

MY INSPIRATION (DREAM)  
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Last night I had a beautiful dream. I entered an empty theater. The only light came from the bare stage where a chorus line of pretty girls were in dress rehearsal - singing and dancing. Their style was like one of the 1920's Gershwin shows – but the lyrics and tune were new to me.

I took a seat and watched and listened. A stranger took a seat in the row behind me. I sensed his presence over my left shoulder.

“Aw,” he said. “ain’t that pretty.”

I recognized his unforgettable voice. “They got pretty faces and voices – and cute costumes. Look at ‘em tappin’ them dainty feet and kickin’ high all together at the same time.”

It was Al Jolson!

“Wouldn’t it be great if they made shows like that nowadays? I’m not just talkin’ about the dancin’ an’ singin’ – I’m talkin’ about the *feelin’!*”

The rehearsal stopped. The musicians, show girls, crew and others gathered around us, . I recognized a few of them, to listen to what Jolie had to say.

“We used to really try to entertain people. That’s all. We didn’t try to influence their votes or complain about the hand that fate dealt us. It was all about how we treated each other and loved each other and tried to help each other. You know, ‘live, love, laugh and be happy’.

“Today, somehow that’s missing. When I listen to the music today it’s disgusting. Slime and filth flows out of the mouths of people who shout and stomp their feet in hatred. That ain’t entertaining, and it ain’t funny, it’s just noise and meanness.”

Sitting there in the darkened theater as the entertainers sat around us the music started again. It was joyful happy music with an exciting beat. The lyric was new, the melody was new – that part of the dream remains. The actual words and songs have faded away. But the feeling was really exciting.

Jolie kept talking with the music in the background. “Somehow creative people today have stopped being creative,” he said.

“With a few exceptions here and there, whenever they want to sing a love-song they pull something up from the past. When they want to make a good movie they re-write an old

one that made money and try to bring it up to date.

“Trouble is, they do their revising of the old stuff without the feeling of the old stuff. Lemme show you what I mean.

“The other day I was at the airport. A cute young couple, a soldier and a pretty girl were standing there arm-in-arm waiting for the loading gate to open.. Then the announcement came over the sound system. ‘Flight 123 now loading at Gate Eleven.’

“They faced each other and locked eyes for a moment, then they hugged and kissed, and the soldier turned and started for the gate. As he did, the girl began to cry. The soldier turned and came back to her and said, ‘Tootsie, don’t cry – don’t sigh. Tootsie, I’ll be back. Watch your e-mail. If you don’t get a letter I’m ok, I must be in jail! ‘Cause I’ll always love and think about you.’

“I sang that ditty long ago. It became one of my trademarks. When you change train and mail to plane and e-mail you still carry the love message. Today if someone wanted to update the song they’d focus on the tragedy of war and blame the president! The love story is lost! See what I mean?

“And, you know, if you wanted to make a low-budget movie today using the old songs of love and hope you couldn’t do it. When we wrote songs and music and made movies and records we copyrighted them because we were proud of them and wanted to get credit for our work. We never intended to keep people from singin’ ‘em! Greedy people now hold the performance rights and charge a fortune to let anyone use them – and people on a tight budget can’t.

“So, somehow, you have to write completely new stuff about lovin’ and helpin’ each other. Most of the so-called creative people today have sold the audience out. They write and perform scum, they make the money but destroy the spirit of entertainment. I don’t know what it is, but this ain’t show business!

“‘Nuff of that, now, lets sing.” And he sang a song I never heard him sing before. Not a new one, but the one my Mother used to play at the piano while I played the violin at age seven or eight to entertain my Daddy-Pal: “And they Called It Dixieland.”

It was wonderful!

The dream faded and I woke up happy with the memory. When I told Alma the dream I broke into tears I felt it so deeply. She said I should write it down and share it with you.

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