

# The Rockettes



The Rockettes are of course the celebrated all-girl precision dance company based in Radio City Music Hall. But did you know that they got their start as a counter-espionage unit in North Africa during World War II? In September 1940, five elite combat troops were ordered to infiltrate British Somaliland, which Italian colonial forces had occupied a month earlier. The commander, Major Barbara, dressed up as a drum majorette; his subordinates cleverly disguised themselves as warhead-bearing “rockets.” The five were thus able to enter British Somaliland without arousing suspicion. They made their way to Berbera, the capital, where the only cabaret in town was conveniently short on entertainment. Even without auditioning, Barbara and his men were hired as a song and dance troupe. For five years, they performed in their sometimes unwieldy costumes, all the while gathering invaluable information for the Allied forces. When the war ended, the dancers relocated to New York, scrapped their costumes, but kept the eponymous name, which they have to this day. If you ever go to see one of their shows, notice how they seem to pay extraordinary attention to what their audiences are doing. After all – once a spy, *always* a spy.