



BRIEF SYNOPSIS

Book by Wendy Levine

Music and Lyrics by Wendy Levine and Alex Forbes

In a Jewish temple Manhattan's Lower East Side, 13-year-old Moses Teichman stands before the congregation on the day of his Bar Mitzvah in 1907. A gawky teenager with a debilitating stutter, not a single word emanates from his lips. Urged on by the rabbi and his conservative parents, Sarah and Abraham, Moe instead begins to sway. His feet start to move, and suddenly he's dancing. The words of the Torah spill out into song.

Moe harbors a passionate longing to escape his family's cramped apartment, which doubles as a bread bakery. After a harsh run-in with a gang of anti-Semitic thugs, his sister Becky calms his nerves by teaching him a few dance steps. They both recognize Moe's natural talent, and he begins to formulate a plan.

Defying the wishes of his father to "become a serious man," Moe secretly pursues his dream of becoming a professional ballroom dance instructor. His early mentor is The Baroness — an elegant fraud — who invites him to relocate with her to Asheville, North Carolina to groom the daughters of the Vanderbilts, Mellons and Carnegies. But, she warns him, he must first renounce his Jewish name and heritage.

At a family dinner, Moe announces that he is now Arthur Murray. Sarah shrieks as if she's been cut with a knife, and Abraham flies into a rage. Becky and his brothers David and Ira struggle to understand. But Arthur barrels forward on his chosen path, quoting Hillel the Elder: "I get up. I walk. I fall down. Meanwhile, I keep dancing."

At a radio show, the now 29-year-old Arthur meets a gorgeous young flapper, Kathryn, and it's love at first touch. His pedantic streak and her youthful insecurities clash on their honeymoon cruise, and sparks fly. Soon afterwards they relocate to New York, where Arthur's skills as a marketing genius blossom. Eventually ballroom dancing becomes all the rage.

Arthur's success comes at a personal price, however. He lives in terror that someone will expose him as a fraud, his father dies without reconciling their differences, and tensions

ratchet up with Kathryn, who is jealous of his beautiful dance partners. Kathryn turns to alcohol to soothe her pain, culminating in a dramatic suicide attempt that Arthur narrowly prevents. He resolves to bring her on board as a full partner, and together they launch the wildly popular *Arthur Murray Dance Party* TV program.

When a business dispute with his brothers leads to a falling out, Arthur is finally jolted awake. His blind ambition has alienated everyone he loves, and his empire is in danger of crumbling as Elvis Presley storms the airwaves. Arthur realizes “the jig is up.”

Arthur’s opportunity to set things right comes when the whole family gathers for his daughter’s wedding. His estranged brother Ira cuts in on the first dance, and won’t let go until Arthur forgives him. Thrown off balance, Arthur takes a few steps backward. He regains his footing, shakes a fist at Ira, then gracefully spins around the floor. The guests applaud.

Finally, Arthur throws off his tuxedo jacket, and allows himself to become immersed in the joy of the family event as he starts to dance the traditional Jewish Hora.