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TITLE=THIS IS AMERICA - "The Producers"

BYLINE=Nancy Steinbach

VOICE ONE:

A new musical play opened a few months ago on Broadway in New York City. It is called "The Producers".

"The Producers" was first seen as a movie in Nineteen Sixty-Eight. It was written by Mel Brooks. But it was not a musical. A few years ago, Mister Brooks decided to write the story again as a musical for the stage. He also wrote all the songs.

I'm Sarah Long. Today, Shirley Griffith and I report about "The Producers" on the VOA Special English program, THIS IS AMERICA.

((CUT ONE: MUSIC FROM OVERTURE TO "THE PRODUCERS"))

VOICE TWO:

Mel Brooks says the musical show "The Producers" is his way to honor the Broadway shows he loved in the past. He calls it a traditional musical comedy.

That is true in one way. The show presents a funny story told through songs and dances performed by actors in beautiful clothes. But the story of "The Producers" is very different from other Broadway shows. That is because its songs and dances are about Germany and the Nazis in the Nineteen-Thirties. The show makes fun of German dictator Adolph Hitler and his followers.

Mel Brooks has said that the best way to defeat an enemy is to make fun of him by showing him as stupid. That is what he has done in "The Producers." And audiences are loving the show. All the tickets have been sold until next year.

VOICE ONE:

"The Producers" takes place in New York City in Nineteen-Fifty-Nine. It involves two men, Max Bialystock and Leo Bloom. Nathan Lane plays the part of Max. Max is a theatrical producer. He organizes shows on Broadway. But his latest show was a failure.

Leo Bloom is an accountant. He arrives at Max's office to record the show's losses. Matthew Broderick plays Leo. Leo tells Max how a producer could make more money with an unsuccessful show than with a successful one. For example, a producer

could get one-million dollars from investors. He could produce a bad show that only costs one-hundred-thousand dollars. When the show fails, the producer could keep the rest of the money. Max immediately decides to do it. He asks Leo to join him in the plot in the song "We Can Do It."

((CUT TWO: WE CAN DO IT))

Leo hates his accounting job. He wants a more exciting life. He imagines himself as a famous Broadway producer surrounded by beautiful girls as he sings "I Wanna Be a Producer."

((CUT THREE: I WANNA BE A PRODUCER))

VOICE TWO:

Leo quits his job and decides to work with Max. The first step in their plan is to find the worst play ever written, so it will be sure to fail. They choose a musical called "Springtime For Hitler." They are sure it will be so bad that it will close after one performance.

The writer of "Springtime For Hitler" is a former Nazi named Franz Liebkind. He gives Leo and Max permission to produce his show. The two producers then hire the worst director, worst actors and worst production team they can find. Max gets two-million dollars to produce the show from rich old ladies he knows.

Finally, "Springtime For Hitler" opens on Broadway. It includes a huge production number with beautiful dancing girls. Men dressed as Nazi soldiers sing about the glories of Adolph Hitler and Nazi Germany. The song is "Springtime For Hitler":

((CUT FOUR: SPRINGTIME FOR HITLER))

VOICE ONE:

But Max and Leo's plan fails. The worst thing happens. The audience loves the show. They think it is supposed to be funny. The show is a huge success.

Soon, Max is arrested for stealing the investors' money. Leo takes the two-million dollars and flees to Brazil with their office secretary. Alone in jail, Max sings angrily about his situation in this song, "Betrayed."

((CUT FIVE: BETRAYED))

VOICE TWO:

Max is found guilty and is about to be sentenced when Leo returns to admit his part in the plot. Max finally recognizes what Leo means to him. The two men express their feelings of friendship in the song "'Til Him."

((CUT SIX: 'TIL HIM))

Leo and Max go to prison. But the governor pardons them. They begin producing

successful Broadway shows, for real this time.

((CUT SEVEN: PRISONERS OF LOVE--LEO AND MAX))

VOICE ONE:

Each year, Broadway shows compete for Tony awards. This year "The Producers" won twelve Tony awards. That is the most Tony awards ever given to one show. "The Producers" won the award for Best Musical on Broadway. Nathan Lane won best actor in a musical for playing Max Bialystock. Cady Huffman was named best actress in a musical for her work as the secretary. Mel Brooks won the Tony for best music and lyrics written for the theatre. "The Producers" also won Tony awards for best direction, best dancing, best lighting, best costume design and best sets.

People who have seen "The Producers" say it is great fun. The show's producers reportedly are considering making the musical into a movie. That way even more people will be able to enjoy it.

((TAPE CUT EIGHT: INSTEAD OF CLOSING THEME, OVERTURE TO "THE PRODUCERS"))

VOICE TWO:

This program was written by Nancy Steinbach. It was produced by Paul Thompson. Our studio engineer was Keith Holmes. I'm Shirley Griffith.

VOICE ONE:

And I'm Sarah Long. Join us again next week for another report about life in the United States on the VOA Special English program, THIS IS AMERICA.

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