Mikhail Bakunin, a nineteenth century socialist and anarchist, who wrote “God and the State”. This was a piece of atheist literature that was influenced by Marxism (2).

Being that the play takes place in the 1930’s, just after the "First Red Scare", the government is on edge. With the pamphlet’s already incriminating Ed, the agents then discover Paul and Mr. DePinna’s copious amounts of gunpowder for their fireworks in the basement. The agents can only assume that this family could be attempting an attack on united states soil (3).

The Palmer Raids

On June 2, 1919, Carlo Valdinoci, an anarchist, blew up the front of the Attorney General A.
With the country already on edge after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia causing the “First Red Scare”, there was a demand for answers about the bombings. The Attorney General appointed J. Edgar Hoover to run a small division of law enforcement to gather intelligence on the threats pf radicals. Under the Sedition Act, the Department of Justice began arresting radicals and suspected foreigners that followed Marxism. In December, a group of suspected radicals were put on a ship called the “Red Ark” and were deported to Russia. The department then planned simultaneous raids to occur across the country in January of 1920. The police arrested thousands of suspected anarchists. The “Palmer Raids” operation was later questioned by the public due to the possibility of undermining rights of American citizens and the constitution (6).

What is a G-Man

September 26th, 1933  government officials
arrested the notorious gangster, “Machine Gun” Kelly. He was found hiding in Memphis. Though no violence was used, It is said that when Kelly was arrested, he yelled out “Don’t shoot G-Men! Don’t shoot!” (7).

Before this, “G-Man” was a form of slang for all government agents. Following Kelly’s arrest, the media picked up the phrase “G-Men”, and suddenly it was a part of the American vernacular to call J. Edgar Hoover’s Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Agents (8).

In 1934, a string of crime bandits and outlaws had been arrested or killed by government agents. Because art mirrors society, Hollywood took this as an opportunity to honor and celebrate the G-men in movies and the media (9).

In 1935, Warner Brothers Studio produced "G-Men" which follows James "Brick" Davis (James Cagney) in the early days of the FBI.
End Notes


2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. FBI. “Palmer Raids” https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/palmer-raids

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.


8. Ibid.


10. IMDb “‘G’ Men”. 1935.

Photos

IRS Captures Chicago Mob Leader, Al Capone

Written by Megan Lenstra

When you think of the IRS, or the Internal Revenue Service, there are a mixture of emotions that pop up: frustration, confusion, anger, exhaustion, and possibly hope that April 15 will be gone before you know it. You are not alone; many Americans dread calculating their taxes to turn into the IRS every year. Even with companies built to help Americans finance and pay their taxes, we still find ourselves groaning over the hassle with the IRS every April.

However, these frustrating emotions were not what many Americans experienced in the 1930’s. For example, in You Can’t Take It With You, when an IRS agent arrives at the Sycamore household to speak with Grandpa about his unclaimed taxes, he is not stirred. He is not fearful of the IRS agent; he is not afraid of the IRS department in general. In fact, the entire Sycamore family does not mind the IRS. For instance, when Essie hands Grandpa a letter from the government, she is more preoccupied with the ballet dancing than the contents of the letter (1). Overall, the Sycamore family is not fearful of the IRS. They have a neutral stance with the government agency - not liking it, but also not hating the department either.

The Sycamore’s lack of frustration and fear of the IRS may be due to its impact in the 1930’s. During the Great Depression, many American citizens were fond of the IRS, which was then called the Bureau of Internal Revenue. The government agency changed their name to Internal Revenue Service in the 1950’s (2). Many citizens were pleased with the Bureau of Internal Revenue because of their heroic actions in capturing one of the most known gangster leaders of all time, Al Capone (Figure 1).
aggressive gang leader of the Chicago area. He became involved with the lifestyle with a well-known mob, called Colosimo, in the early 1920’s (3). During this time, Capone began to build his reputation by becoming the right hand man of “Big Jim” Colosimo, the leader of the mob (4). However, in 1925, Capone took charge as leader of the gang when Colosimo became injured from an assassination attempt, retiring from the mob life (5). Al Capone became one of the main leaders of the Chicago mobs of the time.

As the dominant gang leader in the area, Al Capone strived to become the sole Chicago leader of all the mobs. His gang either killed or drove out other gangs in Chicago by the late 1920’s, which left him the main mobster of all time. By 1929, there was only one gang left in the area: George “Bugs” Moran’s gang (6). Capone’s crew had been trying to get rid of them for some time, but made their ultimatum on Valentine’s Day in 1929. Early in the morning on February 14, 1929, four men showed up to Moran’s headquarters. Two of the men were dressed up as policemen to trick Moran’s men. The four men asked the seven Moran members to stand against the wall, where they proceeded to open fire. In a matter of minutes, ninety bullets were fired at the seven men. Then, the gunmen ran into a black Cadillac, complete with a police siren and lights, and drove off (7).

Many have attributed the attack to Al Capone, but Capone himself was in Florida. Nonetheless, Capone testified to the actions of the attack on March 20, 1929, in a federal grand court in Chicago. After completing his testimony on March 27, agents arrested Capone for contempt in court. Agents arrested Capone as he was literally leaving the court. The penalty consisted of a year in prison and a $1,000 fine. Capone was released with a $5,000 bond (8).
began to look into Capone’s taxes. They found no record on file, which meant that Capone’s taxes were nonexistent. Failing to file taxes is a crime against the federal government. Therefore, the bureau began to hunt Capone down for not filing his taxes. In June 1931, Al Capone pleaded not guilty to tax evasion and prohibition charges. A few months later, on November 24, 1931, Al Capone was sentenced to eleven years in federal prison, fined $50,000, charged $7,692 court fees and $215,000+ from tax interest. During his time in prison, Capone served time in Alcatraz (9).

Capone’s arrest became a celebration for the country, especially in Chicago. Although, his arrest seemed a little ironic. Al Capone was the leader for many deaths and attacks in the name of his gang and authority. But he was never arrested for his vicious acts. Instead, he was arrested because he didn’t pay his taxes! It seems ridiculous how years of ruthless fights and attacks never got him in trouble with the law, but his nonexistent tax dollars did. Therefore, in the 1930’s, the Bureau of Internal Revenue was viewed as a hero for catching Al Capone. The public viewed the department in pleasant regards instead of frustration as many Americans feel nowadays in 2020.

Links for Further Research:
Click the following descriptions to follow the link for further research

- About the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
- Timeline of the IRS
- Steven Mnuchin, current Secretary of Treasury
- "Al Capone Sentenced to Prison for Tax Evasion on this day in 1931"
- FBI Overview about Al Capone’s case
- "How the Law Finally Caught up with Al Capone"
Footnotes:
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
Race in You Can't Take It With You

By Zoella Sneed

An American Success.

You Can't Take It With You by George S. Kauffman and Moss Hart is a zany comedy that has stolen the hearts of audiences across the nation for generations. It has been celebrated as one of the top ten most produced plays in modern American history (1), especially among high school populations. However, even with this recent success, the original script (written in 1936) hasn't been updated to match the developments in contemporary language about
"When You Can't Take It With You was first written, these writers were doing something that nobody else was... they were putting African Americans in the spotlight with white people. It was groundbreaking."

- Jim Bray, TheatreUNI Director of You Can't Take It With You

The Racial History of YCTIWY.
The Script.
A Note from the Director.

"As the semester comes to a close and we begin to gear up for auditions, I would be remiss if I didn’t send out a notice about the xenophobic and prejudiced writing of certain characters and stage directions in You Can’t Take It With You.

The year before Kauffman and Hart wrote the Pulitzer Prize winning script, the Harlem Riots of 1935 broke out due to a conflict with a young Afro Puerto Rican boy and a 10-cent stolen knife. The characters of Rheba and Donald (part of the Sycamore family) were originally written to be black, due to (I believe) the history of this event. I also believe Kauffman and Hart created Donald and Rheba to further highlight the soul of the Sycamore home- where only support, creativity and non-judgement reign supreme. When the show was written in 1936, people living their dreams, befriending Russians, and having family that didn’t look like the patriarch was shocking and perhaps an absurd thought-especially during the Depression Era in New York. However, that is what makes the Sycamores beautiful and why the play is successful.

That does not erase the fact that for this day and age, the stereotypical depictions can be uncomfortable and possibly hurtful. It is my goal (and also my belief) that the cast can be of many diverse backgrounds. It is possible that many and anyone can play any character (including Donald and Rheba). It is the essence of these characters that is so important. They all have immense heart.

Enjoy reading the play and remember: the prejudiced, ignorant writing for certain characters is just that- ignorant and outdated. These issues will be addressed and are being taken care of. My idea for the Sycamore family is the same I have for our own community: inclusive, supportive, loving and positive. There is immense depth to this comedy! All the best."

- Jim Bray
TheatreUNI's Production.

Works Cited.


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Photos.

Comedy of the 1930's:
Kaufman and Hart

A BRIEF HISTORY

Physical humor has been paramount to comedy since the inception of theatrical performance. From Greek comedies like *Lysistrata* to French Restoration comedy like *Tartuffe*, comedies have paired wit and word play with good old-fashioned prat falls and chase scenes (1). With the rise of silent film in the early 1900s, witty dialogue took a backseat in comedy and slapstick ruled the screens. Slapstick, a genre of comedy defined by "broad humor, absurd situations, and vigorous, usually violent action" (2), was a hallmark of silent comedy films. There's something universally funny about an unsuspecting man getting hit in the face with a full sized string bass. If you don't believe it, check out the compilation below for some classic slapstick examples.
With slapstick and physical comedy at an all time high during the silent film era, there came a shift when silent films gave way to the new and wildly popular "talkies" in the 1930s. The wit and fast-paced dialogue that characterized comedy in theatre for centuries were back in vogue on the screen and stage alike. (3) Kaufman and Hart's *You Can't Take it With You* is a blend of these two popular styles with its comedy coming from its fast-paced dialogue and physical humor.

**KAUFMAN AND HART**

Kaufman and Hart met through Broadway producer Sam Harris in 1929 when Moss Hart was a young playwright struggling to make his break. Sam Harris offered to turn one of Hart's plays into a musical comedy, and when Hart refused, he paired the playwright with George S. Kaufman, an already established and successful Broadway playwright. The two worked together on *Once In A Lifetime*, which became a huge success when it opened in 1930. The pair worked together for the next ten years and wrote 7 successful comedies in that time. Fortunately, their partnership ended in 1940 on good terms and the two remained friends for the rest of their lives. (4)

Kaufman and Hart's works of comedy have survived the years due to their use of situational and physical comedy, witty banter and dialogue, and, at the heart of their works, a deep understanding of relationships. *You Can't Take It With You* has been widely performed for decades at all levels of theatre from high schools to Broadway stages. Part of the play's success can be attributed to the loving care taken with all the members of the Sycamore family; Kaufman and Hart knew comedy, but they also knew when to make an audience feel something in their heart as well.
Notes

1. britannica article
2. ibid
3. ubc article
4. bard.org article
5.

written by Hannah Twitchell
images from Getty images