

GOODSPEED MUSICALS

AUDIENCE INSIGHTS

GUYS AND DOLLS

A Broadway Classic

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GUYS AND DOLLS

GUYS AND DOLLS
Goodspeed Opera House
April 10 - June 20, 2015

Music and Lyrics by
FRANK LOESSER

Book by
JO SWERLING
&
ABE BURROWS

Based on a Story
and Characters of
DAMON RUNYON

Lighting Design by
STEPHEN TERRY

Costume Design by
TRACY CHRISTENSEN

Scenic Design by
PAUL TATE DEPOO III

Choreographed by
ALEX SANCHEZ

Directed by
DON STEPHENSON

Executive Director
MICHAEL GENNARO

Character Summary.....	3
Show Synopsis.....	4
Meet the Writers.....	6
Director's Vision.....	8
Program Notes.....	9
Behind the Scenes: Set Design.....	10
Damon Runyon.....	11
New York City and the Fable of Broadway.....	12
Saints and Sinners.....	14
Interesting Facts.....	15
Resources.....	16

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CHARACTER SUMMARY

GUYS AND DOLLS

NATHAN DETROIT: A good-hearted gambler and the operator of the “oldest established permanent floating crap game in New York.” Nathan is also the longtime fiancé of Miss Adelaide.

MISS ADELAIDE: The lead performer at The Hot Box nightclub and Nathan Detroit’s fiancé for the past 14 years. Adelaide is madly in love with Nathan and desperately wants to get married.

SKY MASTERSON: A suave and charming gambler whose luck never seems to run out. Sky takes pride in his unsettled lifestyle and is known to make bizarre, high-stake bets.

SARAH BROWN: A pretty young woman who serves as the Sergeant of the Save-a-Soul Mission. Sarah is stoutly committed to her cause and consistently tries to convert the gambling sinners to saints.

NICELY-NICELY JOHNSON: A friendly and cheerful gambler and a loyal friend/lackey to Nathan Detroit. Nicely is optimistic, a touch naïve, and never fails to answer the question “how are you?” with “nicely, nicely, thank you!”

LIEUTENANT BRANNIGAN: A tough New York police officer who is keeping a close watch on Nathan Detroit and hopes to shut down his operation of illegal crap games.

BENNY SOUTHSTREET: The right-hand man of Nathan Detroit and a slick gambler. Benny is always on the move but tries to keep Nathan’s best interests at heart.

UNCLE ARVIDE: Sarah Brown’s loving uncle and the bass drum player in the Mission band. Arvide wants nothing but the best for Sarah.

GENERAL CARTWRIGHT: The head of the Save-a-Soul Organization. General Cartwright has decided to close the New York branch of the Mission, much to the horror of Sarah Brown.

BIG JULE: A big-time gambler from Chicago.

HARRY THE HORSE: An experienced gambler who introduces Big Jule into Nathan’s crap game.

AGATHA, CALVIN, MARTHA: Members of the Save-a-Soul Mission band

LIVER LIPS LOUIE, ANGIE THE OX, RUSTY CHARLIE: Gamblers

HOT BOX GIRLS: Performers at The Hot Box nightclub



*Nancy Anderson as Adelaide and Mark Price as Nathan Detroit.
©Diane Sobolewski.*

and concludes that her chronic cold is a psychosomatic reaction to her annoyingly long engagement to Nathan.

The next day, General Cartwright, the leader of the Save-a-Soul organization, arrives and announces that she will be closing the New York City location. Sarah, desperate to save the Mission, asks the General to reconsider and guarantees that “one dozen genuine sinners” will be at the next prayer meeting, acquiescing to Sky’s deal. Meanwhile, Brannigan sees the gamblers congregating around Nathan and becomes suspicious. The men tell Brannigan that they are assembling for a surprise bachelor party for Nathan. Adelaide overhears the conversation and Nathan resigns himself to eloping.



The cast of *Goodspeed's Guys and Dolls*. ©Diane Sobolewski.

Sky has taken Sarah to his favorite restaurant in Havana. Sarah does not realize that the drinks they have been served contain rum, and innocently consumes multiple glasses. Sarah inadvertently starts a brawl and Sky drags her from the building. Outside, Sarah kisses Sky and he realizes that he has feelings for Sarah. They

arrive home at 4:00 a.m. and as they walk to the Mission they spontaneously admit that they’re in love. A moment after their breathtaking revelation, a siren rings out and gamblers spill from the Mission. Sarah assumes that Sky has been playing with her emotions so Nathan could use the Mission for the game. She rejects his proclamation of innocence and slams the Mission’s door in his face.

ACT II

The next night, Sky goes to The Hot Box in search of Nathan and “one dozen genuine sinners” to send to Sarah at the Mission. He runs into Nicely-Nicely Johnson who

is bemoaning the fact that he must tell Adelaide that Nathan will not elope with her. Adelaide is heartbroken by the news that her wayward fiancé has, once again, abandoned her and turns to her medical book for comfort. Nicely then leads Sky to the crap game that is being held in the sewer. Sky arrives at the game and attempts to persuade the men to attend a midnight prayer meeting at the Mission. When the men refuse, Sky offers them a bet. If he loses, he must give each man a thousand dollars; but if he wins, they must all attend the prayer meeting at the Mission. He tosses the dice and wins the bet.

As the gamblers sullenly walk to the Mission, Nathan runs into Adelaide and tells her that he has to attend a prayer meeting. Adelaide does not believe him and breaks off their engagement. The gamblers finally arrive at the Mission much to the General and Sarah’s surprise. Brannigan suddenly interrupts the meeting and tries to arrest the gamblers for participating in an illegal crap game, but Sarah clears them. Brannigan leaves and Nathan confesses that they did hold a crap game in the Mission the previous night. He also admits that he made a bet that Sky would not be able to take Sarah to Havana. Much to Sarah’s shock, he adds that he won the bet and she realizes that Sky has lied to Nathan.

Sarah leaves the Mission in search of Sky and runs into Adelaide. She confirms that Nathan was at the prayer meeting and the two women commiserate over their shared misfortune in loving a gambler. They both resolve to marry their men anyway and reform them after the weddings. Several weeks later, Nathan opens a newsstand and marries Adelaide at the Save-a-Soul Mission while Uncle Arvide presides over the ceremony. Sky and Sarah are married and Sky is playing in the Mission band.



JO SWERLING (Book) was born Joseph “Jo” Swerling and grew up on New York’s lower East Side after emigrating from Russia as a young boy. Swerling became a newspaper and magazine writer in the early 1920s before becoming a successful playwright in 1929 when he co-wrote *The Kibitzer* with actor, Edward G. Robinson. That same year, Swerling was given the opportunity to assess and “fix” a screenplay for a Frank Capra picture. The result was *Ladies of Leisure* that came out in 1930 and was the first of several Capra-Swerling collaborations, including *It’s a Wonderful Life*. In 1942, he became an Academy Award nominee for his work on Sam Wood’s *Pride of the Yankees*.

Following his success in Hollywood, Swerling was invited to make the move to Broadway and was tapped to write for the musical *Guys and Dolls*. However, due to creative differences, he parted ways with the team early in the process and was eventually replaced by comedy writer Abe Burrows. Though Swerling’s script never appeared on stage in its entirety, he still received a writing credit for *Guys and Dolls* due to contractual obligations. After the success of *Guys and Dolls*, Swerling continued to work in Hollywood and received his final writing credit in 1961 for *King of the Roaring 20’s: the Story of Arnold Rothstein*. Swerling passed away in 1964 at the age 71.



ABE BURROWS (Book) was born on December 18, 1910 as Abram Solman Borowitz in New York City. The entire Borowitz family changed their surname to Burrows in the 1930s. Burrows attended Morris High School in the Bronx before transferring to New Utrecht High School in Brooklyn where he became friends with a trumpet player named Cy Feuer. He graduated from New Utrecht High School in 1928 and went on to attend college at New York University and City College before quitting school to work full time on Wall Street. Over the next few years he held various clerical jobs and worked as an accountant, a maple syrup salesman, a label salesman, and a paint and wallpaper salesman.

In 1938 Burrows began to write comedy sketches and radio scripts with a young comedy writer named Frank Gaylen. The duo eventually sold material to a comedian on *The Rudy Vallee Show* and more work quickly appeared. Burrows went on to write material for stars such as Dinah Shore, Joan Davis, and Peter Lind Hayes before he helped to create the popular radio program *Duffy’s Tavern* in 1941. He spent four years as the chief writer for *Duffy’s Tavern* and made the switch to films in 1946 when Paramount Pictures offered him a contract.

Despite his witty style, Hollywood was not the right fit for Burrows and he went back to broadcasting after only thirteen weeks at Paramount. He hosted his own radio program called *The Abe Burrows Show* until 1949 when he was approached by an old Utrecht High School friend, Cy Feuer, who asked him to write the book for the musical *Guys and Dolls*. He agreed to work on the musical and was given a crash course in writing for the theatre by the legendary George S. Kaufman. In 1950, *Guys and Dolls* opened to rave reviews and became a musical theatre classic. After his initial success on Broadway, Burrows wrote the screenplay for *The Solid Gold Cadillac* and produced two television programs, *Abe Burrows Almanac* and *The Big Party*. Burrows again partnered with Frank Loesser in 1961 and wrote the book for the Pulitzer Prize winning musical *How to Succeed at Business without Really Trying*. After two massive Broadway hits, Burrows became a renowned “script doctor” and was called in to repair numerous productions throughout the years. He released an autobiography in 1980 and passed away on May 17, 1985 at the age of 74.



Director Don Stephenson

Guys and Dolls is often called the “perfect, classic” musical. There’s a reason for this. The show doesn’t require a novel reinterpretation or directorial “vision” because the show simply works as it is, and just as beautifully today as it did when it opened in 1950. The director’s job, then, is simply to trust that material and to present it faithfully.

What is essential is to realize that, while *Guys and Dolls* does demand a particular style, the characters in it must be presented humanly, but with innocence, romanticism, and largesse that transcends realism. So a balance must be struck in the playing of these characters. Our gangsters aren’t the gritty criminals seen on HBO, nor are they cartoon

buffoons; they are real, open-hearted humans with romantic notions and dreams of making it big.

There are some challenges to bringing *Guys and Dolls* to the Goodspeed stage. *Guys and Dolls* is a large show. It takes place in the biggest, flashiest, spot in the universe: New York City’s Times Square and the surrounding area. So, the challenge is to present this larger-than-life world

on the petite, elegant stage that is the Goodspeed Opera House. It requires a truly creative scenic design, one that creates the illusion of a large area without the actual dimensions of it.

Further, *Guys and Dolls* was originally designed to be performed “down in one.” This means you bring in the curtain, you play a scene in front of the curtain, and meanwhile you are setting up a new scene behind the curtain. When the scene is over down front, you bring up the curtain, revealing a new locale behind it. Today’s audiences, however, are more sophisticated and expect smooth, cinematic transitions. So, there are challenges in getting from scene to scene seamlessly and creating two vastly different worlds—New York City and Havana on one stage—in a way that is seamless, believable, and complete. Audiences can expect to laugh at Burrows’ hilarious book, be carried away by the romance of the story, transported by the glorious Loesser score, and excited by choreography that is dynamic and character/story-driven.



Manna Nichols and Tony Roach in rehearsal with Don Stephenson. ©Diane Sobolewski

Guys and Dolls is an extraordinary musical theatre masterwork of indisputable artistic integrity, sidesplitting hilarity, and immense appeal. What's more, it captures the spirit and energy of Alfred Damon Runyon, a prolific writer who played a profound role in shaping American popular culture. Runyon developed his own colorful literary style known as "Runyonesque" while penning over seventy short stories between 1929 and his death in 1946. *Guys and Dolls* is chiefly based on two of those stories, "The Idyll of Sarah Brown" and "Blood Pressure."

Runyon was born in Manhattan, Kansas, but he moved to Manhattan in 1910 following service in the Spanish-American War and positions as a journalist in Colorado. He was enchanted by the opportunity, ambition, and unique mentality of New York City. While pursuing work as a staff writer for the Hearst press, he became much more than an observer of urban life. Partly due to a serious coffee addiction, he gradually immersed himself in the nocturnal seamy side of the Big Apple. His popularity as a writer soared and his writing thrived thanks to the eclectic characters that frequented the Great White Way, often finding his inspiration while seated at local hangouts like Lindy's and the Stork Club. During his nightly sedentary sessions, Runyon encountered the real-life Broadway figures he described in his stories. He consorted with gangsters, cops, gamblers, hoofers, and notable personalities of the day. But who could be capable of bringing the authentic Runyonesque spirit and syntax to the stage?

In 1950, producers Cy Feuer and Ernest Martin were basking in the glory of their first Broadway success, *Where's Charley?*, but they could not idle for long; they were intent on adding a second box office hit to their sterling record. They had already optioned the rights to "The Idyll of Sarah Brown," among other Runyon stories, and recruited Jo Swerling to pen the book for *Guys and Dolls*. Being unsatisfied with Swerling's work, Feuer and Martin brought in numerous other writers to make improvements until they gambled on hiring comic and radio personality Abe Burrows to doctor the book. Burrows faced a daunting challenge: he had never written a word for Broadway prior to 1950 and composer-lyricist Frank Loesser had already written much of his ingenious score. Burrows took over writing the script for *Guys and Dolls* and worked to adapt the book to Loesser's tunes. Fortunately, director and comic writer George S. Kaufman took Burrows under his wing and provided an introduction to writing for the theatre.

The final libretto was a magnificent achievement, but it was Loesser's ingenious score and lyrics that eventually propelled the show to phenomenal success. Despite it being his second show on Broadway, Loesser's warmth, versatility, and use of brilliant pastiche of formerly popular musical styles left audiences nostalgic and floating on air. Loesser's towering musical talent enabled him to give heart to Runyon's

somewhat two dimensional characters, while simultaneously fully capturing the Runyonesque spirit and rhythms of the source material. Loesser's collaboration with a celebrated director like Kaufman brought a fluidity of staging, story, and music that is rarely achieved to this day.

Don Stephenson, husband of Loesser's daughter, Emily Loesser, is the director for Goodspeed's production of *Guys and Dolls*. Stephenson was recently at the helm of the Avery Fisher Hall Concert of *Titanic* and he has appeared in numerous Broadway productions such as *The Producers*, *Rock of Ages*, *Dracula*, *Parade*, *Titanic*, and Goodspeed's *By Jeeves*. Stephenson aims to gracefully bring the grand world of midtown Manhattan to the Goodspeed Opera House stage through creative scenic design in a smooth and believable way. The characters will strike a balance between realism and the style that the show demands requiring an enhanced "innocence, romanticism, and largesse." Stephenson states that "audiences can expect to laugh at Burrows' hilarious book, be carried away by the romance of the story, transported by the glorious Loesser score, and excited by choreography that is dynamic and character/story-driven."



Peter Gennaro (second from right) and the original Broadway cast of *Guys and Dolls*.

Finally, this show holds a special place in the heart of Goodspeed Musicals' new Executive Director, Michael Gennaro. His father, Peter Gennaro, danced in the original production on Broadway. Michael was born during the run of the show. On that day, one of the dancers went around to the dressing rooms with a paper bag. Each of the performers put whatever money they could spare into the bag for the new parents. The cast assembled on stage right before the curtain went up and presented the bag to Michael's father. And so, that was his introduction to the world of musical theatre—as a newborn he was given a brown bag full of cash during a show about gambling!

BEHIND THE SCENES SET DESIGN BY PAUL TATE DEPOO III



PAUL TATE DEPOO III is a NYC-based scenic and production designer: *Orlando, Alcina* (WhiteBox LES); *Les Misérables, The Wiz, Annie, The Music Man, Hello, Dolly!* (Maltz Jupiter); *Swallowed* (BAM); *Rocky Horror* (Yale); *One Man, Two Guvnors* (Pioneer Theatre); *Other Desert Cities, A Christmas Carol* (Capital Rep); *Pageant* (Off-Broadway); *Lost Highway, I Do!, I Do!* (Infinity); *Look Upon Our Lowliness* (NYC Movement Co.); *Hello, Dolly!* (Cape Playhouse); *The Kite Runner* (Boston Rep). Broadway Associate: *Sweeney Todd* (Lincoln Center, English National Opera), *Lady Day, How To Succeed, Nice Work If You Can Get It, Bengal Tiger, Follies, Anything Goes*. Paul is a member of Lincoln Center's Directors Lab and recently *Live Design Magazine's* 'Young Designer to Watch'.



The Save-a-Soul Mission



The Hot Box



Havana



Times Square



Damon Runyon is an unusual figure in American history because he is not widely known by the modern day public, yet he is almost singlehandedly responsible for crafting the popular perception of New York City during the 1930s and 40s in American culture. He offered a glimpse into the criminal underground of New York in a voice that was distinctly his own by using only the historic present tense, also known as the eternal present, as a narrative voice. He avoided the past tense and contractions, forcing his characters to use a mixture of formal speech and regional slang. For example, "And you cannot tell by the way a party looks or how he lives in this town, if he has any scratch, because many a party who is around in automobiles, and wearing good clothes, and chucking quite a swell is nothing but a phonus bolonus and does not have any real scratch whatever."

He was one of the first writers to "stylize both the language and the behavior of gangsters and depict them as another part of the socio-economic system," according to Professor Daniel Schwarz of Cornell University, though Runyon himself may have disagreed with this opinion. In a newspaper column published in 1930 Runyon confessed, "I steal from Plato, Socrates, Woodrow Wilson, Shakespeare, Montaigne...Euripides, Nat Fleischer's All-Time Ring Record, Lincoln's speeches, Ingersoll's lectures, LaGuardia's reading of the comic strips....Dickens, Cato, Thoreau, Emerson and Whitman. I steal from Dante, Goethe, Aesop, Confucius, Karl Marx, Conrad. . . I would like to see another column that presents as great a variety of brains burglary as this." Despite this confession, Runyon's style remains distinct and the exaggerated speech patterns of his characters became the blueprint for the depiction of gangsters in American media, and his representation of New York City worked its way into the global consciousness.

Damon Runyon was born Alfred Damon Runyan on October 4, 1884 in Manhattan, Kansas to Elizabeth and Alfred Damon Runyan. The family relocated to Pueblo, Colorado in 1887 and Elizabeth Runyan passed away in 1891. Runyon was left largely unsupervised following the death of his mother and began to develop a disdain for authority as well as a passion for writing. He left school during the sixth grade and began

working in his father's printing business; by the time he was a teenager, Runyon was a full-fledged reporter for the *Pueblo Evening News* where a typographical error gave him the name "Runyon" with the "o" instead of the traditional "an" spelling; he decided to adopt the name change permanently.

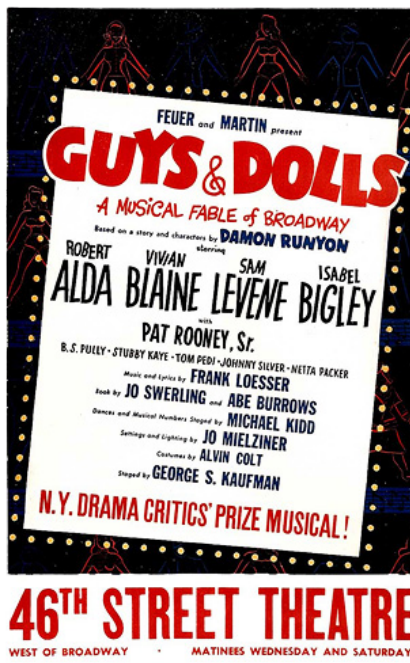
Runyon enlisted in the Army in 1898 during the Spanish-American War and was deployed to the Philippines where he wrote pieces for two army-based papers, *Manila Freedom* and *Soldier's Letter*. After his stint in the Army, Runyon wandered from newspaper to newspaper until landing a position as a sportswriter for *The Denver Rocky Mountain News* in 1906. While at *Mountain News*, he expanded his horizons beyond sports into crime and politics, and penned several short stories for prestigious national periodicals like *Harper's Weekly* and *McClure's*. Runyon left Colorado in 1910 and moved to New York City. By 1914, he had begun writing for the Hearst publication, *The New York American* where he served as a sportswriter, columnist, and feature writer until 1928.

Runyon's time as a reporter had given him a rare glimpse into the inner workings of New York City and allowed him to observe the denizens of Broadway for an extended period of time. He was fascinated by the rough and slightly sinister characters he encountered in his wanderings through Times Square. His biting wit, stoicism, and impatience with law and order allowed him to develop friendships with men like Arnold Rothstein, Al Capone, and Otto Berman; these friendships inspired Runyon's highly successful short stories, the first of which was published in 1931. He developed a unique voice by putting the colorful entities he came in contact with down on paper without losing the objectivity and insights that were a hallmark of his earlier reporting style. At the zenith of his popularity, Runyon was one of the most productive and highly-paid writers in New York. Between 1929 and 1946, he wrote over 70 short stories that inspired ideas in popular culture, multiple films, and a Broadway musical.

In 1946, Runyon passed away from an aggressive form of throat cancer and his friend and colleague, Walter Winchell, created the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation in his honor.



NEW YORK CITY AND THE FABLE OF BROADWAY



Guys and Dolls has been called one of the great triumphs of musical theatre. The show has managed to resonate with audiences for more than 65 years and New York provides a vibrant background for the lovable caricatures of gamblers, showgirls, and missionaries that populate the world of *Guys and Dolls*. New York City is a study in contrasts as it reflects both innocence and danger much like the show itself, and no one captured this duality better than Damon Runyon.

Runyon's Broadway borrowed heavily from the lives of true Broadway characters, however, the harmless gangsters featured in his short stories and the musical *Guys and Dolls* were a long way from truthfully portraying their counterparts in reality. According to biographer Jimmy Breslin, Runyon "gave off a reflection of more than three decades of the city of New York, and it has almost become the official record of the times. He had everybody believing that his street, Broadway, actually existed.Go to any library and the illusion

is there as fact. The Roaring Twenties, the Golden Age of Sport, Broadway, the warmhearted guys and dolls."

Guys and Dolls is set in New York City during the 1940s. Gone was the darkly glamorous New York City of the Prohibition era when gangsters like Big Jule ruled the city; what remained was a middlebrow Broadway, neither graceful nor disgraceful. Writer, Jan Morris, explains that Times Square in the 1940s contained "a frank and jolly air to it, and there was an impudent naiveté even to its naughtiest activities." One of the defining events of the 1940s was America's involvement in WWII after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The sudden plunge into war left the American public reeling and inspired an increase in patriotism throughout the country. Food, gas, and clothing were rationed as part of the war effort and by the mid-1940s the percentage of women in the American workforce had expanded from 25% to 36%. When WWII ended on August 7, 1945 a sense of relief and joy swept nation, however the landscape of Broadway had been irrevocably altered. 42nd Street had become lined with all-night cafeterias, arcades, and gimmick shops; while most of the grand theatres in the area were converted to movie houses.

Despite the closing of many New York theatres during the 1940s, Broadway producers Cy Feuer and Ernest Martin both agreed that they had found their next show when they stumbled upon an anthology of Damon Runyon stories entitled *Guys and Dolls* in the spring of 1949. Frank Loesser, Abe Burrows, and George S. Kaufman were the final members to join the *Guys and Dolls* creative team and were equally enchanted with Runyon's Broadway.

Each man was a native New Yorker and felt a connection to Runyon's boisterous interpretation of New York during Prohibition, yet also realized that the golden-hearted gangsters with their descriptive slang were idealized, which led them to the full title of the original show, *Guys and Dolls: A Musical Fable of Broadway*.



After a couple of glances at this young doll, The Sky is a goner

An illustration from Runyon's short story "The Idyll of Miss Sarah Brown" published on January 28, 1933 in Collier's magazine. The story would later become one of the stories upon which *Guys and Dolls* is based. Illustrated by Wallace Morgan.

Continued • • • • • ▶

THE FABLE OF BROADWAY CONTINUED

PROHIBITION:

In 1920, a ratification of the 18th Amendment of the United States Constitution banned the manufacture, transportation and sale of intoxicating liquors that began a time period known as Prohibition. The increase of the illegal production and sale of alcohol (known as "bootlegging"), the abundance of speakeasies (illegal bars), and the supplementary rise in gang violence and other crimes led to diminishing support for Prohibition by the end of the 1920s. In early 1933, Congress accepted a resolution proposing a 21st Amendment to the Constitution that would revoke the 18th Amendment. It was ratified by the end of 1933, bringing Prohibition to a close.

Damon Runyon's tame gangsters were further softened for the musical theatre stage while the female characters in *Guys and Dolls* reflected the opposite treatment. In Runyon's original stories, women were background noise to the male-centric world of gambling and gossiping at Mindy's Delicatessen. The women in Runyon's world could only serve one of two purposes, victim or prize, however, the women in *Guys and Dolls* are one of the driving forces of the show. Sarah Brown provides the moral center for the world of *Guys and Dolls* whereas Adelaide provides the show with vulnerability, comic relief, and heart. By making the women the mind and heart of the musical, Loesser and Burrows altered the tone and the balance of power in the original short stories by allowing the female characters to become fully-defined human beings. The detailed "dolls" provide a balance to the rough and ready male characters in the story, making the largest gamble in the show the risk that the characters take on relationships as opposed to the monetary risks they take in a craps game. The emotional gamble that was added to the story and the gleeful celebration of the idealized New York City allowed audiences to connect to the show and revel in the memory of a city that never truly existed.



CLICK HERE
to listen to a 1948
radio broadcast of Da-
mon Runyon's short
story "The Idyll of
Miss Sarah Brown."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrMC710Hqfw>



Al Hirschfeld's illustration of *Guys and Dolls*.



The Save-a-Soul Mission from the 1955 *Guys and Dolls* film.

The Save-a-Soul Mission featured in *Guys and Dolls* was based on the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army is an international religious and charitable movement based on a military structure. The Army has been established in more than 80 countries, offering sermons in 112 languages in 16,000 locations and operating more than 3,000 social welfare institutions, hospitals, schools, and agencies. A Methodist minister named William Booth founded The Salvation Army in 1865.

The public has long been fascinated by variations of the wanted outlaw since the legend of Robin Hood first began to circulate in the 14th century. The legend of Robin Hood eventually turned into the gunslingers of the Wild West, Bonnie and Clyde, then the gamblers and gangsters described by Damon Runyon's stories. While not a gangster himself, Runyon did associate with notorious criminals and would routinely base his characters on infamous figures like Al Capone, Frank Costello, Legs Diamond, and Arnold Rothstein. By depicting criminals as the heroes of his stories, Runyon forces his readers to reconsider their idea of right and wrong and to root against the traditional upholders of morality and law enforcement.

Guys and Dolls, like other Runyon-inspired adaptations, presents an interesting sense of moral ambiguity to its audience, mimicking the ambiguity that was rampant in New York City during the 1930s and 40s. The Golden Rule, which is defined by Merriam-Webster as "do to others as you would have them do to you," is alive and well, if slightly twisted, in the minds of the musical's characters and may fall along the lines of "do to others before they can do to you." However, many of the characters appear to subscribe to a Machiavellian morality where they will act virtuously if they can but are prepared to be evil when they must. Generally, the term "morality" or "ethics" refers to the code of conduct by which individuals live their lives and allows them to differentiate between right and wrong.

The definition of morality is ambiguous since it is generally agreed upon that morals are learned and can differ across societies. For example, the two distinct societies depicted in *Guys and Dolls* each have a different idea of right and wrong. Sky Masterson, Nathan Detroit, and their comrades see nothing wrong with lying or gambling, whereas Sarah Brown and the members of Save-a-Soul Mission are sure that any "vices"

will lead to damnation. The characters in *Guys and Dolls* are many things, however, most would not be considered ethically or morally responsible by most standards. It could be argued that Sarah Brown and the members of the Save-a-Soul Mission are the exception to the above statement, however Sarah's moral compass changes throughout the show as her relationship evolves with Sky. The audience is made to view the gamblers as heroes from the first notes of the "Overture" as they are ensconced in Runyon's Broadway where wrong is right and right is inconvenient.

Damon Runyon would undoubtedly approve of the moral ambiguity displayed in *Guys and Dolls*, particularly since he interacted with the denizens of Broadway on a daily basis. Runyon would probably agree that the citizens of Broadway were complex characters who wavered between moral and immoral decisions depending on their situation. Though Runyon's narrator was able to maintain a safe distance from the characters he shared so willingly with readers, Runyon himself was unable to maintain that same distance and would occasionally adopt the gangster's perspective in his reporting. This tendency is particularly noticeable in his reporting on the trial of Al Capone. Stephen Fox clearly articulates Runyon's struggle with his New York sensibilities and cuts to the heart of the matter by stating, "in soaking up the Broadway scene [Runyon] had displaced his own moral sense and picked up another."



The gamblers repent in the 1955 *Guys and Dolls* film.

INTERESTING FACTS



B.S. Pully as Big Jule with Frank Sinatra in the 1955 *Guys and Dolls* film.



Bat Masterson

- *Guys and Dolls* was the second Broadway musical with music and lyrics written by Frank Loesser.
- Before becoming a theatrical producer, Cy Feuer was a professional trumpet player.
- In the 1955 movie version of *Guys and Dolls*, Marlon Brando does not sing. The sound department for the film had Brando sing words and phrases before stringing them together to give the audience the impression that he was performing a song.
- Frank Loesser added the song "Adelaide" to the 1955 film version of *Guys and Dolls* for Frank Sinatra. He wrote two other new pieces for the movie and five of the original Broadway songs were removed for the film.
- Robert Alda, who played Sky Masterson in the original Broadway cast of *Guys and Dolls*, is the father of noted actor Alan Alda.
- Nathan Lane took his stage name from *Guys and Dolls*. When Mr. Lane applied for his Actor's Equity card he was told that the name Joe Lane was already in use and decided to name himself Nathan after the character Nathan Detroit.
- The creative team for *Guys and Dolls* decided to hire B.S. Pully to play Big Jule immediately after his audition, but Pulley was so sure that he didn't get the part that he left the theatre without leaving any contact information.
- Frank Sinatra wanted to play the character of Sky Masterson in the 1955 film version of *Guys and Dolls*.
- Members of the Salvation Army are required to sign Articles of War when they volunteer their services.
- Damon Runyon based the character of Sky Masterson on his idol Bat Masterson. Bat Masterson was a gambler, Saloon owner, reporter, and old West Sheriff turned U.S. Marshal.

GENERAL SHOW INFORMATION

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