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The secret life of walter mitty thurber

Ben Stiller was not only aptly cast in the recently released movie of the same title, he’s also sublime as the entertaining narrator of Thurber's original short story. A timid man escapes his boring life by living in his imagination—which is full of fantasies of daring heroic adventures. Stiller grasps this concept by imbuing each new character that Walter Mitty assumes with a bold creative voice. Mitty’s fantasy world is in direct opposition to his melancholy existence, which is, of course, the point. Although the short story is brief, Stiller continues the audiobook by imparting his interpretation of the story and its lasting significance and relevance. A.W. © AudioFile 2014, Portland, Maine [Published: JANUARY 2014] Digital Download • Audible, Inc. • 2013 DD ISBN multiple sources A henpecked husband copes with the frustrations of his dull life by imagining he is a fearless airplane pilot, a brilliant doctor, and other dashing figures. James Thurber (1894–1961) From James Thurber: Writings & Drawings An article that appeared recently in The Columbus Dispatch (James Thurber’s hometown newspaper) considers the enduring popularity of characters like Walter Mitty, who made his creator famous after the publication of “The Secret Life” in 1939. Beaten-down underachievers had long been—and would continue to be—central to many of Thurber’s stories and drawings, but what set Walter Mitty apart from his counterparts was a series of flights into heroic fantasies—daydreams that increasingly seem to intrude on Mitty’s grasp of reality. In an interview for the Dispatch article, Jared Gardner, a professor at Ohio State University, acknowledges, “Thurber was drawing on a classic device found in some of the great comedies in American culture—in which the timid or oppressed man finds release or redemption in fantasies drawn from popular culture.” “Though the theme was far from new,” summarizes biographer Harrison Kinney, “Thurber handles it with a greater universal application than anybody before or since.” Soon after the story’s initial appearance in The New Yorker, it was reprinted in Reader’s Digest (twice), Life, Scholastic, and This Week Magazine. The selection was also included in Thurber’s best-selling collection, My World—and Welcome to It (1942). Throughout the war, anthologies of Thurber’s writings were issued as Armed Services editions, and the story became a favorite among American soldiers. Kinney explains, “World War II flyers used ‘pocketa-pocketa’ in radio code; planes and vehicles were named ‘Walter Mitty’; airmen formed Walter Mitty clubs; troops used ‘Walter Mitty’ as passwords.” During the 1940s Charles Laughton recorded an audio version, and Robert Benchley created a radio production. And, of course, the story was adapted for the big screen, first in the 1947 film featuring Danny Kaye and, now, in an updated major motion picture released this week with Ben Stiller as director and star. Although the 1947 film was a commercial success and has acquired the patina of a classic in its own right, Thurber was upset with the studio, which had not used any of the material he had written or approved. The movie bears little resemblance to the original story, and at one stage of production, Goldwyn Productions even considered changing the title. When the author’s dissatisfaction became public, Samuel Goldwyn released excerpts from letters Thurber had written praising various scenes from drafts of the script yet disingenuously neglected to note that none of this material had actually made it into the final film. According to Random House publisher Bennett Cerf (who thought the movie was “hilarious”), at the end of the movie’s premiere Thurber asked, “Anybody catch the name of this picture?”* * *“We’re going through!” The Commander’s voice was like thin ice breaking. . . . If you don't see the full selection below, click here (PDF) or click here (Google Docs) to read it—free! This selection is used by permission. To photocopy and distribute this selection for classroom use, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center. Skip to content Shop Authors Music Publishing Recordings Resources A CONCORD THEATRICALS TITLE On his fortieth birthday Walter Mitty reflects on his drab, ordinary life. Defeated in his quest for wealth and glory by family responsibilities, a mortgage, and a routine job, he creates elaborate fantasies in which he is the hero. His secret world is so enticing that he often loses sight of the boundary between dream and reality and comically slips into his imagination. An attractive would be chanteuse aptly named Willa de Wisp encourages Walter to leave his wife, shed the burdens of suburban living and really live the secret life. Unfortunately it is as unattainable as it is appealing. At the end of the play Walter discovers that he is happily committed to the real world, complete with its mortgages and responsibilities. The Secret Life of Walter Mitty was first presented at the Players Theatre, New York City on October 26, 1964. Love Marriage Economic/Financial Interest High School/Secondary College Theatre / Student Community Theatre Professional Theatre WALTER MITTY - Male, 40. A whimsical, henpecked, dreamer supreme. Instantly likeable.AGNES - Female, 30-40. Mitty’s wife. Reasonably attractive, nagging, practical, but underneath her strong veneer, she is sensitive, understanding and smart.PENINNAH - Female, 10-11. Mitty and Agnes’ daughter. Unspoiled and sweet.HARRY - Male, 40’s. Pleasant, friendly bartender type.WILLA - Female, Late 20’s. Sexy and kookie nightclub singer.IRVING - Male, 30. Slightly dense. Her is a stern believer in health foods and spas, and looks it.RUTHIE - Female, Mid 20’s. Volatile and a little on the crude side. Pretty in a cheep sort of way.GORMAN - Male, 40. A successful salesman type with a gift of gab and great charm.HAZEL - Female, Mid 20’s. Speaks with a lisp, dumb as they come.SYLVIA - Female, Mid 20’s. Definitely not the finishing school type.MACMILLAN - Male, 50. A large, pompous, gruff man.CHORUS (SATB) - Firing Squad, Peasants, Mission Control Operator, Surgical Patient, Dr. Renshaw, Dr. Benbow, Nurses, Professor Remington, Dr. Pritchard-Mitford, Crêpe Suzette, Tortoni, Apple Turnover, Townspeople, Blind Date, Folies Customers, Male Dancers, Group Therapy Patients Features Contemporary Costumes / Street Clothes Duration 120 minutes (2 hours) Cautions "A thoroughly pleasant musical evening." - Time Your browser doesn't support HTML5 audio. Here is a link to the audio instead. Your browser doesn't support HTML5 audio. Here is a link to the audio instead. Your browser doesn't support HTML5 audio. Here is a link to the audio instead. Don't Forget (Aggie, Mitty) Your browser doesn't support HTML5 audio. Here is a link to the audio instead. Hello, I Love You, Goodbye (Gorman, Harry, Mitty) Your browser doesn't support HTML5 audio. Here is a link to the audio instead. Two Little Pussycats (Ruthie, Hazel) Your browser doesn't support HTML5 audio. Here is a link to the audio instead. You're Not (Mitty, Agness, Ensemble) Your browser doesn't support HTML5 audio. Here is a link to the audio instead. Large Orchestration:1 Piano-Conductor1 Flute/Piccolo1 Clarinet/Alto Saxophone 1 1 Clarinet/Alto Saxophone 21 Trumpet 11 Trumpet 21 Trombone1 Percussion (Timpani, Bells, Drum Set, Cymbal, Triangle, Wood Block, Cowbell, Tom-Tom, Bongo (Or Bongo Sound), Castanets, Gun Shot Sound)1 Harp2 Violins I & 21 Viola1 Cello1 BassSmall Orchestration:1 Piano-Conductor1 Reed (Piccolo, Flute, Bb Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Tenor Sax)1 Percussion (Drum Set, Vibraphone, Cymbal, Wood Block, Tom-Tom, Triangle, Bongo (Or Bongo Sound), Castanets)1 Bass Musical StyleClassic Broadway Vocal DemandsModerate Orchestra SizeMedium Chorus SizeLarge ©2021 Concord Theatricals Oops, looks like your browser doesn't support HTML 5 audio. Today, we are told that most men lead lives of quiet desperation, that the hero of our time is a man bedeviled and frustrated by petty annoyances and demands, a man who can only dream of heroic deeds. The Secret Life of Walter Mitty, a new musical based on one of James Thurber’s most enchanting stories, is about just such a wistful little man. Although Thurber’s story takes place in Connecticut, Mitty is a universal character in whom we all recognize something of ourselves. He has become a legend. Mitty, escaping in daydreams from the straitjacket of reality, finds that life’s only triumphs come in “The Secret Life” (Prologue). Act I To the rapid-fire shouted orders of his wife to hurry, Walter Mitty (Marc London), just turning forty, prepares to face another day. As he shaves, he imagines himself before a firing squad, elegantly scorning the traditional blindfold and last cigarette (“The Walter Mitty March”). Recalled to a real, more formidable “squad,” comprising his angry mother-in-law (Susan Lehman) and nagging wife, Agnes (Lorraine Serabian), he meets a firing line of accusations: a missing sock, a spotted tie, too much smoking, causing his mother-in-law’s dentures to freeze solid in a glass of water he absentmindedly left overnight on the window sill. His only compensation is his adoring daughter, Peninnah (Christopher Norris). If only he could flee all the bickering and go “Walking With Peninnah,” or escape in a rocket where Mitty the Great Space Scientist, with a brilliant improvisation, repairs a clogged fuel line. His dream of glory dissolves as Agnes complains that he never does anything to get ahead in his job. In “Drip, Drop, Tapoketa,” he suddenly imagines himself as the famous Dr. Mitty saving his boss’s life with a miracle of surgical skill – only to be recalled to the all-too-real world by Agnes’s jealous suspicions of his mumblings and daydreaming. Why have their lives become so drab? “Once I made you dream; now I make you scream,” he muses (“Aggie”). As all leave for town in the family car, Mitty is assailed by Agnes’s and her mother’s barrage of driving instructions, shopping lists and general duties (“Don’t Forget”). At Harry’s Bar, his only refuge from the burdens of the world, Mitty falls into conversation with Willa de Wisp (Cathryn Damon), a tippling nightclub singer who also dreams – of stardom and fame. Her immediate problem, however, is a health fanatic boyfriend, Irving Kornfeld (Charles Rydell), who wants to build her up, marry her, and transplant her to his Oregon farm. But Willa believes that “Marriage Is for Old Folks.” Also on hand to denounce marriage to Mitty is an old college pal, Fred Gorman (Eugene Roche), now a philandering blowhard whose uncomplicated credo is “Hello, I Love You, Goodbye.” Suddenly Mitty fancies himself as a bon vivant ordering a meal that would make fastidious Secret Agent 007 James Bond drool. He is surrounded by adoring and beautiful women, including a veiled dancing girl who, alas, turns out to be Agnes. He banishes her from the dream. In reality, it is Willa who gets Irving’s adoration in a love poem (“Willa”). When Irving muddleheadedly accuses Mitty of leading Willa astray, Mitty comes to her defense. A grateful Willa prompts Mitty to imagine himself a great prizefighter, with Agnes as his protagonist. He boxes her with verbal insults instead of fists, overwhelming her by pointing out all the things “You’re Not.” Emboldened by Irving’s opinion of his manliness and by the “Confidence” of Willa and bar-owner Harry (Rudy Tronto), Mitty, high on dreams and champagne, decides to tell Agnes off and run away with Willa. Act II Having decided to help Willa with her career, Mitty imagines himself a great impresario with Willa as the star of the Folies de Mitty, doing a torrid nightclub solo for him, a hilarious caricature of a French chanteuse (“Fan the Flame”). In “Two Little Pussycats,” a pair of Fred Gorman’s slighted lady friends, Hazel (Rue McClanahan) and Ruthie (Lette Rehnolds), solicit sympathy. When Mitty wavers in his determination to flee with Willa, she and Harry convince him that it is Agnes herself, not he, who needs the psychological help she is forever prescribing for him. Suddenly, Mitty is a famous psychiatrist treating Agnes in a group-therapy session. Emboldened once more, Mitty tells his new friends all he will accomplish “Now That I Am Forty.” Agnes unexpectedly appears at the bar and proceeds to berate and humiliate her husband for his drinking and his intended relationship with Willa. Finally daring to put his dreams into action, Mitty tells Agnes he is leaving her, but as he is about to sign papers cashing in his insurance, selling his house and resigning his job, the sight of a pen that Peninnah had given him fills him with shame and he asks Agnes to take him home (“Aggie” – reprise). The next morning, suffering from a hangover, Mitty realizes that Peninnah gives his life meaning and Agnes gives it order and stability. Willa, Irving and Fred Gorman are “Lonely Ones” whose lives have no real direction. Besides, when Agnes’s well-intentioned nagging gets too much for him, there’s always “The Secret Life.” – Curtis F. Brown (Taken from the original liner notes for OL 6320 / OS 2720) Walter Mitty: Marc London Mother-in-law: Susan Lehman Agnes: Lorraine Serabian Peninnah: Christopher Norris Willa de Wisp: Cathryn Damon Irving Kornfeld: Charles Rydell Fred Gorman: Eugene Roche Harry: Rudy Tronto Hazel: Rue McClanahan Ruthie: Lette Rehnolds Music by Leon Carr Lyrics by Earl Shuman Book by Joe Manchester Musical Direction: Joe Stecko James Thurber’s most famous short story inspired this completely original, remarkably clever and skillful 1964 Off-Broadway musical. It ran for only 96 performances, but was recorded by Columbia Records. The score is by Leon Carr, a composer best known for writing TV jingles (“Sometimes you feel like a nut …”), with lyrics by Earl Shuman. Marc London, an actor who also wrote for Rowan and Martin’s Laugh-In, plays Mitty, along with Emmy-winner Cathryn Damon (TV’s Soap), Lorraine Serabian (Tony® nominee as The Leader in Zorba) and the late Rue McClanahan. Previous Next > Skip to content The Secret Life of Walter Mitty is just one of James Thurber's wry, humorous stories in this selection, which contains the best of his short tales, essays and cartoons. Poking fun at his own weaknesses and those of other people (and dogs), they demonstrate Thurber's off-beat, hilarious imagination and his unique take on the world around him. Walter Mitty is an ordinary man living an ordinary life. But he has dreams - vivid, extraordinary day dreams - in which the life he leads is one of excitement and even adventure, in which he - a weary, put upon middle-aged man - is the hero of his own story. A man can dream, can't he?The Secret Life of Walter Mitty is just one of the brilliant humorous and witty stories written by James Thurber and collected here. Praise for The Secret Life Of Walter Mitty One of the great humourists Sunday Times

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