

I Could Have Danced All Night

My Fair Lady

- MUSIC AND LYRICS: Lerner and Loewe
- TYPE: Musical Romantic Comedy
- YEAR: 1956
- CHARACTER: Eliza Doolittle

SYNOPSIS:

The tale is about a 'guttersnipe' Cockney flower girl Eliza Doolittle. Selling flowers one day, Eliza is cautioned by a bystander that a suspicious character behind a pillar, (Professor Henry Higgins), is "takin' down ev'ry blessed word you're sayin'." It turns out he is a phonetics expert: "Simple phonetics. The science of speech. That's my profession, also my hobby" he explains.

The Professor makes a challenge which becomes the cornerstone of the plot. He says that within six months, he can teach Eliza Doolittle to speak articulately so that she will be transformed into a pure-speaking lady, so that no one will suspect her Cockney origins when she is passed off as a duchess at an Embassy Ball. She will become a proper, aristocratic lady just by being taught proper English.

Eliza is told "you are to stay here for the next six months learning how to speak beautifully, like a lady in a florist shop. If you're good and do whatever you're told, you shall sleep in a proper bedroom, have lots to eat, and money to buy chocolates and take rides in taxis. But *if* you are naughty and idle, you shall sleep in the back kitchen amongst the black beetles, and be walloped by Mrs. Pearce with a broomstick." Eliza now is focused in becoming a lady.

Eliza endures speech tutoring, endlessly repeating phrases like "In Hertford, Hereford and Hampshire, hurricanes hardly ever happen" (to demonstrate that "h"s must be aspirated) and "The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain" (to practice the "long a" phoneme). **Just as things seem hopeless, she suddenly "gets it" after Higgins eloquently speaks of the glory of the English language. Both Professor Higgins, and Eliza are so delighted that they dance around the room together. That night, the maids spend a long time trying to get her to go to bed as she is in a daze and falling in love with the professor. She sings 'I Could Have Danced All Night.'**

During her elocution lessons, her unrepentant, calculating drunk father appears for handouts, and she makes an embarrassing first appearance at the opening day Ascot Races, but she catches the eye of high-born, but poor, Freddie Eynsford-Hill. Although she experiences personal triumph within high society at the Embassy Ball, and wins her teacher's love, she storms off after being transformed - only to return by film's end.