

Johnny Green's *Body and Soul*. From New York to London and Back.

Albert Haim

John Simpson's Blog, August 13, 2011

It starts in silence. By the end, the singer has thrown him- or herself melodramatically, almost operatically on the mercy of a lost love. It's drenched in self-pity, but was written for and first performed by a woman once dubbed "Hollywood's first maneater." One of its most famous covers includes no vocal at all, and barely follows the tune. And it's gone on to become, arguably, the single most-recorded pop standard in history.

Introduction.

Body and Soul, a 1929 composition by Johnny Green (music), Edward Heyman, Robert Sour and Frank Eyton (lyrics) is the most recorded song of all times. Tom Lord's jazz discography lists over 2000 recordings and broadcast performances of the song and there probably are nearly 3000. *Body and Soul* is both a jazz standard and a popular song. In view of the importance of the tune in the realms of jazz and popular music, it is surprising that the literature (both print and internet) provides incorrect information about the genesis of the song –where, when and for whom it was composed and what are the dates of the first recordings.

It has been reported that *Body and Soul* was sung by Gertrude Lawrence in England in the summer of 1929. The song spread like wildfire (in the very words of Johnny Green himself, see below) and by the end of 1930, there were seventeen recordings of the song in England. It was brought back to the United States for the Broadway revue *Three's a Crowd* which premiered at the Selwyn Theatre on October 15, 1930. *Body and Soul* was sung by Libby Holman in the revue. The song became very popular in the United States, and by

the end of 1930 it had been recorded about a dozen times. There were jazz renditions of the tune in 1930 by Louis Armstrong, in 1935 by Benny Goodman and Henry “Red” Allen, in 1938 by Chu Berry with Roy Elridge. But it was not until 1940 that *Body and Soul* attained the status of a true jazz standard following the legendary October 11, 1939 recording by tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins.



Figure 1, Record Label B-1523-A

Hawkins' interpretation of *Body and Soul* heralded a new era in jazz. The four-bar piano introduction with a statement of the melody was followed by Hawkins' two choruses of improvisation over the rather complex harmonic structure of the AABA tune. There was barely a reference to Green's melody; thus the recording has been viewed as a harbinger of modern jazz/bebop.

The purpose of the present article is to provide new documentation about the circumstances surrounding the early history of this classic tune and to correct literature errors.

Was *Body and Soul* Composed in New York or in England? In 1929 or 1930? For Gertrude Lawrence or Libby Holman?

There is abundant, documented evidence that *Body and Soul* was composed in New York in 1929. Nevertheless, several sources make the claim that the song was composed in England in 1930, and, in some instances, that it was an English tune! Some of the erroneous reports are listed here.

This short notice was published in the August 31, 1930 issue of the New York Times: "*Body and Soul*, an English tune which was played everywhere in London early this summer and is getting around over here, will be one of Miss Holman's numbers in *Three's A Crowd*."

The July 12, 1932 issue of Variety reported: "Johnny Green, American, wrote *Body and Soul* in England, for which reason the American-authored song was first popularized over there."

The following is a quote from the internet site jazzstandards.com: "While in London, Hollywood songwriter/conductor Johnny Green wrote *Body and Soul* for Gertrude Lawrence."

The article in Wikipedia about *Body and Soul* provides conflicting information. From the first paragraph: "*Body and Soul* was written in New York City for the British actress and singer Gertrude Lawrence, who introduced it to London audiences." In contrast, the second paragraph begins as follows: "While in London, Hollywood songwriter/conductor Johnny Green wrote *Body and Soul* for Gertrude Lawrence." Obviously, the two statements are inconsistent with each other. Wikipedia further informs us that "*Body and Soul* is a popular song and jazz standard written in 1930." Dozens of internet sources also report that *Body and Soul* was written in 1930.

At least one jazz history book reports that *Body and Soul* "was composed in 1930 for the Broadway revue *Three's A Crowd*." [1] Several books also provide the incorrect information that *Body and Soul* was composed for Libby Holman's *Three's A Crowd*. [2]

The Johnny Green obituary in the Los Angeles Times of May 17, 1989 includes the following item: "In 1931, they [Green and Heyman] wrote a package of four songs for Gertrude Lawrence for \$250. One of them had to be a comedy number, one an up-tempo item, one a ballad, one a torch song. The torch song was 'Body and Soul,' Green said not long ago."

Conclusive evidence that *Body and Soul* was composed in New York in 1929, long before the idea of the show *Three's A Crowd* was conceived, is provided in the following documentation.

From the August 21, 1929 issue of Variety: "Miss Lawrence said that just before sailing for England (she left New York on August 1, 1929 on the S. S. Aquitania, bound for Southampton) she had placed under contract John W. Green, Edward Heyman and Edward [sic; Sour's first name was Robert] Sour a trio of young American composers in whose future she had great confidence, to write songs especially for her use."

This account is corroborated by Johnny Green's and Gertrude Lawrence's own words. Johnny Green told Fred Hall [3]: "During the period that I wrote *Body and Soul* with Eddie Heyman I was Gertrude Lawrence's accompanist. She wanted some special material so she commissioned Eddie and me to write four special pieces." In her autobiography, [4] Gertrude Lawrence wrote, "My eye lighted on the bulky case on top of one of my trunks. In it was the saxophone Johnny was teaching me to play. I took the sax out of its case and blew a wailing note. 'My god, it sounds like a French taxicab,' he cried. I found out in 1929 that those discordant notes on the saxophone were the inspiration for one of Johnny's greatest song hits, *Body and Soul*, I took the song to England with me and later gave it to Libby Holman."

Moreover, there is strong evidence that Johnny Green could not have been in England in 1929 and 1930. Incoming New York and United Kingdom passenger listings [ancestry.com, Ellis Island records] demonstrate that Johnny Green went to England in 1926, 1928 and 1933, but not in 1929 or 1930. The first time that Johnny Green went to England was in 1926. He was a member of the orchestra of the S. S. Leviathan returning to New York on April 26, 1926 from

Southampton. In the passenger manifest, John W. Green is described as 19 years of age (he was really 17), 5'5", 145 lbs, engaged in New York on April 8, 1926. The second visit of Johnny Green to England was in 1928. He arrived in Southampton, England on June 29, 1928 on the S. S. Majestic with his father Vivian, mother Irma and younger brother Richard. They returned to New York on September 18, 1928 on the S. S. Olympic. For his third visit, Johnny Green arrived in Southampton on October 5, 1933 on the S. S. Olympic having left New York six days earlier with his (first) wife Carol. Johnny Green is described as music composer, age 24. Johnny and wife Carol left England on the S.S. Bremen on February 3, 1934 and arrived in New York on February 8, 1934. At that time they resided in New York City at 430 East 86th Street, between First and York Avenues (Upper East Side), a fancy, 17-story building dating from 1931.

In addition, newspaper and magazine articles demonstrate that Johnny Green was living in New York in 1929 and 1930. Radio magazines give listings on Mondays in 1929 for pianist Johnny Green's broadcasts over WOR, one of New York City's leading radio stations. In 1930, Johnny Green was a member, in its Long Island studios, of Paramount's musical staff as piano player and musical advisor.

Finally, the *piece de resistance*: From an interview of Johnny Green by Laurie Henshaw [Melody Maker, May 31, 1952]: "I wrote *Coquette* in 1928; I was 18 then. I had just graduated from Harvard. I wrote *Body and Soul* a year later back in the States. I was working as Gertrude Lawrence's accompanist, and that was one of four songs I wrote specially for Gerdie. The other three? I can't even remember the titles."

Evidently, the Green-Heyman-Sour team wrote *Body and Soul* in New York in 1929 for Gertrude Lawrence. Thus, all reports that it was written in England or in 1930 or for Libby Holman for her Broadway revue *Three's A Crowd* are incorrect.

Gertrude Lawrence and Johnny Green.

By the summer of 1929, when Johnny Green composed *Body and Soul* for Gertrude Lawrence, the two had known each other for about seven years. In 1922, when Johnny was just 14 years old, he was maestro-arranger of a dance band, The Harmonians, all students at the Horace Mann School, and had secured a broadcast over network radio. Around that time, Johnny Green met Gertrude Lawrence through the backers of *Charlot's Revue* who were friends of the Green family. Johnny invited Gertrude to one of the Harmonians performances. Gertrude was impressed by this precocious musician and hired him to accompany her at the piano in some of her appearances.

Another meeting of Gertrude Lawrence and Johnny Green took place in 1924. After the closing of the Broadway show *Charlo't Revue* on September 20, 1924, the company moved to Boston and continued performing the show. In her autobiography Gertrude writes: "The house was sold out night after night to Harvard boys, many of whom had already seen the show in New York several times over, and had come backstage and were friends of the cast. Johnny Green was one of them. Johnny came round to my dressing room the night before we closed Boston to take me out to supper. 'I can't go,' I told him. 'I'm ill. I have a terrible cold.' Gertrude proceeds to tell an amusing anecdote. Johnny told her that he had the Harvard (instant) cure for her cold. The cure consisted of drinking a large amount of castor oil mixed with sarsaparilla, which Johnny proceeded to feed Gertrude. Gertrude remarked that the cure might work for Harvard students, but in her case, after spending time in the bathroom being "embarrassingly sick," the cure failed with her. She remarked, "I was ill and miserable all next day." [4]

The Gertrude-Johnny friendship continued for many years after *Body and Soul*. In 1933-1934, Johnny Green spent several months in London. At that time, he wrote *Big Business*, the first musical comedy written especially for BBC Radio. Gertrude Lawrence recorded two of the numbers in the production: *An Hour Ago This Minute* and *What Now*. In 1942, at the 60th benefit of the Actors Guild [New York Times, February 22, 1942], Gertrude Lawrence, accompanied by Johnny Green at the piano, sang several of the songs that had made her famous. In 1943, Gertrude sang the song "We'll Meet in the Funniest

Places,” written especially for her by Johnny Green, in Sol Lesser’s production of “Stage Canteen.”

Gertrude Lawrence in New York and London in 1929.

By 1929, Gertrude Lawrence had starred in four Broadway musical shows:

- *Andre Charlot’s Revue of 1924*, January 9, 1924 - September 20, 1924.
- *Charlot Revue*, November 10, 1925 - March 6, 1926.
- *Oh, Kay*, Nov 8, 1926 - ca. June 1927.
- *Treasure Girl*, November 8, 1928 - January 5, 1929.

The first three shows were very successful, but *Treasure Girl*, which had a good cast (Clifton Webb) and songs by George and Ira Gershwin, turned out to be a flop.

Around Christmas 1928, as *Treasure Girl* was about to close, an opportunity arose for Gertrude Lawrence to make her first film. She was engaged by Paramount Studios on Long Island to make a full-length film first called *The Gay Lady* and later re-titled *The Battle of Paris*. This was also the debut on film for Arthur Treacher and it included two songs by Cole Porter. The film was released on November 30, 1929. Although the Long Island Paramount studios did not have the prestige of the Hollywood location, Gertrude found it convenient because it allowed her to keep her contacts on Broadway.

From her contact with American theatrical producer Gilbert Miller came her chance to star in the Fall of 1929, not in a musical, but a legitimate play that had been running in London as *By Candle-Light* and renamed *Candle-Light* for the New York engagement. Upon learning that Gertrude was going to do the play, her friend Noel Coward cabled her: “LEGITIMATE AT LAST. WON’T MOTHER BE PLEASED?” Gertrude sailed to England where she arrived on August 7, 1929. This was reported in the November 1929 issue of *Screenland*. “Two of our loveliest ladies have left us for London-but only temporarily, thank goodness. Gloria Swanson and Gertrude Lawrence are both sojourning in merrie [sic] England-Gloria on a

combined business and pleasure jaunt, and Miss Lawrence to play a limited engagement in a new play called 'By Candlelight,' which she will bring back to Broadway with her when the short run in London is completed. Leslie Howard will play opposite her, and I can't help wondering when Mr. Howard is going to make a screen debut. It's about time, for he is one of the most ingratiating personalities in the modern theater."

Rehearsals for *Candle-Light* took place in London with two other British actors, Reginald Owen and Leslie Howard. They had a one-week try-out in Southampton. Gertrude boarded the S.S. Majestic on September 4, 1929 in Southampton and Leslie Howard the S.S. Samaria in Liverpool on September 3, 1929. They arrived in New York in good time for additional rehearsals for the opening of the play on September 30, 1929. Already in July 1929, there was an ad in *Variety* for the opening of *By Candle-Light* (before it was changed to *Candle-Light*).

GILBERT MILLER
Will Present
GERTRUDE LAWRENCE
in
“BY CANDLE LIGHT”
Adapted from the German by P. G. WODEHOUSE
Opening Sept. 30 at the
EMPIRE THEATRE, NEW YORK

Figure 2. *Variety*, July 1929.

One of the contacts Gertrude maintained in New York in the summer of 1929 was her friend John Waldo "Johnny" Green. Although she was planning a legitimate play for her next Broadway appearance in the Fall of 1929, Gertrude did not neglect her musical career. This was duly reported in the August 21, 1929 issue of *Variety*. [Sour's first name was Robert, not Edward].

Gertrude Lawrence Has Them Under Contract for Musicals

London, Aug. 20.

Gertrude Lawrence asked whether her debut in the legit field in "By Candle Light" meant her complete withdrawal from the musical comedy field in the event of the play being successful in New York, replied it was her hope to alternate each season between the legitimate and musical stage.

To substantiate her statement Miss Lawrence said that just before sailing for England she had placed under contract John W. Green, Edward Heyman and Edward Sour, a trio of young American composers in whose future she had great confidence, to write songs especially for her use. It is her opinion that these song writers, all sons of wealthy New York families, will emulate the success of the Rodgers, Fields and Hart combination, who first obtained recognition with the "Garrick Gaieties" produced by the Theatre Guild in New York.

Figure 3. Variety, August 21, 1929

Body and Soul Goes to London.

As shown above, in the summer of 1929, Gertrude Lawrence commissioned three young men, composer Johnny Green (age 20), and lyricists Edward Heyman (age 22) and Robert Sour (age 23), to write four songs for her. In Johnny Green's own words [1980s interview of Johnny Green by Deena Rosenberg, transcribed by Peter Mintun]:

“Gertie needed some special material. So what do you do? She wanted four songs. You write what we call a rhythm song, a ballad, the inevitable, in those days, the torch song, and what we would call a comedy number (or a ‘point’ number), and *Body and Soul* was the torch song. That’s where I did, in the ‘release’ the esoteric kind of things that I had done in *Coquette* that Carmen Lombardo talked me out of. But I did it in *Body and Soul* and Eddie [Heyman] and a fellow called Bobby (or Robert) Sour [who later became the president of BMI] and was also working in Wall Street, we formed a triumvirate that we thought would cause DeSylva, Brown and Henderson quickly to shoot themselves, and the Gershwin Brothers and Guy Bolton to jump off the Brooklyn Bridge.”

Gertrude bought an interest in the songs for \$250 and, as reported in several magazines, she took *Body and Soul* to England with her where it became very popular. Here is the account by Rudy Vallee in Radio Digest, December 1930. “A short time ago he [Johnny Green] was commissioned to write a song for Gertrude Lawrence to sing in England. Together with Ed Hymann [sic; correct spelling Heyman] a young man who wrote the lyrics of one of the songs in my picture, *The Vagabond Lover*, he evolved a melody which they subsequently called *Body and Soul*. Miss Lawrence proceeded to sing the song in England and there it became sensational.”

The two dominant bands in England in the 1920s and 1930s were Bert Ambrose's and Jack Hylton's. Ambrose was born Benjamin Baruch Ambrose in Warsaw, Poland on September 11, 1896 and died in Leeds, England on June 11, 1971. He was a violinist and a

very popular big band leader in England from the 1920s into the 1940s. Hylton was born John Greenhalgh Hilton in Bolton, Lancashire, England on July 2, 1892 and died in London, England on January 29, 1965. He was a pianist, band leader (sometimes known as the British Paul Whiteman) and music impresario. Both Ambrose and Hylton were key figures in the saga of *Body and Soul*: Ambrose discovered the tune, but Hylton was the first to record it.

Johnny Green himself provides a fascinating account as to how Ambrose discovered *Body and Soul*. From Fred Hall [3]: “Bert Ambrose was home dressing to go to the evening session at the May Fair Hotel where he played with the Ambrose orchestra. He had his wireless on and he heard Gertrude Lawrence singing this song he’d never heard before. He rushed to the phone and got Gertrude on the phone and said, ‘What is that song? That *Body and Soul*, who wrote it?’ She said ‘Johnny Green.’ He said, ‘Our Johnny Green, our *Coquette* Johnny Green?’ She said, ‘Yes, the same.’ He said, ‘Well how do you come by it?’ She said, ‘He wrote it for me.’ Well. I will make it very brief from here, she gave him a manuscript copy that she had-overnight he had one of his guys do a ‘scratch’ as we call them. The next night he started playing in the Mayfair [sic] and it was unprecedented. Every band in London, every artist in London was coming in and taking it down-that was literally true. It spread like wildfire and the next thing I got a call from the late Henry Spitzer at Harms. He said, ‘Did you and Heyman write a song called *Body and Soul*?’ I said, ‘Yeah, we wrote it for Gertie Lawrence.’ He said, ‘Are you aware of what a smash it is in England?’ I said, ‘well I heard that she did it and that some people were playing it.’ You know I was so naïve at that point, it’s hard to believe, but I was. Anyway, he slapped a contract on Eddie Heyman and me and it was published in England, not in this country.”

Virtually the same account was given by Johnny Green forty years earlier in an interview published in the *Music Maker* issue of May 31, 1952. However, contrasting information is provided by Lew Stone in the *Melody Maker* of June 7, 1952. Lew Stone (1898–1969) was a British bandleader and arranger. In the 1920s, he made arrangements for the Savoy Orpheans and Ray Starita’s band. In the late 1920s and early 1930s Stone was the principal arranger for Ambrose’s orchestra. Having read Green’s interview in the *Music*

Maker of May 31, 1952, Lew Stone sent in to the magazine Music Maker his own account of the events surrounding the premiere of *Body and Soul* in the May Fair Hotel. In the summer of 1929, Stone recounts, Ambrose and Bert Read, the Ambrose band pianist, took a two-week vacation and Stone replaced Read. Stone tells that one night Gertrude Lawrence went to the May Fair Hotel with a pile of music manuscripts and asked him to look them over. Stone writes. "I took the manuscripts home. There were about twenty in all. On going through them the next day, I came across one song that was scrawled so badly I had to rewrite. When I finally did sort it out I was so impressed with the song that I wrote an arrangement then and there and I took it to the May Fair that same evening. The number had so much individuality that people kept asking for it. The band played it night after night. Ammy (the nickname used by band members to refer to Ambrose) came back from the south of France [in fact Ambrose and Read were in New York, not in France at this time] to find *Body and Soul* a hit at the May Fair. It was this that started Johnny Green's tune on the way to publication and public fame. Ammy then called me to say that he had had a cable from Gertrude Lawrence for the song copy of *Body and Soul*. Unfortunately I was unable to return this and the remaining manuscripts that she had left in my possession. I was taking them to the Mayfair [sic] one night when I dropped in at Lyon's Corner House for a cup of tea. I calmly went on my way. Then to my horror, I discovered that I had left all the manuscripts behind. I tried to trace them. But it was in vain. They have been lost to this day. Only the intrinsic merit of *Body and Soul* had saved it from a similar fate."

Green's and Stone's accounts differ in important respects. According to Green, Ambrose heard Gertrude Lawrence sing *Body and Soul* on the radio, asked one of his arrangers to make an orchestration and premiered the song in his nightly performances in the May Fair Hotel the next day. According to Stone, Gertrude Lawrence brought to him twenty music manuscripts at a time when Ambrose was on vacation. Stone examined the manuscripts the next day, chose *Body and Soul*, produced an orchestration and played it that night in the May Fair Hotel. There is no way to reconcile these two accounts.

There is another discrepancy between Stone's account and a report by British record producer, jazz collector and vocalist Chris Ellis.

Stone claimed that he left the *Body and Soul* manuscript, given to him by Gertrude Lawrence, in a tea house (Lyons) in London. Will Friedwald reports that, according to Chris Ellis, Green left the only copy of the *Body and Soul* manuscript in a cab in New York City and had to reconstruct the score from memory. [5] In March 2015, British jazz historian and sound engineer Nick Dellow telephoned Chris Ellis about this issue, and reported the following to the author as a result of his interview. In the 1970s or 1980s, Johnny Green was in London in connection with his position as board member of ASCAP. At that time, Green also had a performance on piano at the luxurious Claridge Hotel. Chris Ellis was a member of the audience on that occasion and when Johnny Green asked for requests, Ellis asked for several songs written by Green in the 1930s. After the performance ended, Green sat at the bar, called Chris over to join him and asked how he knew so much about songs from years before: Chris's response: "I am a producer of LPs with songs from the 20s, 30s and 40s." The subject of *Body and Soul* came up and Green recounted that he had composed the tune for Gertrude Lawrence in London, that she had paid Green £100 for the song and that she controlled the copyright. When the song became a hit, Gertrude Lawrence felt guilty and returned to Johnny Green the money and ownership of the song. Furthermore, Green recalled that he had left the *Body and Soul* music manuscript in a cab in London.

There is still another version about the loss of the *Body and Soul* music manuscript. The following is part of a letter dated August 8, 2000 from discographer/jazz historian Brian Rust to pianist/performer/music consultant Peter Mintun:

"I heard somewhere that Johnny Green composed it while in London in 1929, but having put the finishing touches to his music (and arrangement ?) while having a meal in a London restaurant, he got up and paid his bill and walked out of the place, absent-mindedly leaving the manuscript on the table. He went back on discovering his loss, but the table had been cleared and the MSS. thrown out for paper salvage, never to be seen again. He had to start all over again, allegedly with a different melody line, but of course, this may be just another legend someone dreamed up years later."

Evidently, the various versions of the circumstances whereby the *Body and Soul* manuscript was misplaced are inconsistent with each other. Was the manuscript left by Johnny Green in a taxi in London or New York or in a restaurant in London or by Lew Stone in a teahouse in London? It is likely that the *Body and Soul* music manuscript was misplaced, but it does not seem possible to state conclusively at the present time by whom and where the manuscript was mislaid. However, In view of the documented fact that Green composed *Body and Soul* in New York and gave the manuscript to Gertrude Lawrence before she sailed to England, we can rule out the stories about Green leaving the manuscript in a taxi or restaurant in London. Therefore, we are left with two possibilities: Green left the manuscript in a taxi in New York or Stone left it in a teahouse in London. It must be pointed out that Stone was clumsy and absent-minded, so much so that his fellow musicians gave him the nickname “Joe Clumsy.” Thus, Stone’s account that he left the manuscript in a teahouse in London has some factual support.

Using New York and United Kingdom incoming passenger listings, I have been able to narrow down the time frame when Gertrude Lawrence gave Johnny Green’s music manuscript of *Body and Soul* to Ambrose or Lew Stone. Gertrude arrived in England on August 7, 1929 on the S.S. Aquitania and left for New York on the S.S. White Star on September 4, 1929. Bert Ambrose took a vacation in the United States in August 1929. He left Southampton on the S. S. Leviathan on August 6, 1929 and returned to England on the S.S. Leviathan on August 25, 1929. Thus, Gertrude and Ambrose overlapped in England between August 25 and September 4, 1929, a rather narrow window of opportunity. On the other hand, Gertrude and Stone were simultaneously in England for nearly a month – August 7 to September 4, 1929. Two other pieces of information are relevant here. First, there is no listing of a Gertrude Lawrence broadcast in the BBC database [BBC Genome’s Project] for the period August 25 - September 4, 1929 when Gertrude and Ambrose were both in England. In fact, there is no listing for the entire period August 7 to September 4, 1929 when Gertrude was residing in London. Second, Lew Stone, in his account, refers to Ambrose’s vacation –confirmed by incoming and outgoing passenger information – at the time that Gertrude gave him Green’s manuscript. Based on this documentation, we tend to favor Stone’s account as to how

Johnny Green's music manuscript of *Body and Soul* became part of Ambrose's orchestra repertoire. Stone was a witness to the episode, whereas Green's account is certainly second-hand as he was not in England when *Body and Soul* was premiered by Ambrose's orchestra. Since there are contemporary accounts that Gertrude Lawrence sang *Body and Soul* in England but no listings of her having appeared over BBC radio at the time, I suggest that Gertrude sang the song at the May Fair, accompanied by Ambrose's orchestra.

English Copyright.

Body and Soul was copyrighted in England on February 18, 1930.



BODY AND SOUL

(SUPPLICATION)

WORDS BY
ROBERT SOUR
EDWARD HEYMAN &
FRANK EYTON

MUSIC BY
JOHN W. GREEN

PRICE 2¹/₂ NET

FOR THE CONTINENT OF
NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA
HARMS INCORPORATED
62-64 WEST 43RD STREET
NEW YORK

FOR ALL OTHER COUNTRIES
CHAPPELL & CO. LTD.
50 NEW BOND STREET
LONDON, W.1.
AND SYDNEY

M.H. Rask

Figure 4. Cover of Sheet Music, Copyright England, February 18, 1930.

It will be seen that both Harms Incorporated (New York) and Chappell & Co. Ltd. (London) are credited on the cover. Chappell and Company was a music publishing company founded in London in 1811. T. B. Harms, Inc. was a music publishing company founded in New York in 1875. In 1929 Chappell & Co. purchased several American music publishing houses, including Harms Inc.

As I indicated above, *Body and Soul* was written in New York in the summer of 1929 by Johnny Green (music) and Edward Heyman and Robert Sour (lyrics). Edward Heyman (1907-1981) was a lyricist who collaborated with Johnny Green in *I Cover the Waterfront*, *Out of Nowhere* and *Easy Come, Easy Go*. He wrote *When I Fall in Love* with Victor Young and *You Oughtta Be in Pictures* with Dana Suesse. Heyman was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1975. Johnny Green had been inducted in 1972. Robert Sour (1906-1985) was a lyricist who collaborated with Johnny Green and Edward Heyman in the song *Candlelight* copyrighted on November 27, 1929 and dedicated to Gertrude Lawrence on the occasion of her starring in the Broadway play of the same name. Sour was lyrics editor for Broadcast Music Inc. in 1940 and became president in 1966.

It will be seen that the cover of the sheet music for *Body and Soul* published in London also includes the name of Frank Eyton as lyricist. Frank Eyton (1894-1962) was a British lyricist active mostly in the London West End theater. He wrote the music for the Hollywood film *Body and Soul*. According to the April 30, 1948 issue of the New York Post, "*Body and Soul* could not be published in England unless lyrics were revised. Frank Eyton made the revisions." Thus, his name appeared in the copyright and on the cover of the sheet music.

In his interview by Fred Hall, Johnny Green stated, "It [*Body and Soul*] became, I don't want to sound egotistical, it became the anthem of Europe." Indeed, the popularity spread from England to the continent, and the song was copyrighted by Chappell S. A. in Paris on November 20, 1930 under the title *Corps et âme, Le plus joli poème d'amour*, paroles anglaises de Robert Sour, Edward Heyman, Frank Eyton; adaptation française de André Mauprey; musique de

John W. Green.” André Mauprey (1881-1939) was a French screenplay writer, lyricist, composer and actor. His songs were interpreted by Edith Piaf and Marlene Dietrich, among others. He was well-known for his work in the 1933 film “L'opéra de quat'sous ,” the French version of “The Three-Penny Opera.”

Finally, I find it fascinating that the sub-title “Supplication” is written under the main title “Body and Soul.” Indeed, a supplication as seen in several phrases of the lyrics:

- My heart is sad and lonely

For you I sigh, for you dear only

- I spend my days in longing

- Are you pretending it looks like the ending

Unless, I could have one more chance to prove dear

The First Recordings of *Body and Soul* in England.

As a consequence of its enormous popularity, *Body and Soul* was recorded seventeen times in England in 1930. Although *Body and Soul* was discovered by Ambrose, and his orchestra was the first to play it in England, the honors for the first to record it go to Jack Hylton and His Orchestra with Pat O'Malley on vocal. The date was February 7, 1930 (some sources give February 14), the place was Kingsway Hall, London, one of the world's finest recording venues built in 1912 as part of the Wesley House, the home of the West London Mission. Take 2 of *Body and Soul* was issued on HMV B-5777. Note that although the recording includes a vocal refrain, credit for composing it is given only to “Green,” perhaps because the song had not been copyrighted yet (copyright dated February 14, 1930).

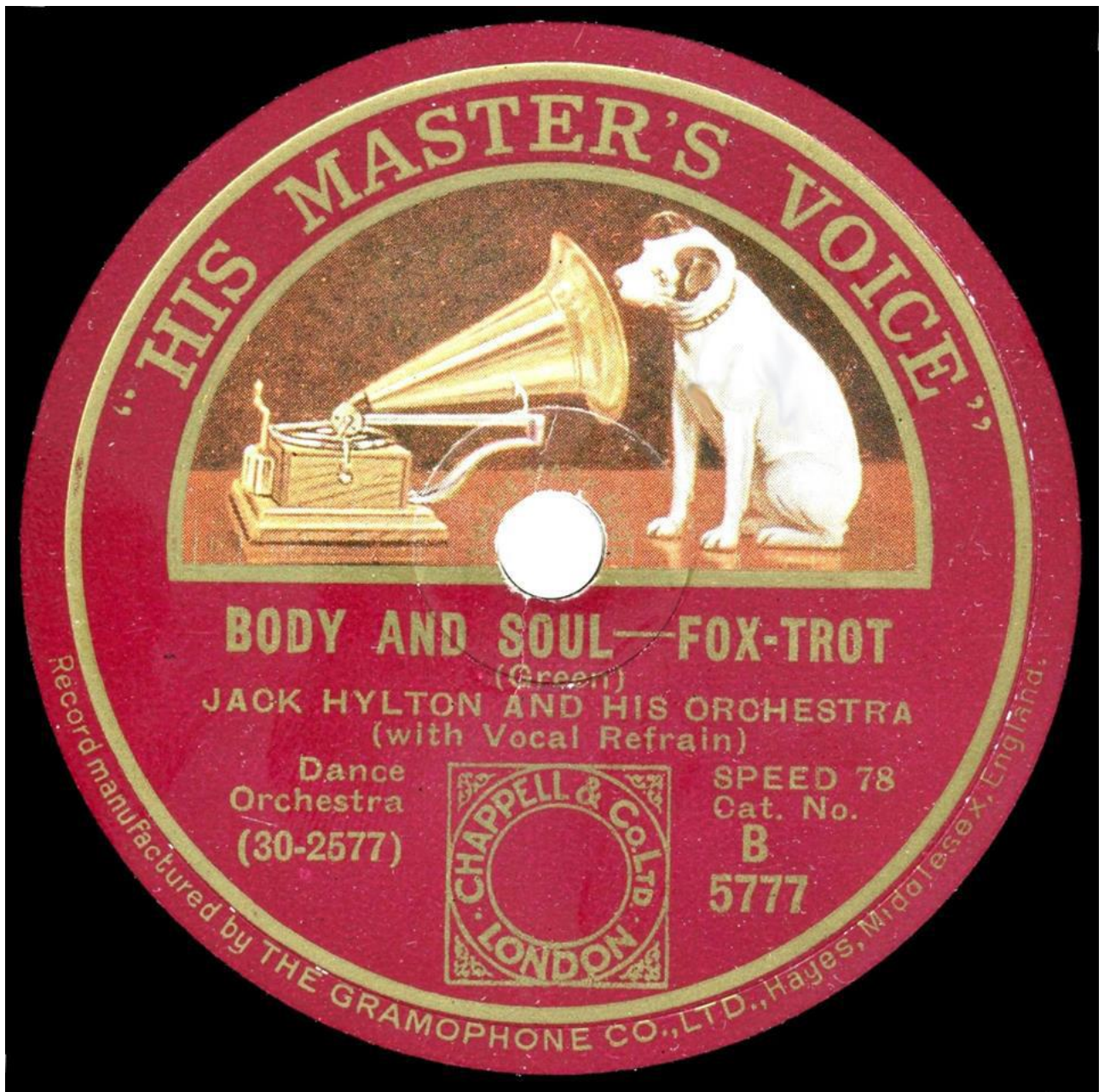


Figure 5. Record Label B 5777.

The next day, February 8, 1930 Ambrose and his orchestra recorded *Body and Soul*. Most historical accounts of the first recordings of *Body and Soul* give February 22, 1930 as the date for Ambrose's recording. It turns out that Ambrose and his orchestra waxed three takes of *Body and Soul* on February 8, 1930, matrix number MB-941, with take 3 being issued as Decca M-118. Again, composer credit is given only to "Green" although a vocal refrain was featured in Ambrose's rendition.



Figure 6. Record Label M-118.

Note that, in contrast with Hylton's recording which is described as a "Fox-trot," Ambrose's recording is a "Slow Blues." However, both interpretations conform to standard dance band styles prevalent at the time. It was fashionable in England at the time to use the word "blues" to describe the style of a recording, although it was not strictly

a blues. On February 22, 1930 (the date given in most discographies as the first time Ambrose recorded *Body and Soul*), Ambrose and his orchestra went back to the Chenil Gallery Studios in Chelsea, the location of Decca recording laboratories at the time, and waxed two additional takes; take 5, matrix number MB 941-5, was issued with the same Decca number as take 3. The two takes are very similar and feature Sam Browne as vocalist (who stated in an interview that *Body and Soul* was one of his favorite songs, together with *Night and Day* and *Let's Put Out the Lights and Go To Sleep*). For a 10-inch 78 rpm record, Ambrose's *Body and Soul* is inordinate in length: it clocks at about 4 minutes. Dick Hill commented on this recording: "Its arrangement by Lew Stone gave the orchestra nearly four minutes of playing time, and Hooley [Sylvester Ahola] remembers it as being one of those rare occasions on which Ambrose picked up his violin and noodled around on he melody." [6] We see on the record label the correct spelling "May Fair." Most references give "Mayfair."

Three days after Ambrose's second recording of *Body and Soul*, Jack Hylton and his orchestra went back to the recording studios of the Gramophone Co. Ltd., this time in Small Queen's Hall. Beginning in 1893, Queen's Hall in Langham Place, with a 2500 seat capacity and first-class acoustics, was the premier concert venue in London. The Small Queen's Hall, with a 500 seat capacity, was located at the top of the building and included a recording studio used by HMV. On February 25, 1931, Hylton's orchestra recorded a concert version of *Body and Soul*, matrix number Cc-18882; take 3 was issued in England as HMV C-1855, a 12-inch 78 rpm disk. It was also issued in December 1930 in the United States by Victor.



Figure 7. Record Label 36027-A

Note the sentence below the title: "From the Musical Comedy *Three's a Crowd*" which had opened on Broadway on October 15, 1930.

All the recordings cited so far include a vocalist. The first instrumental version was recorded by Carroll Gibbons on February 19, 1930 (that makes this version the third of four recorded in February 1930!), It was issued on HMV B3347 and features Gibbons on piano accompanied by violin and clarinet. In my opinion, this is the first jazz interpretation of *Body and Soul*, with Carroll Gibbons changing pace

several times during the record and playing variations on the melody. There is also a good, improvised violin solo.

There were several other recordings of *Body and Soul* in England in the spring and summer of 1930, among them recordings by Arthur Roseberry, Bidgood's Broadcasters, Spike Hughes, Jack Payne (rejected), Hal Swain, Herman Darewski, Pete Mandel, Nat Star, Jack Leon and Alfredo. As would be the case in the fall of 1930 in the US, several English female singers recorded *Body and Soul*. We cite here three, all recorded in March 1930: Marie Burke, Gracie Fields and Elsie Carlisle.

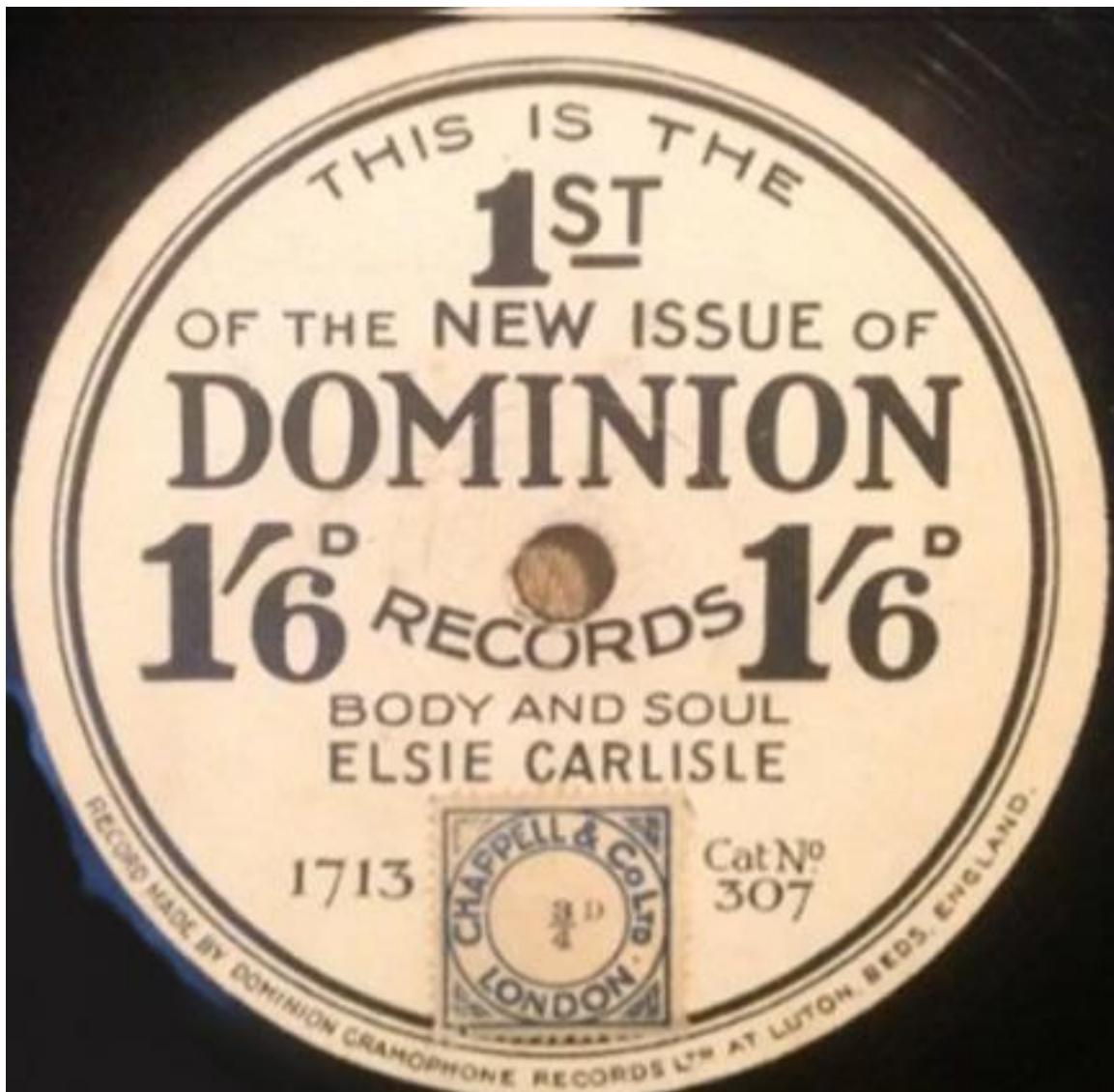


Figure 8. Record Label 307.

We quote from the Elsie Carlisle website: “Elsie Carlisle sang many torch songs early in her recording career; unrequited love was a theme as much in vogue then as it is now, and Elsie’s delicate, sometimes quavering voice was a suitable vehicle for conveying pathos. Her March 1930 *Body and Soul* stands out from the rest because of her especially touching rendering of its mesmerizingly sad motifs.”

***Body and Soul* Returns to New York.**

Arthur Schwartz (1900-1984) was a songwriter (inducted in the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1972) and film producer. His principal collaborator was lyricist Howard Dietz. By the end of 1929, Schwartz had written the music for four Broadway shows. In 1930, some of his songs were included in three shows in the US and three in England. In the Spring of 1930, Schwartz was in England. From an interview of Johnny Green published in the Long Island Daily Press of 1935: “That tune [*Body and Soul*] was the rage with the Britishers. Arthur Schwartz, producer, who was visiting London heard a recording of it, recognized it as a ‘natural’ for Libby Holman and got the United States rights to feature the tune in *Three’s A Crowd*.” Schwartz arrived in Southampton on the S. S. Bremen on February 27, 1930, According to the New York Times of February 14, 1930, Schwartz had business in London. He was scheduled to compose the score for a new edition of “The Co-Optimists” and conduct the orchestra at the first performance of “Here Comes the Bride,” a musical comedy written by him, Otto Harbach and Edward McGregor.

Schwartz left England on May 3, 1930 on the S. S. Berengaria and arrived in New York on May 9, 1930 in good time to complete the writing of the music for the October 15, 1930 opening of the production of *Three’s A Crowd*. Once back in New York, according to the New York Times of November 23, 1930, Schwartz insisted that Howard Dietz, librettist for *Three’s A Crowd* “hear a record of a song then popular in England, *Body and Soul*.” Dietz obliged, went to a phonograph shop to listen to the tune and was sold on the idea of including *Body and Soul* in *Three’s A Crowd*. The right to use *Body*

and Soul was secured by Max Gordon, the producer of *Three's A Crowd*. The tune was copyrighted by Harms Music Publishers in New York on October 14, 1930, one day before the premiere of the Broadway production. All of these activities were described in a telegraphic style by the New York Times of November 23, 1930. "... Mr. Schwartz's insistence that Mr. Dietz hear a record of a song then popular in England, 'Body and Soul,' ... Dietz's jaunt to a phonograph shop ... His jaunt a few minutes later to Harms to secure the rights ..."

Body and Soul was copyrighted in New York on October 14, 1930

Words by
EDWARD HEYMAN
and ROBERT SOUR

BODY AND SOUL

Music by
JOHN W. GREEN

MAX GORDON
PRESENTS

Clifton Webb
Fred Allen
Libby Holman

THREE'S A CROWD

A REVUE

Put together by Howard Dietz
Staged by Hassard Short
Dances by Albertina Rasch
Lyrics and Music by

HOWARD DIETZ
ARTHUR SCHWARTZ
And others



Body and Soul
Something To Remember
You By
The Moment I Saw You
Right At The Start of It
Yaller
Practising Up On You
Forget All You Books
Out In The Open Air
All The King's Horses

MADE IN
U. S. A.

HARMS
NEW YORK

Figure 9. Cover of Sheet Music. Copyright USA, October 14, 1930.

It is seen that the main attraction on the cover of the sheet music is *Three's A Crowd* and that *Body and Soul* is relegated to relatively small print. Moreover, I note that only Heyman and Sour are given credit for the lyrics and that Eyton is omitted.

Two of the stars of *Body and Soul* – Libby Holman and Clifton Webb, were in Europe in the summer of 1930. They returned to New York on Aug 25, 1930. The next day, as reported in the New York Times of Aug 22, 1930 rehearsals began. “Rehearsals of *Three's A Crowd*, the Max Gordon revue formerly known as *About Town* are announced to begin next Tuesday following the return of Clifton Webb and Libby Holman on the Ile de France Monday. Mr. Webb, Miss Holman and Fred Allen will be starred in the Gordon Revue.



Figure 10. Clifton Webb, Libby Holman, Fred Allen.

Three's A Crowd, with music chiefly by Arthur Schwartz and lyrics by Howard Dietz, will open in Baltimore on Sept. 29 and play a second week in Washington before coming to New York." Note the qualification "chiefly" in the account. The most popular song of the musical turned out to be *Body and Soul*, composed by Johnny Green.

As was often the case, *Three's A Crowd* opened out of town before the premiere played on Broadway. The tryout was to take place one week in Baltimore and one week in Washington, DC, but eventually

that plan was changed to two weeks at the Erlanger Theatre in Philadelphia. Built in 1927 and demolished in 1978, “The Erlanger Theatre was one of Philadelphia’s most elaborately designed live performance theaters and was considered one of the most magnificent ever built in the United States.” [Wikipedia]



ERLANGER THEATRE, PHILADELPHIA
EXTERIOR VIEW SHOWING THEATRE AND STORES ON STREET FRONT
Hoffman-Henon Company, Architects and Engineers

Figure 11. Erlanger Theatre, Philadelphia, PA.

Here is the program for the performance at the Erlinger Theatre.

Erlanger Theatre

Beginning Monday, September 29, 1930

Nights at 8:30—Mats. Wed. and Sat. at 2:30

MAX GORDON

presents

Clifton Webb

Fred Allen

Libby Holman

In

"Three's a Crowd"

A Revue

Conceived and Compiled

by Howard Dietz

Staged by Hassard Short

Dances arranged by Albertina Rasch

Settings designed by Albert R. Johnson

Costumes and dresses designed and executed
by Kiviette

Orchestra under the direction of Nicholas
Kempner

Lyrics and music by Howard Dietz, Arthur

Figure 12. Cover of Program, Erlanger Theatre.

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER YOU BY
Libby Holman.

THE CURSE OF VERSATILITY
Fred Allen.
Portland Hoffa.

OUT IN THE OPEN AIR
Clifton Webb, Margaret Lee and other
babes in the wood.
Lyrics by Howard Dietz. Music by
Burton Lane.

THE EVENT
By Groucho Marx and Arthur Sheek-
man.
Introduced by Portland Hoffa.
(a) The Age of Ignorance.
Earl Oxford, Marybeth Conoly, Har-
old Moffett.
(b) The Age of Innocence.
Lou Wood and Joan Clement.
(c) This Age of Ours.
Libby Holman and Rex Beach.

JE T'AIME
Clifton (Buddy) Webb and His Cookie
Cutters.

TALKATIVE TOES
Tamara Geva and The Girls.
Lyrics by Howard Dietz. Music by
Vernon Duke.

THE LEASEBREAKERS
By Corey Ford and Howard Dietz.
Mr. Holmes.....Earl Oxford
Mrs. Holmes.....Libby Holman
Mr. Abercrombie.....Clifton Webb
Mr. Tilford.....Fred Allen
LandlordHarold Moffett
Scene—The Holmes' apartment.

ALL THE KING'S HORSES
Margaret Lee and The Girls.
Lyrics by Alex Wilder and Howard
Dietz.
Music by Eddie Brandt.

BODY AND SOUL
Libby Holman
Lyrics by Robert Sour and Edward
Heyman.
Music by John Green.

PROF. MORON LE FAYE
Fred Allen.
The ProfessorHarold Moffett
His Girl.....Portland Hoffa
AssistantSam Fletcher
The Committee.....Gerty Barr

THE MOMENT I SAW YOU
Clifton Webb, Amy Revere and Ensemble

BODY AND SOUL
Reprise..Clifton Webb and Ta

FORGET ALL YOUR BOOKS
Margaret Lee, Wally Coyle and
Lyrics by Howard Dietz.
Music by Burton Lane.

THIS THING CALLED MAN
Maryb

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF A ROX
By Arthur Sheekman
Flynn.
Private Ethelbert Miggle..Cl
Mrs. Miggle, his wife.....Jo
The Lover.....E
Scene—The Miggles at ho

YALLER
Libby Holman and Ensemble
Lyrics by Henry Myers.
Music by Charles M. S
Arthur Schwartz.

IN A NUTSHELL
Fred Allen.

NIGHT AFTER NIGHT
Clifton Webb and Ensemble.
By Howard Dietz and
Schwartz.
With ballet music by Wil

THE COLLEGIANS
Alan Jones, Percy Saunders,
Herb Montei, Rene DuPlisses
and Ray Adams.

RIGHT AT THE START OF IT
Clifton Webb, Fred Allen, Lib

ENTIRE COMPANY

Pierce Arrow limousine, 1931 mod
Pierce Arrow Motor Co
Masks and costumes in "Night A
designed by Constance R.
Costumes for "All the King's
made by Eaves, Schneider, Bl
Jewelry and accessories by Lor
Lighting equipment by De
Men's costumes by Eav
Men's modern clothes and furni
Properties by Whiedhaas S
Scenery built by McDonald Cons
Scenery painted by Cleon Thro
Velvet curtain and "Night After
painted by Triangle Scenic
Draperies by Dazians
Draperies made by Eclipse S
Shoes by Miller
Stockings by Miss Bel
Wigs by Oscar Bernne
Men's shoes by La Ray Bo

Figure 13. Detailed Program, Erlinger Theatre.

The staging of *Body and Soul* was marred with technical difficulties. Jon Bradshaw [7] describes some of the vicissitudes in detail:

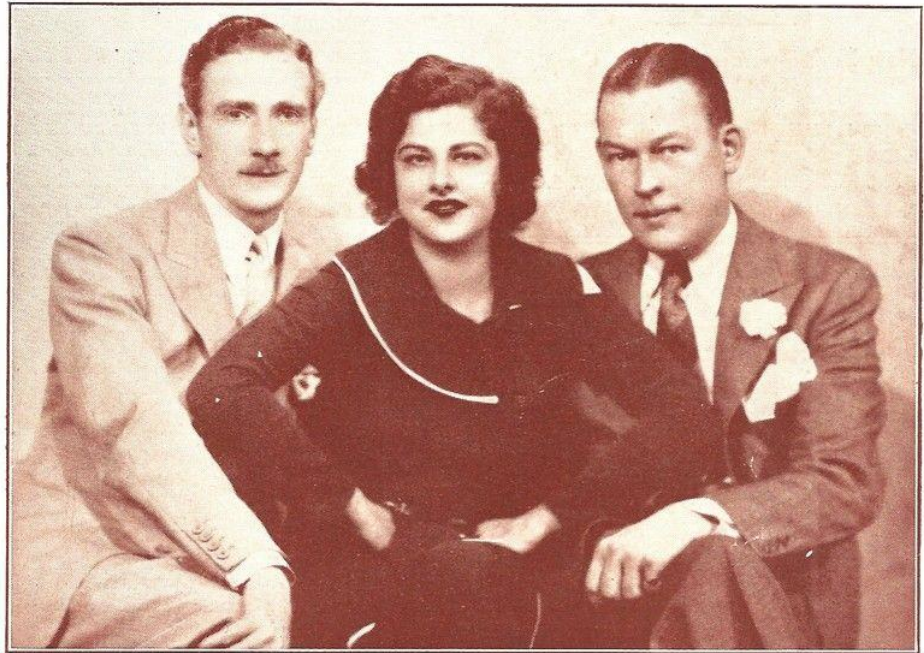
"Libby disliked the lyrics and asked Howard Dietz to write a new version. Several new orchestrations were fashioned, none of which worked. The staging of the number was catastrophic. The director, Hassard Short, had created what seemed at first a brilliant device. The curtain rose on a dark stage, and Libby, sitting on a kind of inverted bowl encased in black velvet, was conveyed slowly front stage by pulleys. Only a pin spot picked out her face so that, as Libby moved forward, her features seemed to grown larger and larger. Unfortunately, the pulleys failed to function properly, they jerked and pitched and created so much din, the audience was unable to hear the song.

"On the second night the pulleys, which had cost one thousand dollars, were scrapped. Libby sang the song in front of the curtain, but there was still no applause. At the Wednesday matinee, Johnny Green decided to conduct the orchestra. The podium, however, was so high that he blocked Libby from the audience. Different effects were employed on different nights, none of them worked. Libby was distraught. She threatened to quit. 'Instead of calling it *Three's a Crowd*,' she cried, 'you can call it *Two's Company*.'

Soon after these trials, Howard Dietz bumped into composer Ralph Rainger in Manhattan. He persuaded him to help them out by going to Philadelphia and making a new orchestration of the song. One of his improvements was to use piano only for the accompaniment of the verse, and then bring the orchestra in *tutti* when the chorus began. The number was also restaged with Holman, in a long black dress with a plunging neckline, walking in from stage left. The pulleys were gone, but the simplicity of Holman's spotlight solo, slowly slinking across a dark stage, prevented the song from being scrapped."

Three's A Crowd opened at the Selwyn Theatre on October 15, 1930 and ran for 272 performances.

SELWYN THEATRE



CLIFTON WEBB, LIBBY HOLMAN, and FRED ALLEN

THREE'S A CROWD



Figure 14. Cover of Program, Selwyn Theatre.

According to the Film Daily of October 14, 1930, "John W. Green, Paramount staff composer, made a public appearance at the opening of 'Three's A Crowd,' when he accompanied Libby Holman, from the pit, during her rendition of *Body and Soul*, which Green wrote."

Three's A Crowd was a great success in spite of the great depression. One of the important innovations, introduced by director Hassard Short in the show, was the use of floodlights suspended in the balcony instead of footlights. This technique spread very rapidly to other Broadway shows.

The First Musical Shows Ever Produced Without Footlights

Hassard Short Productions

"Face the Music" with Mary Boland and J. Harold Murray at the New Amsterdam Theatre, 1932

"Waltzes From Vienna" in London at the Alhambra Theatre, 1931

"The Band Wagon" with Fred and Adele Astaire, Frank Morgan, Helen Broderick and Tilly Losch at the New Amsterdam Theatre, 1931

"Three's a Crowd" with Clifton Webb, Fred Allen and Libby Holman at the Selwyn Theatre, 1930

"Sunny Days" with Jeannette MacDonald at the Imperial Theatre, 1929

"Don't Count Your Chickens" with Mary Boland, 1928

"Lucky" with Mary Eaton and Paul Whiteman at the New Amsterdam Theatre, 1928

"Oh Please" with Beatrice Lillie at the Globe Theatre, 1926

"Cradle Snatchers" with Mary Boland at the Music Box Theatre, 1925

"Sunny" with Marilyn Miller and Jack Donohue at the New Amsterdam Theatre, 1925

"Greenwich Village Follies" at Chamba's 46th Street Theatre, 1925

"Hassard Short's Ritz Revue" with Charlotte Greenwood at the Ritz Theatre, 1924

"Peg O' My Dreams" at Johnson's 29th Street Theatre, 1924

"No Trespassing" at the Sam Harris Theatre, 1924

"The Third Music Box Revue" at the Music Box Theatre, 1923

"The Second Music Box Revue" at the Music Box Theatre, 1922

"Music Box Revue" in London for C. B. Cochran at the Palace Theatre, 1922

"The First Music Box Revue" at the Music Box Theatre, 1921

"The Rose Girl" at the Ambassador Theatre, 1921

"Her Family Tree" with Nora Bayes at the Lyric Theatre, 1920

"Honey-Dew" at the Casino Theatre, 1920

The Equity Shows at the Metropolitan Opera House, 1920, 1921, 1922

HASSARD SHORT

Has Produced, Staged and Lighted the Following Sensational Musical Successes This Last Season

"Three's A Crowd"

Hassard Short created the effect and lighting of the sensational "BODY AND SOUL" number as danced by Clifton Webb and Tamara Geva.

"The Band Wagon"

Hassard Short created the reflected lighting with the Albertina Rasch Girls dancing on Mirrors in "DANCING IN THE DARK" number.

"Face the Music"

By IRVING BERLIN and MOSS HART, Presented by SAM H. HARRIS at the NEW AMSTERDAM THEATRE, with MARY BOLAND and J. HAROLD MURRAY

THE ENTIRE PRODUCTION CONCEIVED, STAGED AND LIGHTED BY HASSARD SHORT

The Sensational Mirror Effect and Revolving Lighting Created by **HASSARD SHORT**

Hassard Short's Production

of

"Waltzes From Vienna"

Music by JOHANN STRAUSS

Now Playing at ALHAMBRA THEATRE, LONDON, Presented by SIR OSWALD STOLL

The Most Exquisite Production in the History of the Theatre

Will Be Presented in New York by MAX GORDON in September
Cast of 50, Chorus of 100, Ballet of 24, and Orchestra of 50

DU WI CO

315-17 West 47th Street
New York City

Made All the Lighting Equipment and Effects for These Productions Under the Supervision of

Hassard Short

The First Musical Shows Ever Produced Without Footlights

"Waltzes From Vienna"

Quotations From the London Press

"The lighting is a perpetual joy. Its prodigality is matched by Mr. Hassard Short's. Here is a producer with new and bold ideas in staging, a man who does not play variations on the old inventions, but is as lavish of new themes as Johann Strauss."

"EVENING NEWS."

"But the real hero of the evening, so far as living people are concerned, was undoubtedly Mr. Hassard Short, whose production is in its own way quite a new thing in our theatre. It has feeling and a sense of beauty and character about it at every point, quite apart from its moving stages and mysterious lights, and deserves to be seen and heard and enjoyed by all who have the chance."

"MORNING POST."

"Mr. Hassard Short's production, with its lovely costumes and decor, should carry 'Waltzes From Vienna' to success. Never have I seen better lighting."

"EVENING STANDARD."

"It was a wise policy to reopen the Alhambra with a musical play, and with possibilities from Hassard Short, New York's most efficient lighting artist and scenery manager, to give us a taste of his talent. And he succeeded."

"DAILY SKETCH."

"And Hassard Short's lighting, it really deserves the word 'genius.' 'Waltzes From Vienna,' stately, precious and dignified, is a 'Lilac Time' to which has been added the superlative skill of Hassard Short, a brilliant producer."

Hansen Steffer, "DAILY HERALD."

"Over it all is the hand of Hassard Short, a producer of superb taste and resource."

"DAILY TELEGRAPH."

"May I suggest, in all seriousness, that Mr. Hassard Short should now turn his very great talents to a Shakespearean production? Fortunately, there is always the admirable Mr. Hassard Short to share with a most picturesque and accomplished corps de ballet, and with the two composers, Strauss pere and fils, the honours of the evening. Mr. Short keeps his revolving stage very busy, and puts it through a series of the most involved and difficult tricks, some of which are contrived by actually using lifts beneath the revolving stage."

Alan Parsons, "DAILY MAIL."

Figure 15. Advertisement. Variety, February 23, 1932.

Body and Soul was performed twice in the show. Libby Holman sang it in Act I and, according to the Radio Digest of March 1931, “she stops the show every night with her *Body and Soul* number.” According to the New York Times review of the show on October 16, 1930, “The sultry Miss Holman intones the plaintive measures of a transatlantic song [again, the mistaken notion that the song was composed across the Atlantic], *Body and Soul*, which seems destined to duplicate its English popularity here.” The song was reprised in Act II as a dance number. From the review in the New York Times: “One of the most striking numbers of this or any other revue is the *Body and Soul* dance which achieves a startling quality even more through its use of lights than through the poses of Mr. Webb and Tamara Geva, the Russian exotic.”

Several positive reviews were included in an ad published in the New York Times of October 21, 1930.

A FEW OF THE MANY RAVES

Which Greeted the Opening of the Most Successful Revue New York Has Ever Seen!

"Bright and altogether charming. Three million's the crowd that will probably rush to this revue."
Gilbert Gabriel, American

"'Three's A Crowd,' a revue which you cannot afford to miss, is certain to give pleasure to the lucky ones who are able to crowd into the Selwyn."
John Mason Brown, Post

"A thoroughly delightful and entirely superior musical entertainment, the smartest and most distinguished show that has reached town for many seasons."
Richard Watts, Herald Tribune

"One of the y... when Clifton W... forming his st... Fred Allen is... Admiral Byrd, v... Holman is moan... delightful song... Soul.' It is a F...
Walter Winchell

"I recommend 'Three's A Crowd' to your attention. It is my favorite among the musicals."
Richard Lockridge, Sun

MAX GORDON presents
CLIFTON WEBB

"A bright, smart... ful show." *N.Y.*



FRED ALLEN

in the Revue



LIBBY HOLMAN

of Revues



"THREE'S A CROWD"

SELWYN THEATRE, West 42nd Street—Eves. at 8:30—Mats. Thurs. and S

Figure 16. Advertisement, New York Times, October 21, 1930.

Highly influential theater critic J. Brooks Atkinson too had very favorable comments about the show in general. In the New York Times of October 26, 1930, he wrote: "What makes it [*Three's A Crowd*] a work of art is the skill it discloses for being all in one key—deft, sardonic and knowing. What makes it so rapturously entertaining is the wit of the sketches, the bizarre beauty of the dancing, the gayety of the tempo and the frolicsome intelligence of Clifton Webb, Fred Allen and Libby Holman." However, Atkinson had harsh words about *Body and Soul*: "In a sable evening dress and funereal lighting effects, she is proffering her *Body and Soul* in hot contralto tones. What with weeping women singing these sultry laments in every night club and on every musical stage, it is time for all granite-hearted citizens to come to the defense of their country."

The succulence of sadness is being shamelessly commercialized. Three times in *Three's a Crowd* Miss Holman, who does not sing particularly well, calls heaven to witness that the life of flouted passion is hard. Two of the songs have been staged with an egregious dramatic pretentiousness that seems to me well on the way to travesty. How spontaneous *Body and Soul* may be you may judge from the size of the corporation that produced it—lyrics by Edward Heyman, Robert Sour and Frank Eyton, music by John W. Green, with vocal and orchestral arrangements by Ralph Rainger. A corporation as large as that could sell stock—and ruin the community. If you could take Miss Holman's numbers casually, no doubt you could enjoy them without mental reservations. But, when they are staged as elaborately as *Electra* or *Antigone*, the skeptic can hardly help snickering up his sleeve.” In spite of this acerbic review, *Body and Soul* became as popular in the US as it had been in England.

Recordings of Body and Soul in the US in 1930.

As a consequence of the phenomenal success of *Body and Soul* in England and its incorporation in the Broadway musical *Three's A Crowd*, there was a flurry of recordings in the US of the tune in the period Sep-Dec 1930. They were preceded and accompanied by quite a bit of anticipation and expectation about *Body and Soul* in the press.

- New York Times, August 31, 1930: "*Body and Soul*, an English tune [N. B. incorrect] which was played everywhere in London early this summer and is getting around over here, will be one of Miss Holman's numbers in *Three's a Crowd*."

- The Film Daily, September 2, 1930. "*Body and Soul*, the latest European song sensation, which was written by John W. Green, Paramount staff composer, will be introduced to America by Libby Homan in her forthcoming musical *Three's A Crowd*."

- Variety, September 24, 1930: "*Body and Soul* in Show. Libby Holman will sing *Body and Soul*, moanful melody, in *Three's A Crowd*, the newest Max Gordon Production opening Oct. 17. Harms publishes the score. Number was written by Johnny Green, Ed Heyman and Bob Sour. It has been sung in England."

Leo Reisman's orchestra was the first to record *Body and Soul* in the US.. Three takes were waxed on July 26, 1930 in the Victor recording laboratories on 44th Street, New York, with Don Howard as vocalist. According to <http://adp.library.ucsb.edu> take 1 was destroyed, take 2 was held and take 3 was mastered/held. As far as I know, none of these were issued nor did test pressings survive. On September 3, 1930, Reisman and his musicians returned to the Victor studios, this time at their 24th Street facility, and recorded takes 4-7 with Frank Luther as vocalist. All takes were destroyed. A third attempt was made on September 13, 1930. Takes 8-11 were waxed. Don Howard was the vocalist and, for this session, trumpeter Bubber Miley was added. Again, all takes were destroyed. Once more, on September 19, 1930 the band cut three takes. Takes 12 and 14 were held, take 13 was held/mastered. It was released as Victor 22537, the first of two issued takes with the same record number. Bubber Miley was on trumpet and the vocal was by Frank Luther. Finally, on October 10, 1930, three more takes were recorded. Takes 15 and 16 were held; take 17 was mastered and released, also as Victor 22537, with Bubber Miley on trumpet and Frances Huddox as vocalist. The

arrangements and lyrics in takes 13 and 17 (both matrix number BVE-62370) are somewhat different.

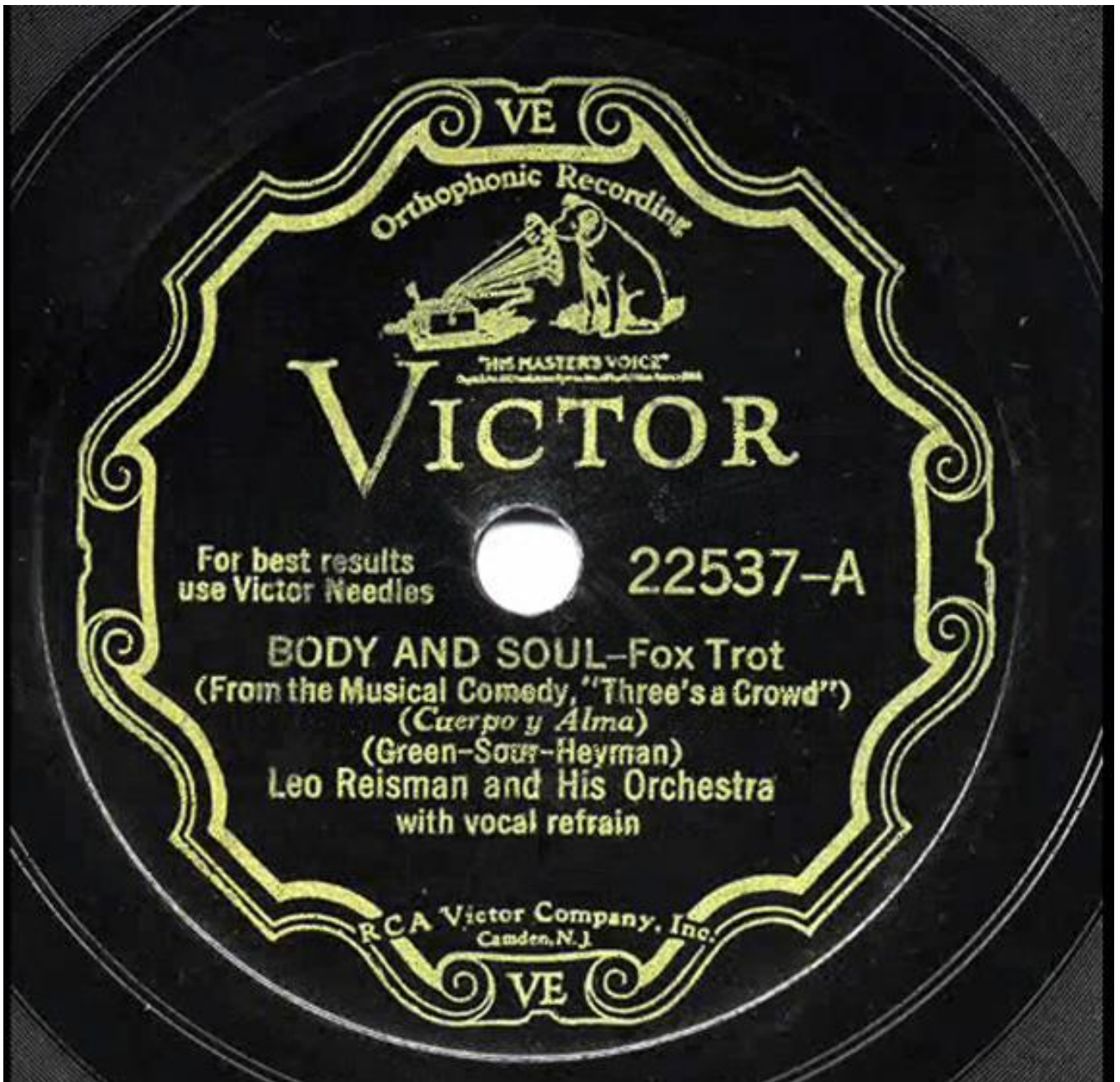


Figure 17. Record Label 22537-A

Although *Three's A Crowd* did not open until five days later, the record label included the text "(From the Musical Comedy "Three's A Crowd")." However, it must be noted that by the time the record was

released commercially, *Three's A Crowd* had been running for several weeks.

The second attempt to record *Body and Soul* was made by Helen Morgan. On September 5, 1930, she recorded three takes accompanied by an orchestra directed by Leonard Joy. All takes were destroyed. A week later, on September 12, Helen Morgan went back to the Victor studios and waxed three additional takes. Takes 4 and 6 were held. Take 5 was mastered and released in 1930 as Victor 22532. Take 5 was released again in 1941 as Victor 27683, one of the four-record Victor set P-102.



Figure 18. Record Label 27683-A

Although Paul Whiteman was not the first to record *Body and Soul*, because of the failure of the previous attempts by Reisman and Morgan, it turns out that Whiteman's recording was the first to be released in the US. Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra waxed four takes on September 10, 1930. Takes 1 and 2 were destroyed. Take 4 was held but not issued. Take 3 was issued as Columbia 2297-D.



Figure 19. Record Label 2297-D

The arrangement of the Whiteman recording was by Roy Bargy and the vocalist was Jack Fulton. It will be seen that a reference is given on the label to *Three's A Crowd*. Although the record was waxed weeks before the premiere of *Three's A Crowd*, the date for the release was October 31, 1930, two weeks after the opening of the Broadway musical. According to jazzstandards.com, "Their (Whiteman) recording hit the charts on October 11, 1930, and held

the number one spot for six weeks.”

The connections between Johnny Green and Paul Whiteman go back to 1924. Johnny Green attended the legendary Whiteman Experiment in Modern American Music at Aeolian Hall on February 12, 1924 where George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* was given its world premiere. Johnny's parents were Whiteman aficionados and they often attended his concerts at the Palais Royale. In 1928, Whiteman's orchestra recorded the first Johnny Green hit, *Coquette*, recorded earlier by Guy Lombardo Royal Canadians with an arrangement by Johnny Green. In 1930 Whiteman recorded Green's *Body and Soul*, the last recording he made for Columbia. In a highly publicized event, featured in a Fox Movietone newsreel, Whiteman had moved from Victor to Columbia two years earlier. According to Green “Paul idolized the song. Not only the middle strain, in which I happen, for the first time in a popular song, to use that inharmonic device that involves a chromatic multiplicity of keys in the middle. Not only that, but Paul adored the verse of that song, which flowed in and out of minor and major keys in a labyrinthian manner.” Green composed *Night Club: Six Impressions for orchestra and three pianos* at Whiteman's request. The composition had its world premiere at Carnegie Hall on Jan 25, 1933, Whiteman's Fifth Experiment in Modern American Music.

There were several dance band recordings of *Body and Soul* in the Fall of 1930 in the US: Fred Rich, Ozzie Nelson, Sam Lanin, Lou Gold, among others. Two of the popular male singers of the time, Smith Ballew and Seger Ellis also recorded the song. In his a recording of October 30, 1930, Seger Ellis was accompanied by Phil Napoleon, the Dorsey Brothers and Eddie Lang. In spite of the quality of the jazz musicians in the band, the rendition by Ellis is that of a ballad.

Being a torch song about unrequited love, *Body and Soul* is quite suitable for female singers. Therefore, it is not surprising that *Body and Soul* was recorded by several popular songstresses in 1930: Helen Morgan, September 12; Ruth Etting, September 29; Annette Hanshaw, October 7; Vee Lawnhurst, November 17.

Finally, we discuss Libby Holman's own recording of *Body and Soul*. She was born Elizabeth Lloyd Holzman on May 23, 1904 in Cincinnati, OH and died on June 18, 1971 in Stamford, CT. She moved to New York in 1924 and became a close friend of actor Clifton Webb. Her break came in 1929 when she starred, with Webb, in the Broadway revue *The Little Show*. Howard Dietz and Ralph Rainger's song *Moanin' Low* was an immediate success and became Holman's signature song. The show would run for 321 performances, from April 1929 to February 1930. Her husky voice and dramatic singing style were perfectly suited to this torch song about unrequited love and the experience of broken dreams.

In September 1930 Libby Holman recorded two takes of *Body and Soul*, another torch song that fitted perfectly her sensuous singing and acting style. Both takes, matrix numbers E34387-A and B, were rejected. She went back to the studio in October 1930 and cut four takes, three accompanied by orchestra, matrix numbers E34705-A and B and E34706, and one accompanied by piano, matrix number TE34707. According to Ross Laird, E34705-A was mastered and released as Brunswick 4910, the other orchestral takes were rejected and a test pressing of the piano take was made. [8]



Figure 20. Record Label 4910.

The test pressing of the take with piano accompaniment, as far as I know, has never surfaced. The issued recording with orchestra accompaniment was at number 3 for seven weeks in the Billboard charts. [<http://tsort.info/music/447z27.htm>]

According to the Film Daily of September 14, 1930, "John W. Green, Paramount staff writer, has completed a special arrangement of his original composition, *Body and Soul*, to be sung by Libby Holman for Brunswick records." It turns out that Brunswick 4910 was issued in two versions that differ considerably in arrangement and lyric: one includes a counter point and a second refrain, the other does not; one version uses the standard lyric ("My heart is sad and lonely ...") while

the other uses an alternate lyric (“My days have grown so lonely ...”). This highly significant discovery by Peter Mintun is in conflict with Ross Laird’s listing of only one issued take. Since matrix numbers are not engraved on the run-off grooves of the two different records, it is not possible, at this time, to determine the date and matrix number of both issued takes. One of the issued takes is very likely E34705-A, but it is not known which. Peter Mintun (private communication to the author) discovered, by comparing the two versions with the manuscript to Green’s *Three’s a Crowd* orchestration, that the latter matches the version that included the counter melody and alternate lyric. Johnny Green’s arrangement of *Body and Soul*, made especially for Libby Holman, was given to Peter Mintun by Evelyn Carol Falk, Johnny Green’s first wife.

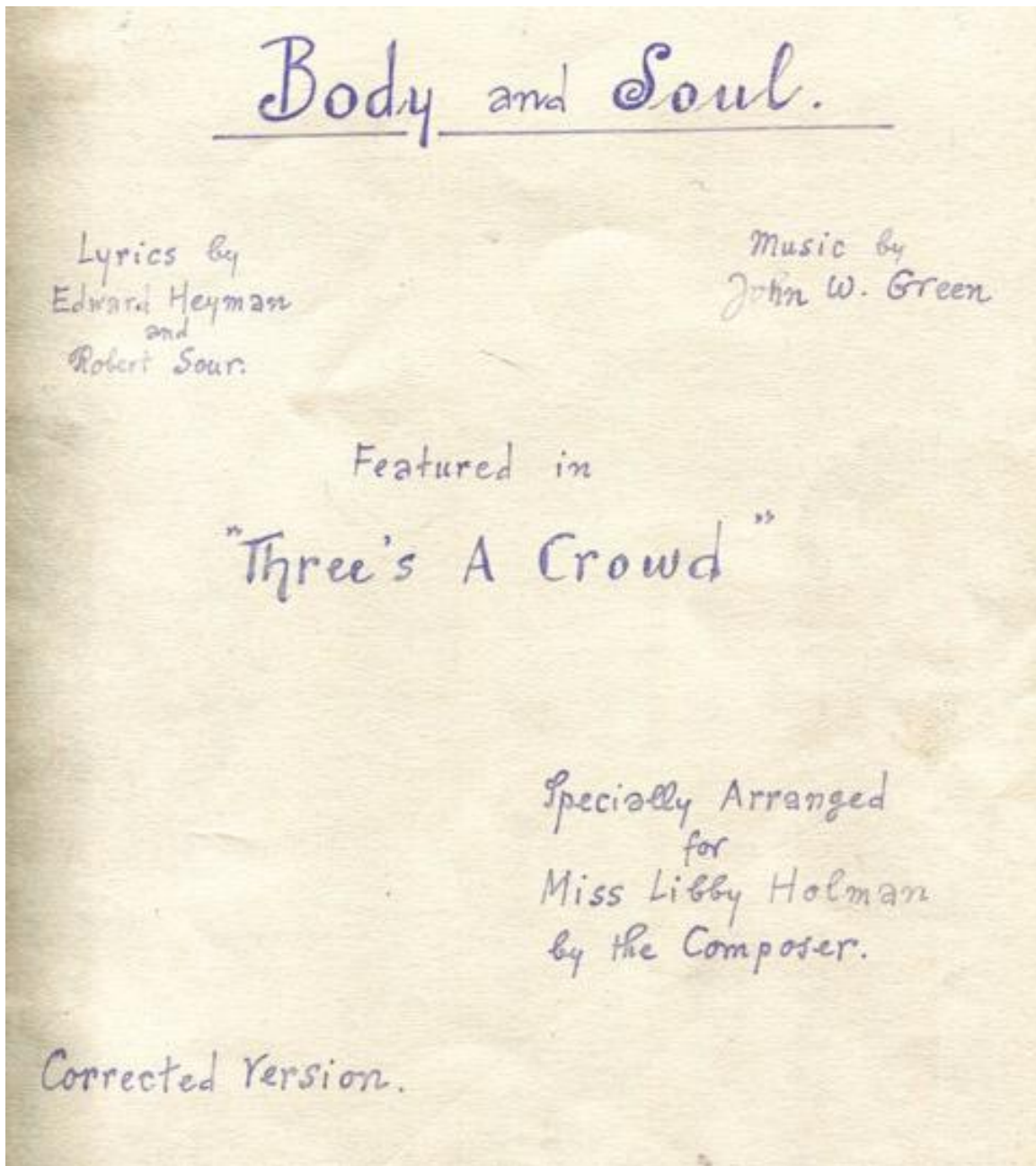


Figure 21. Cover Sheet of Johnny Green's Special Arrangement of *Body and Soul* for Libby Holman in Johnny Green's Handwriting. Courtesy of Peter Mintun.

Perhaps, this is the "special arrangement" announced in the *Film Daily*.

***Body and Soul*: Benny Goodman.**

Body and Soul was played by the Benny Goodman Trio (Benny, Gene Krupa and Teddy Wilson) at the legendary January 16, 1938 Carnegie Hall concert. It is noteworthy that this event took place before *Body and Soul* became a jazz standard following saxophonist Coleman Hawkins 1939 recording of the tune. The Goodman-Green connection went back to 1933-34 when Benny played with Johnny Green in broadcasts and records. In 1951, Benny Goodman was the soloist at the Hollywood Bowl concert of September 15, 1951, with Johnny Green conducting the orchestra.

Tom Lord's discography includes more than 30 listings of recordings and broadcasts of Benny Goodman's *Body and Soul*. The first is Benny Goodman's Trio recording of July 13, 1935. The last is the live Budakan concert in Tokyo of September 3, 1980. In between, Benny Goodman's international recordings and broadcasts of *Body and Soul* took place in Sweden, Italy and Switzerland (1950), England (1955 and 1969), Germany and Switzerland (1959), Chile (1961), Russia (1962).

Commenting in 1955 about his July 13, 1935 recording session, Benny stated: "I still think of *Body and Soul* and *After You've Gone* as ranking with the best I ever did." [9] According to Metronome, the Trio's *Body and Soul* was the record of the month and "will give you fellows goose-flesh." Abel Green, critic for Variety stated: "The swing addicts will go curhazy [sic] for the Trio's version of Johnny Green's *Body and Soul* done as a slow fox." Down Beat described it as "a record that should be in the library of every hot fan."

The Benny Goodman Trio session of July 1, 1935 represents a milestone in the history of jazz.



Figure 22. Trio reunion, mid fifties. Courtesy www.drummerman.net

Small jazz groups playing what has become known as chamber jazz were quite effective in the 1920s: Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang, Joe Venuti's Blue Four, the Five Pennies. But by the 1930s, jazz was evolving into swing with big bands becoming prominent and highly popular. Thus, Goodman's return to small group jazz was a complete break with current trends at the time. The Goodman's small groups (Trios and Quartets) produced some of the most innovative jazz in the second half of the 1930s. The liberation from the rigid arrangements for the big bands, gave the musicians in small groups the needed freedom to display their creativity. Pianist Dick Katz, who took lessons from Teddy Wilson, writes: "The Trio was informally conceived at a party at Mildred Bailey's apartment in June, 1935, and it seems that fate fortuitously brought together two of the most technically adroit performers since Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines collaborated in 1928. [Goodman recalled later, 'That night Teddy and I began to play as though we were thinking with the same brain. It was a real kick.']" "Prodded by Gene Krupa's "hot" brushes, Goodman and Wilson took collective improvising to a new level of clarity and precision, and attracted listeners who had previously thought of jazz

(quite wrongly, to be sure) as a crude and even primitive musical idiom. Aside from Goodman's obvious virtuosity and keen sense of the jazz pulse, what really made the Trio unique was Wilson's vitalizing and strikingly original concept of contrapuntal harmonic movement. He revised the conventional stride left-hand by outlining the harmonic structure of a piece with an uncannily well-placed series of both consecutive and "walking" tenths." [10] Martin Williams commented on Wilson's second solo in the Trio's recording of *Body and Soul*: "His second solo is a brilliant invention, a beautiful new melody, with no thematic relation to the original at all ... a miracle of originality in melody and phrasing." [11] Similar comments have been made about Coleman Hawkins saxophone solo in his 1939 recording of the song. However, the Trio's recording, although highly praised, did not attain, perhaps surprisingly, the legendary status of Hawkins' recording.

Conclusion.

The popularity of Johnny Green's immortal composition *Body and Soul* continued unabated throughout the decades. The 1930s saw another dozen recordings of *Body and Soul*, among them, recordings by Eddie South, Art Tatum, Frank Trumbauer, Bob Zurke, Chu Berry and Jimmy Dorsey. But it was in the 1940s and subsequent decades that, following the seminal recording of October 11, 1939 by tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins, we witness an explosion of recordings –at least three thousand– by jazz musicians, big bands and singers. Some of the more notable recordings are discussed by Will Friedwald [5], Gary Giddins [12], Thomas Cuniffe [13] and Jose Antonio Bowen [14]. The last four citations are highly recommended reading.

It is noteworthy that one of the most recent recordings of *Body and Soul* –Tony Bennett and Amy Morehouse, March 23, 2011, London's Abbey Road studios– entered the Billboard Hot 100 at #87 on the Billboard chart dated October 1, 2011. Indeed, *Body and Soul* is timeless.

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