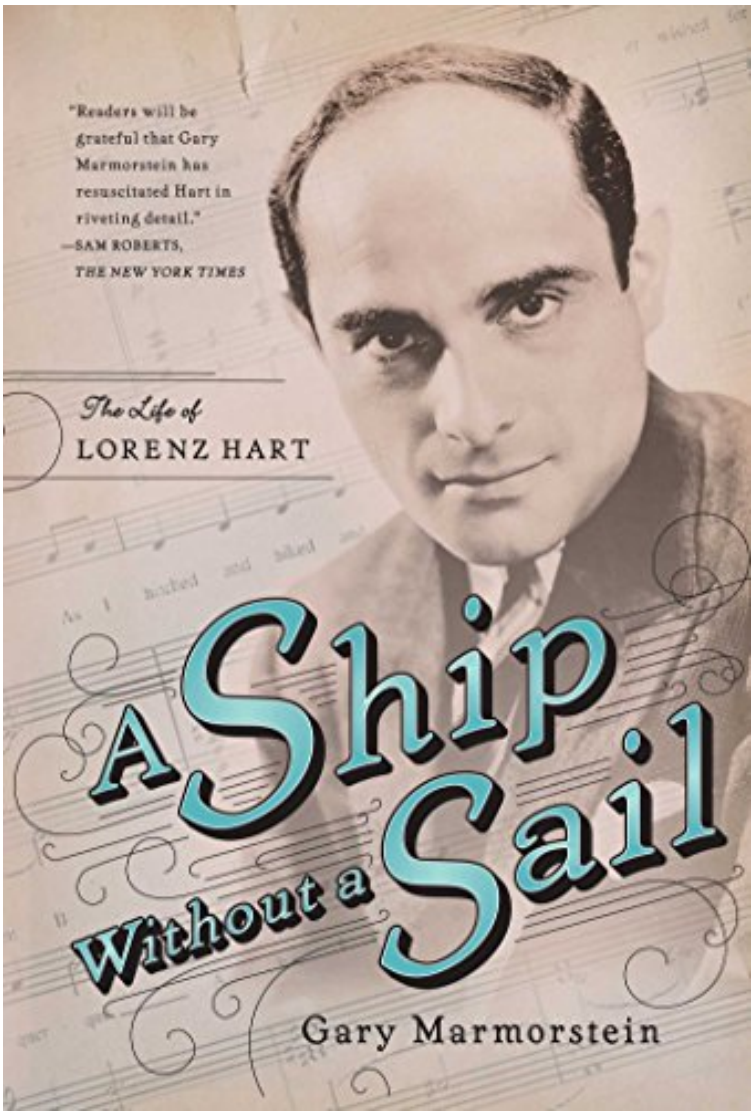
A Ship Without A Sail: The Life of Lorenz Hart (English Edition)



Par Gary Marmorstein
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Par Gary Marmorstein : A Ship Without A Sail: The Life of Lorenz Hart (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Ship Without A Sail: The Life of Lorenz Hart (English Edition):

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAn unforgettable portrait of an exuberant yet troubled artist who so enriched the American songbook Blue Moon, Where or When, The Lady Is a Tramp, My Funny Valentine, Isnt It Romantic?, My Romance, Theres a Small Hotel, Falling in Love with Love, Bewitched, Bothered and Bewilderedlyricist Lorenz Hart, together with composer Richard Rodgers, wrote some of the most memorable songs ever created. More than half a century after their collaboration ended, Rodgers Hart songs are indispensable to the repertoire of nightclub singers everywhere. A Ship Without a Sail is the story of the complicated man who was Lorenz Hart. His lyrics spin with brilliance and sophistication, yet at their core is

an unmistakable wistfulness. The sweetness of My Romance and Isnt It Romantic? is unsurpassed in American song, but Harts lyrics could also be cynical, funny, ironic. He brought a unique wit and elegance to popular music. Larry Hart and Richard Rodgers wrote approximately thirty Broadway musicals and dozens of songs for Hollywood films. At least four of their musicalsOn Your Toes, Babes in Arms, The Boys from Syracuse, and Pal Joey have become classics. But despite their prodigious collaboration, Rodgers and Hart were an odd couple. Rodgers was precise, punctual, heterosexual, handsome, and eager to be accepted by Society. Hart was barely five feet tall, alcoholic, homosexual, and more comfortable in a bar or restaurant than anywhere else. Terrified of solitude, he invariably threw the party and picked up the check. His lyrics are all the more remarkable considering that he never sustained a romantic relationship, living his entire life with his mother, who died only months before he died at age forty-eight. Gary Marmorsteins revelatory biography includes many of the lyrics that define Harts legacythose clever, touching stanzas that still move us or make us laugh.ExtraitPROLOGUE Im a Sentimental Sap, Thats All ON THE morning of November 29, 1943, one week after the death of Lorenz Hart at age forty-eight, several people gathered at the Guaranty Trust Company, on the southwest corner of Forty-Fourth Street and Fifth Avenue, to open the decedents safe-deposit box. Hart was considered by many to be the greatest of all American lyricists. Harts attorney Abraham M. Wattenberg arrived with his young associate Leonard Klein, bearing an order, duly made by Surrogate James A. Foley, to open the box with the express purpose of removing Harts will. A representative of the state tax commission agreed to be there at 11:45 A.M. to oversee the task. Already present were the two executors named in the will: William Kron, who had been Harts accountant for the past five years; and Richard Rodgers, the composer with whom, over the course of twenty-five years, Hart had written more than eight hundred songs, including My Funny Valentine, Isnt It Romantic?, My Heart Stood Still, Blue Moon, My Romance, With a Song in My Heart, The Lady Is a Tramp, Thou Swell, I Didnt Know What Time It Was, Mountain Greenery, Manhattan, Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered, I Could Write a Book, and Where or When. Expected at the bank were Harts younger brother, Theodore, an actor known personally and professionally as Teddy, and Teddys wife, Dorothy. Teddy had lived with Lorenzor Larry, as he was calledand their mother until January 1938, when he married Dorothy Lubow and the couple moved to an apartment in the West Fifties. Never living far from Larry, the Harts often looked after himand few intelligent, able-bodied men have needed such looking afterespecially in the six months following the death of the boys mother, Frieda, in April 1943. When they arrived at Guaranty Trust, they did not know what was in the will. The others did.1 The state tax commission representative was delayed. Teddy Hart, who had always played up his lack of book knowledge in clowning contrast to the erudition of his brother, now asked Abe Wattenberg if he had a copy of the will. Wattenberg, in fact, was carrying two copies, and he gave one to Teddy and one to Dorothy. Sitting side by side in the funereal hush of the bank, the Harts read through Larrys will, dated June 17 of that year. The high-ceilinged space had not always felt so sepulchral; decades earlier it had been occupied by the opulent restaurant Sherrys, where Charles Pierre, who later built the Hotel Pierre, was captain, and diners were serenaded by live music and the clatter of silverware and crystal.2 Do either of you have any questions? asked Wattenberg. Dorothy Hart finally looked up from her copy. Does this mean that if I have any children, theyre cut off? Yes, said Wattenberg, thats what it meant. Thats hardly fair, Dorothy said. She pointed out that Larrys estate ought to remain in the family; given the way the will was worded, if she were to have children, they would have no share in his legacy. By then Teddy and Dorothy had been married for nearly six years; to Abe Wattenberg, a Hart child seemed an improbability. Nevertheless, Wattenberg assured her that the Harts would be ably supported by the $100,000 life insurance policy that Larry had left to Teddymore than enough to take care of the Harts and any children they might have. In any case, Wattenberg went on, I followed your brothers instructions to the letter. This is what he wanted. Wattenberg, a music publishing insider who over the years had represented John Philip Sousa, George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, and Vincent Youmans, had been Larry Harts attorney since 1925 and, as he reminded Teddy and Dorothy, every legal action hed taken had been in his clients best interests. Wattenberg produced a waiver of citation that, if signed by Teddy, would enable probate to go through within three or four days. Anxious about holding up the proceedings, Teddy signed. The state tax man appeared. The safe-deposit box was extracted from the vault and taken to a conference room. The will inside it was compared with the copies read by the Harts, and everyone agreed the copies matched the original document. Wattenberg gave the original to a bank representative, who would forward it to the Surrogates Court. At this point Richard Rodgers, having no reason to remain, left the bank. Wattenberg led the Harts, both groping for purchase in a fog of legalese, up to the second floor to get Teddy Harts signature notarized. Wattenberg then

handed the notarized waiver and the petition to probate to his associate, who took the documents away to file with the court. The Harts remained in the conference room with Wattenberg, who did his best to placate the befuddled couple, and with Larry Harts financial manager, William Kron, whose position in the decedents will was its most perplexing aspect. A full 30 percent of the Lorenz Hart estate was to go to Kron; when he died, that same 30 percent would pass on to his children, and then to his childrens children, and so on, presumably until the family stopped reproducing. Although the will bequeathed Teddy Hart 70 percent, with his share going to his wife when she was widowed, no provision was made for their issue; the Harts participation in Lorenz Harts future royalties, which were sure to be considerable, would end with Dorothys death. Then the 70 percent share would be payable, in perpetuity, to the Federation of Jewish Philanthropic Societies (later known as the United Jewish Appeal). This was curious, because Larry Hartalthough hed been bar mitzvahed at Mt. Zion synagogue in Harlem and been generous to several Jewish organizations, notably the Jewish Theatrical Guildwas not known to have been devoted to Jewish causes. If the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies maintained a strong link with anyone even remotely involved in the proceedings, it was with Rodgerss wife, Dorothy. Felix Warburg, a close friend of Dorothy Rodgerss family, had been first president of the Federation, and Dorothy Rodgerss mother, May Adelson, was a founder of the Federations thrift shops. If Dorothy Rodgers had a lifelong cause, it was the battle against anti-Semitism and raising funds to help in that battle. Larry was sympathetic, but the cause wasnt his. William Kron was said to be an ardent supporter of the Federation. It was just as likely, however, that the Federations inclusion in the will had been engineered by Rodgers to acknowledge his wifes profound interest in the organization. As they left the bank that day, the Harts were drifting into shock. Dorothy knew at least one thing that Wattenberg and the others did not. One week earlieron the day her brother-in-law died, in factshe had gone to her doctor, concerned about abdominal discomfort that she thought was an ulcer, only to learn she was pregnant.Larry Harts will, dated June 17, 1943, was filed in New York Citys Surrogates Court on November 30. The will named Rodgers and Kron as coexecutors and trustees and instructed them to form two trusts out of the residuary estatethe Teddy Hart share and the William Kron share. Before there was a residuary estate, however, bequests had to be made. Teddy Hart was bequeathed $5,000 outright, with another $2,500 going to Dorothy. The other legatees were Harts cousin Sidney Hertz (the family surname before Harts father changed it); his friend Irving Eisenman; Mary Campbell, known to the Hart family as Big Mary and in their employ as housekeeper for twenty years; and Dr. Milton (Doc) Bender, a dentist turned talent agent who had been as close to Hart as anyone for more than twenty years. These legatees received $2,500 each. Harts aunts Emma Kahn and Rose Elkan were to receive $2,000 each, as was his uncle William Herman, but Elkan predeceased Hart by six weeks, and the bequest did not pass through to her two children.3 Herman, too, died before probate, his share going back to the residuary estate. Bequests of $2,000 also went to Irene Gallagher, who had spent years with Chappell Company, one of the more powerful music publishers, and to Rodgerss two daughters, Mary and Linda. As executors, Kron and Rodgers legally seized control of the Rodgers Hart copyrights and could direct payouts from various income sources, particularly the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, better known as ASCAP. What made Krons position as a primary beneficiary so baffling, however, was that he had been imposed as accountant on Hart by Rodgers only a few years earlier. Hart was known to be a big spender; so, although he was never poor after 1925, when Rodgers and Harts Revolutionary Warera musical, Dearest Enemy, became a hit, he was frequently broke. In Rodgerss eyes, Kron, who had handled the financial affairs of playwright Edna Ferber and composer Jerome Kern, was the antidote to Larrys devil-may-care attitude about money. The Rodgerses saw Kron as saving not only Larrys money but saving Hart from himself. Dorothy Rodgers said, Willy Kron, Larrys good friend and financial advisor, went away with him for short trips and played endless card games to keep him from drinking.4 In 1929, Rodgers and his father, William, a prominent obstetrician known as Will, had opened a savings account for Hart at a bank at Eighty-Sixth and Broadway; Harts royalty checks, according to Rodgers, went directly into that account. This was something of a hedge against not only Larrys profligate ways but also his generositysupporting his mother and brother for many years, routinely picking up checks for people he barely knew, and being widely known as the softest touch on Broadway. Later on, when there was a great deal more money available, Rodgers remembered, what [Willy Kron] did was virtually the same thing that my father and I did, with one exception. He took Larrys money and distributed it in savings accounts all over the city, in Larrys name. There was no way for Larry to get at it, and no way for anybody else to get at it.5 Not everyone saw Krons caretaking as magnanimous. Kron often appeared in the lobby of the Ardsley, Larrys apartment house on Central Park West, and someone down therea doorman or a

friendwould phone upstairs to the penthouse to signal that the accountant was on his way up ostensibly to discuss business, as the Hart biographer Frederick Nolan has said, but really to check out the evenings festivities. Everyone tried to scatter before Kron made it up there. It was like dodging the truant officer, Nolan has written. Larry loved it.6 The relationship between Kron and Lorenz Hart was, as far as I could see, purely a business relationship, Mary Campbell, the Hart familys devoted cook and housekeeper, testified in New Yorks Surrogates Court. Lorenz never expressed any affection for Kron. Krons children visited very rarely and only when Kron brought them there. If Campbells testimony suggested that Krons closeness to Larry had been inflated by the coexecutors, other remarks she made were more troubling. I also heard Kron tell Lorenz Hart that Dorothy Hart, Theodores wife, was planning to put him in an insane asylum because Dorothy wanted Theodore to inherit Lorenzs money and when he did she would take the money away from Theodore Hart and leave him. On each occasion Kron said he would protect Lorenz against any such acts on the part of Dorothy and that he would see to it that Dorothy would not put him away. Lorenz Hart frequently repeated these statements, more particularly when he was under the influence of liquor. Campbell, however, emphasized the Hart brothers mutual fraternal devotion. I have never known two brothers who were more attentive to each other and who loved each other more. When Lorenz spoke of Teddy he frequently cried. Lorenz, during his lifetime, frequently said that whatever he had in life was for his mother and Teddy and when his mother died he said that everything was for Teddy.7 If the testimony sounded coached, there was still ample evidence, pictorial as well as written, of how close the brothers were. Larry did not hang photographs of himself, whether pictured alone or with others, in his various residences, but he kept a photograph of Teddys appearance in the play Three Men on a Horse in his bedroom. Even as adults the two famously undersized menat five feet one or so, Teddy was slightly taller than his older brotherhad lived and occasionally worked together. Teddys leading role in The Boys from Syracuse was created for him by Larry. Krons accusation that Teddy and Dorothy Hart were planning to put Larry away by declaring him insane sounded wild on its face and was almost certainly false. It would be more reasonable to conclude that Larry Hart was being manipulated by Kron, and probably at the direction of Rodgers. Yet Larry drank, according to Doc Bender, morning, noon, and night, and the paranoia that often accompanies such chronic alcoholism had kicked in, exacerbated by the loss of the one personhis motherwho had given him unconditional love.8It was rumored that Larry was bankruptthat those deposits in savings accounts all over the city had vanished. Teddy and Dorothy Hart suspected that all that cash had gone into Willy Krons pocket. According to an Order to Show Cause for Approval of Compromise Agreement, not counting two insurance policies$100,000 from New York Life, and a separate $10,000 policy that turned upthe estate showed a total of $33,462.69more than $29,000 in ASCAP royalties and $4,000 from a checking account.9 But this wasnt enough to pay immediate expenses, including $22,500 in bequests; costs incurred from Larrys last illness and burial, which amounted to $16,500; and Larrys bequest of $1,000 to Mt. Zion Cemetery, in Maspeth, Queens, for the perpetual care of the Hart family plot. (The will makes no mention of cemetery space for Teddy or Dorothy Hart.) It also turned outa shock to the Hartsthat the New York Life policy erroneously named the estate as beneficiary, not Teddy. This was not even the final insult to the Harts. In the last week of 1943, given the stunning insurance policy mistake and now desperate to slow the probate process, Teddy Hart filed an affidavit in Surrogates Court stating that his brother had been an alcoholic addict and was subject to undue influence when he had revised his will the previous spring, shortly after the death of his mother. Teddy Harts affidavit declared: In the last three years of his life he acted like a man mentally unbalanced and one who did not know what he was doing and did not understand the nature of his acts. His friends and business associates recognized this.10 Acknowledging his brothers alcoholism was painful for Teddy, but it was necessary to challenge the will. In a counter-affidavit, Rodgers wrote, If I did not think Lorenz Hart was physically and mentally capable of carrying on with his part in the production of [the revival of A Connecticut Yankee], which required an investment of $100,000, I never would have risked the investment of that large sum nor would I have risked my own professional standing and reputation.11 Rodgers was in a tricky position. Through years of Larrys alcoholism, Rodgers had gone to great lengths to get him to work. As early as 1938, during the writing of the stage version of I Married an Angel, Harts long unexplained absences had greatly truncated the teams writing sessions. Rodgers, if pressed, could write lyrics, sometimes even good lyrics, but they were not Hart lyrics. For two decades Rodgers had hung in, forgiving Harts tendency to vanish and trying to get him to see a psychoanalyst. If Rodgers and Hart were hardly (as one admiring newspaper profile put it) the Castor and Pollux of Broadway, they had loved each other. Part of it was Dick really adored Larry, said costume designer Lucinda Ballard, and he would get

frantic with worry because Larry was always getting half drunk across the street with somebody; he would disappear from his cronies as well as from everybody else. He might disappear just at a time when a lyric was desperately needed or a change or something. Their relationship was more like brothers who are fond of each other but become estranged by different lifestyles. You know how in families people can still love each other, and I think Dick wanted to protect Larry.12 When the success of Oklahoma!, written by Rodgers with Oscar Hammerstein II after Hart had expressed no interest in it, had quietly but obviously pierced Hart, it was Rodgers who pushed to revive their 1927 hit A Connecticut Yankee so that Hart would have work to focus on. But Rodgers also wanted control of the works hed produced with Hart. There is a statute of limitations on gratitude, Rodgers said of the artistic debt he owed Larry.13 Fed up with decades of worry and anxiety, of playing the responsible, chiding brother to an erratic imp, Rodgers figured it was time to get something back for his suffering. Given that Larry Hart had to be practically locked in a room to write a lyric, its astounding that he and Rodgers wrote any shows at all. As it was, they produced nearly thirty shows and some eight hundred songs in twenty-five years (with additional lost lyrics still turning up now and then). At least fifty of those songs are among the finest American songs ever written. Further countering Teddy Harts accusation of undue influence on his brother, Rodgers tiptoed along the precipice of perjury. The new Connecticut Yankee has been received with great acclaim and is one of the current New York hits, Rodgers testified (though the revival was not a hit). Its present success depends in a large measure upon the excellence of the lyrics for which Mr. Hart was solely responsible and to the brilliance of the book which he assisted in rewriting. Among those lyrics was To Keep My Love Alive, one of the wittiest songs written in the twentieth century, about an oft-married queen (Im never the bridesmaid/Im always the bride) who kills off each and every one of her imperfect husbandsa list that Larry Hart kept expanding as delighted audiences demanded additional choruses. From the foregoing I can unhesitatingly state that between May and October, 1943, Rodgers went on, isolating the period when the team was revising its 1927 show, Lorenz Hart was never under the influence of liquor in my presence and that at all times during that period as far as I know he was in complete possession of all of his mental faculties and aware of his every act and competent to understand the nature of same.14 The kindest thing to say about that closing sentence may be that Rodgers was being technical. His claim was supported by Dr. Jacques Fischl, the young Doctors Hospital resident who had seen Larry on June 17, 1943, the day he signed the last will, and testified that the lyricist had shown not the slightest trace of intoxication. The Harts jaws could not have dropped lower. Although the Harts were hardly genteel Upper East Side people who aspired to Societythe kind of which Dorothy Rodgers might have approvedDick Rodgers carried no animosity toward them. What he coveted was revealed in the Fourth Part of the June 17 Hart will: In this connection I respectfully request those persons who are authorized to renew copyrights of any of my literary compositions, dramatic compositions, dramatico-musical compositions, musical compositions and songs pursuant to rights of renewal of such copyrights, to procure such renewals of copyrights and after they have done so to assign them to my Trustees hereunder, or to the legal entity which may be organized by them under the provisions of this, my Will. I also respectfully request that all sums that may be payable to me by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers be paid to my Executors and Trustees hereunder or to the legal entity which may be organized by them under the provisions of this, my Will.The underlining was done by Abe Wattenberg, who took pains to emphasize the assignment of copyrights to the wills Trusteesthe control that Trustee Rodgers had wanted all along. It was the last paragraph, directing that all of Larrys ASCAP royalties be paid to the Trustees, that set Teddy Hart off on another round of litigation.The wills Trustees, Rodgers and Kron, were represented by the white-shoe law firm of OLeary and Dunn. Teddy was represented by the scrappy Louis Brodsky, who found himself in something of a bind: he did believe that Larry Hart had been a victim of undue influence in signing the June 17 will; he also believed that Teddy Harts consent to go ahead with probate was not made under duress, and there was only so much that could be done in light of that fact. Prepared to compromise, Brodsky wrote a letter to Emil Goldmark, attorney for the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, reviewing the situation: The decedent undoubtedly believed that the $100,000.00 [New York Life policy] was payable to his brother. This belief was shared by his attorney, and immediately after the death of Larry Hart, the policy was delivered to Teddy Hart for the purpose of cashing the same, but when he attempted to do so and filed the necessary papers, he was told that the policy was payable to the estate. Brodsky went on at some length about Larrys alcoholism and pushed for a compromise: I have suggested, subject to the other elements that may enter into it, such as taxes, etc., that the Federation be paid the sum of $10,000.00 in cash in lieu of their interest in the policy of $100,000.00, and if such a proposition is acceptable to the Federation

then Mr. Dunn and I can resume our talks with a view to straightening out the whole matter.Brodsky sent the letter to Goldmarks office and kept his fingers crossed. The Federation, as it turned out, was prepared to compromise; Brodskys client, Teddy Hart, was not.The first Surrogates Court judge on the Hart case was James A. Foley, a veteran of the so-called New Tammany. When Foley stepped down, he was replaced by James A. Delehanty. Sixty-four years old when the case came into his courtroom, Delehanty seemed to give Teddy Hart every legal opportunity to challenge the legitimacy of the June 17 will. Meanwhile, Larry Hart was remembered in a March 5, 1944, memorial service, organized by Oscar Hammerstein II, at the Majestic Theatre. Proceeds went to Armed Forces Master Records, which supplied servicemen with records (and sometimes the phonographs to play them on). Although Hart had made it clear he did not want a funeral, he would have been proud, as a patriotic American deemed too small to serve in the First World War, of the $6,000 raised that day at the Majestic.15 The opening speaker was Deems Taylor, president of ASCAP, who would be named within the year as part of Teddy Harts complaint against ASCAP. Six days after the memorial service, the revival of Connecticut Yankee ended a Broadway run of less than four months. Oklahoma! was entering its second sold-out year, its authors reaping the fruits of the new all-American brand known as Rodgers Hammerstein. On April 28, Louis Brodsky, at his wits end, tried one last time to persuade Teddy to accept $86,250.00 out of the insurance fund: $50,000.00 in cash and $36,250.00 set aside to pay federal and state taxes, with the excess eventually returned to him. In addition, the Harts would get back propertyfurniture, silver, many personal effects, etc.which had been seized by the Trustees agents as collateral against the estate. I believe that this settlement is as fine a settlement, short of winning the case itself, as could possibly be made, Brodsky concluded.16 Regarding Brodskys eagerness to compromise as a betrayal, Teddy fired him. Teddy hired Arnold Weissberger, an attorney based on Madison Avenue. The Surrogates Court judge, tolerating Teddys apparent intractability, came up with yet another compromise, but that too proved inadequate. Mr. Theodore Hart has asked me to advise you that he is not prepared to accept the modifications of the proposed settlement agreement suggested by Your Honor, Weissberger wrote, and requests that the agreement be withdrawn.17 In early June Teddy had pulled out of the cast of the Kurt WeillOgden Nash musical One Touch of Venus, though the show would continue to run for a while. Lorenz Hart II was born that summer. And Rodgers and Hammerstein were preparing their second musical collaboration, Carousel, which Rodgers would claim to be his favorite of all his shows. Carousel was based on Ferenc Molnrs Liliom, which was first produced in 1909 in Budapest, where it bewildered audiences because the playwright killed off his hero in the fifth scene. More than a decade later, when the Theatre Guild presented an English-language version of Liliom, the translation was signed by Benjamin F. Glazer, a literary agent with ambitions to write and direct. Unacknowledged in public was that the translation used for the 1921 productiona theatrical run so successful that it kept the Theatre Guild afloat through bad timeshad been made by Larry Hart as part of his routine work for Shubert associate Gustave Amberg. Larry received $200 for four weeks at $50 a week. Although never credited, Larry didnt make an issue of the fact that the translation was his. Throughout 1945 Teddy Hart lost one appeal after another. Rodgers secured what hed wanted: control of the copyrights to those extraordinary songs.It is pointless to suggest that Larry Harts lyrics would have gripped us as they have without their marriage to Rodgerss music. No American composer is so frequently recorded as Rodgers. Nol Coward said of Rodgers that the man positively pees melody (Rodgers did not, as some antagonistic critics have claimed, say it of himself), and if the line is hardly elegant, it is metaphorically accurate. Though Rodgerss music has been sometimes derided for having no discernible styleunlike, say, the constantly shifting rhythms of George Gershwin or the absolutely right blue notes of Harold Arlenthat is more a testament to his fecundity than to his limitations. Larry Hart, annoyed by the lack of depth and adventurousness in American lyric-writing, overhauled the artbut he probably needed the disciplined, endlessly imaginative Rodgers to succeed. In his seminal study, American Popular Song, the composer-lyricist Alec Wilder wrote about Rodgers: Though he wrote great songs with Oscar Hammerstein II, it is my belief that his greatest melodic invention and pellucid freshness occurred during his years of collaboration with Lorenz Hart. I have always felt that there was an almost feverish demand in Harts writing which reflected itself in Rodgerss melodies as opposed to the almost too comfortable armchair philosophy in Hammersteins lyrics.18 In their collaboration Rodgerss music usually came first and Harts lyric second, but Wilder is surely referring to Harts high standards, which pushed Rodgers to create fresh, memorable melodic lines. The longtime music director Buster Davis said something similar about Hart inspiring his more disciplined collaborator. Rodgers Hart: I put them a little bit ahead of George and Ira. Musically, Rodgers, though not given to the rhythmic variation of Gershwin, had an incredible harmonic sense; his melodies go

places the Gershwins never thought of. The reason: Rodgers catered to Hartand Harts lyrics, especially the later ones, are complex, multidimensional and unique. Like tobacco or alcohol, a tune, Rodgers said, was a stimulant to Larryhe needed it to get started. Hart was a mercurial, thoroughly unreliable tortured genius who drove Rodgers up the wall, Davis said. Finally it was too much. Rodgers behaved with great cruelty but he certainly had been provoked.19There is plenty of evidence that Rodgers did not intend to be cruel. Two years after Larry Harts death, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer put a biopic about Rodgers and Hart into development. Rodgers could have quashed the project immediately but signed off on it because he wanted the Harts to reap the payoff that came with it. Or so he claimed. Rodgerss go-ahead benefited him and Kron as well, of course, because the money paid by MGM for what are called grand rights or cavalcade rights, to depict the songwriters lives and use their musical compositions, would be considered income and thereby apportioned to the estate. Apprised of the lucrative movie contract, Teddy Hart still could not rest. He contended that the right to privacyhis as well as his brotherswas being sold, along with a permit to have his brother represented by an actor, and therefore should be considered principal, payable to him. But Teddy was manacled by a provision in Larrys will, cleverly inserted by Abe Wattenberg six months before Larrys death, which stipulated that if Teddy were to anticipate income from the trust, or if he became so financially overburdened that creditors would attempt to reach into the trust, Teddys share would be eliminated.20 Challenging MGMs legal department as well as the trustees attorneys, Teddy had to be cautious. MGM turned to Guy Bolton, Rodgers and Harts collaborator from the 1920s, to sketch the story. By July 1946, Bolton had turned in the outline of With a Song in My Heart, a biography of the songwriters that was almost dizzying in its fictions. Bolton provided the sober Larry with a girlfriend he never had; Larrys swift decline, in Boltons version, is due to heterosexual romantic grief that Larry never suffered, so far as is knownthe first stirrings of portraying the lyricist, in the words of Wilfrid Sheed, as a lovelorn dwarf.21 Bolton was replaced by other scenarists. The projects title for a while became Easy to Remember. To coproduce, MGM brought in Rodgerss brother-in-law Ben Feiner, who had known Rodgers since boyhood and Hart since adolescence. When the biography was finally filmed and renamed Words and Music, script credit went to Feiner and Fred Finklehoffe, whose play Brother Rat had been a smash hit in 1937. That may partially explain why Feiner himself is a character in the movie, while more important characters from Harts lifenotably his father, Max, and Teddy and Dorothy Hartare omitted. Despite its myriad inaccuracies, Words and Music offers some significant pleasures. It contains the extravagant, accelerated rendition of that marvelous song Wheres That Rainbow?, led by Ann Sothern (whose early career got a tremendous boost from her appearance in the 1931 Rodgers Hart show Americas Sweetheart). Slaughter on Tenth Avenue, rechoreographed and danced in the film by Gene Kelly, had been conceived by Larry Hart, even though it was an instrumental piece with no lyrics. And Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney appear together on-screen for the last time, trading lines in I Wish I Were in Love Again, easily the best lyric ever written about the sometimes violent, sometimes out-of-control rush of romance. In fact it is Mickey Rooney who rises above Words and Musics infelicities. Despite obvious differences between actor and roleRooney is light and Irish where Larry was dark and Jewish; Rooney is irrepressibly heterosexual where Larry was quietly, discreetly homosexualRooney captures many of Larrys mannerisms and much of his personality: the way he rubs his face or his hands, his easy laughter at other peoples jokes, his delight in the big black cigars he smokes, his generosity, and the dynamic way he moves. I think of him as always skipping and bouncing, Hammerstein wrote of Larry, and he might as well have been describing Rooneys version of him. In all the time I knew him, I never saw him walk slowly. I never saw his face in repose. I never heard him chuckle quietly.22However entertaining Rooneys performance might have been, Words and Music left a sour taste in the mouths of its primary beneficiaries. In early July 1948 Rodgers sent a telegram to producer Arthur Freed full of praise for the picture, but secretly he hated it. Teddy Hartno surpriselost his case against MGM in New Yorks Supreme Court, which decreed that: the showing of a motion picture in which the compositions of Rodgers and Hart will be made known to a wider audience than they have hitherto enjoyed will result in larger sales of sheet music and phonograph records and in a larger use by musicians of the music and words and in a larger use of the compositions in radio performance and in television shows.23Teddy and his wife would have to be content with 25 percent of the contract proceeds, while the remaining 75 percent went to the estate. Perhaps that was all that could be hoped for. The motion picture, a photographic medium before it is a dramatic or philosophical one, has always struggled to show whats internal and complex; why expect it to be able to cope with Larry Harts work, which was interior and often too clever by half, the lyrics spinning with what Rodgers referred to as their pinwheel brilliance and much more dazzling than the narratives they were set in?

There is more going on inside a lyric, and inside Harts head, than in anybody elses, the performing arts critic Gerald Mast wrote. Hart was the most confessional of theater lyriciststhe most able and willing to put his own feelings, thoughts, pains, sorrows, fears, joys, misery into the words of songs for specific characters in musical plays. What he could never say aloud, even to his closest friends in private, he let characters sing in public. He was a gay bachelor who wrote the best love lyrics for women and the most joyous lyrics about falling in love and the most melancholy lyrics about falling out of love.24 Such encomiums suggest that Larry Hart was a poet, as hes often been called. His friend Henry Myers thought otherwise. Larry in particular was primarily a showman, Myers wrote. If you can manage to examine his songs technically, and for the moment elude their spell, you will see that they are all meant to be acted, that they are part of a play. Larry was a playwright.25 Hart usually wrote for specific characters, and his lyrics often take on even greater depth when we return to their original settings. You Are Too Beautiful, for instance, was written to be sung to an amnesiac. Have You Met Miss Jones? was originally addressed to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. This Cant Be Love was sung by two relatively new acquaintances who fear they might be already related by marriage, if not by blood. I Could Write a Book was a pickup line of Pal Joeys. As fast as Larry Hart wrote, he always kept his characters in mind. Ben Feiner, as writer and associate producer on Words and Music, thought Harts energyif only it could be captured on the screenwould make the picture irresistible. At no time was Larry ever an ordinary conventional human being. He was always tremendously high-strung, and consequently either way up or way down. His dialogue was extremely dynamic and colorful. It was never bland, and he never indulged in clichs or even the usual patterns of speech. He was a curious contradiction, this man whose lyrics could be so nuanced and indirect, his behavior so directshouting when he was angry, laughing when he was pleased, crying openly when displeased. Remember that living with Larry for a protracted period of time, Feiner wrote, would be something like existing in the midst of a continuous demonstration of brilliant and varicolored fireworks. At times they are totally extinguished. And then the silence and the darkness become that much more emphatic.26Revue de presseThe whole story, joyful and unflinching, of an astounding talent. This biography really has Hart. Laurence Bergreen, author of As Thousands Cheer: The Life of Irving Berlin and Columbus: The Four Voyages Sophisticated, engaging, elegant, and packed with absorbing detail, A Ship Without A Sail is the definitive biography of Larry Hart for which all of us who love his work have been waiting. That Gary Marmorstein has captured the soaring highs and the crushing lows of that short, unhappy life so completely and so sympathetically is a truly remarkableeven enviableachievement. And I speak of what I know. Frederick Nolan, author of The Sound of Their Music: The Story of Rodgers Hammerstein and Lorenz Hart: A Poet on Broadway"Marmorstein brings to the task just the right precision instruments for dissecting Larry Hart -- panache, sympathy and smarts. The very title of his book goes to the heart of the tortured story he tells so well. . . . He knows the period and its players inside out and along the way offers wonderful cameos of many minor figures in the story..." J. D. McClatchy, The Wall Street Journal Readers will be grateful that Gary Marmorstein, who writes about film, theater and popular music, has resuscitated Hart, also known as Larry, in riveting detail in his A Ship Without a Sail: The Life of Lorenz Hart." (Sam Roberts The New York Times)"A fine new biography of Lorenz Hart by Gary Marmorstein, A Ship Without a Sail, makes clear that Hart, over the years since his early death at age 48 in 1943, has been taken up the very society he set out, in his lyrics, to unsettle." David Hadju, The New Republic "Hart has his shining hour in a new biography. . . . It's the absorbing story of a sparkling but tormented artist and a rich slice of show business history. . . . A Ship Without a Sail quotes liberally from Hart's lyrics, and Marmorstein's analysis is always interesting and often revelatory." John Fleming, Tampa Bay Tribune "Marmorstein bolsters the story of Hart's rocketlike career with a wealth of factual detail. . . . [Marmorstein's] biographer's sense, his dogged researches, and his fair-mindedness constantly lead him in good directions. His account of Rodgers's controversial involvement in Hart's business affairs at his death is the best-balanced I've encountered." Michael Feingold, the Village Voice "Smart and sympathetic. . . . Marmorstein brings to life the Manhattan of Hart's youth." (Brad Leithauser New York Times Book)