

## SETTING THE STAGE

Arena Stage's director of production, Joel Krause, shared about the construction of the set for *Anything Goes*.

"There are a lot of tap dancing numbers in this show, which requires us to protect the surface of the deck (stage). Tap shoes beat up the surface. We are putting several coats of a protective sealer on it to make it a really hard surface."

"One of the design elements I find fascinating about this show is the process of making the railings for around the deck. All these pieces were custom bent by hand in our shop. They started with steel that they ran through a bender multiple times to match the curve they wanted. You can't bend the metal too quickly because it would strain the material, causing it to break and crack. So, with each run you make the bender tighter and tighter until you get the shape you want."



Fichandler Stage

## BY THE NUMBERS

*Anything Goes* is a massive musical production for all Arena Stage's shops. Here are some numbers from our costume shop:

**Cast:** 21 artists and 2 dogs

**Pairs of shoes:** 62

**Number of costumes:** 80

**Wigs:** 15

**Amount of fabric:**

**300 yards** (equivalent to 3 football fields)

Costume design by Alejo Vietti.



## HELPFUL HINTS FOR THEATER AUDIENCES

As an audience member at the theater, YOU are part of the show! Just as you see and hear the actors onstage, they can see and hear you in the audience. To help the performers do their best, please remember the following:

- Arrive at least 15 minutes early.
- Visit the restroom before the show starts.
- Sit in the exact seat on your ticket. Ask the usher for help finding it.
- Before the show begins, turn off your phone, watch alarms and any other electronic devices. If anything rings by accident, turn it off immediately.
- Do not use your phone for texts, calls, games or pictures.
- You cannot take pictures or make recordings in the theater, even before or after the play.
- There is no food allowed in the theater.
- Do not talk, whisper, sing or hum, unless invited by the performers to do so.
- Keep your feet on the floor and off the seat in front of you.
- Avoid getting up during a show. If you must leave, wait for a scene change and exit quietly and quickly.
- Respond to the show; you can laugh, cry and gasp. However, don't repeat lines out loud or talk to the performers on stage.
- Be sure to applaud at the end!

## RESOURCES

### ON THE WEB

"Cole Wide Web" *The Cole Porter Resource*  
<http://www.coleporter.org/>

"Comfort, Courtesy, Safety, Speed"  
*Smithsonian National Museum of History*  
<https://tinyurl.com/atlantictavel>

"The History of Theater on Broadway"  
*Octane Seating* <https://tinyurl.com/broadwayhistory>

"The Transatlantic Crossing"  
*Norway-Heritage: Hands Across the Sea*  
<https://tinyurl.com/steamshiptravel>

"The World Has Gone Mad Today"  
*The Bad Boys of Musical Theatre*  
<https://tinyurl.com/agculture>

"Welcome Aboard Atlantic Liners"  
*Atlantic Liners* <https://tinyurl.com/atlantictliners>

"Writing a Show? Anything Goes!"  
*Michael Kotze* <https://tinyurl.com/writingag>



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Visit [www.arenastage.org](http://www.arenastage.org) for more information on Arena Stage productions and educational opportunities.



# ARENA'S PAGE

STUDY GUIDE

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## THE PLAY

It's the 1930s, and the S.S. American is about to set sail across the Atlantic Ocean.

When he learns his love is aboard, lovestruck **Billy Crocker** stows away on the ship. **Hope Harcourt** is heading off to London, where she plans to marry the millionaire **Lord Evelyn Oakleigh**. With the help of crew members and showgirls, Billy attempts to win Hope's heart, despite her determination to please her mother and remain loyal to the marriage she has arranged for her.

Meanwhile, nightclub evangelist **Reno Sweeney** and gangster **Moonface** (Public Enemy #13) also scheme to prevent the marriage of Hope and Evelyn. Their plans create more romantic dilemmas.

The pursuit of love can get messy, especially aboard a ship with such a lively crew and collection of passengers. In a time when "anything goes," what won't people do for love?

## GOLD STANDARD MUSICAL ANYTHING GOES



MUSIC AND LYRICS BY **COLE PORTER**  
ORIGINAL BOOK BY **P. G. WODEHOUSE** AND **GUY BOLTON**  
AND **HOWARD LINDSAY** AND **RUSSEL CROUSE**  
NEW BOOK BY **TIMOTHY CROUSE** AND **JOHN WEIDMAN**  
DIRECTED BY **MOLLY SMITH** | CHOREOGRAPHY BY **PARKER ESSE**  
MUSIC DIRECTION BY **PAUL SPORTELLI**

FICHANDLER STAGE | NOVEMBER 2 – DECEMBER 23, 2018

"In olden days a glimpse of stocking was looked on as something shocking, but now, God knows, anything goes"

— Reno Sweeney, *Anything Goes*

## THREE BIG QUESTIONS

1

How does class affect the characters in the play?

2

Why is the name "S.S. American" significant?

3

How do current events impact art?

*Anything Goes* is generously sponsored by **GEICO**, **George and Duffy Ftikas**, **Margot Kelly**, **Hubert M. (Hank) Schlosberg** and **Sheila Stampfli**.  
Choreography is sponsored by **Virginia McGehee Friend**.  
The D.C. Ticket Partnership is generously sponsored by the **Paul M. Angell Family Foundation**.  
Additional support is provided by the **DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities**,  
**The Bay & Paul Foundations**, **Rockwell Collins**, and the **Albert and Lillian Small Foundation**.

## MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT



COLE PORTER

Cole Porter wrote over 1200 songs and is one of America's most significant songwriters. His songs include "Let's Do It (Let's Fall in Love)," "I Get a Kick Out of You" and "I've Got You Under My Skin." His music has been sung by Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra and Aretha Franklin.

Born in 1891, Porter showed an interest in music at age 6, learning how to play the piano and violin. He began writing music when he was 10 and published his first musical piece at the age of 11. While studying at Yale, Porter wrote musicals for the university's clubs and organizations.

He first studied law at Harvard, trying to satisfy his grandfather's wishes. However, he found his true passion was for the arts, and he transferred to the Harvard School of Arts and Sciences to pursue a career in music. His first musical, *See America First*, was not very successful, but he gained great recognition for his songs in the musical *Paris* in 1928.

After his success with *Anything Goes* in 1934, Porter entered a high point in his career and made his mark in musical theater history. Unfortunately, a horseback riding accident in 1937 caused him to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair. Although his work seemed to lack its usual luster after the accident, Porter continued to compose music. His next big success came in 1948, when *Kiss Me Kate* opened on Broadway.

Though he died in 1964, his legacy on stage and screen continues. An album of his work was released in 1990, and many of his songs are part of the soundtracks of popular movies today.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT: ALL ABOARD!

The first transatlantic steamship crossing was the S.S. Savannah in 1818. At first, steamships were used primarily for immigration and trade. As ocean travel grew in speed and safety, the wealthy were eager to travel in luxury, opening a new market in leisure travel. Not having to rely on the wind, steamships could move at a rapid pace and cross the Atlantic Ocean in about a week. While onboard, upper-class passengers enjoyed smoking lounges and dining saloons.



The S.S. (short for "steam ship") American in *Anything Goes* was modeled after a famous ocean liner called the Mauretania, which made over 54 crossings from 1923 to 1934. While the safety of such travel was improving, there were also several ocean liner tragedies during the era.

One month before rehearsals for the original production of *Anything Goes* were to begin, disaster struck the ocean liner S.S. Morro Castle. It caught fire off the shores of New Jersey, killing 135 crew members and passengers aboard the ship.

The first version of *Anything Goes* included a bomb threat, mischievous adventures on a desert island and a shipwreck. After this tragedy, the producer, Vinton Freedley, decided the show needed some changes—fast. He turned to Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse to quickly rewrite some of the scenes.

After this collaboration, Lindsey and Crouse became lifelong collaborators, writing the books (scripts) for many more musicals together such as *The Sound of Music* and *Life with Father*.



The S.S. Morro Castle after it caught fire

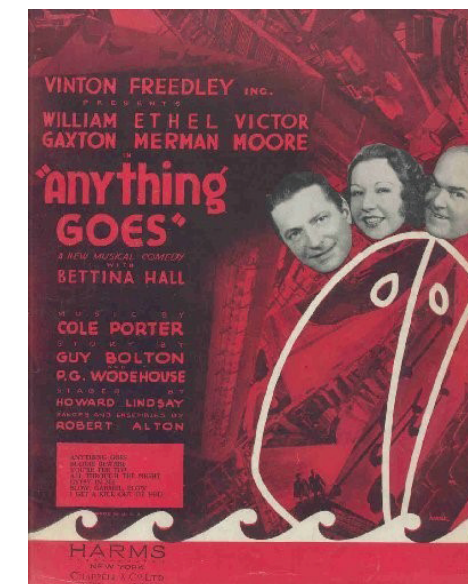
## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S NOTEBOOK

"We're in an '*Anything Goes*' moment in America right now—where anybody can be whatever they want to be as long as you say you are. 'I'm a gangster'—all right you are. 'I'm a debutante'—all right—if you can fake it, we will believe it. Mobsters walk amongst us and are celebrated like kings. Masquerading—being someone else—is the name of the game. Lying and manipulating is just fine—because '*Anything Goes*'. You can become a millionaire in a day—as long as the scam works."

—Molly Smith, Arena Stage's artistic director and the director of *Anything Goes*



Molly Smith



*Anything Goes* is a famous tap show. Here, Parker Esse (choreographer) and Corbin Bleu (Billy Crocker) rehearse a number in the rehearsal hall. Esse says that at times in the show "feet become the instrument." Audiences may remember Bleu from *High School Musical*.

A musical requires actors who are "triple threats" in singing, dancing and acting. Soara-Joye Ross plays Reno Sweeney. Photo by Tony Powell



## THE WORLD OF THE MUSICAL

During the 1930s, America faced major shifts in its culture, economy and government. When the Great Depression began in 1929, the arts started to focus on comedy to brighten people's mood during troubling times. Plays with happy endings were in high demand. Audiences loved *Anything Goes* for its upbeat dancing, numerous pop culture references and cheeky slang.

America was also moving from a rural and conservative culture to a more urban and liberal one. Women's fashion embraced more European trends. Skirts became shorter, limbs were exposed, and dresses became more form fitting. Some saw this fashion and women's more independent behavior as scandalous. Many of the lyrics and much of the content of the show explore this shift away from more conservative ways of thinking and the fear that often comes with social change.



### WATCH

Watch passengers on the deck of a ship crossing the Atlantic in the 1920s. <https://tinyurl.com/linertravel>



### ACTIVITY

Audiences loved the pop culture references and timely humor of *Anything Goes*. Make a list of 20 pop culture references that would make a modern audience laugh.



### READ

"You're cellophane." What does that even mean? Read the *Anything Goes* glossary. <https://tinyurl.com/agglossary>