

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

March 1st, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about freedom of speech and opinion for U.S. journalists and political commentators. In the interview segment, ER's guest is composer Sigmund Romberg.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt, Elliott Roosevelt, Sigmund Romberg

[ER:] Good afternoon. This is Eleanor Roosevelt. I am happy to welcome you for another visit here in my living room at the Park Sheraton Hotel. As usual, I have a guest that you will be anxious to meet and, as usual, Elliott will assist me on the program. And now, here is Elliott.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Thank you, Mother. Sigmund Romberg, today's guest needs no introduction, for America has been singing and waltzing and dancing to his music for many a year. Mr. Romberg is going to tell us about his early songwriting career; the pitfalls, the inevitable disappointments. All of which is generally interesting because who of us does not believe that we have in us the ability to write one song, one play, maybe even a novel. As is usual on this program, a portion will be devoted to Mother and I discussing a problem of general interest prompted by a question sent in by one of our listeners. But before we get launched, a word from our announcer who will say a word for the sponsors who make this recorded program possible.

(Break 01:36-01:49)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Our subject for today, Mother, for discussion was suggested by Mrs. C.I. Jacobs of Germantown, a suburb of Philadelphia. She writes, "I want to ask a question and hope for discussion of it on your program. Don't you think some commentators do a great deal of harm and spread confusion in the already confused public? There is one in particular who starts his program with condemnation of Secretary Acheson or President Truman. His cynicism is displayed in his voice. We all believe in free speech, but this kind of free speech to my mind helps the USSR rather than the US." Mrs. Jacobs also asks that if she and her husband come to New York, how do they get tickets to the United Nations. But before we start that, I'd like to uh say and add, just for the sake of keeping our non-partisan appearance on this program, that uh there might be a number of people who violently disagree with your views, who might say that you by the tone of your voice ah impugn and imply uh that the uh you don't particularly care for the thinking and the policies of other people of differing opinions. (3:12)

[ER:] Well, I hope I'd always listen to other people of differing opinions. I can imagine who this particular commentator may be. Um I don't happen to like him. Uh sometimes I listen to him. Um I-I do that really as a kind of um [Elliott Roosevelt: Self-discipline?] self-discipline. I want to know what is the worst people can say and how beautifully they can twist things, which to me, look perfectly straight and simple. That's very valuable um to find out and uh so that I listen every now and then. Not every day, but every now and then. And I don't believe, if I were Mrs. Jacobs, that I would do anything um really to remove people of that kind, because I think it's good for us to have to decide uh what we think and if we have people saying certain things, it spurs us to making up our minds or thinking, really, whether we do believe those things or whether we don't! And that, I think, is good for us. And um, so that I would um uh I get a little tired of it and then I turn it off. [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] And then -- [ER laughs] and I'm perfectly sure that there are loads of people that turn us off, Elliott. (4:41)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Oh, I'm absolutely sure of that, [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] but I-I feel that ah Mrs. Jacobs is wrong in one respect uh, and that is that once you start to say, "Well it is wrong to criticize or to be cynical about Mr. Truman or Mr. Acheson and their efforts as Secretary of State and President," uh I think you miss the whole idea of freedom of speech in this country because that's been one of the great things that we've always had. That the lowest of the-of the citizenry in this country could criticize the highest, he could say anything that he wanted to about the president or he [ER: As long as he didn't threaten him.] could say that--that's right. And uh I-I think that you will-you will notice that always these commentators uh do not advocate that we overthrow the government of the country or that we kill these people off. They are passionately standing out and trying to call for a new person to be elected at the next election.

[ER:] Yes, I um I-I think we have to be uh for freedom of speech in this country and the freedom for everyone because the minute we deny it to anyone, we may someday be denied it ourselves. And that is one reason why I would always stand for the right of anyone to express their own opinion. The only thing I really object to is when I think someone is not actually expressing the way they really and honestly feel, but is saying things because they think it appeals to their public or they think um that is the way that people who uh-uh are responsible for their program would like them to uh feel. [Elliott Roosevelt: All right.] And it's easy to fool oneself and they do it passionately, but that uh sometimes I feel a little sad about, but I still wouldn't uh refuse them the right to speak. (6:54)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right. Well now, there is a phase uh of uh commentating and of uh public uh pronouncements uh that is bad, uh and that is where, uh quite cynically, the facts are taken and a lie is created, a definite untruth.

[ER:] Oh, that I think is absolutely outrageous, but I think there is another thing which is bad. I think we have a right to discuss um public um questions. I think we have a right to discuss public figures, but I think there are certain things we should not do. I think we should discuss those figures in the relation to their public work. I do not think we should discuss them as individuals, so to speak, and drag in things that have really nothing to do with their responsibility to the public. (8:04)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes. Uh that raises another very interesting point, and that is the character assassination that is carried on of certain public officials uh by people who are not public officials themselves. Uh and uh usually uh because the libel laws are what they are in this country, uh they are done with complete immunity, uh because anybody who goes out to prove damage through character assassination has got to prove, under our laws, definite dollar uh [ER: Loss of the ability to earn a living.] loss. Yes, I remember, for instance, when uh Theodore Roosevelt sued uh I think uh a newspaper, if I'm not mistaken, uh and he collected uh he collected a verdict and one cent. Uh and it so happened that Theodore Roosevelt was in a position to personally uh pay for the prosecution of-of that uh particular case, but there are thousands and thousands of Americans who are definitely libeled, who are--definite untruths are said about them, and they don't feel that they can go into a court and wallow around in-in days and days of horrible name-calling, and then never come out with any satisfaction of any kind, even financial. Uh they may win the verdict, but they have nothing. (9:37)

[ER:] They may win the verdict, but they have to pay for all their-their costs, as a rule, and um I know, for instance, of uh-uh someone, not long ago, who uh found himself in a very difficult position uh because of an accusation which was totally untrue. It took six months to prove that it was absolutely untrue and unfounded. And-and everything has been completely cleared, but this individual didn't happen to have a great deal of money. He has not complained, but I am quite sure that the legal advice he has had, if it is charged, will cost him at least several thousand dollars, and I don't think he makes more than a few thousand dollars a year!

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yeah, [ER: So those--] well that's one example.

[ER:] Those examples are really quite um quite difficult ones.

[ER and Elliott Roosevelt overlap]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, uh and yet there- there are in other countries libel laws which uh protect not only—

[ER:] Well, Winston Churchill collected for uh something that was said in a book about him, *Dinner at the White House*. [ER laughs]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] That's right. It was a small book that was written uh, called *Dinner at the White House*, and the author of that and the publishers, I believe, were found guilty under English law. In America, Churchill could not sue him at all.

[ER:] You couldn't approve of it. No, no.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] So that uh definitely there should be some interest to -- maybe some of our bar associations should take an interest in what happens in character assassination of individuals through a definite uh untrue remark being made about them. Now I think we have to go on, at this point, to another part in our program, and I hope that this answer has been satisfactory to the lady who sent it in.

(Break 11:33-11:46)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] There probably isn't a day that goes by that one or more melodies composed by Mother's guest today is not heard at least several times, because songs come and songs go, but his go on forever. Mother, will you introduce your guest of today?

[ER:] With great pleasure, Elliott. Being myself a lover of his music, I'm happy to introduce to you Mr. Sigmund Romberg.

[Sigmund Romberg:] Thank you so much, and thank you for having me here so that I can talk today.

[ER:] Mr. Romberg, I am so glad to have you. Since you started composing, how many songs have you written?

[Sigmund Romberg:] Well now, uh if you allow me to say, uh I would divide that essentially into two parts: printed songs, close to nine hundred, and with the unprinted songs, close to two thousand.

[ER:] Well now, what do you mean by printed and unprinted? Do you mean printed songs of those [Sigmund Romberg: Well when you--] that were public?

[Sigmund Romberg:] Uh most of my songs, of course, come from productions. I mean most. I mean almost all of them. And when you arrive at production, uh you generally print five or six songs, which are the high spots of the show, and the opening choruses and dance numbers and select [ER: I see.] you never have print. (13:02)

[ER:] And the others are not?

[Sigmund Romberg:] You should take all the unprinted and printed songs, about two thousands.

[ER:] Two thousand.

[Sigmund Romberg:] If you take the printed songs, close to nine hundred.

[ER:] I see. Well, for how many musical plays or operettas have you composed the music? (3:18)

[Sigmund Romberg:] Well uh, counting my early experiences when I wrote nothing but revues for the Winter Garden and uh counting onto the musical farces and music uh shows with music and uh operettas, I wrote close to eighty-seven shows.

[ER:] Eighty-seven shows?

[Sigmund Romberg:] Mhm, that's right.

[ER:] Which is your favorite?

[Sigmund Romberg:] Of the shows?

[ER:] Mhm.

[Sigmund Romberg:] That's a hard question uh to answer. Uh generally it's my--the latest show I'm writing. But um I like *The Student Prince*, I like *Desert Song*, I like *The New Moon*, I like *Maytime* still, and uh I like one of my latest ones, *Up in Central Park*. (14:00)

[ER:] Well, have you got any special reason why you pick out certain ones and like them better?

[Sigmund Romberg:] Well, because ah-ah certain shows are still alive and being played every year. And in fact, *The Desert Song*, Warner Brothers who bought the movie rights years ago, made already twice a picture. Still the show -- the original show is still being played every year. Same thing happened to *New Moon*. Two pictures were made of *New Moon* already and still the original show is playing. [ER: I see.] So uh *The Student Prince* -- there's not a year passes that *The Student Prince* doesn't go on the road. And in fact, not a year passes that *Blossom Time* of mine doesn't go on the road. [ER: Mhm]. So they are still alive and very much kicking. [Sigmund Romberg laughs]

[ER:] And you like them when they stay alive like that, I can imagine!

[Sigmund Romberg:] Well, I mean it all helps me to pay my income taxes. [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] (14:51)

[ER:] Well now, you're also a conductor; your own concert orchestra as well as the Philharmonic and others. Do you always use only your own music? (15:02)

[Sigmund Romberg:] No, I mean, at the beginning, um shortly at the beginning of the Second World War, the question arose, in my mind, uh what to do for the war effort. Entertaining uh soldiers, sailors, uh the different stations, there were no wounded in the beginning, you know, uh was very easy from New York. We organized teams of composers and singers and we went to the different camps and so on, entertaining the soldiers. But then when it came to entertaining the boys in the country at large, [ER: Yes.] uh it was very hard to reach them, and we got more and more complaints from uh different cities that we based all of our efforts in New York and didn't do anything for the country. So I struck up the idea to take up an orchestra and singers and go out on a concert tour and at the same time reach these cities, and try to get them an orchestra or at least the singers. And I did that and uh. So the idea of the concert was started and

it caught on fire as it started to roll. And later on, of course, I didn't bother with camps anymore, I only bothered with hospitals, uh but ah both efforts were very much appreciated. My uh -- the concerts that brought me quite nice returns, and I could also fulfil my dream and get closer to the boys in the country and give them some New York entertainment. (16:24)

[ER:] Well that's really a very nice story, I think, how you happened to come to do it. Well, before we went on the air, Mr. Romberg, you referred to your music as middlebrow. What do you mean by that? [ER laughs]

[Sigmund Romberg:] Well now, when I play in a concert tour, I only use about, in a two hour and fifty minute concert, I'd say between twenty-five or thirty-five minute of my own music. I play anybody's music. I don't play symphonies and I don't play jazz music, but I play waltzes by [Johann] Strauss [II], or [Franz] Lehár. I play marches by [John Philip] Sousa, or somebody else. I play the standard overtures. I play selections by [Jerome] Kern, [George] Gershwin, Cole Porter, Lehár, [Emmerich] Kálmán . Uh, I play Gilbert and Sullivan. So when I address the audience, which I generally do at each concert tour, I try to explain what I'm trying to do. I generally say to them that not only do I write, but I also play to them, in my concerts, music which a first-class jazz band would call highbrow. A symphony orchestra, again, would call it lowbrow. [ER and Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm] So I'm right in the middle, then I call it middlebrow [ER and Elliott Roosevelt laugh].

[ER:] That's a-that's a good name to have! I think that I'm sure you get a big audience for your middlebrow music. (17:47)

[Sigmund Romberg:] Well now, I mean, giving um—

[ER:] A lot of people can understand it probably and enjoy it who might not like either extreme.

[Sigmund Romberg:] Yes, well, I mean, actually this is a fact, you see, because a jazz band uh-uh really would call uh-uh an overture or a uh real Strauss waltz a highbrow music for them. And although the Philharmonic orchestras all over the country play some middlebrow music when they put on what they call a popular concert. [ER: Yes.] Still, I mean, in the general run of the thing, they play highbrow music. [ER:Yes.] So I really, I'm entitled to call the music middlebrow music. [ER and Elliott Roosevelt laugh]

[ER:] Well now, sir, I wonder if you'd mind telling us a little about your early life. You were born in Hungary, weren't you? (18:35)

[Sigmund Romberg:] Yes. I was born in Hungary way back in 19-- 1880, I mean 19-- 1887, and I came to this country in 1909. Now um uh—

[ER and Sigmund Romberg overlap]

[ER interrupts:] You say way back, I was born before you were! [ER laughs] Doesn't seem to me so far off so long ago.

[Sigmund Romberg:] That's quite right, you're right. I mean, I shouldn't have said that.

[Sigmund Romberg:] Well now, um I'm very happy, in a way, that I had a chance seeing Hungary and Austria, especially Vienna and Budapest, in a time when the old emperor was still alive because it's a period which is absolutely gone. And although you can still read it in books, but the younger generation today hardly knows anymore what that life was.

[ER:] Well, I saw something today that horrified me in the paper. I wonder if you saw it. I don't think Vienna would ever be the same. That the coffee shops were going to have to be given up because the price of coffee had gone up so. Vienna, without that coffee with whipped cream on top, would seem to me imp-impossible to imagine. (19:38)

[Sigmund Romberg:] That's very hard to imagine. Yes, Vienna, of course, that's a custom of the land. To sit in the-the coffee house, drink coffee, and read all the newspapers. Uh that's where the old word *gemütlichkeit* came in. You know, they had nothing else to do but sit around there and talk. [ER laughs] Uh but uh there was a life there; there was uh art there; there was smile. I mean, there was happiness and gaiety there in Vienna. Uh really, I mean, when I say that when I play, because I remember that life, Strauss's waltz, "Wine, Women and Song," that's about the best description which I can give you of Vienna as it used to be. Um when [Erich Wolfgang] Korngold, a famous composer, a friend of mine, wrote *Die tote Stadt*, The Dead City, it really described Vienna as of today. (20:30)

[ER:] But isn't there something uh that is valuable in the kind of leisure, which is a cultivated leisure. You see, without the people to listen, much that you think of as being valuable would never have been done. You needed the audience that was uh educated to appreciate and had time to listen. (20:58)

[Sigmund Romberg:] Well, you-you're quite right, but may I just point out to you one thing. Uh no artist, in the period I'm talking about, no artist of any nature, regardless if he was a painter, a poet, a singer, a conductor, or a composer, amounted to anything unless he impressed the Viennese critics and gave his concert in Vienna. The same thing is today--happens today, in New York. Uh I know that we are today the leading nation as far as art and music is concerned. And no singer of any standing can get anywhere, unless he passes to give at least a concert in Carnegie Hall, or in Town Hall, or conducts the Philharmonic Orchestra, or sings at the Metropolitan, or has a show on Broadway, you have--or has a picture and an exhibition at the Anderson Galleries or somewhere, or has his books published here, or his poems published here, so that he can be criticized. You have to pass the center, the leading center today of art and artists, and that's New York.

[ER:] You think it's here today [Sigmund Romberg: Absolutely] in this country?

[Sigmund Romberg] There is no artist today in the world who wouldn't want to work in America and give concerts here. And you cannot give a concert in any city, in-in the United States unless you have at least a concert in Carnegie Hall or Town Hall behind you. (22:23)

[ER:] Well, now you see, I remember the time when no artist would really succeed in this country who had not succeeded somewhere in Europe first.

[Sigmund Romberg:] There was such a time, yes.

[ER:] And um it must indicate what you're now saying. That there's come about um quite a good deal of maturity in the American audience, now whether that comes from the fact that we have had a more ease of life and, therefore, um have been able to listen more. Um there are, of course, groups in our midst that have always uh had an appreciation of the arts, but the average American public uh for a long time did not have that appreciation, and had so little security in their own judgement that unless um the stamp of approval was given somewhere else, they would have hesitated to say they liked it. (23:35)

[Sigmund Romberg:] Yes, um again, I must say you are right. But again, I must just make one observation, if I'm allowed to do so, and that is that of course we are about the only country where radio and now television is absolutely uh-uh supported by private money, not by state money. Uh the field in which an artist can bloom and make a return here is so much greater than anywhere in Europe. Uh if you

sing in Paris, you are about shot your boat as I may say, because I mean the other cities are smaller cities. But I mean, our field is so large and uh it almost takes you up a year, if not more, to get through with all of the concerts you want to do in this country. And ah-ah it's-it's a temptation which today that no artist can escape. (24:26)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mother, I'm terribly sorry to interrupt again, uh I want to get right back to this very interesting discussion between Mr. Romberg and yourself, but we must stop for just a minute to have a word from our announcer.

(Break 24:36-24:47)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mother, I'd like to turn it right back to you, because I know you have many more questions that you would like to ask Mr. Romberg.

[ER:] All right, I would like to ask Mr. Romberg a number of things. But, first of all, I know that one of the things most gratifying to you is the part you played in helping to found the Songwriters Protective Association of which you are president. What is this organization? Why did you think it was necessary, Mr. Romberg? (25:16)

[Sigmund Romberg:] Uh I want to thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt, for asking me this question, because one of-one of the things which is more dearest to my heart is the organization of the Songwriters Protective Association. Uh as you know, in sometime in 1924 or 1925, the Authors League of America was formed. Then in 1925, the Dramatists Guild was formed. At the same time, the Authors Guild was formed. In the Dramatists Guild, everybody got together who had to do- had to do anything in writing a show for Broadway. Now the musical shows, which were written from that period on-on in Broadway theatres, the composers were protected through the Dramatists Guild and his relationships with his producer. That left really on the limb, this composer of a popular song, who was now left without any organization and without any protection. So in 1930, a few of us got together, who had protection already at that time, and were trying to organize an organization called the Songwriters Protective Association, in which the composer of a popular song should be protected and regulated in his life and his dealings with the pro- with the publisher of a popular song. And with the exception of five years when I resigned because I lived in California, by the way my home is still there, I'm now president of the Songwriters for almost fifteen years. The organization originally started with some 240 members and we have today in our fold over eighteen hundred. When I say eighteen hundred, I mean everybody from Irving Berlin and Cole Porter, Oscar Hammerstein, Dick Rodgers, down to the most humble beginner, is a member of this association. There is very little that Songwriters can do for me or for Dick Rogers or for Irving Berlin, because it's protection of the youngster, mostly, who comes along and tries to start in with his publisher. Uh but without the strength of some of these men, Songwriters wouldn't be today where it is and that is almost twenty years in existence. (27:43)

[ER:] Well, I suppose it's as difficult today as it ever was for young and unknown composers to get their songs published isn't it?

[Sigmund Romberg:] Well, uh if you will speak to hundreds of the youngsters, you will find out that ah the road is a little bit difficult. But then if you realize what the road was for most of these composers-composers, including myself, when we started in without even protection, we even travelled a harder road to get there than these youngsters have to travel today. Their trouble is only to get recognition from some com--publisher, in fact to get into that publisher with a good song because if he has a good song, the publisher will be after him. Uh our road was much more difficult. We not only had to find, years ago, an outlet for our song, but we had to then try to get to a publisher and get even less than minimum terms uh-uh for our song. We were happy when he even just decided that he was going to publish it. Asking what

he's going to pay us was almost an insult. [ER: Mhm.] Uh at least today, uh the youngster who sometime, by chance, writes a song like *The Music Goes Round and Round And Comes Out Here* or *Yes! We Have No Bananas*, [ER: Mhm] and then many years and years pass before he writes another one [ER: Mhm]. Even when he writes that first song, he gets every penny which is coming to him because he has the protection of our contract. (29:20)

[ER:] Of your association.

[Sigmund Romberg:] That's right. Our association means a contract, you see.

[ER:] Oh yes.

[Sigmund Romberg:] Our relationship with the publishers is that we have a uniform contract, which assures that youngster when he gets his song published uh the best terms--the same terms--as the biggest writer would get from the same publisher.

[ER:] Well, that really was a wonderful achievement, I think. Well, what do you have to do today to make a song popular?

[Sigmund Romberg:] Well now, that is a very wonderful question. Uh, you would think, so would anybody, that all a writer has to do is to go to a publisher and give them a song and if the publisher is the visionary he thinks he is, and that he can pick a good song out of a pile of ten, or even out of a pile of a hundred. Well, all the publisher has to do then is to publish that song, and-and then the next thing he has to do is cut his dividends or cut his coupons. [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] Uh unfortunately it doesn't work that way. It used to work that way. Uh today, to get a song popular, the first place you have to get a name singer to record the song with some of the better class and bigger recording companies. Once the song is recorded by Perry Como or uh or uh Tony Martin or any of the bigger singers, the publisher then will go ahead and publish his copies. And the first thing which happens it that the recording company supplies all the disc jockeys with recording. The disc jockeys, of course, start playing the song. Now, I don't know how many disc jockeys there are in the country, but there must be over eight hundred. Second place where that song now because it's on the record goes to is the jukebox and by dropping a nickel, you know, you can play the song. Now once the disc jockey creates a demand in a city with a song, I'm speaking now of course--taking it for granted that the song so recorded at least has enough merits to stand on its own feet. I mean it isn't a bad song, it's a good song. And a local radio station will also use that song in some program, and it's only a question of time before some singer will pick it up on a radio show, and before you know it, the song will land on a television show. (31:48)

[ER:] Mm, yes.

[Sigmund Romberg:] And that's--the song starts to roll and before you know, you land on a *Hit Parade*. And then as you know, you have all kind of surveys in *Variety* and *Billboard* of how often the song turns around and uh who slept on the copy of the song and uh [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] and who is looking at what title page and so on.

[ER:] Everybody is talking about it.

[Sigmund Romberg:] And uh yeah talking about the song and you start selling sheet music. And when you put all that effort together, you find out you have a hit song who is probably making a nice little money.

[ER:] Well, that's very interesting because I have a great many people who send me their songs and I never know what to do with them. They send me their songs, and I nearly always return them saying that uh, "I'm sorry, but I can't judge songs that I don't know enough about music." (32:33)

[Sigmund Romberg:] Now, if you'll allow me to say this to you, when I'm on a concert tour, my greatest trouble is that not only I'm being uh interviewed all the time by singers who want to sing for me, but also by amateur composers, what we call ah-ah wanna-be composers, who want me to see their songs and give them judgement. I refuse both. And in the first place, I haven't got enough time to pass a judgement on some voice, and uh secondly, I don't want to look at anybody's song, because in the position I am as president of the Songwriters, I'm not in the position to say--um I may say a song is good and the song is bad and vice versa. So I don't want to be put in that position. But what I generally say to that songwriter is keep on writing. What happens actually is the fact--the following fact: A youngster, or some person, maybe a lady, maybe a man, writes a song in a small town. And because some connection has a little uh five uh thirty-second commercial spot on a local radio station, the song gets to the radio station and some singer sings it, and everybody in town is being notified that in such and such a town with the local station a song is going to be done. Consequently, everybody calls up and says what a wonderful song it is.

[Elliott Roosevelt laughs] Uh now, uh the desire of the person who wrote the song, to see that song in print, is so strong that she forgets all about writing some further songs, but she tries to get that song published, that one song she wrote. That song is promptly sent to every publisher in New York and promptly sent back. Now she falls then in the hands of some person who says, "If you give me a hundred and fifty dollars or something, I'll see that your song is published. Not only that, I'll see that every radio station in the country will get a copy of the song." So that can be done for twenty-five dollars, and the person makes about a hundred and twenty-five. Generally, at that point, is when the amateur comes around to our organization and says, "What's wrong here and what's happening?" [ER: Mhm.] You see, that is when we have to step in and try to clarify the situation. [ER: Mhm.] My advice to all these people is they should keep on writing songs. And suppose that the person writes sixty songs. Now some person likes fishing. Some person likes painting. Some person likes a single sport, uh playing ping-pong. Now why shouldn't a person keep on composing? Now then, if a person composes 60 songs, if there is talent there, some song will really stand out. And that one song, if it stands out, mushrooms so quickly over the nation that a publisher will be at her doorsteps instead of she have to sending the song to the publisher. (35:30)

[ER:] Well now, that's uh--I'm very glad to know about that and um, I will give the same advice: keep on writing and wait until something uh gets on the air and uh—

[Sigmund Romberg:] May I just say how that happens, are you really interested? [ER: Yes.] Uh suppose a youngster, a person, suppose a college student who writes a song, suppose he goes to his little jazz band, which plays there every Saturday for dancing. And that jazz band is generally definite one dance and maybe for two dances, Saturday and Sunday. Suppose that jazz band likes this song and plays it. Now next week, that jazz band may be a hundred-fifty miles away from that place, but they still keep on playing that song because they like it. Before you know, the next band will play that song and before you know, a-a-a scout for a publisher will start to pick up that song. You don't have to go to the source. You can create a demand for something good. And, in fact, you are in a better position then, because as the publisher is saying to you, "Yes I will publish this song for you," you can say to the publisher: "How much will you give me for this song?"

[ER:] Yes, that's a good idea.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mother?

[ER:] Yes, dear?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I'm afraid that I have been so fascinated by this story that I haven't been watching the clock, but I'm afraid that we have to move on in our program so that we'll have to say goodbye to our guest of today.

[ER:] Well, I'm particularly grateful to you because I think you really helped a lot of songwriters today. Now they'll write to you and they won't write to me, so thank you very much! [ER laughs]

[Sigmund Romberg:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt, thank you for having me in the program, and thank you for giving me the chance to say that.

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