

'Hoagy & Bix' going to Broadway

By Beth Harris
Associated Press writer
INDIANAPOLIS (AP) —
Hoosier composer Hoagy Carmichael's career and friendship with jazz cornetist Bix Beiderbecke will become a Broadway musical produced by the songwriter's son.

"Hoagy & Bix" centers on Hoagy's relationship with Beiderbecke, a native of Davenport, Iowa, and begins when Hoagy, at age 40, learns of Beiderbecke's death.

Hoagy recalls his early days in music, his friendship with Beiderbecke, and troubles between the two of them, culminating in the writing of "Stardust," perhaps Carmichael's best known song.

The \$4.2 million musical will have 30 performances at the Indianapolis Civic Theatre Sept. 27 through Oct. 30, his son, Hoagy Bix Carmichael, said Wednesday.

The younger Carmichael said he expects to bring the show to Broadway in early 1992, with stops

in St. Paul, Minn., and Baltimore after Indianapolis.

"We've got the music. The important thing is to make the songs tell the story," the son said at the Columbia Club on Monument Circle, where Hoagy's college roommate, Stu Gorrell, came up with the title for "Stardust."

The current script calls for 23 songs in the show. Among Carmichael's other compositions are "Georgia on My Mind," "Lazy River," "Heart and Soul," "Buttermilk Sky," and "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening," which won an Academy Award in 1951.

Carmichael said he believes Broadway theatergoers will find appealing the low-key storyline about the Bloomington native and his music. Broadway is moving away from such commercially successful, but bombastic, British imports as "Les Miserables," "Phantom of the Opera" and "Starlight Express," he said.

"The big-time British musicals make a lot of money, but people are beginning to cry for some good songs and a story. They say, 'Give me a guy and a girl. Forget the flying scenery,'" said Carmichael, who has spent eight years developing the project.

"A lot of that British stuff was theater made for TV. It was as if

you had no imagination. I see this show as a return to people having the opportunity to use their imagination."

Alice McMahon Hendricks remembers when Hoagy, wearing a dark suit and carrying a briefcase, would sneak into the Indiana Roof Ballroom and peddle his music to touring orchestras.

"When he wrote 'Stardust,' he wrote the closest thing to the national anthem. Everybody loves

it," said Hendricks, who ran the ballroom in the 1940s and '50s.

"The Roof was the perfect place to introduce the number because it was built to resemble a little Spanish town under the starlit sky. It was the perfect setting," she said.

William L. Wheatley, who knew Hoagy, wrote the script based on Carmichael's autobiographical book, "The Stardust Road." Carmichael died in 1981 at age 80.



Carmichael

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