

Words and Music by  
Ross Altman

**Triangle Fire Song**

Washington Square, 1911  
Saturday, March 25  
At the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory  
Tillie Kupersmith  
Is trapped in a fire in the ten-story Ash Building  
When a bundle of cloth tumbles down—  
“Harris is saving his best material”—  
Thought a witness till she hit the ground.

Chorus: Whoever said, *the dead tell no tales*  
Was either a fool or a liar  
‘Cause they’ve been speaking for a hundred years:  
*Remember the Triangle Fire.*

From the *shtetl* to the sweatshop  
She survived with her needle and thread  
She poured her grief into the *Bintel Brief*  
The union was her butter and bread—  
She kisses her sweetheart—their last act of love  
On the Sabbath they have to work—  
They jump from the window nine stories above  
The sidewalks of New York. (Ch.)

A makeshift morgue on Charities Pier  
The workers call Misery Lane  
With bitter tears the families appear  
To identify their loved ones remains  
The coffins are open—they can’t be sure--  
Their features are all but erased  
A lock of hair, a shoe from the flames  
Take years for some names to be traced. (Ch.)

“The Shirtwaist Kings” are tried for manslaughter  
Isaac Harris and Max Blanck  
A jury of their peers finds them *Not Guilty*  
The Statue of Liberty shrank  
They award the families \$75  
A piece for their children who died  
*Give me your tired, your poor huddled masses*  
When your building burns lock them inside.

A hundred and forty six immigrant garment workers  
Martyred in eighteen minutes  
Yet no one’s to blame for this wall of flame  
If there’s a Hall of Shame they’re in it  
Skeletons were bending over sewing machines  
Where Margaret Schwartz drew her last breath  
Fire escape broke—she choked on the smoke--  
In the Triangle factory of death. (Final Ch.)

