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Dramatic Publishing



Inga Binga



Comedy
By Julian Wiles

“Julian Wiles ... brings the young Jack Kennedy to life before our very eyes ... Anyone who has ever been remotely intrigued by the dashing, enchanting life and times of JFK will enjoy *Inga Binga* ... the story of a weekend tryst between Jack and Inga, a Danish beauty queen who caught the young ensign's eye.”

—*Art Mag*, Charleston

“From his World War II exploits as skipper of PT-109 to trysts with Marilyn Monroe and the gauzy days of Camelot, the life of John F. Kennedy is wrapped in so many exaggerated tales, myths and legends that separating the apocryphal from the real is no small challenge. Julian Wiles unearthed a nugget of truth and ran with it. The prize of Wiles' excavations is his original play, *Inga Binga*, based on actual events that took place in Charleston early in 1942.” — Bill Thompson, *The Post and Courier*

Inga Binga

Comedy. By Julian Wiles. Cast: 7m., 3w. Intrigue, espionage and forbidden romance abound in *Inga Binga*, based on the amazing true story of Ensign Jack Kennedy's World War II romance with a suspected Nazi agent and former Miss Denmark, Inga Arvad. When rumors that Kennedy was seen in the company of a beautiful blonde bombshell and alleged Nazi agent began to circulate around wartime Washington in 1942, the FBI was soon on the case. Jack and Inga arrange for a secret liaison in Charleston, S.C., checking into a hotel under assumed names. But FBI agents are in hot pursuit, setting up recording devices in the next room, where they begin to listen in on Jack and Inga's steamy tryst. When reporters from *LIFE* magazine show up, eager for a photo of the clandestine couple, the makings of a full-blown farce are soon in the works. Based on declassified FBI files that were held in secret in the offices of J. Edgar Hoover for more than 50 years, *Inga Binga* is a fictional and farcical romp through this steamy footnote in American history. “Whether you are a JFK enthusiast, want a comedy with a little love too, or a sucker for the inevitability of doomed romance, *Inga Binga* will satisfy audience members of any age.” (*Art Mag*, Charleston) *One int. set. Approximate running time: 2 hours. Code: ID5.*

Cover: Charleston Stage, The Historic Dock Street Theatre, Charleston, S.C.

(back row l-r) Victor Clark and Josh Harris. (front row l-r) Gardner Reed and Phil Mills. Cover design: Susan Carle.

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Inga Binga

A comedy by
JULIAN WILES



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Inga Binga was premiered by Charleston Stage at The Historic Dock Street Theatre in March 2011.

Cast

(in order of appearance)

Josephine.....	Constance Singleton
Hank.....	Victor Clark
Skip.....	Josh Harris
Bud.....	Derek T. Pickens
Ensign Jack Kennedy.....	Phil Mills
Lemoyne “Lem” Billings.....	Brian Porter
Betty.....	Beth Curley
Red.....	Luke Whitmire
Inga Arvad.....	Gardener Reed
Special Agent-in-charge.....	Drew Archer

Inga Binga

CHARACTERS

*ENSIGN JOHN F. KENNEDY (JACK): 24 years old.

*INGA ARVAD FEJOS (INGA BINGA): Jack's Danish girl-friend, 28 years old.

*LEMOYNE "LEM" BILLINGS: Jack's best friend, 25 years old.

HANK HAMILTON: an experienced FBI agent, about 45 years old.

SKIP JENNINGS: a novice FBI agent, in his early 20s.

BETTY ROLLINS: a reporter for *LIFE* magazine, in her 30s.

RED: a photographer from *LIFE* magazine, about age 19.

BUD: a hotel bellhop, 19 years old.

JOSEPHINE: a hotel maid, 46 years old.

**SPECIAL AGENT-IN-CHARGE: Hank and Skip's supervisor.

* These characters are based on real historical figures.

** For the program, a pseudonym was used for this character. The reason will become clear once you have read the play.

SCENES

ACT I

SCENE 1: Checking in, *Friday afternoon*.

SCENE 2: Arrivals, *later that afternoon*.

SCENE 3: Suspicion, *that night, after dinner*.

ACT II

SCENE 1: The Picnic, *Saturday morning*.

SCENE 2: Covert Activities, *that afternoon*.

SCENE 3: Sleeping In, *Sunday morning*.

SCENE 4: Undercover, *later that night*.

SET

A floor plan can be found at the back of this book on page 101.

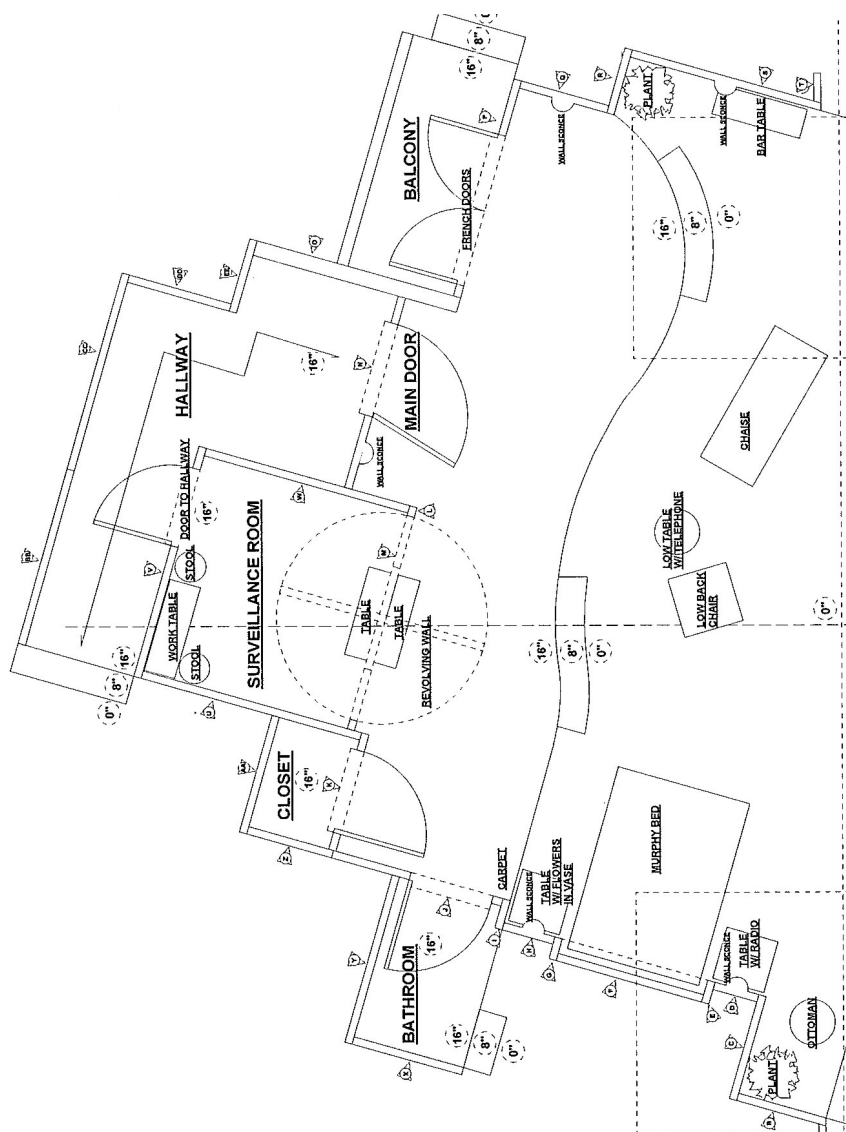
AUTHOR'S NOTE

While much of *Inga Binga* is fiction, much of the basic story is true. I did extensive reading and research on this story and then let my mind wander as I created the play. For historical insights, I would especially like to thank the Massachusetts Historical Society and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum staff for their assistance. Interpretation and creative use of these historical materials are mine, however.

Though the FBI made extensive recordings and wiretaps of Kennedy's liaison with Inga, these no longer exist. What remains are FBI reports—mostly summaries of these recordings and agent notes from what they heard and saw from the surveillance. These are available at the institutions above and are excerpted in Athan Theoharis' *From the Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover*.

There are hundreds of books on Jack Kennedy. The best on his younger years and his affair with Inga is Nigel Hamilton's *JFK: Reckless Youth*. For a detailed account of Kennedy's friendship with Lem Billings, I recommend David Pitts' *Jack and Lem: John F. Kennedy and Lem Billings—The Untold Story of an Extraordinary Friendship*.

FLOOR PLAN



SCENE 2: ARRIVALS

(Later that afternoon.

JACK opens the entrance door to the hotel suite.)

LEM *(still using his fake Southern accent)*. Miss Whiiiiite, won't you come in?

(LEM waltzes INGA into the room.)

INGA *(still dancing)*. Oh, Jack, Lem is so silly, yah?

JACK *(follows LEM and INGA into the room. He is carrying INGA's suitcase)*. Oh yes, yah.

LEM. How often do I get to cut the rug with Miss Denmark?

JACK *(with a fake Danish accent)*. Not often enough. I tink zis iz vere I cut een, yah?

(Author's note: Even though JACK is making fun of INGA's accent, INGA's English is quite good. She spent part of her

childhood in England. The actor playing INGA only needs a hint of a DANISH accent, it should not be heavy and comic.)

INGA. Yah!

JACK. Yah?

INGA. Yah! (JACK “cuts in” and takes INGA in his arms and they continue to dance.) You know, Lem, Jack took me dancing the night we met.

JACK. Artie Shaw, “Stardust” ... (Begins to hum it and from someplace the tune is heard. INGA lays her head on JACK’s shoulder as they slow dance.) Thanks Lem. I think I can take it from here.

LEM (he prepares to go). I’m sure you can.

INGA (looking up). Oh, Lem, aren’t you having dinner with us?

JACK. In a bit, but first I think you and I have some catching up to do. (Pulls her back to him and kisses her passionately.)

LEM. Well. I know when three’s a crowd. Let me know when it’s dinner time. I’ll be at the bar downstairs.

INGA. You’re the best, Lem.

(LEM gives INGA a little goodbye wave as he closes the door. Then INGA puts her head down on JACK’s shoulder once more.)

JACK (baby-talking). How’s my Inga Binga Baby Boo?

INGA (following suit). How’s my young Kennedy?

JACK. I’m not that young. I’m 24.

INGA. You’re a baby to me.

JACK. I’m old enough to know my way around a 28 year old.
(He dances her over toward the bed.)

INGA. I know you do, Jack. *(He moves in, as if to push her back onto the bed, but she slips out of his embrace and JACK continues forward and falls on to the bed. INGA*

crosses away, making her escape from his clutches.) Slow down, sailor. Don't get carried away, we need to talk.

JACK *(sitting on the end of the bed)*. You came all the way down here to talk? I had other things in mind. *(He pats the bed.)*

INGA *(moving away, all business, obviously serious)*. Jack, I have something I need to tell you.

(Lights come up in the surveillance closet and through the two-way mirror we see HANK and SKIP, earphones on their heads, listening in on JACK and INGA. Though the audience can see and hear the FBI agents, JACK and INGA cannot.)

HANK. Are you getting, this?

SKIP. They're coming in loud and clear.

(Lights fade on HANK and SKIP in the surveillance and they disappear.)

JACK. You're not late are you?

INGA. Late? No. The train was right on time—*(Then it dawns on her what he means.)* Oh you mean—*(JACK sheepishly nods yes. INGA is amused at JACK's concern.)* No, Jack there are no little sailor boys on the way.

JACK. That's a relief.

INGA. Did you really think—

JACK. Well, you said you had something you needed to come all the way down here to tell me.

INGA *(crosses away, not quite wanting to tell him what she's come to say)*. Well, it's not about that Jack, it's about your transfer.

JACK *(sobering up)*. My transfer?

INGA. I'm so sorry, Jack, but I think it's my fault that you've been transferred down here.

JACK. Your fault?

INGA. That's why I'm traveling under an assumed name.

JACK. Yes, what's that all about?

INGA. Oh Jack, they think I'm a Nazi spy.

JACK. Who? Who thinks that?

INGA. The FBI.

JACK (*not quite believing her*). Why would the FBI think you're a spy?

INGA. Because someone gave them a tip.

JACK (*beginning to realize something serious is up*). What kind of tip, who?

INGA. Paige Huidekoper. (*Pronounced "Weed de copper."*)

(Author's note: Page Huidekpoer was one of INGA's co-workers at The Washington Times-Herald. In this scene INGA will explain how Page raised suspicions about her. Actually, JACK already knew about Page's allegations of INGA's spying well before this date, as well as INGA's past association with Nazi officials in Germany in 1936, but for dramatic purposes I've moved those revelations here.)

JACK (*trying to sort this out*). But I thought Paige was your friend.

INGA. I thought so too, but apparently she got jealous when she found out about us. Did you sleep with her, Jack?

JACK. Paige, no. Why would you think that?

INGA. Because you've slept with half the women in Washington.

JACK. Well she was in the other half. Besides Page is pretty homely.

INGA. Homely or not, I think she was looking for a way to get me out of the picture. When my editor asked me to translate some German reports. Paige was surprised to learn that I knew German. When she asked about it, I told her I picked it up when I covered the Berlin Olympics back

in 1936. I bragged about the great time I'd had in Berlin and the next thing I knew she was spreading rumors that I was a German agent.

JACK. Just because you speak German and wrote some articles from Berlin?

INGA. Well there's something else. She looked up those stories.

JACK. So?

INGA. Well one had a photo of me with a German official.

JACK. What German official?

INGA. A guy named Adolph Hitler.

JACK (*quite surprised*). Hitler! There's a photo of you and Hitler?

(Author's note: I'm not sure that this photo exists. It's often talked about in the historical record, but I have yet to find a copy.)

INGA. It was all perfectly innocent Jack. It was taken at the opening ceremonies.

JACK. So there's a photo of you and Hitler in a crowd, so what?

INGA. It wasn't in a crowd, Jack. I was in Hitler's private box.

JACK. You were with Hitler in his private box? Who got you that invitation?

INGA. Actually, Hitler invited me himself. We met at Göring's wedding.

JACK (*incredulous*). You were at Göring's wedding?

INGA (*matter-of-factly, as if one goes to Nazi weddings all the time*). Yes, Hitler was the best man. It's a long story, but I'd done a piece on Göring's fiancée and at the end of the interview, she invited me to her wedding. That's where I met Hitler. I told him I'd give anything for an interview and he said, "Come join me at the opening ceremonies and we can talk there." And I did.

JACK. I knew you could charm the devil, Inga, but I didn't realize you already had.

INGA. What gal reporter hasn't batted her eyes to get a good story? I told Paige it was happenstance I'd met Hitler and Göring. I thought that would shut her up.

JACK. Did it?

INGA. No, it just gave her ammunition. She went straight to the FBI the next day and told them she had no doubt that I was a Nazi agent. Of course she couldn't keep her mouth shut so soon the whole newsroom was buzzing about what she'd done. When I found out, I was furious. I knew I had to do something immediately.

JACK. So what did you do?

INGA. Something foolish, Jack. I marched myself over to FBI headquarters and right into Mr. Hoover's office.

JACK. Good Lord. I would like to have seen that.

(Author's note: Though INGA would later threaten to march into Hoover's office, she never actually did. It was INGA's editor at The Washington Times-Herald who marched INGA and Paige over to FBI headquarters to have them make a statement. Probably this was to settle an interoffice catfight, and partially to protect his newspaper's reputation. Before the war, The Washington Times-Herald had been isolationist and almost pro-German. If it was rumored the paper had a Nazi agent on the payroll it would have destroyed the paper's credibility. Again, for dramatic purposes I've slightly changed the circumstances of INGA's visit to FBI headquarters in Washington.)

INGA. I felt like I had no choice. They're detaining thousands of people just because they're of Japanese, Italian or German descent. Any suspicion and they're being picked up. I didn't want that to happen to me.

JACK. But you're not German.

INGA. But I'm foreign, Jack. All foreigners are suspect now.

JACK. So what did Hoover do?

INGA. That little toad just stared at me as his agents rushed to see who this crazy blonde was that had made her way into his office. Those Neanderthals were about to usher me out when Hoover said, "Wait, what is this all about?"

And I told him my story, how I knew Paige was spreading rumors and that I just wanted to set the record straight. I told him that though I had interviewed some Nazis, I loathed those bastards—after all the Nazi's have occupied Denmark. Why would I ever spy for them?

(Author's note: Germany invaded neutral Denmark in April 1940. Denmark surrendered after two hours.)

JACK. Didn't he believe you?

INGA. I thought so. Hoover asked me what I wanted and I told him I just wanted a letter signed by him saying I was not a spy.

JACK. And did J. Edgar go for that?

INGA. No. He said if he gave me a letter saying I was not a spy I could just use that for cover and become a spy tomorrow. But he assured me that if I was not a spy I'd have nothing to worry about. I batted my eyes at him and gave him my best smile and thought that had done the trick.

JACK. I know that's your usual modus operandi, Inga, but those tricks don't work on men like Hoover.

INGA. Why not?

JACK. Because Mr. Hoover doesn't swing that way.

INGA. Swing?

JACK. Well, the jury's out, but Mr. Hoover is 47 years old, never married, lives with his mom and vacations with his best friend Clyde Tolson. He's never been known to have

a date in his life, so batting your eyes at him probably had no effect on him. He's what we call in this country a confirmed bachelor.

INGA (*confused*). Something's lost in translation here.

JACK. Women are not his cup of tea, Inga. The keeper of secrets has his own secrets.

INGA (*suddenly realizing what JACK is implying*). No! But he's so important, so powerful. He's—? How does he keep his job?

JACK. Because he's made a career of collecting dark and dirty secrets about everyone else. He probably just added you to one of his seedy little files. He probably put a tail on you the minute you left his office.

INGA. He did. It was only a few days after you were transferred that I realized I was being followed. I noticed the same guy on my corner, day and night, watching everyone who came and went. If Hoover put me under surveillance after I left his office, that would include you, Jack.

JACK (*the reason for his mysterious transfer suddenly becoming clear*). Which would explain my sudden transfer.

INGA. Yes, that's what I thought which is why I thought I needed to come down here and tell you. I'm so sorry. I don't want you to get kicked out of the Navy because of me.

JACK (*trying to make sense of this turn of events*). If they were going to do that, they would have already done it. Seems to me they're just trying to keep us apart.

INGA. I know you wanted to keep our relationship under wraps.

JACK. If they are following you Inga, they probably followed you to the train, too.

INGA. They did, but don't worry, Jack. On the way to the station I ducked into Madame Gigi's lingerie shop. I knew they wouldn't follow me in there. Madame Gigi let me slip out the back door. I grabbed a cab to the Washington Monument, walked around to be sure I'd lost them, then caught another cab to Union Station.

JACK. You sure you *aren't* a spy, Inga?

INGA. I was just trying to warn you Jack. If I hadn't lost them I wouldn't have come. But I didn't know any other way to tell you. I was afraid the phones would be tapped.

JACK. I'm glad you came, Inga. *(He gives her a hug.)*

INGA. Oh, Jack do you think we're safe here?

JACK. Sure, I bet there's not an FBI agent within a hundred miles of this place.

(Lights rise upstage inside the surveillance closet and we see HANK and SKIP listening in. They turn and look at each other.)

JACK *(cont'd)*. You're always safe with me, Inga. Besides we have Lem to cover for us. In public you'll be his girl all weekend.

INGA. Well, I don't want to keep my date waiting. Why don't you go down and have a drink with Lem while I freshen up? I won't be a minute.

JACK. All right if you don't mind.

INGA. No, go, go.

(INGA shoos JACK out of the room and he exits. INGA listens at the door to be sure he's gone. Then she crosses and picks up the phone. Inside the surveillance closet HANK motions to SKIP to start the wire recorder.)

INGA *(cont'd)*. Operator. I need long distance for New York. The number is Hudson 2-550—Yes, I'll wait. *(Speaking in Danish.) Nils, undskyld, noget uventet kom op—noget ud af byen. Hvornår vil jeg blive tilbage? Jeg kan ikke fortælle dig lige nu, men det gør ikke noget, hvad vi gør, er forkert.*

(As INGA continues her conversation, SKIP and HANK are seen through the two-way mirror.)

SKIP. What's that language? German?

HANK. It must be.

SKIP (*excitedly*). She must be talking to another agent.