

## Blue Skies

These notes about the song “Blue Skies” (Irving Berlin) were extracted from the following websites. For more information, please read the articles:

<http://www.lorenzhart.org/betsy.htm>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue\\_Skies\\_\(song\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_Skies_(song))

[http://www.lyricsfreak.com/i/irving+berlin/blue+skies\\_20068097.html](http://www.lyricsfreak.com/i/irving+berlin/blue+skies_20068097.html)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irving\\_Berlin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irving_Berlin)

Included below is a history of the composition, its first performance and subsequent history. This is followed by a short introduction to the composer.

After the articles, click on the links to hear selected audio/video files of the song, performed by various artists. There is also a video of Irving Berlin singing a song (not Blue Skies).

Lyrics are posted at the end of this article.

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### Betsy – a 1926 play produced by Florenz Ziegfeld – Songs composed mostly by Rodgers and Hart

Plot: Mama Kitzel wouldn't allow any of her other children (three sons and a daughter) to get married until her daughter Betsy, who had no boyfriend, found a husband.

Act Two, set on Conev Island, opened with Evelyn Law and ensemble doing the bright "*Cradle Of The Deep*" Next came "*If I Were You*", with its cleverly juxtaposed sentiments ("I'd tell me that I really loved me"). It was at this point that Dick and Larry [Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart] received the shock of their lives. Belle Baker stepped up front and belted out a song they'd never heard before!

It turned out Rodgers and Hart weren't the only ones who'd smelled turkey. The night before the show opened, Belle was in despair. This was her Broadway debut, and her two solo numbers gave her no chance to show off that great big voice of hers. She called her old friend Irving Berlin, who came over to see her. Belle told him her troubles and begged him to come up with something. Berlin told her he had an idea for a song, but he couldn't get a middle eight for it. He played it for her on the piano: two notes, then four, then five. He kept banging away one-fingered on the black notes (Berlin could only play in one key) halfway through the night till he found what he wanted, and then put words to the whole tune. Next morning, he and Belle played it for Ziegfeld, who turned it over to an arranger.

It was this song that Belle Baker now stepped up and sang. It was "*Blue Skies*" and it stopped the show cold. The audience wouldn't let her off. She did twenty-seven encores. On the twenty-eighth, she blew the lines. Ziegfeld had them put a spotlight on Irving Berlin, who stood up and fed her the words.

It was a great moment-provided you weren't Rodgers and Hart. Nothing they had written came anywhere close to the verve of the Berlin song, and nobody knew it better than they.

When the show was over, Dick slunk off in one direction, and Larry, who always brought his mother to every opening, slunk off in another. On the sleet music of "**Blue Skies**," published shortly after the opening, there is a drawing of Belle Baker tying strings around three embarrassed-looking men. Two of them look surprisingly like the composer and lyricist. It isn't difficult to imagine the reason for their embarrassment. The critics tore Betsy apart, and the show died on its feet with only 39 performances to its credit, a catastrophic flop.

The song, "**Blue Skies**" was composed in [1926](#) as a last minute addition to the [Rodgers and Hart musical](#), *Betsy*. Although the show only ran for 39 performances, "**Blue Skies**" was an instant success, with audiences on opening night demanding 28 encores of the piece from star, Belle Baker. During the final repetition, Baker forgot her lyrics, prompting Berlin to sing them from his seat in the front row.

In [1927](#), the music was published and [Ben Selvin](#)'s recorded version was a #1 hit. That same year, it became one of the first songs to be featured in a [talkie](#), when [Al Jolson](#) performed it in [The Jazz Singer](#). [1946](#) was also a notable year for the song, with a [Bing Crosby/Fred Astaire film](#) taking its title, and two recorded versions by [Count Basie](#) and [Benny Goodman](#) reaching #8 and #9 on the pop charts, respectively. Crossing genres, [Willie Nelson](#)'s recording of "**Blue Skies**" was a #1 [country music](#) hit in [1978](#). The fact that it became a No. 1 country song (especially by a Texan artist) was not entirely surprising as it clearly was a major western swing and country standard as a 1939 version by Moon Mullican and a 1962 Jim Reeves interpretation have shown.

"**Blue Skies**" is one of many popular songs whose lyrics use a "[Bluebird of Happiness](#)" as a symbol of cheer: "Bluebirds singing a song -- Nothing but bluebirds all day long."

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## Irving Berlin

Irving Berlin ([May 11, 1888](#) – [September 22, 1989](#)) was a [Russian](#)-born [American composer](#) and [lyricist](#), and one of the most prolific American [songwriters](#) in history. Berlin was one of the few [Tin Pan Alley/Broadway](#) songwriters who wrote both lyrics and music for his songs. Although he never learned to [read music](#) beyond a rudimentary level, with the help of various uncredited musical assistants or collaborators, he eventually composed over 3,000 songs, many of which (e.g. "[God Bless America](#)", "[White Christmas](#)", "[Anything You Can Do](#)", "[There's No Business Like Show Business](#)") left an indelible mark on music and culture worldwide. He composed seventeen film scores and twenty-one [Broadway](#) scores.

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## Audio/Video Links

Choral [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nVpJR\\_ztio](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nVpJR_ztio)

Alice Faye <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJplXY8fekc>  
Nancy Evans (Wayne King orchestra) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGxoMwUSg9E>  
Jim Reeves <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkjXieeVSJk>  
Al Jolson <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKU43kD1Dmo>  
Frank Sinatra <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6cZKcRhQes&feature=related>  
Willie Nelson <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSCplj40uuY&feature=related>  
Ella Fitzgerald <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tr6EldSFwOI&feature=related>  
Irving Berlin sings "Oh How I Hate To Get Up In The Morning"  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71smG5d29to&feature=related>

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### Blue Skies

I was blue, just as blue as I could be  
Ev'ry day was a cloudy day for me  
Then good luck came a-knocking at my door  
Skies were gray but they're not gray anymore

Blue skies  
Smiling at me  
Nothing but blue skies  
Do I see

Bluebirds  
Singing a song  
Nothing but bluebirds  
All day long

Never saw the sun shining so bright  
Never saw things going so right  
Noticing the days hurrying by  
When you're in love, my how they fly

Blue days  
All of them gone  
Nothing but blue skies  
From now on

[2]  
I should care if the wind blows east or west

I should fret if the worst looks like the best  
I should mind if they say it can't be true  
I should smile, that's exactly what I do