

LEO ROBIN MUSIC

March 2, 2021

Ms. Kristin Chenoweth
3 Arts Entertainment
9460 Wilshire Blvd., 7th Floor
Beverly Hills, CA 90212

Dear Ms. Chenoweth,

Leo Robin Music's Open Letter to Ms. Kristin Chenoweth Re: Moral Wrong for Failure to Install the Star, "#Leosloststar," Awarded to the "Thanks For The Memory" Oscar-Winning Lyricist More Than 30 Years Ago *(Released Tuesday, March 2, 2021 6:37 AM PST)*

I, as Leo Robin's grandson, am compelled by the recent announcement and the events that have taken place over the course of 30 years to request that you redress the moral wrong committed against lyricist Leo Robin by the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce and the Walk of Fame Committees (2018 - 2020). Leo Robin Music was outraged by the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce's recent announcement to once again deny the installation of the star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame that was awarded to Leo Robin more than 30 years ago. The Hollywood Chamber as well as the Walk of Fame Committee continue to be morally adrift in regard to this unprecedented situation with the star awarded to Leo Robin but not installed. And they must recognize that they bear responsibility for this on-going moral injustice and take the steps to address it.

Ms. Chenoweth, you are known for your distinctive speaking voice, one which has been compared to that of Betty Boop. In an interview reported by Walter Scott in Parade magazine on April 5, 2014, "Kristin Chenoweth Takes a Wicked Vocal Turn in Rio 2." He posed this question, "You have such a distinctive voice -- both singing and speaking. Some people would say, Are you related to Betty Boop? Are you sucking helium?" Ms. Chenoweth, you responded, "I have a sort of nineteen-thirties cartoon voice that's well-suited for animation. It makes me feel like I was born a little bit in the wrong time." Then Mr. Scott asked, "Kids seem to instinctively relate to high-pitched voices. Do they do that with you?" and you responded, "I think they think I'm one of them!"

In 1930, Betty Boop made her first appearance in the cartoon *Dizzy Dishes*, the seventh installment in Max Fleischer's Talkartoon series with the character's voice provided by Margie Hines. Betty Boop had particular mannerisms that included a trademark baby girl voice uttering the lines "boop-boop-a-doop" during her performance of the song "I Have to Have You, composed by Richard A. Whiting with lyrics by Leo Robin. Inspired by a popular performing style, but not by any one specific person, the character was originally created as an anthropomorphic French poodle. Betty Boop appeared as a supporting character in ten cartoons as a flapper girl with more heart than brains and soon became popular and the star of her own cartoons. In 1932, Betty Boop was changed into a human, the long dog ears becoming hoop earrings.

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While Leo Robin music congratulates the Hollywood Walk of Fame Class of 2021 for the honors, we are woefully reminded of the fact that the star awarded to Leo Robin in 1990 was never installed. When I called the Hollywood Chamber and spoke to Ana Martinez, Producer of the Walk Of Fame, more than three years ago on July 6, 2017, I told her about my discovery of Leo's long-lost star. She confirmed it was true and said, "Nothing like this has ever happened before." After I spoke with Ms. Martinez, I followed her instructions and wrote a letter addressed to the Walk of Fame Committee, of which you have been a member for, at least, the past two years. In the letter I sent to the Walk of Fame Committee on July 11, 2017, a fresh carbon copy is enclosed, I wrote, "In light of these bizarre circumstances, I...humbly request that the Walk of Fame Committee reinstate the award to Leo of the posthumous star."

Ashley Lee from the Los Angeles Times first broke on May 23, 2019 this intriguing story, *Leo Robin never got his Walk of Fame star. Now his grandson is fighting for it*, about my serendipitous discovery of Leo's long-lost star which I believe got lost because "[The Hollywood Chamber of Commerce]...made this 30-year-old mistake," Ms. Lee quoting me. Leo Robin's wife, Cherie Robin, and actor, Bob Hope, sponsored Leo for a star in 1988 but, sadly, Mrs. Robin passed away slightly more than one year before the letter was sent out from the Hollywood Chamber announcing that her husband had been awarded the star and so, unfortunately, it was never installed.

In the wake of the release of this story last year by The Times, Leo Robin Music was outraged to learn what happened more than 30 years ago. Ms. Lee reported, "The envelope was returned to its sender and has since remained in the Chamber of Commerce's records." She also tweeted, "at first I didn't believe that Leo Robin's star had really slipped through the cracks" with a photo of that acceptance letter and the envelope stamped "RETURN TO SENDER." Ms. Lee explained the Chamber's view, "A mistake it was not, noted (Ana) Martinez to The Times. Back in 1989, before the ease of email and cell phones, honorees were not as repeatedly and actively pursued to secure their star as they are today. That means no follow-up letters and no calls to co-signers, even if Robin's application was co-signed by (Bob) Hope, who has four stars on the Walk."

In the Sunday print edition of The Times issued on May 26, 2019, midway in the article "A Walk of Fame star still in limbo," Ms. Ashley Lee posed this question to the Chamber, "It's been decades since Robin was named to the Walk of Fame...what would it take to get the star installed? Martinez explained that Robin would need to be reinstated by the current committee at the next annual meeting. She didn't anticipate problems with that part of the process." This was all, apparently, an insincere PR stunt being that I never heard a word from the Hollywood Chamber since the meeting took place in June 2019.

Leo Robin's song "I Have to Have You," composed by Richard A. Whiting, was introduced by Helen Kane, who sings and dances to it with Skeets Gallagher, in the 1929 film *Pointed Heels*. Helen Kane was a well-known singer and actress who was thought by some to have inspired the cartoon character Betty Boop. Fleischer Studios animator Grim Natwick introduced what

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was alleged to be a caricature of Helen Kane, with droopy dog ears and a squeaky singing voice, in the 1930 Talkartoons cartoon *Dizzy Dishes*. Kane's voice and appearance were a source for Fleischer Studios animator Grim Natwick when creating Betty Boop. Although Clara Bow is often given credit as being the inspiration for Betty Boop, some say she actually began as a caricature of singer Helen Kane, who performed in a style shared by many performers of the day. It had been discovered that Helen Kane had swiped the "Boop" scat singing style from an African American performer by the name of "Baby Esther" and used it in the show *Goodboy* in 1928.

Betty Boop, a caricature of a jazz age flapper, launched her career with lyrics by Leo Robin with her "boop-oop-a-doop" refrain from "I Have to Have You" in her debut in the cartoon *Dizzy Dishes*. Many young actors got their big break when they were given a Leo Robin song to sing such as Bob Hope. who credited Leo's heartfelt lyrics for launching his career saying on January 2, 1985, "I owe an awful lot to Leo Robin. He and his partner gave me a memento that I've been carrying around me for 46 years. It's a melodic masterpiece called 'Thanks for the Memory.'... 'Thanks for the Memory' won the Academy Award that year and I've had a pretty exciting ride on its coattails."

Roy Trakin, who is the *crème de la crème* of entertainment journalism, in *his Variety* article on September 30, 2019, "Thanks for the Memory: How Leo Robin Helped Usher In the Golden Age of Song in Film," reported, "His impressive catalog includes signature tunes for Maurice Chevalier ("Louise"), Jeanette McDonald ("Beyond the Blue Horizon"), Bing Crosby ("Please," "Zing a Little Zong"), Dorothy Lamour ("Moonlight and Shadows"), Jack Benny ("Love in Bloom"), Eddie Fisher ("One Hour With You"), Carmen Miranda ("Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat") and Marilyn Monroe ("Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend")."

Meanwhile, the Hollywood Chamber along with the Walk of Fame Committee have mislaid their moral compass. What happened after I spoke to the Hollywood Chamber over the past three years - where it obstructed installation by ignoring emails from me for a whole year and failing to honor its promise for the Walk of Fame Committee to consider my request for the star to be placed on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and toying with me - is just plain wrong. What happened 30 years ago - when the acceptance letter was returned to sender and there was no follow-up letters and no calls to notify co-sponsor Bob Hope - is wrong as wrong can be. The 1990 Walk of Fame Committee awarded a star to a deserved honoree and then the Hollywood Chamber and subsequent Walk of Fame Committees would take it back. These actions over the years that resulted in the failure to install the star awarded to Leo Robin are manifest of a moral wrong.

Ms. Chenoweth, I urge you, as a member of the Walk of Fame Committee to find the moral compass that guides the Hollywood Chamber and the Walk of Fame Committee and set a new course. Right now, in contradiction to its mission, the Hollywood Chamber is not doing justice to the award to Leo Robin. Instead we are witness to the moral injustice of Leo's long-lost star and the Hollywood Chamber's refusal to honor their commitment to Robin's memory. I want to reaffirm my deepest level of commitment to achieving that all of you - the Hollywood Chamber

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and the Walk of Fame Committee - uphold the strictest moral authority in fulfilling your commitment. This is your moral imperative.

The Hollywood Chamber and the Walk of Fame Committee have exercised wanton disregard of its own rules for the star awarded to Leo Robin but never installed. Throughout the past sixty years, the Hollywood Chamber has successfully kept track of 2,691 honorees and has seen to it that each and every one of them received a star and had it successfully installed on the Hollywood Walk of Fame with their name on it -- except for Leo Robin. At this point, one can't help but conclude that Robin, his sponsors, his family and the 1990 Walk of Fame Committee, itself, have been treated unjustly by the Hollywood Chamber and the Walk Of Fame Committee.

The failure of the Hollywood Chamber to install the star awarded to Leo Robin is hard to fathom but remember that my grandmother who was the sponsor passed away before receiving notification and that the co-sponsor, actor Bob Hope, was never notified. It is high time for the Hollywood Chamber to preserve their integrity and honor the decision of the 1990 Walk of Fame Committee and its obligation to put Leo's long-lost star in its rightful place on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Ms. Chenoweth, you have lead a lifetime with unshakeable faith and have the "boop-boop-a-doop" to make this happen. It is my hope that you, as a member of the Walk of Fame Committee, will take the necessary steps to correct this moral wrong and award my grandfather, the legendary songwriter, Leo Robin, his long-overdue star.

In Leo Robin's lyrics from *Gulliver's Travels* -1939,

"Faithful Forever,"

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Enclosure