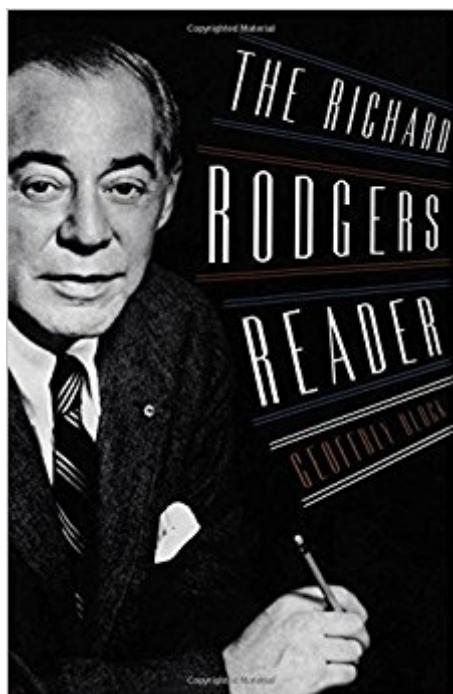


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The Richard Rodgers Reader (Readers On American Musicians)



Synopsis

Richard Rodgers was one of America's most prolific and best-loved composers. A world without "My Funny Valentine," "The Lady is a Tramp," "Blue Moon," and "Bewitched," to name just a few of the songs he wrote with Lorenz Hart, is scarcely imaginable, and the musicals he wrote with his second collaborator, Oscar Hammerstein--Oklahoma!, Carousel, South Pacific, The King and I, and The Sound of Music--continue to enchant and entertain audiences. Arranged in four sections, Rodgers and Hart (1929-1943), Rodgers and Hammerstein (1943-1960), Rodgers After Hammerstein (1960-1979), and The Composer Speaks (1939-1971), The Richard Rodgers Reader offers a cornucopia of informative, perceptive, and stylish biographical and critical overviews. It also contains a selection of Rodgers's letters to his wife Dorothy in the 1920s, the 1938 Time magazine cover story and New Yorker profiles in 1938 and 1961, and essays and reviews by such noted critics as Brooks Atkinson, Eric Bentley, Leonard Bernstein, Lehman Engel, Walter Kerr, Ken Mandelbaum, Ethan Mordden, George Jean Nathan, and Alec Wilder. The volume features personal accounts by Richard Adler, Agnes de Mille, Joshua Logan, Mary Martin, and Diahann Carroll. The collection concludes with complete selections from more than thirty years of Rodgers's own writings on topics ranging from the creative process, the state of the Broadway theater, even Rodgers's bout with cancer, and a generous sample from the candid and previously unpublished Columbia University interviews. For anyone wishing to explore more fully the life and work of a composer whose songs and musicals have assumed a permanent--and prominent--place in American popular culture, The Richard Rodgers Reader will offer endless delights.

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Customer Reviews

Richard Rodgers (1902-1979) was not only the composer of 1940s and '50s Broadway musicals like Oklahoma!, Carousel, South Pacific, The King and I and The Sound of Music (all in collaboration with Oscar Hammerstein II), but also the melodist for the witty, tender lyrics of Lorenz Hart in beloved songs like "My Funny Valentine," "The Lady Is a Tramp" and "Blue Moon." Block, a music theory and history professor at the University of Puget Sound and a composer of musicals himself, divides this survey of writings on Rodgers into four sections: "Rodgers and Hart (1929-1943)," "Rodgers and Hammerstein (1943-1960)," "Rodgers After Hammerstein (1960-1979)" and "The Composer Speaks (1939-1971)." The collection includes excerpts from recent scholarly works by musicologist Allen Forte and lyrics expert Philip Furia, as well as some letters from Rodgers to his wife, Dorothy, in the 1920s; contemporary commentary by theater critics like Eric Bentley; and reminiscences by performers who worked with Rodgers, such as Diahann Carroll. Block may overdo his enthusiasm about some of the more banal contributions, like the cliched entry by performer Mary Martin, but he also includes strong, entertaining pieces by informed music writers like Joshua Logan, Brooks Atkinson and George Jean Nathan. Rodgers's own tight-lipped comments paint a portrait of the man as vividly as anything else in this book. Good for serious performing arts readers, although a few pages of musicological analysis may be over the heads of some Broadway babies. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

For this book, Block (music history, Univ. of Puget Sound; *Enchanted Evenings*) has assembled fascinating pieces of writing about the popular American composer of Oklahoma! and The Sound of Music. While not strictly a biography, it is divided into four chronological parts: "Rodgers and Hart," "Rodgers and Hammerstein," "Rodgers After Hammerstein," and "The Composer Speaks." Among the pieces included are a Time magazine story (Rodgers and Hart made the cover in 1938); a profile from The New Yorker; reminiscences by Rodgers's wife; a piece by longtime collaborator Oscar Hammerstein; an unflattering account of Rodgers from actress and singer Diahann Carroll's autobiography; classic criticism by Alec Wilder, Walter Kerr, and Leonard Bernstein; and other writings by those who knew Rodgers or wrote about the American musical theater. Music examples are provided throughout. Much of the best writing on Rodgers and his music is included here, though Meryle Secrest's recent *Somewhere for Me: A Biography of Richard Rodgers* is not

represented. The most valuable contribution (and also the longest) is a never-before-published excerpt from an interview with Rodgers around 1968. A fine combination of anecdote, music criticism, and biography, this is recommended for all libraries interested in American popular culture and American musical theater. Bruce R. Schueneman, Texas A&M Univ., KingsvilleCopyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Richard Rodgers (1902-1979) was one of America's most prolific and successful popular composers of the first half of the 20th century. As a songwriter, Rodgers occupies a central place in the core repertory of The Great American Songbook. No fewer than 9 of Rodgers's songs are listed among Variety's Golden 100 songs of Tin Pan Alley, a figure that equals Irving Berlin's status among all songs copyrighted between 1918 and 1956. Rodgers's work in collaboration with lyricists Lorenz Hart (1895-1943) and then Oscar Hammerstein II (1895-1960) arguably did more to shape and transform the American stage musical than that of any other single composer. From the beginning, with a benefit performance of the *Garrick Gaieties* in 1925, Rodgers's earliest shows contained one or more songs that remain standards. Beginning in 1935 and lasting right up to Hart's death in 1943, the team turned out one success after another, including a quartet of musicals that enjoy revivals today -- "On Your Toes", "Babes in Arms", "The Boys from Syracuse", and "Pal Joey". In 1942 Rodgers began a second long-term partnership with Hammerstein that launched the third great phase of the American musical, according to Ethan Mordden's opening essay. Understanding full well the grip of conventions on the musical, Rodgers, Hammerstein, director Rouben Mamoulian, and choreographer Agnes DeMille made the radical decision in "Oklahoma!" (1943) to allow the story to drive everything that happened on the stage. Gone were the oft-irrelevant song and dance numbers required in earlier works that effectively stopped the show. "Oklahoma!" forged a new model with its integration of the "three essentials" of performers, songs, and dancing, into one show -- all performed by believable and complex characters who spoke and sang in a fashion that advanced the story. From now on the songs grew out of the script naturally, like dialogue. The song functioned as an integral part of a larger musical scene, which pressed the story along while also developing the character. And as never before, the dancing became integral to the plot. In "Carousel" (1945) Rodgers and Hammerstein completed the transformation of the musical comedy into the musical play, which, with its dramatic content, soon displaced the lightweight musical comedy. For 17 years Rodgers and Hammerstein turned out an astonishing succession of shows: "Oklahoma!", "Carousel", "South Pacific", "The King and I", and "The Sound of Music". The team produced four of the five greatest hit shows of the 1940s and four of the six longest-running shows

written before the 1960s. Their film "The Sound of Music" (1965) became the top-grossing musical film of all time. In "The Richard Rodgers Reader", editor Geoffrey Block, has gathered a comprehensive and informative overview of the life and music of Richard Rodgers from Rodgers's own writings, critical reviews of his music, and previously unpublished materials. The book is organized into four sections: "Rodgers and Hart, 1919-43," "Rodgers and Hammerstein, 1943-60," "Rodgers after Hammerstein, 1960-79," and "The Composer Speaks, 1939-71". Contained here for the first time are letters to his wife Dorothy in the 1920s. Rodgers's daughter Mary also provides another family perspective. Others bring personal remembrances, such as Hammerstein and Demille themselves, director Joshua Logan, actresses Mary Martin and Diahann Carroll, and conductor Leonard Bernstein. Included also is the 1938 Time magazine cover story and New Yorker profiles from 1938 and 1961, as well as essays and reviews by such noted critics as Brooks Atkinson, Eric Bentley, Lehman Engle, Walter Kerr, and Ken Mandelbaum. Especially instructive are the number of musical examples illustrating the songs under discussion. The one notable omission is the lack of anything from Meryle Secrest's biography of Rodgers. Block also includes excerpts from recent scholarly works that provide thoughtful analyses of Rodgers's song styles. The two by musicologist Allen Forte and lyrics expert Philip Furia stand out as insightful analyses of Rodgers's musical style. The final section surveys more than 30 years of Rodgers's own writings on topics ranging from the creative process "How to Write Music in No Easy Lessons" to the state of the Broadway theater in 1971. Deeply touching as well, is a memoir of Rodgers's bout with cancer. Perhaps the most informative contribution is a previously unpublished excerpt from a tight-lipped interview with Rodgers from around 1968. For anyone curious about the life and work of the most successful, productive, diverse, and influential American composer for the musical stage of the 20th century, "The Richard Rodgers Reader" is an excellent and comprehensive introduction. Aside from the inevitable repetition of facts and anecdotes, the work will well reward serious readers interested in the American musical theater and one of its greatest practitioners.

Good Price. Great product. Product delivered in Excellent Condition.

A great resource on one of the 20th century's greatest composers. While useful for academics, the essays in this book were a delight to read casually, as a fan of Rogers. So many chapters/excerpts offered fascinating insights and anecdotes, but for me the standout was Leonard Bernstein's essay. Written from the perspective of both a great conductor, and an accomplished Broadway composer, It beautifully summed up the many sides of Rogers' genius, and provided me with many invaluable

insights.

If any college plans to teach a course on Richard Rodgers, they need look no further than this book for the perfect text. Here is a collection of essays, book chapters, reviews, etc., dealing with Rodgers in each of his eras. They range from a Time magazine piece on Rodgers and Hart in the late 30s, to a Holiday magazine piece on Rodgers and Hammerstein in the late 50s. The collection helps give the reader an even better understanding of Richard Rodgers than he does in his own autobiography, because, as the editor notes, in the interviews that make up the final section, Rodgers is much more at ease and more glib. Some of the articles are a little technical in nature, with their study of Rodgers' musical compositions, but anyone familiar with his writings should be able to understand what they're referring to, by simply running the tune through your head as you analyze what's being discussed. The book is hardly a whitewash, and is amazingly fair in its presentation of articles both friendly and not so friendly. For example, there's a chapter from Diahann Carroll's autobiography that paints Rodgers in a very unflattering light. The collection is not only informative, but it's very entertaining. While this book is good for people just getting familiar with Rodgers, it's probably best suited for the well-versed scholar, who will enjoy this research packed together in a handy volume, eliminating the need to head to the library's microfilm collection. Also, the editor does a very good job of pointing the reader to other articles that were not included (usually because of the cost, as he mentions in the foreword) but present an opposing view or elaborate further on an idea. Great job!

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