

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION honoring the life and legacy of John Chancellor Olcott, distinguished Irish-American actor, singer, and songwriter

WHEREAS, New York State has long been the birthplace and home to great historical figures, men and women who, through their great personal and professional achievements, have contributed to the development of our Nation's rich cultural life; and

WHEREAS, From time to time this Legislative Body takes note of certain extraordinary individuals it wishes to recognize for their valued contributions to the success and progress of society; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly pleased to honor the life and legacy of John Chancellor Olcott, distinguished Irish-American actor, singer, and songwriter, to be celebrated on the anniversary of his death on Friday, March 18, 2016, in conjunction with the observance of St. Patrick's Day; and

WHEREAS, John Chancellor "Chauncey" Olcott was born on July 21, 1858, in Buffalo, New York; his mother, the former Margaret Doyle was a native of Killeagh, County Cork, Ireland; and

WHEREAS, During the early years of his career, Chauncey Olcott performed in minstrel shows, before leaving to study singing in London during the 1880s; he returned to the United States in 1886, and made his Broadway debut as Pablo in the show, "Pepita"; and

WHEREAS, After becoming a star on Broadway, Chauncey Olcott succeeded William J. Scanlan in 1893 as the leading tenor in sentimental operettas on Irish themes, and performed in a variety of Irish inspired roles for the rest of his life; and

WHEREAS, Known for being an accomplished songwriter, Chauncey Olcott captured the mood of his Irish-American audience by mixing melodic and rhythmic phrases from traditional Irish music; and

WHEREAS, During his illustrious career, Chauncey Olcott skillfully combined the roles of tenor, actor, lyricist and composer in numerous major productions; he also wrote the complete scores for many Irish musicals, including "Sweet Inniscara" in 1897, "A Romance of Athlone" in 1899, "Garret O'Magh" in 1901, and "Old Limerick Town" in 1902; and

WHEREAS, In addition, this esteemed artist collaborated with other leading auteurs in such popular works as "The Irish Artist" in 1894, "Barry of Ballymore" in 1910, "Macushla" in 1912, and "The Isle O' Dreams" in 1913; and

WHEREAS, Many of Chauncey Olcott's musical numbers and collaborations achieved tremendous success including "My Wild Irish Rose" from "A Romance of Athlone", "Mother Machree" from "Barry of Ballymore", and "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" from "The Isle O' Dreams"; and

WHEREAS, Throughout his tremendous entertainment career, Chauncey Olcott never forgot his Buffalo roots, and often returned to perform in the local opera house; and

WHEREAS, In 1925, Chauncey Olcott was forced to retire due to serious illness, and moved to Monte Carlo where he died in 1932; and

WHEREAS, Chauncey Olcott's life story was memorialized in the 1947 film, "My Wild Irish Rose" based on the biography, SONG IN HIS HEART, by his widow, Rita Olcott; and

WHEREAS, His name and legacy continues to live on in the numerous musicals and songs which have become a beloved part of the history of American music; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is pleased to have this opportunity to express its highest admiration for John Chancellor Olcott and for all of the individuals who have worked to bring proper attention to his legacy,

which truly merits recognition in the grand panorama of the history of our State and Nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the life and legacy of John Chancellor Olcott, distinguished Irish-American actor, singer, and songwriter; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of John Chancellor Olcott.