

Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart were introduced in 1919, when both attended Columbia University, when asked to write an amateur club show. After writing together for several years, they produced their first successful Broadway musical, *The Garrick Gaieties*, in 1925, which introduced their hit song, "Manhattan" and led to a series of successful musicals and films. They quickly became among the most popular songwriters in America, and from 1925 to 1931 had fifteen scores featured on Broadway. In the early



1930s they moved to Hollywood, where they created several popular songs for film, such as "Isn't It Romantic?" and "Lover", before returning to Broadway in 1935 with Billy Rose's *Jumbo*. From 1935 to Hart's death in 1943, they wrote a string of highly regarded Broadway musicals, most of which were hits.

Many of their stage musicals from the late 1930s were made into films, such as *On Your Toes* (1936) and *Babes in Arms* (1937), though rarely with their scores intact. *Pal Joey* (1940), termed their "masterpiece", has a book by The New Yorker writer John O'Hara. O'Hara adapted his own short stories for the show, which featured a title character who is a heel. So unflinching was the portrait that critic Brooks Atkinson famously asked in his review "Although it is expertly done, how can you draw sweet water from a foul well?" When the show was revived in 1952, audiences had learned to accept darker material (thanks in large part to Rodgers' work with Oscar Hammerstein II). The new production had a considerably longer run than the original and was now considered a classic by critics. Atkinson, reviewing the revival, wrote that "it renews confidence in the professionalism of the theatre."



*Ella Fitzgerald
sings the
Rodgers and Hart
Songbook*

Ella Fitzgerald was one of the most exciting jazz singers of her time and, because of the naturalness of her style, had a popular appeal that extended far beyond the borders of jazz.

A rising star

Ella Fitzgerald was born on April 25, 1918, in Newport News, Virginia, but she spent her youth just outside New York City in Yonkers, New York, and received her musical education in public schools. During elementary school she began singing at her local church, the Bethany African Methodist Episcopal Church. At fifteen her mother died and she was cared for by her aunt in Harlem, a black neighborhood in New York that was rich with jazz music.

When only sixteen, she received her first big break at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, when she won an amateur-night contest and impressed saxophonist-bandleader Benny Carter (1907–). He recommended her to drummer-bandleader Chick Webb (c. 1900–1939), who hired her in 1935. She soon became a recording star with the band, and her own composition "A-tisket, A-tasket" (1938) was such a smash hit that the song became her trademark for many years thereafter. When Webb died in 1939, Fitzgerald assumed leadership of the band for the next year.

"The First Lady of Song"

By 1940 Fitzgerald was recognized throughout the music world as a vocal wonder—a singer with clarity of tone, flexibility of range, fluency of rhythm, and, above all, a talent for improvisation (to make up without practice) that was equally effective on ballads and faster tunes. Although for a long time she had a better reputation among fellow musicians than with the general public, this changed soon after she joined Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic (JATP) in 1946. She made annual tours with the group and was always the concert favorite. Three of her unflinching show-stoppers were "Oh, Lady Be Good," "Stomping at the Savoy," and "How High the Moon." Each would begin at a medium tempo and then speed up as Fitzgerald moved up-tempo and "scatted" (that is, sang harmonic variations of the melody in nonsense syllables). The huge JATP crowds always responded well.

By the early 1950s Fitzgerald's domination of fans's and critics's polls was absolute. In fact, she won the Down Beat readers' poll every year from 1953 to 1970 and became known as "The First Lady of Song." In 1955 she ended her twenty-year recording relationship with Decca in order to record for Norman Granz's Verve label. She proceeded to

produce a series of legendary "Songbook" albums, each devoted to the compositions of a great songwriter or songwriting team, such as the Gershwins (George, 1898–1937; Ira, 1896–1983), Cole Porter (1891–1964), Irving Berlin (1888–1989), and Duke Ellington (1899–1974). The lush orchestrations allowed Fitzgerald to display the classy popsinger side of herself. In the two-volume Ellington set, her jazzier self moved aside for the melodist in her.

Touring the world

Under Granz's personal management Fitzgerald also began to play choice hotel jobs and made her first feature film appearance in *Pete Kelly's Blues* (1955). In 1957 she worked at the Copacabana in New York City and gave concerts at the Hollywood Bowl. In 1958, in the company of the Duke Ellington Orchestra, she gave a concert at Carnegie Hall as part of an extended European and United States tour with the band. In the early 1960s she continued to work the big hotel circuit—the Flamingo in Las Vegas, the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco, and the Americana in New York City. She also continued to tour Europe, Latin America, and Japan with the Oscar Peterson (1925–) trio, which was three-fourths of Granz's JATP house rhythm section. In 1965 and 1966 she was reunited with Ellington for another tour and record date.

Fitzgerald was always blessed with superb musicians accompanying her, from the full orchestral support of Chick Webb and Duke Ellington to the smaller JATP ensembles. In 1968 she teamed up with yet another, the magnificent pianist Tommy Flanagan, who headed a trio that served her into the mid-1970s. In 1971 Fitzgerald had serious eye surgery, but within a year she was performing again. Her singing, however, began to show evidence of decline: the voice that was once an instrument of natural beauty and effortless grace became a bit thin and strained. Nevertheless, so great was her talent that she continued to excite concert audiences and to record effectively. She appeared after the mid-1960s with over fifty symphonic orchestras in the United States.

A large, pleasant-looking woman with a surprisingly girlish speaking voice, Ella Fitzgerald sometimes forgot lyrics. But the audiences loved it and delighted in her ability to work her way out of these potentially embarrassing moments on stage. Unlike some other great jazz singers, like Billie Holiday (1915–1959) and Anita O'Day, Fitzgerald avoided falling into drug addiction. She was married twice. The first marriage, to Bernie Korngay in 1941, was annulled

Ella Fitzgerald sings the Rodgers and Hart Songbook

1. Have You Met Miss Jones?
2. You Took Advantage Of Me
3. This Can't Be Love
4. The Lady is a Tramp
5. Manhattan
6. Johnny One Note
7. I Wish I Were in Love Again
8. It Never Entered My Mind
9. Where or When
10. Little Girl Blue
11. Ten Cents a Dance
12. There's a Small Hotel
13. I Didn't Know What Time it Was
14. I Could Write a Book
15. My Funny Valentine
16. Bewitched
17. My Romance
18. Wait Till You See Her
19. Lover
20. Isn't It Romantic
21. Blue Moon

Recording Info: Transferred from a Verve 4-track tape / Producer : Norman Granz / August 21, 1956 - August 31, 1956

Please Note: In the interest of preserving the superb sound quality of these historic recordings, they have been preserved in their original, pristine state for maximum fidelity. Transferred from commercially released, analog reel-to-reel tapes (some of which are more than 50 years old), the recordings themselves can be subject to certain "artifacts" which are an inseparable part of the original analog recording process, such as tape "hiss" or other defects, and these may be audible on certain music tracks.

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