

IRVING BERLIN



Irving Berlin was born Israel Isidore Baline to a Jewish family in Russia in 1888. His family moved to the United States in 1893 to escape persecution in Russia, and settled in New York City. To help support his struggling family, he sang for change in public places as a teenager, where he noticed that the songs people liked best were well-known songs with catchy melodies and lyrics that expressed happiness. As a young man, he worked as a singing waiter in a café, and soon music publishers began to take notice of him. He was offered a job on Tin Pan Alley, the New York neighborhood where many music publishers worked. He wrote popular songs for music publishers, then moved on to writing songs for Broadway musicals. His songs then began to be used in movie musicals, a popular genre of the 1930s and 40s. He continued to write music for stage and screen well into his 50s.

Over the course of his career, he wrote about 1,500 songs, many of which became major hits and continue to be performed today. A great number of his songs are now considered American classics, like “Blue Skies”, “There’s No Business Like Show Business”, “Puttin’ on the Ritz”, “God Bless America”, and “White Christmas”. He is an artistic hero to many and is considered one of America’s all-time greatest songwriters.

1. Why did Irving's family move to the United States? _____

2. What is Tin Pan Alley? _____

