SONG 1: “Give My Regards to George M. Cohan,” MUSIC EXPRESS, October/November 2009

(The voice is of a veteran stage manager trying to get to the theatre. Music continues softly in the background.)

Taxi! Taxi! Taxi! Come on, give me a break! I’ve got to get to work! Taxi! It’s seven o’clock! The show starts in an hour. Taxi!

Oh great! Now it’s starting to rain. (We hear rain.)

Taxi! Come on, cabbie! Give me a break!

Getting a taxi in New York an hour before show time is almost impossible! There are thousands of people all trying to get to the same places.

Hey! I’ll get a carriage. Yo, buddy! Can you take me to the Gershwin Theater?

(A horse whinnies.) You can? Great! I’ve got to be there in fifteen minutes. I’m the stage manager, you know, and we’ve got a hit show to put on. Only in New York!

Okay! I’m in. I’m in. Gimme that blanket, will you? It’s freezing out here.

(Music fades.)

Ah, Broadway – my favorite street in the world! (to students/audience) What? You’ve never been here before? Come on. Hop in. You can ride with me. Yeah, all of you. Whoa! Big class! That’s okay–big class, big horse. We’re used to being shoulder to shoulder here on Broadway. Ready? Come on. Let’s go! Let’s go!

(singing loudly as though he were in a car ride with his family) “Give my regards to Broadway…” (He stops singing.)

You know that song? (gruffly) Well, don’t sing it now. I’m talking. (laughing) Heh, heh! Just kidding. That song is from one of earliest Broadway shows called Little Johnny Jones—1904. No, I wasn’t alive then. Neither was your teacher. Well, at least I don’t think so.

I wasn’t here in 1927 either, but I wish I could have been. That’s when Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II opened Show Boat—a show that changed Broadway Theater forever. That was when the songs in a show really started to make sense and move the show along—you know, setting up a scene, getting ready for the next one—stuff like that.

(singing) “Old Man River. That Old Man River…” (He stops singing.) Man, I love that show.

We never would have had modern shows like Cabaret and South Pacific if it hadn’t been for Show Boat. We sure never would have had a show like Porgy and Bess —1935. George Gershwin wrote the music, and his brother Ira wrote the lyrics. The whole cast was classically trained African American singers. I can practically hear “Summertime” right now—one of the most famous Broadway songs ever sung.
Every one of these theaters is jam-packed with unbelievably talented actors, singers, dancers and especially stage managers. Heh, heh, just a little joke there. Ya see, I’m a stage mana—... Oh, never mind. Look over there! That’s the Shubert Theater. Back in 1948 Cole Porter’s Kiss Me, Kate played for 1,077 performances and won the Tony award for best musical in ’49. The Tony Award is the award they give here in New York for good work on Broadway.

In the history of Broadway, one musical leads to another. Like, there probably would have never been a Kiss Me, Kate or even Guys and Dolls, if there had not first been a musical called Oklahoma! back in 1943. It was written by two guys you should know—Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein. You’re right! That’s the same Oscar Hammerstein that wrote Show Boat. Now he’s working with another friend, and they go on to write a bunch of great shows like Carousel, State Fair, The King and I and of course, The Sound of Music! Do you know any Rodgers and Hammerstein songs? Of course you do!

**SONG 2:** “I Whistle a Happy Tune” from The King and I, MUSIC EXPRESS, December 2009

Rodgers and Hammerstein weren’t the only team of writers on Broadway. There were some other greats too. Like Frederick Loewe and Alan Jay Lerner. They wrote great shows like My Fair Lady in 1956, not to mention Brigadoon and Camelot.

Two of Broadway’s greatest, Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim, teamed up in 1957 to write a show called West Side Story, a modern show based on Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet. I’ll bet you’ve heard of those guys before. Bernstein went on to write Candide and Wonderful Town and Stephen Sondheim turned out to be one of the most important Broadway composers ever. Do the names Gypsy, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Company, Follies, A Little Night Music, Into the Woods and Sweeney Todd mean anything to you? The guy never rests. Sort of like a stage manager. Heh, heh.

Oh, no! Traffic jam. Even the horse can’t get through. Come on! We’re going to have to run for it. Call time is five minutes from now.

Wow! Having you kids following me makes me feel like The Music Man in the show by Meredith Willson—1957. Come on, sing with me!

**SONG 3:** “Seventy-Six Trombones” from The Music Man, MUSIC EXPRESS, August/September 2009

*(The next lines are delivered as though characters are hurrying through the streets of New York.)*

Look over there! That’s The Martin Beck Theater. That’s where Gower Champion directed the first production of Bye Bye Birdie by Charles Strouse and Lee Adams back in 1960.

That’s the Imperial Theater where Fiddler on the Roof opened in 1964. It went on to win nine Tony Awards!

Good grief!! There’s the John Golden Theater where You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown played for all of forty-seven performances after it moved to Broadway in 1971. Should have stayed off Broadway, I guess. These New York critics can be brutal!

There’s the Broadhurst Theater where Grease played for 3,388 performances more than any other musical ever, until A Chorus Line became the “ONE.” Get it? The “ONE”!

**OPTIONAL SONG:** “One” from A Chorus Line, MUSIC EXPRESS, January/February 2010


Look out! That’s the chandelier from The Phantom of the Opera. They must be taking it out for cleaning. The thing crashes to the floor every night in that musical.
Disney came to Broadway in 1994. Started with Beauty and the Beast. Now it seems like there’s a Disney Show in every other theater. Mary Poppins, The Little Mermaid, The Lion King!

(panting as though out of breath) Slow down! Slow down!

SONG 4: “Seasons of Love” from Rent, MUSIC EXPRESS, December 2008

I can hardly stand to go by the Nederlander Theater. It’s where the musical Rent opened in 1996 after playing off Broadway for while. It just makes me so sad. Not just the made-up La Boheme story, but did you know that the composer Jonathan Larson never even got to see the show open on Broadway? He died before it opened and he was only thirty-six years old. He did win a Pulitzer Prize and a Tony for it.

You know one of the best songs from it.

(Continue playing “Seasons of Love” a bit more.)

Hey! We’re almost to my theater. You guys are pretty good hoofers! Hoofers! That’s what we call tap dancers on Broadway.

Don’t you think it’s great that Broadway Theater is alive and well? I guess when you get a good thing going, you just can’t stop the beat!

SONG 5: “You Can’t Stop the Beat” from Hairspray, MUSIC EXPRESS, August/September 2008

(talking over the music) I love that song from Hairspray. Don’t you?

(Keep the music going softly in background.)

Up ahead is where Jason Robert Brown’s show 13 played—great songs, great young composer. And further up is where they are doing another revival of Irving Berlin’s White Christmas. Can you believe it? The same guy who wrote “God Bless America” in 1938 and “There’s No Business Like Show Business” in 1954 is still playing on Broadway today!

Okay, we made it. Whew! My show. Guess which one it is? I’ll give you a hint—a green witch, a cowardly lion, a scarecrow, a tin man, no gravity. That’s right! It's Stephen Schwartz’s Wicked! No, I’m not the witch—I’m the stage manager!

I’ve got to make sure everything is ready. Go take your seats, everyone; the show will begin in just a few minutes. This is the part I love best.

Every night at eight o’clock people snuggle into their seats, shoulder to shoulder with other theater lovers and friends. The lights go down, the music swells, the curtain goes up and something truly magical begins. I’m a part of it. You’re a part of it! Singers, dancers, choreographers, directors, the audience—we’re all a part of it. It’s something very special. Something magical. And do you know what it’s called? That’s right. It’s called…. Broadway!

(Finish with more of “You Can’t Stop the Beat.”)