

The States Collection – Iowa – The Silver Triangle

By Claudia Haas

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CAST: 3

Meredith Wilson (male) late 30's-40; composer, musician

Sid (male) late 30's-40; friend of Meredith's; producer

Rini (female) 20's; opera singer; Meredith's second wife

TIME: 1948-49

PLACE: Meredith's home in Mason City, Iowa. Meredith is working at a desk. This will also double as a Sid's desk in his office in NYC.

SYNOPSIS: Meredith Wilson struggles to create "Music Man."

The States Collection – Iowa - The Silver Triangle

Lights up on MEREDITH working away at his desk. He is crossing out long passages of his script “The Silver Triangle” (to be reworked later into “The Music Man.”) Sid is off on the side. MEREDITH is remembering his conversation with him in NYC.

SID

Meredith, Meredith, what are you thinking? You cannot start a musical with a long monologue about the troubles in River City. You are setting up the audience for a boring night of Iowans complaining to each other.

MEREDITH

Are you saying the entire monologue has to go? It has a nice rhythm to it.

SID

Rhythm, schmythm. It’ the opening! Give them some razzma-taz! Beautiful girls. Lots of cute legs.

MEREDITH

This is set in Iowa.

SID

That’s your first mistake.

MEREDITH

There’s more?

SID

Your leads are a con man and a pitiful boy in a wheel chair.

MEREDITH

I want to represent many types of people.

SID

So you begin with a man with no morals and a child who will never walk? Think some more, Buddy – before you do any more work. Musicals are not about complaining, wheelchairs, and immorality.

MEREDITH

That’s not/

(SID abruptly exits.)

... what this musical is about.

(RINI enters.)

RINI

It's so lovely to have you back home. Why don't you give it a rest?

MEREDITH

They hate it, Rini. They hated the opening. They hated my leading man. They even hated my little boy. How can you hate a little boy? A little boy confined to a wheelchair? A little boy afraid to speak because nobody listens to a kid in a wheelchair?

RINI

Didn't they like the music? "Till There Was You" just soars.

MEREDITH

They said, "too little too late." And there isn't enough razz-a-ma-tazz.

RINI

I think "76 Trombones" has all the razz-a-ma-tazz you need.

MEREDITH

They agree on that point. Sid says it should open the show.

RINI

And you don't.

MEREDITH

I want them to meet Harold Hill first. I want them to see who he is at the beginning of the show so that the audience can appreciate it when he changes.

RINI

But ...

MEREDITH

If I don't pay attention to the producers, *nobody* will see "The Boy With the Triangle." It will never be produced and it won't matter what I think.

RINI

About that title ...

MEREDITH

Not you, too!

RINI

"The Boy With the Triangle" tells the audience that the musical is about a little boy. But it isn't. It's about your shifty salesman Harold Hill and of course, Marion. How about "Harold and Marion?"

MEREDITH

It doesn't sing.

RINI

Neither does the title "The Boy With the Triangle." Think about it.

(RINI exits. MEREDITH goes back to work. Time passes. SID appears.)

MEREDITH

So what do you think?

SID

So the boy no longer plays the triangle. Good. That's boring, Now he plays the piccolo and your title is what –

MEREDITH

"The Boy With the Piccolo."

SID

Think some more. That play is not about the boy. And get him out of the wheelchair. If we're going to stick a kid in the play, I want him to dance. At least that would be cute.

(SID exits. RINI appears.)

MEREDITH

No and no.

RINI

That's what I said. The play is not about the boy.

MEREDITH

But I've grown attached to him. After ten rewrites and eight more songs, he has my heart. Sid wants him out of the wheelchair.

RINI

I agree. It's too limiting.

MEREDITH

That's my point – wheelchairs are limiting.

RINI

Maybe another disability. Back in the day when I was still singing, there was an opera singer with a lisp. She could control it when she sang but never when she spoke. So she never spoke. She only sang.

(RINI exits.)

A lisp?
Meredith

(Sid appears.)

Sid
A lisp? Onstage? Will the audiences be able to understand him?

Meredith
He won't speak much – until the end of course. Somewhere along the line, Harold helps him overcome the lisp.

Sid
How?

Meredith
Through singing.

Sid
And the title is now?????

Meredith
“The Boy With the Song in His Heart.”

Sid
Too long.

(Rini enters with some music.)

Rini
I love “Goodnight My Someone.” Meredith, this music is too good to be shut away. You have to get this onstage.

Meredith
I don't have an opening. Sid worries nobody will understand the boy if he has a lisp.

Rini
I keep telling you, the play is not about the boy. It's about Harold and Marion.

Meredith
But it's the boy who undergoes the biggest change.

Rini
No. It's Harold who goes from a con man to a decent man. The boy is a sub plot.

MEREDITH

Harold can't be the lead! It's a musical and Harold has no music in him. It's a sham.

RINI

But Harold does have music in him. Which he discovers at the end when he changes. He is such a music man.

MEREDITH

Music Man?

RINI

That's what I said.

MEREDITH

"The Music Man."

(Beat.)

SID

(Peering out.)

I like it.

(And maybe we hear some music from the play as the lights dim. It depends on your music license.)

END OF PLAY

The States Collection – Iowa – Hogback Covered Bridge

Lights up on Greg inside the Hogback covered bridge near Winterset Iowa. He is going through a guest booklet having from somewhere inside the bridge. He finds what jhe is looking for and runs his fingers over the entry.