

PAPER MILL PLAYHOUSE

AUDIO DESCRIPTION NOTES

IRVING BERLIN'S WHITE CHRISTMAS

These description notes were provided by Elizabeth Hunt, audio describer, and will be shared in advance of scheduled audio-described performances.

Irving Berlin's: White Christmas is based on the Paramount Pictures film written for the screen by Norman Krasna, Norman Panama & Melvin Frank. Music & Lyrics are by Irving Berlin, book by David Ives & Paul Blake. Directed by Mark S. Hoebbe. Original Broadway choreography is by Randy Skinner, recreated by Kristyn Pope. Music direction by Cynthia Meng. Scenic design by Anna Louizos, with scenic coordination and additional design by Kelly James Tighe. Costume design by Carrie Robbins, with costume coordination and additional design by Antonio Consuegra. Lighting design by Charlie Morrison. Sound design by Matt Kraus. Hair, wig & makeup design by The Wig Associates. Stage managed by Melissa Chacón.

Theatrical haze will be used throughout the entire performance. The first act will run approximately one hour and twenty minutes, followed by a twenty-minute intermission. Act two runs approximately 50 minutes.

Based on the classic 1954 holiday film, *Irving Berlin's White Christmas* is a Technicolor Broadway musical extravaganza. Two army buddies enlist the help of their showbiz pals to put on a show at a picturesque Vermont inn and end up finding their perfect mates. This incredible score contains some of Berlin's most popular tunes including "Blue Skies," "I Love a Piano," "How Deep Is the Ocean?," "Count Your Blessings," and the title song, "White Christmas."

The show curtain is a midnight blue with sparkling snowflake applique designs throughout, in addition to white snowflakes projected onto the curtain. Each snowflake is unique and different from one another. Once the overture begins, a logo reading "Irving Berlin's White Christmas the Musical" is projected onto the curtain. There is a special

lighting effect that depicts the snowflakes floating down from the sky. Throughout the show, characters will make use of the **passarelle** - a semi-circular runway in front of the stage surrounding the orchestra pit.

At the top of the show the year is 1944, on Europe's Western front during World War II. At the center is a makeshift stage with pipe and drapes hanging behind it. Painted on the drape is the image of a woman resembling Betty Grable in a Santa hat posed next to an American flag and an arrowed signpost that says "USA, 4,103 Miles Away". This is **the 151st Division Holiday Party**. There are a few musicians on stage and a music box with a crank. The audience plays the part of the entire 151st Division and will be addressed as such by various characters.

We are introduced to one of our main duos: Bob Wallace and Phil Davis. They are performing a holiday routine for their fellow members of the 151st division. The two are often referred to as "Wallace and Davis" throughout the show.

Bob Wallace, played by Max Clayton, is a tall, white man with a medium build in his 30s, with dark brown hair and hazel eyes. He is a little more reserved in his mannerisms compared to his counterpart. He first appears in his army fatigues and red Santa hat with a white trim.

Phil Davis, played by Casey Garvin, is a tall white man in his 30s with a muscular frame and broad shoulders. He has brown wavy hair, dark brown eyes, and dimples. His movements and mannerisms are very animated and precise. He also appears first in his army fatigues and red Santa hat.

We also meet their commanding officer, General Henry Waverly, as well as their army buddy, Ralph Sheldrake.

General Henry Waverly, played by Lance Roberts, is a tall, Black, bald man in his 60s with brown eyes and a greying black mustache. He has a very distinct, rich and deep, booming voice. He wears his general uniform in the first and final scene.

Ralph Sheldrake, played by Reagan Pender, is a short white man with black curly hair and dark eyes. Has a very distinct nasally “television announcer” voice.

We then move ten years in the future to 1954 at **The Ed Sullivan Show**. The backdrop bears images of muted green, red and blue Christmas ornament balls. There is a blue wash of light with two blue curtains drawn open from floor to ceiling on the sides.

After the number, we follow Wallace and Davis to their **dressing rooms**. The walls of the room have wood paneling, celebrity photographs hang above a double-dressing table where Bob and Phil sit in front of their dressing mirrors that are lined with light bulbs. Christmas cards are strung up across the room. The entrance doorway is on the left and another doorway on the right leads into an unseen dressing room. Their dressing room is on the left side of the stage.

Phil’s charming “ladies’ man” persona shines particularly bright when **Rita and Rhoda**, two featured chorus girls, pay them a visit. Rita and Rhoda, played by Candice Hatakeyama and Larkin Reilly respectively, are both petite with slender frames and both have a distinct screeching laughter and shrill manner of speech. Rita’s hair is dark brown with short, styled curls, while Rhoda has dark auburn hair loosely curled and styled.

To the right of the stage is the separate dressing room in **Jimmy’s Back Room**, a nightclub in New York City. This dressing room is noticeably small and cramped, with exposed brick walls and one dressing table. This dressing room belongs to our second duo, sisters Betty and Judy Haynes.

Betty Haynes, played by Ashley Blanchet, is a short Black woman in her 30s with brown hair and brown eyes. Betty has a sophisticated attractiveness and is clearly the more reserved sister. She wears two different wigs: she starts the show with loosely curled hair styled just below the shoulders; towards the end of act two she wears a formal updo with her hair pulled away from her face.

Judy Haynes, played by Keely Beirne, is a tall Black woman in her 30s with curly dark brown hair and brown eyes. While wholesome and sweet, she is flirtatious and has a much spunkier disposition in comparison to her older sister, Betty.

When we first meet the sisters, they wear satin dressing gowns. But once on stage at Jimmy's Back Room, they wear matching blue dresses, cut just below the knee. The dresses have thick electric blue straps, with a tight lace crystal blue bodice and flared skirt with tulle underneath. There are small silver/glittery rose applique patterns adorned on the skirt and bodice. As part of their show, they carry large matching sky-blue feathered fans

The night club is small with a few leather-seated banquettes on either side of a small stage with a gold tassel curtain. There is a bright red neon sign that reads "Jimmy's Back Room" above the curtain. The lighting includes dark shades of blue and purple to accentuate the lettering of the red signage. There is also the use of a sharp-edged deck pattern that's suggestive of a 50s motif.

The scene transitions to a **train car** later that night. The car is lined with red velvet banquettes. The walls of the car are wood paneled and have art deco wall sconces to light. Characters will walk through the train compartment wearing their winter clothes consisting of knitted sweaters, hats, gloves, and galoshes.

We then arrive at our main destination, **The Columbia Inn in Vermont**. The front door is back-center and leads into the main lobby. To the left-rear side is a sitting room with a Christmas tree decorated with colorful lights, ornaments, and tinsel with a star on top. There is a cushioned chair next to it with a curtained window in between. In front of the room in the lobby is a wooden bench with a red fleece blanket draped along the top of the back, and a red and white patched decorative pillow. A small wooden table and lamp are directly left of the bench. To the right of the lobby is a rich mahogany desk that serves as a check-in counter. Behind the desk is a wooden staircase that leads upstairs. It is decorated with garlands and red ribbons along the banisters and railings. We do not enter the second floor at any point during the show, and it is covered by the exterior of the inn,

which has white wooden panels and three windows: one in the center above the main entrance and one on either side.

We are also introduced to the inn's housekeeper, **Martha Watson**, played by Stacia Fernandez. She is a tall white woman with strawberry blonde hair pinned up in a slightly disheveled updo. She wears a multicolored patchwork dress with different fabrics sewn together. Her voice is loud and booming, akin to Ethel Merman.

We also meet **Susan Waverly**, General Waverly's granddaughter, played by two children at alternating performances: Annie Piper Braverman and Savannah Austin. Annie is a short white girl with long, straight light brown hair and brown eyes. Savannah is a short Black girl with dark brown curly hair that falls just below her shoulders and brown eyes.

Martha will then lead us to the **barn/rehearsal hall**. The barn is a separate space from the inn but is on the same property. It is the interior of an empty wooden barn with two large, very tall doors located in the center-rear. There are tall support pillars along the sides of the barn and support beams along the top. There is an "industrial" breakup of lighting to suggest light piercing through slats in the panels of the barn roof and walls. The barn is used as the rehearsal room and stage for the production being rehearsed. Backdrops will intermittently be used during dance numbers along the back wall of the barn in front of the doors.

In the barn, we meet additional characters, including Ezekiel Foster and Mike Nulty.

Ezekiel Foster, played by Buzz Roddy, a tall white man with a large frame and gray hair, and a prominent mustache. He is dressed in boots, a flannel shirt and suspenders that hold up his working pants. He is a man of few words and has an exaggerated slow pace in his mannerisms and walk.

Mike Nulty, played by Lamont Brown, thin black man of 5'9" with dark brown hair and brown eyes. He is constantly in a state of panic and stress and can be found frantically running around the barn/rehearsal hall as he stage manages the show.