

# When Irish Eyes Are Smilin'

Chauncey Olcott and George Graff, Jr. and set to the music of Ernest Ball 1912

*C* *F* *G7* *C*  
There's a tear in your eye and I'm wondering why; for it never should be there at all.

*G7* *C* *A7*  
With such power in your smile sure a stone you'd beguile;

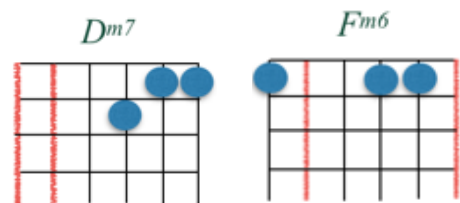
*D7* *G7*  
So there's never a teardrop should fall.

*C* *F* *C*  
When your sweet lilting laughter's like some fairy song,

*C* *C7* *F*  
And your eyes twinkle bright as can be;

*Dm7* *Fm6* *Em* *A7*  
You should laugh all the while and all other times smile;

*D7* *G7*  
And now smile a smile for me.



Play not upon the  
reddened strings.

## CHORUS

*C* *G* *C* *C7* *F* *C*  
When Irish eyes are smiling, sure'n it's like a morn in spring.

*F* *C* *A7* *D7* *G*  
In the lilt of Irish laughter, you can hear the angels sing.

*C* *G* *C* *C7* *F* *C*  
When Irish hearts are happy all the world is bright and gay;  
*F* *Dm7* *C* *A7* *D7* *G7* *C*  
And when Irish eyes are smiling, sure they steal your heart away.

*C* *F* *G7* *C*  
For your smile is a part of the love in your heart, and it makes even sunshine more bright.

*G7* *C* *A7*  
Like the linnet's sweet song crooning all the day long,

*D7* *G7*  
Comes your laughter so tender and light.

*C* *F* *C*  
For the springtime of life is the sweetest of all,

*C* *C7* *F*  
There is ne'er a real care or regret;

*Dm7* *Fm6* *Em* *A7*  
And while springtime is ours throughout all of youth's hours,

*D7* *G7*  
Let us smile each chance we get.

# History

The lyrics to “**When Irish Eyes Are Smiling**” were written by Chauncey Olcott and George Graff, Jr. and set to the music of Ernest Ball for Olcott's production of *The Isle O' Dreams*. The piece was published in 1912.

Chauncey Olcott produced several shows about Ireland for the New York stage. His other hits included *My Wild Irish Rose*.

*Brobdingnagian bards at [thebards.net](http://thebards.net)*

“**When Irish Eyes Are Smiling**” ranks among the most recognizable and frequently recorded Irish songs. It was made famous by John McCormack—possibly the century’s

greatest Irish tenor—in 1914. It has become virtually synonymous with Ireland. Filmmakers feel obliged to include the song in every movie about Ireland. Every singer with just a touch of the Irish has recorded a cover (Bing Crosby, Nelson Eddy, Ronan Tynan), and at public events involving Ireland and / or Irish Americans, you can usually expect to hear a performance of the song. Irish American US Senator Ted Kennedy’s memorial service closed with a rendition of the ballad.

Yes, the song is synonymous with Ireland, but it is an American creation with stronger ties to Vaudeville and Tin Pan Alley than Dublin or Belfast.

Olcott took up the Irish project legitimately as his mother was Irish. She immigrated to America when she was a child, and Chauncey was born in upstate New York along the banks of the Erie Canal some years later. His songwriting partners were also born in the US, but unlike Olcott, they were not Irish. That’s not necessarily a big deal, though. Ernest Ball was devoted to Ireland. And, many songwriters and composers draw their musical influences from outside their own background. Irving Berlin, widely known as one of the greatest American songwriters of all time, wrote “God Bless America” despite having been born in Belarus and “White Christmas” despite having been Jewish.

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Chauncey Olcott  
1896 photo by W.M.  
Morrison



George Graff, Jr



Ernest Ball from  
Wikipedia