



**OSCAR  
PETERSON  
PLAYS THE  
RICHARD RODGERS  
SONGBOOK**

**Bass – Ray Brown  
Drums – Ed Thigpen**



Richard Rodgers' contributions to the musical theatre of his day were extraordinary, and his influence on the musical theatre of today and tomorrow is legendary. His career spanned more than six decades, and his hits ranged from the silver screens of Hollywood to the bright lights of Broadway, London and beyond. He was the recipient of countless awards, including Pulitzers, Tonys, Oscars, Grammys and Emmys. He wrote more than 900 published songs, and forty Broadway musicals.

Richard Charles Rodgers was born in New York City on June 28, 1902. His earliest professional credits, beginning in 1920, included a series of musicals for Broadway, London and Hollywood written exclusively with lyricist Lorenz Hart. In the first decade of their collaboration, Rodgers & Hart averaged two new shows every season, beginning with POOR LITTLE RITZ GIRL, and also including THE GARRICK GAIETIES (of 1925 and 1926), DEAREST ENEMY, PEGGY-ANN, A CONNECTICUT YANKEE and CHEE-CHEE. After spending the years 1931 to 1935 in Hollywood (where they wrote the scores for several feature films including LOVE ME TONIGHT starring Maurice Chevalier, HALLELUJAH, I'M A BUM starring Al Jolson and THE PHANTOM PRESIDENT starring George M. Cohan), they returned to New York to compose the score for Billy Rose's circus extravaganza, JUMBO. A golden period followed — golden for Rodgers & Hart, and golden for the American musical: ON YOUR TOES (1936), BABES IN ARMS (1937), I'D RATHER BE RIGHT (1937), I MARRIED AN ANGEL (1938), THE BOYS FROM SYRACUSE (1938), TOO MANY GIRLS (1939), HIGHER AND HIGHER (1940), PAL JOEY (1940), and BY JUPITER (1942). The Rodgers & Hart partnership came to an end with the death of Lorenz Hart in 1943, at the age of 48.

Earlier that year Rodgers had joined forces with lyricist and author Oscar Hammerstein II, whose work in the field of operetta throughout the '20s and '30s had been as innovative as Rodgers' own accomplishments in the field of musical comedy. OKLAHOMA! (1943), the first Rodgers & Hammerstein musical, was also the first of a new genre, the musical play, representing a unique fusion of Rodgers' musical comedy and Hammerstein's operetta. A milestone in the development of the American musical, it also marked the beginning of the most successful partnership in Broadway musical history, and was followed by CAROUSEL (1945), ALLEGRO (1947), SOUTH PACIFIC (1949), THE KING AND I (1951), ME AND JULIET (1953), PIPE DREAM (1955), FLOWER DRUM SONG (1958) and THE SOUND OF MUSIC (1959). The team wrote one movie musical, STATE FAIR (1945), and one for television, CINDERELLA. (1957). Collectively, the Rodgers & Hammerstein musicals earned 34 Tony Awards, 15 Academy Awards, two Pulitzer Prizes, two Grammy Awards and 2 Emmy Awards. In 1998 Rodgers & Hammerstein were cited by Time Magazine and CBS News as among the 20 most influential artists of the 20th century and in 1999 they were jointly commemorated on a U.S. postage stamp.

Despite Hammerstein's death in 1960, Rodgers continued to write for the Broadway stage. His first solo entry, NO STRINGS in 1962, earned him two Tony Awards for music and lyrics, and was followed by DO I HEAR A WALTZ? (1965, lyrics by Stephen Sondheim), TWO BY TWO (1970, lyrics by Martin Charnin), REX (1976, lyrics by Sheldon Harnick) and I REMEMBER MAMA (1979, lyrics by Martin Charnin and Raymond Jessel).

NO STRINGS was not the only project for which Rodgers worked solo: as composer/lyricist he wrote the score for a 1967 television adaptation of Bernard Shaw's ANDROCLAS AND THE LION for NBC; contributed songs to a 1962 remake of STATE FAIR; and to the 1965 movie version of THE SOUND OF MUSIC. He composed one ballet score (GHOST TOWN, premiered in 1939), and two television documentary scores — VICTORY AT SEA in 1952 and THE VALIANT YEARS in 1960 (the former earning him an Emmy, a Gold Record and a commendation from the U.S. Navy.)

Richard Rodgers died at home in New York City on December 30, 1979 at the age of 77. On March 27, 1990, he was honored posthumously with Broadway's highest accolade when the 46th Street Theatre, owned and operated by the Nederlander Organization, was renamed The Richard Rodgers Theatre, home to The Richard Rodgers Gallery, a permanent exhibit in the lobby areas presented by ASCAP which honors the composer's life and works.

Oscar Peterson was one of the greatest piano players of all time. A pianist with phenomenal technique on the level of his idol, Art Tatum, Peterson's speed, dexterity, and ability to swing at any tempo were amazing. Very effective in small groups, jam sessions, and in accompanying singers, O.P. was at his absolute best when performing unaccompanied solos. His original style did not fall into any specific idiom. Like Erroll Garner and George Shearing, Peterson's distinctive playing formed during the mid- to late '40s and fell somewhere between swing and bop. Peterson was criticized through the years because he used so many notes, didn't evolve much since the 1950s, and recorded a remarkable number of albums. Perhaps it is because critics ran out of favorable adjectives to use early in his career; certainly it can be said that Peterson played 100 notes when other pianists might have used ten, but all 100 usually fit, and there is nothing wrong with showing off technique when it serves the music. As with Johnny Hodges and Thelonious Monk, to name two, Peterson spent his career growing within his style rather than making any major changes once his approach was set, certainly an acceptable way to handle one's career. Because he was Norman Granz's favorite pianist (along with Tatum) and the producer tended to record some of his artists excessively, Peterson made an incredible number of albums. Not all are essential, and a few are routine, but the great majority are quite excellent, and there are dozens of classics.

Peterson started classical piano lessons when he was six and developed quickly. After winning a talent show at 14, he began starring on a weekly radio show in Montreal. Peterson picked up early experience as a teenager playing with Johnny Holmes' Orchestra. From 1945-1949, he recorded 32 selections for Victor in Montreal. Those trio performances find Peterson displaying a love for boogie-woogie, which he would soon discard, and the swing style of Teddy Wilson and Nat King Cole. His technique was quite brilliant even at that early stage, and although he had not yet been touched by the influence of bop, he was already a very impressive player. Granz discovered Peterson in 1949 and soon presented him as a surprise guest at a Jazz at the Philharmonic concert. Peterson was recorded in 1950 on a series of duets with either Ray Brown or Major Holley on bass; his version of "Tenderly" became a hit. Peterson's talents were quite obvious, and he became a household name in 1952 when he formed a trio with guitarist Barney Kessel and Brown. Kessel tired of the road and was replaced

by Herb Ellis the following year. The Peterson-Ellis-Brown trio, which often toured with JATP, was one of jazz's great combos from 1953-1958. Their complex yet swinging arrangements were competitive -- Ellis and Brown were always trying to outwit and push the pianist -- and consistently exciting. In 1958, when Ellis left the band, it was decided that no other guitarist could fill in so well, and he was replaced (after a brief stint by Gene Gammage) by drummer Ed Thigpen. In contrast to the earlier group, the Peterson-Brown-Thigpen trio (which lasted until 1965) found the pianist easily the dominant soloist. Later versions of the group featured drummers Louis Hayes (1965-1966), Bobby Durham (1967-1970), Ray Price (1970), and bassists Sam Jones (1966-1970) and George Mraz (1970).

In 1960, Peterson established the Advanced School of Contemporary Music in Toronto, which lasted for three years. He made his first recorded set of unaccompanied piano solos in 1968 (strange that Granz had not thought of it) during his highly rated series of MPS recordings. With the formation of the Pablo label by Granz in 1972, Peterson was often teamed with guitarist Joe Pass and bassist Niels Pedersen. He appeared on dozens of all-star records, made five duet albums with top trumpeters (Dizzy Gillespie, Roy Eldridge, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Clark Terry, and Jon Faddis), and teamed up with Count Basie on several two-piano dates. An underrated composer, Peterson wrote and recorded the impressive "Canadiana Suite" in 1964 and has occasionally performed originals in the years since. Although always thought of as a masterful acoustic pianist, Peterson has also recorded on electric piano (particularly some of his own works), organ on rare occasions, and even clavichord for an odd duet date with Joe Pass. One of his rare vocal sessions in 1965, *With Respect to Nat*, reveals that Peterson's singing voice was nearly identical to Nat King Cole's. A two-day reunion with Herb Ellis and Ray Brown in 1990 (which also included Bobby Durham) resulted in four CDs. Peterson was felled by a serious stroke in 1993 that knocked him out of action for two years. He gradually returned to the scene, however, although with a weakened left hand. Even when he wasn't 100 percent, Peterson was a classic improviser, one of the finest musicians that jazz has ever produced. The pianist appeared on an enormous number of records through the years. As a leader, he has recorded for Victor, Granz's Clef and Verve labels (1950-1964), MPS, Mercury, Limelight, Pablo, and Telarc.

# OSCAR PETERSON PLAYS THE RICHARD RODGERS SONGBOOK

- 1-Manhattan 2:56
- 2-Isn't It Romantic? 2:19
- 3-Lover 2:03
- 4-I Didn't Know What Time It Was 2:39
- 5-Bewitched 2:54
- 6-My Funny Valentine 2:46
- 7-This Can't Be Love 2:34
- 8-It Might As Well Be Spring 3:02
- 9-Johnny One Note 1:42
- 10-The Surrey With The Fringe On Top 2:34
- 11-The Lady Is A Tramp 2:06
- 12-Blue Moon 2:45

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