

# **STRIKE UP THE BAND**

## **AUDITION INFORMATION PACK**

Music & Lyrics by George & Ira Gershwin  
Book by George S Kaufman  
1927 version (the 'cheese' version) \*

Stage Director: Mavis Boulton  
Musical Director: Sue Black  
Choreographer: Gill Cogzell

<b>PRE-AUDITION REHEARSALS:</b>	Thursday 24 July, Tuesday 29 July, Thursday 31 July, Tuesday 5 August, Thursday 7 August at 7.30 pm Charlton Kings Infants School
<b>PRINCIPAL AUDITIONS:</b> (a timetable will be issued)	Sunday 10 August at 2.00 pm Charlton Kings Infants School
<b>CHORUS AUDITIONS:</b>	Tuesday 12 August at 7.30 pm Charlton Kings Infants School
<b>PRODUCTION DATES:</b>	Friday 21 & Saturday 22 November plus Wednesday 26 – Saturday 29 November The Playhouse, Bath Road, Cheltenham
<b>PERFORMANCE TIMES:</b>	Evening performances 7.30 pm Saturday 22 matinee 2.00 pm
<b>DRESS REHEARSAL:</b>	Thursday 20 November at 7.30 pm The Playhouse, Bath Road, Cheltenham
<b>TECHNICAL REHEARSAL:</b>	Wednesday 19 November at 7.30 pm The Playhouse, Bath Road, Cheltenham
<b>BAND CALLS (ALL TO ATTEND):</b>	Friday 14 November at 7.30 pm Sunday 16 November from 10.30 am – 1.00 pm Charlton Kings Infants School
<b>STANDARD REHEARSALS:</b>	Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7.30 pm – 10.00 pm, usually at Charlton Kings Infants School but a few to be held at The Playhouse (rehearsal schedule will clarify this)

*\*\* The show was heavily revised for a 1930 production (the 'chocolate' version). Please note that the 1940 film starring Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney has no connection with either stage version of the musical, beyond the use of the title song*

## VERY BRIEF CHARACTER SKETCHES with VOCAL RANGES

*NB Ages indicated are playing ages*

**JOAN FLETCHER** Horace's daughter. She finds her self falling for Jim but is actually being set up to marry Sloane. Female, 25-30 yrs old. High Soprano. Range: D - Bb

**ANNE DRAPER** The daughter of Mrs. Draper, and girlfriend to Timothy. She longs to be married before he ships off to war but her mother is strongly against the relationship. Female, 17 yrs old. Light Soprano. Range: Eb - F

**MRS. DRAPER** A society woman and mother to Anne. She shows interest in Mr. Fletcher when she goes to his factory. She does not approve of her daughter's relationship with Timothy, and forbids them to see each other. Female, 45+ yrs old. Mezzo. Range: Eb - Ab

**C. EDGAR SLOANE** The manager of the Horace J. Fletcher American Cheese Factory. He demands Horace encourage his daughter Joan to marry him or else he will reveal incriminating details. Secretly, a member of the Swiss Secret Service. Male, 35+ yrs old. Tenor. Range: Eb - A

**COLONEL HOLMES** A confidential adviser to the President of the United States who works with Horace to initiate the war with Switzerland. He also finds himself falling for Mrs. Draper who he thinks is rich. Male, 45+ yrs old. Baritone. Range: C - F

**GEORGE SPELVIN** A mysterious figure who dresses in workman's clothes. He often gets in the middle of situations and turns people against each other. He is appointed to General of the war in hopes that he can lead the team to victory. Secretly, a member of the American Secret Service. Male, 25-40 yrs old. High Tenor. Range: D – top C

**HORACE J. FLETCHER** The owner of the Horace J. Fletcher American Cheese Company, who is excited by the new imported cheese tariff in hopes it will boost his American company. He begins a war with Switzerland, a country protesting the new tariff. Male, 45+ yrs old. Baritone. Range: B – G

**JIM TOWNSEND** A reporter for The Gazette, he ends up falling in love with Joan. Refuses to support the war due to his dislike for cheese and the lies he knows about the company. Male, 25-35 yrs old. Tenor. Range: D - Gb

**TIMOTHY HARPER** The foreman of the Horace J. Fletcher American Cheese Factory. He is dating Anne and is appointed Captain for the war. Male, 21 yrs old. Ability to tap dance may be useful but not essential. Light Tenor. Range: C - G

**A SOLDIER** One of the chorus who, for some strange reason, gets to sing a solo reprise of The Girl I Love towards the end of Act II. Any age. High Tenor. E – top B

**CHORUS** In Act I, the chorus are the men and women who work for the Fletcher's American Cheese Company. In Act II, the men of the Cheese Company have become soldiers (four of whom have speaking lines), while the women are split into two groups - Swiss girls and American tourists.

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

Where principals are specified, they have solo lines within the musical number. Principals may, depending on the scene, be part of the chorus in certain numbers (will be clarified in rehearsal).

### ACT ONE Scene One

Fletcher's American Cheese Choral Society	Tim, Sloane, Fletcher & Chorus
Seventeen and Twenty-One	Tim & Anne
Typical Self-Made American	Fletcher, Jim & Men
Meadow Serenade	Jim & Joan
Unofficial Spokesman of the USA	Fletcher, Holmes & Chorus

### ACT ONE Scene Three

Patriotic Rally	Chorus
The Man I Love	Jim & Joan
Yankee Doodle Rhythm	Spelvin & Chorus
Seventeen and Twenty-One (reprise)	Mrs Draper & Fletcher
Finaletto Act I	Fletcher, Jim, Sloan, Holmes, Joan, Tim & Chorus
Strike Up The Band	Tim & Chorus

### ACT II Scene One

This is Such a Lovely War	Soldiers & Swiss Girls
Come-Look-At-The War Choral Society	Female American Tourists
Hoping That Someday You'd Care	Jim & Joan
Military Dancing Drill	Tim, Anne & Chorus
How About a Man?	Mrs Draper, Holmes & Fletcher
Finaletto Act II	Fletcher, Jim, Sloane, Joan, Holmes, Spelvin & Chorus

### ACT II Scene Two

Homeward Bound	Soldiers
The Girl I Love (reprise)	A Soldier

### ACT II Scene Three

The War That Ended War	Chorus
Finale Ultimo	Entire Company

## AUDITION PIECES

Copies of music and dialogue pieces will be available at pre-audition rehearsals.

## SYNOPSIS

### ACT ONE

A group of factory workers at Horace J. Fletcher's American Cheese Company in Hurray, Connecticut start their morning off right. They explain that management encourages them to vocalize every morning on the theory that the happier they are, the better they work. They are joined by their foreman, Timothy Harper, their manager, C. Edgar Sloane, and the company's owner, Horace J. Fletcher ("Fletcher's American Cheese Choral Society").

After the workers leave, Mr. Fletcher speaks of how excited he is by the fifty-percent tariff the President of the United States has just imposed on every pound of imported cheese, meaning everyone will now buy American. They recount the wonderful events taking place around the country to commemorate National Cheese Week and commend Mr. Fletcher for building up the company with only a pound of cheese. Harper leaves to urge on the workers to increase production. Sloane, meanwhile, demands Mr. Fletcher encourage his daughter, Joan, to become Sloane's wife or else he will reveal some information about Fletcher's evasion of income taxes. Fletcher agrees to think it over.

Mrs. Draper, a society woman, and her daughter, Anne, appear as Mr. Fletcher orders Sloane out of his sight. Mrs. Draper wants to start the City Air Movement for Country Children, a fund to send poor country children to the city for two weeks every summer. She has an obvious romantic interest in Mr. Fletcher, and her attention makes him very nervous. He leads her off for a tour of the factory. As soon as they leave, Anne and the factory foreman, Timothy Harper, embrace frantically and kiss. They are madly in love but her mother has forbidden her to see him. Anne suggests they get married before she becomes an old hag. They recall how they met, and how young and naive they were ("17 And 21").

As they leave, Sloane catches up with Mr. Fletcher to deliver a telegram: Switzerland is protesting the new tariff on imported cheese. Fletcher and Sloane remember that the president's confidential advisor, Colonel Holmes, is in town, and make a plan to get him on their side to keep the tariff. Sloane sets off to find Holmes. Joan Fletcher then appears and demands her father call a reporter from the local paper and reprimand him for writing a derogatory story about her. The reporter, Jim Townsend, enters to get information about the cheese tariff. Joan hides, telling her father to get back at Jim. Unsure of what to do, he tells Jim to wait until Holmes has arrived, as there is about to be a big news story. While they wait, the two men chat and find that their life goals are very different ("A Typical Self-Made American").

Joan finally confronts Jim, who admits that he wrote the article to get her attention. He tells her she never noticed him before and when spring came, it had such an effect on him that he had to do something ("Meadow Serenade"). Joan and Jim leave as Fletcher and Sloane return, awaiting the arrival of Colonel Holmes. George Spelvin arrives, claiming he has come to repair the telephone. He seems to be trying to distract Fletcher from his true purpose, and as soon as he is alone begins to act in a furtive manner. Mrs. Draper and Anne reenter, and then Jim comes back - looking for Mr. Fletcher - but is interrupted by Sloane announcing the arrival of Colonel Holmes ("The Unofficial Spokesman").

Fletcher and Holmes have a meeting in Fletcher's private office, where they discuss the importance of maintaining the cheese tariff. Holmes thinks a war might do the trick, so Fletcher agrees to pay for the war and give the government twenty-five percent of the profits if they name it after him.

A few weeks later. We see a crowd outside of the Fletcher home, rallying in support of the war ("Patriotic Rally"). Fletcher introduces Timothy as Captain, and the excited crowd waits to hear Switzerland's response to a series of American demands. Meanwhile, Joan and Jim have met, and Jim explains to Joan that he cannot get behind the war because he doesn't like cheese. Joan is upset and

claims that the man she loves would be proud to go to war. Jim asks if there really is such a man, and the two finally confess their love for each other ("The Man I Love"). As Joan leaves, Sloane comes in and warns Jim that he intends to marry Joan but he is unimpressed.

Elsewhere, Timothy and Anne are arguing because she wants to get married before he goes off to war. They get distracted when Spelvin enters with two girls, who he is teaching dance moves to in support of the war ("Yankee Doodle Rhythm"). After the crowd disperses, Mrs. Draper and Mr. Holmes meet and he invites her to have a drink. It is now clear he is a few drinks ahead of her and the two soon become drunk. Holmes begins to spill confidential information to her, and Mr. Fletcher walks in on the two being flirtatious. Holmes leaves and Mrs. Draper tries to confess her feelings to Mr. Fletcher ("17 And 21 [Reprise]").

As Fletcher and Draper leave, Spelvin comes on as a waiter and offers a drink to Jim to toast the war. He informs Jim that the drink is the milk that Fletcher uses to make his cheese. Jim, who used to be a dairyman, recognizes the milk as Grade B milk, not the Grade A that Fletcher proudly claims to use. He quickly informs Joan that he can't go to war because he cannot defend the lie. Just as Jim is telling her this, Fletcher enters with the crowd to tell them that Congress is in session to declare war on Switzerland. Jim steps forward to alert the crowd about the milk, but instead everyone turns on him claiming he is a spy. War is declared, and Jim is taken away for his supposed crime ("Finaletto Act I").

After the crowd marches off, the Very Patriotic League, which consists of Mr. Fletcher, Sloane, Colonel Holmes, and Mrs. Draper, meets. They wear small hoods resembling those worn by the Ku Klux Klan. They make decisions pertaining to the war, such as eliminating any dangerous Swiss references such as 'Swiss Family Robinson.' They discover that the Swiss want to hold the war in Switzerland and decide that doing so will be great for tourism. The League then decides to try Jim and find the best punishment is to force him to fight. The troops appear, led by Timothy, ready to go to war. Fletcher announces the engagement of his daughter to Sloane and the troops march off to war ("Strike Up The Band").

## **ACT TWO**

The act opens in Switzerland. A group of soldiers sit on rocking chairs and knit. They have Swiss girls by their sides and all reflect on how wonderful it is to be at war ("Oh This is Such a Lovely War").

Timothy Harper warns the soldiers that Mr. Fletcher is about to appear with the Board of Directors of the war and a group of tourists. The group includes Colonel Holmes, Sloane, Mrs. Draper, Anne, and Joan. Fletcher asks Tim to supply war action to make the tourists happy. Jim then appears in uniform, and the group is informed that he works in the kitchen. Sloane humiliates Jim in front of Joan, much to her distress.

Mr. Fletcher complains to Timothy the war is a disaster and has left him broke. He demands to know why they haven't fought any battles. Timothy informs him that they can't find the enemy, as the Swiss know the mountains much better than they do. Holmes and Fletcher insist Timothy start selling American supplies to the Swiss army to make a profit because the Americans aren't buying enough. Fletcher tells Holmes he is running out of money and asks if the United States could loan; Holmes admits the President doesn't even know the war in Switzerland is going on.

Later, Fletcher recruits the mysterious Spelvin to be a General and promptly orders him to win the war. General Spelvin goes off to look for his army. Jim tries to talk to Fletcher but Fletcher dismisses

him. Joan and Jim share their sadness over the path their lives have taken because of Jim's need to stand up for his ideals ("Hoping That Someday You'd Care").

General Spelvin finally finds soldiers and they complain to him that the buttons are being cut off their coats. They march off as Mrs. Draper enters. Spelvin says she reminds him of an exotic dancer he once knew and encourages her to dance for the troops instead of reciting inspirational poetry to them. She is awkwardly trying to dance when Anne appears. Mrs. Draper, who doesn't think she can catch a man if she is a grandmother, makes Anne promise not to get married before she does. Anne then tries to play matchmaker for her mother with Colonel Holmes by suggesting Mrs. Draper is wealthy. Timothy appears and complains about life in the Army ("Military Dancing Drill").

Joan finally tells her father she can't marry Sloane because she loves Jim. Mr. Fletcher says unless they proceed as planned, the war will fail. Jim tries once again to tell Mr. Fletcher how to end the war, but is ignored. Mrs. Draper appears and tries to seduce Fletcher but he continues to avoid her as Colonel Holmes enters and makes a reference to her millions. Suddenly, both Mr. Fletcher and Colonel Holmes are interested in Mrs. Draper. They try to compete for her affection ("How About A Man?").

General Spelvin manages to snip two buttons off of Sloane's coat, and convinces Jim that Sloane is the one who has been cutting off the buttons all along. Jim tells Spelvin to yodel and deceive the Swiss army into thinking they are being called home to lunch, then the enemy can be engaged and the war can be finished. Jim confronts Sloane and, in an act of anger, calls everyone out and reveals that Sloane has been stealing the buttons. Everyone demands Jim be taken away for making false accusations but are interrupted by yodeling and the sounds of war. Spelvin appears to announce they have won, and they owe Jim for his clever idea. In all of the excitement, Mrs. Draper accidentally reveals that she isn't rich, and Anne and Joan feel hopeless about their attempts at love ("Finaletto: Act II").

On the return trip, the sailors aboard the ship celebrate how great it is to be going home ("Homeward Bound"). Mr. Fletcher and Mrs. Draper meet at the ship railing, both very seasick. In their moment of vulnerability, they both realize their love for each other and collapse into each other's arms.

In Mr. Fletcher's ballroom, the women are anxiously awaiting the return of their heroes, who finally arrive ("The War That Ended The War"). During the festivities, Jim - now considered a hero - identifies Sloane as the head of the Swiss Secret Service. Spelvin is subsequently outed as a member of the American Secret Service, who caught Sloane cutting the buttons of the uniforms so the soldiers would catch pneumonia. He was also responsible for using Grade B milk to make the cheese.

Jim promises to keep the whole ugly business quiet if Mr. Fletcher agrees to a League of Cheese to prevent further wars, and finally announces his intention to marry Joan. Just as all seems well, Holmes appears to announce Russia wants the tariff on caviar cut down. Instantly, Fletcher leads the crowd into declaring they fight against Russia's demands ("Finale Ultimo").