Puttin' on the Ritz by Irving Berlin

Verse:

1928 Verse: Have you seen the well-to-do, up on Lenox Avenue?
1946 Verse: Have you seen the well-to-do, up and down Park Avenue?

On that famous thoroughfare, With their noses in the air.
On that famous thoroughfare, With their noses in the air.

High hats and colored collars, White spats and fifteen dollars.
High hats and Arrow collars, White spats and lots of dollars.

Spending every dime, for a wonderful time.

Puttin' on the Ritz was a hit several different times in the last century. The "Ritz" refers to the posh hotel chain built by Cesar Ritz. This song expresses a common theme of several Berlin songs, a couple of society wannabees trying to appear better off than they really are.

This may have been written as early as 1927, and Harry Richman introduced the tune in 1929. Clark Gable sang it in the 1939 film Idiot's Delight, which was reintroduced in 1973 film That's Entertainment. Most people remember Fred Astaire's incredible dance in the 1948 movie Easter Parade. Do you remember the world-wide hit in 1982 by Indonesian Dutch singer Taco Ockerse? And Gene Wilder and Peter Boyle sang it in 1974 in one of my favorite movies, Young Frankenstein.

Puttin' on the Ritz has a jazzy syncopated melody sung over a steady swing style accompaniment. The melody is formed from syncopated chord arpeggios and scales. The verse is in a major key (C major), and the chorus is in a minor key (C minor), which provides an intriguing contrast. Irving Berlin rewrote the lyrics in 1946 for Fred Astaire to perform in the musical Blue Skies, and it is these later lyrics that most people know.
Puttin' on the Ritz

Words and Music by Irving Berlin
Chorus: C minor

1928 Chorus: If you're blue and you don't know where to go to, why don't you go where Harlem sits, Puttin' on the Ritz.

1946 Chorus: If you're blue and you don't know where to go to, why don't you go where fashion sits, Puttin' on the Ritz.

Spangled gowns upon a bevy of high browns from down the levee, all misfits. Puttin' on the Ritz.

That's where each and ev'ry Lu-Lu Belle goes. Dressed up like a million dollar trooper. Strolling up the avenue so happy.

Ev'ry Thursday evening with her swell beaus, Rubbing elbows.

Try ing hard to look like Gary Cooper, Super duper.

All dressed up just like an English chap pie, Very snap py.

Come with me and we'll attend their jubilee and see them spend their last two bits. Puttin' on the Ritz.

Come let's mix with Rock e fel - lers walk with sticks or "um - ber - el - lers" in their mits. Puttin' on the Ritz.