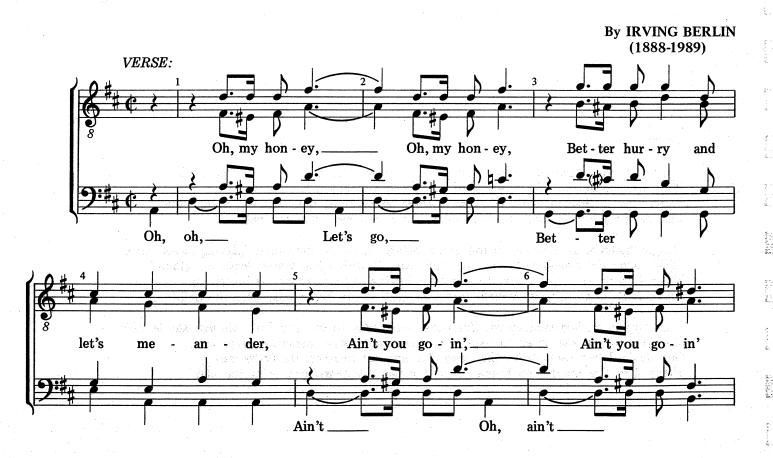
ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND

1912

Irving Berlin came to New York from his native Russia when he was five years old. It wasn't long before this cantor's son was in business as a newsboy, then a singing waiter, and later a song plugger for the great writer and publisher, Harry Von Tilzer. Soon he became a successful composer and publisher himself. His first hit was in 1907, "Marie From Sunny Italy." Berlin's early songs were light, often comedic and saturated with the ethnic character of New York City. Ragtime music was in vogue, and Berlin capitalized on its popularity by writing "Alexander's Ragtime Band," not ragtime music itself, but a rather slow march which was perfect for those new popular dances, the Turkey Trot and the Grizzly Bear. It was a sensational hit.

Perhaps America's greatest songwriter, he found song material in a simple thought, a humorous incident, a catchy phrase. It might be all of these things, plus a clever quote from "Old Folks At Home" and a bit of bugle call, that makes "Alexander's Ragtime Band" such an enduring classic of popular music.



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