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GINZBURG'S IRISH WAKE

COMEDY WITH MUSIC. Bereaved widow Mary O'Malley hires David Cohen to play Irish music at her husband's wake, but when David arrives and doesn't know any Irish songs, Mary refuses to pay him. Enraged, David sues the widow and the two appear in small claims court ready to battle it out. In order to prove his case, David brings along a piano to perform Irish songs for the judge. When the judge falls asleep during an Irish lullaby and then jumps to his feet to dance an Irish jig, David feels confident that he will win. Unintimidated, Mary defends herself by calling forth Father Shamus Rory Mulligan as her expert witness. Twists and turns abound in this hilarious play, which features five traditional Irish songs.

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

CHARACTERS

(3 M, 2 F)

DAVID COHEN: Piano player and plaintiff. Note: If he can't play the piano, he can mime playing and recorded music can be used instead.

KATE GREEN: David's friend and lawyer.

ABRAHAM GINZBERG: Small claims court judge; speaks with an Irish accent; wears judge's robe.

MARY O'MALLEY: Irish widow and defendant.

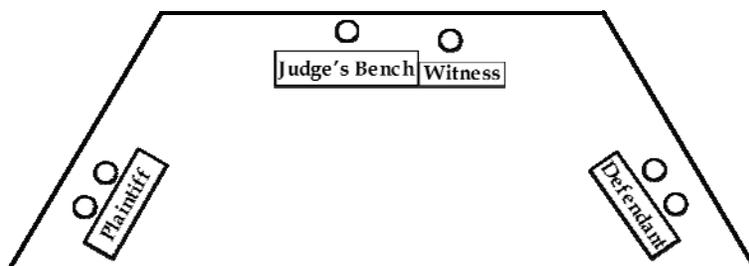
FATHER SHAMUS RORY MULLIGAN: Irish-Catholic priest and friend of Mary O'Malley; wears a cassock and Roman collar.

SETTING

Small claims courtroom.

SET

The room is sparsely furnished with the judge's bench up center. The witness stand is SL. The plaintiff's table with two chairs is DR. The defendant's table with two chairs is DL. There is an open area USR.



PROPS

Sheet music
Briefcase
Gavel
Lightweight portable piano (electric)

SOUND EFFECTS

"Danny Boy"
"Macushla"
"Kathleen Mavourneen"
"My Wild Irish Rose"
Jig music

NOTE: The above songs are in the public domain so they are royalty-free.

“NOW, FATHER,
WHAT IRISH SONGS
DO YOU HAVE TO HAVE
FOR IT TO BE
AN “OFFICIAL” IRISH WAKE?”

—MARY

GINZBURG'S IRISH WAKE

(AT RISE: *Small claims courtroom. David Cohen enters carrying sheet music. Kate Green enters carrying a briefcase.*)

DAVID: Who's the judge going to be, Kate?

KATE: Judge Abraham Ginzberg.

DAVID: Ginzberg. Sounds good. What do you know about him?

KATE: Absolutely nothing. I haven't been in small claims court in five years. In fact, I don't know what I'm doing here today. What am I doing here today?

DAVID: I got stiffed at a gig. You're representing me.

KATE: David Cohen, my criminals pay \$250 an hour for my services.

DAVID: I'm not a criminal.

KATE: What's that supposed to mean?

DAVID: It means I did piano at your wedding for gratis.

KATE: You didn't do a very good job. It only lasted six months.

DAVID: Had you married me, it would have lasted longer. Piano players come with a one-year warranty.

KATE: (*Ignoring him.*) How much are *we* suing for?

DAVID: Four hundred and fifty dollars. Well, actually \$225. She offered to pay half.

KATE: Let me get this straight: you got stiffed for \$225, so you're dragged me down here to represent you, and now you're planning to stiff me on my fee? David, this is going to take all morning. This is costing me a thousand dollars!

DAVID: It's a matter of principle. Mary O'Malley and her gaggle of Irish friends impugned my professional competence.

(*Judge enters, wearing his judge's robe and has a gavel in his hand.*)

JUDGE: *(Irish accent.)* Court's again in session. Top o' the morning to you all.

DAVID: *(Stage whisper. To Kate.)* Why does a guy named Ginzberg have a brogue?

JUDGE: Sure'n, you must be the plaintiff David Cohen. *(To Kate.)* And who might you be, darling?

KATE: Kate Green, your honor. Counsel for the plaintiff.

JUDGE: Now how do you like that? I nearly mistook you for the defendant. Now what was her name again? *(Looking at the pleadings.)* O'Malley. Mary O'Malley.

(Mary O'Malley enters.)

MARY: That's me, your honor.

DAVID: *(Whispers to Kate, a bit too loud.)* She didn't look that good at the wake.

KATE: Whose wake?

DAVID: Her husband's. He croaked.

KATE: Croaked?

DAVID: Died. It's Irish slang. I must have picked it up at the wake.

KATE: You're suing a widow during her bereavement?

JUDGE: *(To David.)* You're suing a widow during her bereavement?

MARY: What would you expect from a barbarian?

KATE: I object to her calling my client a barbarian! He may be unfeeling and self-centered, but he's certainly not a barbarian!

DAVID: Thank God, you're representing me.

MARY: *(To Judge.)* Can you think of a better word to describe a man who obtains employment by telling a poor widow "he knows all the Irish songs" when, in fact, he's never heard of "Macushla"?

JUDGE: Ah, the old John McCormick number. Me dear sainted mither used to sing it to me.

DAVID: *(To Kate.)* Quick, Kate, get a continuance!

KATE: What for?

DAVID: Something tells me Ginzberg ain't Jewish.

JUDGE: Someone tell me what this case is all about.

MARY: I hired this fraud... (*Indicating David.*) ...to play at my dear-departed husband's wake. He warranted to me that he knew all the Irish songs, and then had the audacity to show up with a fake book. When my friends asked him to play something, all he could play was "My Wild Irish Rose."

KATE: (*To David.*) Couldn't you even play "Kathleen Mavourneen"?

JUDGE: That's always been one of me favorites!

DAVID: Kate, for Pete's sake, get a change of venue!

JUDGE: (*To Kate.*) Why does your barbari—, your client, want a change of venue?

KATE: He's afraid your honor might be Irish.

JUDGE: Why, of course, I'm Irish. Me mither was a McCarthy and me father an O'Shea.

DAVID: (*Frenzied. To Kate.*) Then why does he run around the courthouse calling himself Ginzberg?

JUDGE: Because, Mr. Cohen, when me dear father croaked, his business partner, Sam Ginzberg, told me mither at the wake that he had always loved her and would turn Catholic if she would have him. And to avoid confusion, they changed me name to Ginzberg, too.

DAVID: Kate, do something!

JUDGE: The burden of proof is on the plaintiff. Proceed!

DAVID: Excuse me, your honor. (*He exits the courtroom and then promptly returns with his piano, which he pushes into the courtroom to an open area USR.*)

JUDGE: (*To Kate.*) Why is your client bringing a piano into my courtroom?

KATE: Demonstrative evidence, your honor.

JUDGE: Does [Judge Judy] permit this in her courtroom? [*Or insert the name of another famous TV judge.*]

DAVID: She called me a fraud. I intend to disprove that allegation. Sing, Kate!

KATE: What?

JUDGE: In my courtroom? I don't believe this!

DAVID: She's a great mezzo...lots of leads at the Quad City Music Guild. *(To Kate.)* Sing!

KATE: I'm an attorney.

DAVID: If I wanted an attorney, I'd have hired Clarence Darrow! You're here because I can't sing. So sing!

(David plays "My Wild Irish Rose" and Kate sings along.)

JUDGE: Very lovely, Ms. Green.

DAVID: Stick that in your chowder, Mrs. O'Malley!

MARY: Did you hear that, your honor? He doesn't even know it was "Mrs. Murphy's Chowder"!

JUDGE: I don't believe this is happening in my court. The Supreme Court forbids cameras in the courtroom. I wonder if there's any rule about pianos.

DAVID: Do I have to take these insults from someone who can't even play a C major chord, your honor?

MARY: Who can't play a C major chord?

DAVID: All right, how do you play it?

MARY: I object to him questioning me. I thought she... *(To Kate.)* ...was the lawyer.

DAVID: See, she can't play it!

MARY: *(Taunting him.)* You put your right thumb on the C... *(Demonstrating.)* ...you lift the second finger nice and high, and then you place the third finger on the E. Next...

DAVID: All right. Anyone can play a C chord. Big deal.

MARY: I'm not on trial here. He is. We know he can play "My Wild Irish Rose." He played it 27 times at the wake.

DAVID: Twenty-six.

[END OF FREEVIEW]