

Serendipitea Blog



I'm A Little Teapot



I'm a little teapot
Short and stout
Here is my handle
Here is my spout
When I get all steamed up
I just shout
Tip me over and pour me out

I'm a very special pot
It is true
Here's an example of what I can do
I can turn my handle into a spout

Tip me over and pour me out....

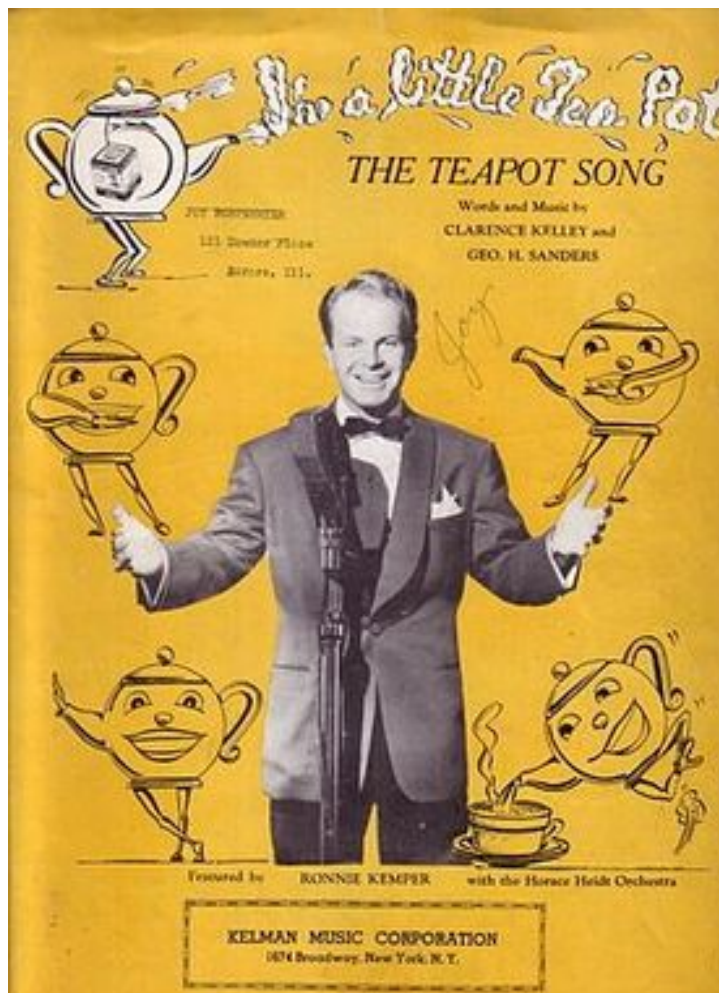
Many of us remember miming the actions of an anthropomorphized teapot in our youth to a tune so enduring I often find myself humming it while prepping my

kettle. I've often wondered about the origin and history of this nursery song. Here's what I learned.

The Teapot Song (also known as **I'm a Little Teapot**) was written by George Harold Sanders and Clarence Z. Kelley and published in 1939. Clarence Kelley and his wife ran a dance school for children. Although I wasn't able to find satisfactory back-up to confirm, one online post indicated that the studio was located in NYC's Tin Pan Allen, a musical hot bed on West 28th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenue. George Harold Sanders (not to be confused with the stage and screen actor George H. Sanders) played the piano there. The story is that George Sanders wrote **The Teapot Song** to assist in teaching very young students who found advanced dance steps difficult. The movements he choreographed for the tune required minimal skill and encouraged pantomime. Little did they know their song and dance was to become an enduring bit of Americana.

The tune spread quickly and a few years later Lipton used a more elaborate arrangement for commercials. Here is a link to a perfectly charming recording of the song performed with orchestra: www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzElCSJycoE . The notation reads, "This was a 1941 hit for Horace Heidt, with words and music by Clarence Kelley and George H. Sanders. Performed by Ronnie Kemper, the record sold over a million copies and the tune was used in Lipton Tea commercials. There was also a dance associated with the song, called the The Teapot Tip."

For the musicians reading, below is the sheet music, including front and rear covers, of **The Teapot Song**.



2

2nd 29

I'm A Little Teapot

Words and Music by
 CLARENCE KELLEY
 GEORGE H. SANDERS

Slowly

Verse

"I am Nap - o - le - on' I've heard some peo - ple say,
 Two lit - tle dish - es on a kit - chen tab - le sat,

Quasi Recitative

And oft - en won - dered how on earth they got that way,
 Each thought the oth - er was so use - less and so fat,

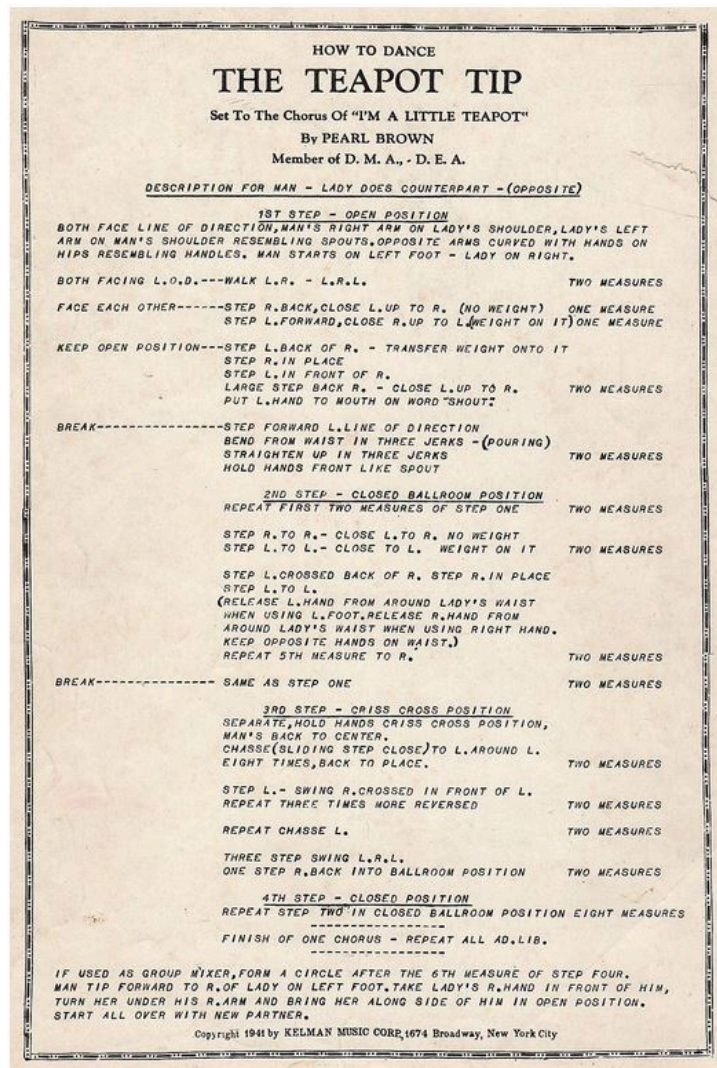
So I start - ed search - ing thro my fam - i - ly tree And
 While they arg - ued back and forth till late in the night The

Copyright MCMXLI by KELMAN MUSIC CORP, 1674 Broadway, New York City
 International Copyright Secured Made in U.S.A. All Rights Reserved



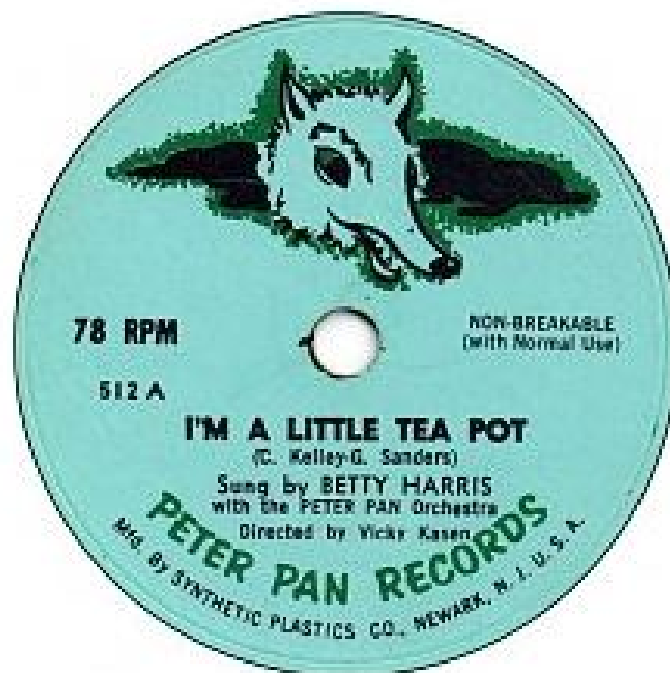
The cover art copyright is believed to belong to the label, Kelman Music Corporation, or the graphic artist(s).

Although loads of contemporary children's videos of **The Teapot Song**, including the dance, are available online, uncovering references of the original Teapot Tip dance has been challenging. In 2014, however, I found a bonus sheet on Ebay that includes clearly explained instructions on How to Dance The Teapot Tip. This would be great fun for tea gatherings!



In 1953, Betty Harris ("Hokey Pokey" songstress) and Peter Pan Records made the song immensely popular. It was released on both 78s and 45s:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjw2J4kOzCg .



Rocking Horse (early 1960's) then Peter Pan Records (1979) released PARTY TIME, a compilation of dance and game songs for children. Included is an embellished version of **I'm a Little Teapot**, also sung by Betty Harris, with pantomime instructions.

So now that we all have this catchy, nostalgic tune in our heads, here's a question for all the JEOPARDY fans reading. Is it just me or do those last notes of the show's theme music send you running to check on the kettle?