

Hallelujah, Baby! Playscript

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circa 1967



WILLIAM
& MARY

CHARTERED 1693

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Scope and Contents

Hallelujah Baby Musical in 2 Acts, Prologue and 6 scenes: Book by Arthur Laurents: Music by Jules Styne: Lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green

First Performed at the Martin Beck Theatre, Broadway - 26 April, 1967 (293 perfs) Previews began on April 6, 1967. Synopsis: ACT I From underneath an open umbrella, Georgina, an attractive, contemporary Black woman, appears and greets us. She tells us that while the show we are about to see will cover sixty years, she will always remain twenty-five - "That's nice for a girl," she states. Georgina's mother, her fiancé Clem and her devoted friend Harvey will also remain the same age throughout the show. In the 1900s, Georgina and Momma are employed as maids on a Southern plantation. Momma tries to convince Georgina that she should be content with her lot in life. But Georgina wants more. Boyfriend Clem, a Pullman porter, arrives and explains how the down payment on a home for Georgina and him was lost when white cops confiscated his poker game winnings. Harvey, a young white theatrical producer, hires Georgina to play a maid in a Civil War play, despite the fact that Black people and whites are not allowed to appear on stage together. Georgina finds she prefers playing a maid to actually being one and is more determined than ever not to go back to the kitchen. In the twenties, Harvey manages a Harlem nightclub where Georgina performs as one of several "Congo Cuties" and Clem works as a waiter. A foreign prince, who doesn't understand the bigoted local bylaws prohibiting Georgina from joining him at his table, starts a fight, and when a brawl ensues, Georgina and Clem are fired, and Harvey resigns in support of his friends. Clem resolves to pull himself together and make Georgina proud. Once more Georgina and Momma are maids and Clem sports a Pullman uniform. All three ironically acknowledge that it pays to keep one's place and fulfil the expectations of white people about how black people are supposed to behave. Then the stock market crashes, and the three find themselves out of work again. To escape the bread lines of the '30s, Georgina returns to the stage, taking on the role of a witch in a politically correct, voodoo version of Macbeth, sponsored by the Federal Theatre. Considered subversive, the show is shut down and Clem, Harvey and a friend named Mary attempt to cheer Georgina up. Clem is drawn to the Communist cause, where they call him "comrade," not "boy." Georgina declares that this is not the solution to their problems: "Nobody can help you and me but you and me." They clash, Clem walks out, and Georgina expresses the irony of her situation. Harvey makes Georgina aware of his feelings for her, but neither has come far enough along for a relationship. Alone, Georgina realises that,

although she's better than ever, she's not much closer to her dreams than she was at the beginning. She resolves to be the best she can be.

ACT II It's the '40s and Georgina is doing her bit for the war effort by performing with a USO troop, while Clem has become a sergeant and Harvey a second lieutenant. All three members of this triangle are too confused about their feelings and too full of pride to act Georgina quits the show when the integrated company is not permitted to play before integrated audiences. After an incident in which Harvey attempts to join Clem and Georgina in the back of a bus, Georgina decides that fighting for one's principles doesn't always pay off. She'll have to find a different route to her dreams. It's the '50s, and Georgina has finally broken through, singing and dancing out her jubilation on the mirrored stage of a chic supper club. Clem, now a civil rights activist, is unhappy with Georgina's new acceptance values and tells her to "get out of your little room and connect." Meanwhile, club manager Harvey proposes to Georgina, aware that, in spite of her estrangement from Clem, she may always be Clem's lady. Momma tells Clem and Harvey that no one is more surprised by Georgina's success than her Momma. At a party where Georgina is the sole non-white, Momma arrives to deliver Georgina's evening bag. Georgina's friend mistakes Momma for Georgina's maid, and Georgina breaks down. She realises she has been "driving tight and tiny for myself," and resolves to "sing for everyone's supper - not just my own". As the '60s arrive, Georgina and Momma are about to move into a posh New York apartment that Harvey has arranged for them. Clem, who wants no more of smugly tolerant white society, convinces Georgina that this is still not the right place for them. Clem and Georgina move on together. At least they will have each other until things change and the weather's better.

Ken Mandelbaum- Theguidetomusicaltheater.com

The Musical was nominated for 9 Tony awards in 1968 and won 5 including Best Musical, Best Composer and Lyricist, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Featured Actress, and four individual awards for Best Producer of a Musical. Source, ibdb.com

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Hooks, Robert, 1937-

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