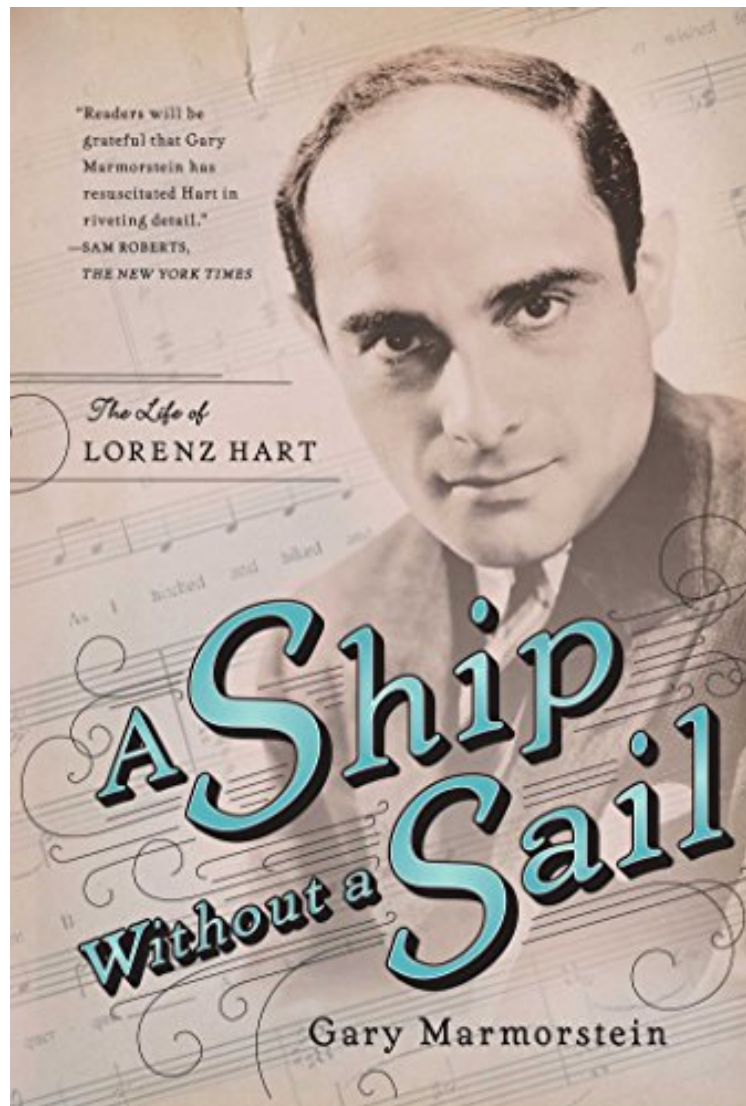


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A Ship Without A Sail: The Life of Lorenz Hart

Gary Marmorstein

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Gary Marmorstein : A Ship Without A Sail: The Life of Lorenz Hart 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:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good Historical Detail, Little Personal InsightBy Michael LeakeSo little in the way of biography exists about the great lyricist Lorenz "Larry" Hart that this book is a welcome addition for that reason alone. Author Gary Marmorstein does a good job of quoting and celebrating his incredibly witty and creative lyrics. I give it 4 stars for that reason. But based solely on its merits, I would probably rate this biography more of a 3-star effort.It's filled with details about the various Rodgers and Hart shows. For those keenly interested in the history of musicals, this is probably of great interest. For the more casual reader, the minutia is probably overkill.

What I feel this biography lacks is any real insight into the character of Larry Hart. We learn that he drank to excess from the earliest days of his involvement with writing partner Richard Rodgers and that this increased as the years wore on, leading to Hart becoming less and less reliable until he was uninterested in working by the end of 1942. His homosexuality is mentioned. We find out he was incredibly self-conscious about his short stature, standing barely 5 feet tall, and thought himself ugly due to his head being oversized for his body. But we never really find out anything about the inner man and what made him tick. I came away from this book feeling I knew quite a bit about the history of one of Broadway's greatest lyricists but, at the same time, knew almost nothing about him at all. Perhaps Hart was so secretive about his personal life that this information simply was unavailable or difficult to acquire. But it seems more could have been done in elucidating the personal side of Hart and not just the professional one. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good Book that Could Have Used Some Editing By Pasquale I purchased this book because I enjoy reading about the lives of gifted artists, authors, and musicians. Hart certainly was one of them. I enjoyed the book most when Marmorstein created a rich social, political, and historical context for Hart's life and work. I admire the research he did to write this book. His list of acknowledgments alone traces the extensive library and archival sources he used. I think at times the book gets a bit bogged down in granular detail about every show, play, and song. I didn't need to know all this detail to appreciate the story of Hart's life and talent. The book was best when the author concentrated on the "big picture" rather than minute details. I found that I was skimming some passages that became kind of tedious with all the facts, some of which were not all that interesting or relevant to understanding Hart's life. At times the book read more like a dissertation with an excessive amount of documentation. It could have used some editing. For example, at the end, when the author is describing Hart's funeral and burial, he devotes space in the text to giving subway directions to get to the cemetery in Queens where the Hart family is buried. I think a footnote would have been more appropriate at that point. Still, Hart was a fascinating subject for a book, and Marmorstein did his "homework" to create an expansive and rich account of his life. Despite my criticisms, I am glad I read it. I have a better understanding of Hart's role in the emergence of musical theatre and the Great American Song Book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. About as Good as it Can Get on Known Data By drkhmxz This is a fine book for anyone interested in the life and times of Larry Hart, one of the creators of 20th Century American Song. Happily there are thoroughgoing descriptive and analytic reviews on this web page; I see no need to add anything but reinforcement to the recommendation that this is a very readable and reliable source for the interested reader. I will add only one point about which I was curious as to how it would be handled by the author: that is, how would he deal with the Black Star of Hart's Life. The answer is, he did about the best one can do without resorting to psychobabble or imaginative reconstruction of the unknown from the little known. So far as I can tell, to this date, there exists no body of personal letters from Hart, no detailed diaries, not even multiple source intimate accountings, of that part of his life which existed behind the iron curtain between it and the part he lived with Richard Rodgers, his younger brother Teddy, and, in fact, nearly all the old Columbia University, summer camp, Broadway and Hollywood acquaintances. Apparently, the ubiquitous ex-dentist, Bender, who was the only known regular participant with him, left nothing to biographical history, by which light could be cast on him, when he was deep in the shadows. It is assumed that he was a homosexual. Yet we do not have a single fact clearly supporting the notion that he ever engaged in an actual sexual act with another man. He did have homosexual buddies, he had heterosexual buddies. He knew women in his public life and never did much with them...as far as we know. He is likely to have gone to the baths and other centers of homosexual life in NYC, when it was an illegal act; but, so did many men who were not homosexual. Are we assured that he never was active at Stella Adler's, center for so much show business and political heterosexual activity, did he never have a "kept" woman in one of the infinite number of private apartments available to a rich man. The answer is, to date, we do not know. (From this book we do know that, in his dying days, he suffered from gonorrhea, which allows us to assume that he had some form of sexuality. It is not only the sexual activity that is masked by this iron curtain. Do we know for certain that in the shadows, more or less, he never ghosted the writing of lyrics of songs or parts of the books of shows, just to help one friend or another...or, given his gregariousness, almost anyone. Are there classic songs, outstanding theatrical events, that are Hart's and not the one to which they are attributed. I stress the first point, in particular, because I expect, if the best of the club singers, of the good middle of the road singers, still sing Rodgers and Hart, someone is going to give us deep analysis of the "real" Larry Hart, when, there is a good chance that there will be no more data available than there is today on which to ground it. (Given that many collections of private papers are donated on the basis of no public availability until fifty, a hundred, or what have you, number of years after the death of...(for example, anyone mentioned in the papers), there is always the hope that more will be known of the "Private Life" of this man who has given so many of us great joy through his lyrics.

An 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," "Isn't It Romantic?," "My Romance," "There's a Small Hotel," "Falling in Love with Love," "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered" — lyricist 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 Romancer"; and "Isn't It Romantic?" is unsurpassed in American song, but Hart's 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 musicals—*On 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 Marmorstein's revelatory biography includes many of the lyrics that define Hart's legacy—those clever, touching stanzas that still move us or make us laugh.

"The 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 remarkable—even enviable—achievement. 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* "Rich, bittersweet." —*New York Magazine* "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*) "Marmorstein's accomplishment is blending [Ben] Hecht's portrait of [Hart] with the wounded soul behind the creative rhymes and, deeper than that, behind the unrequited longing that streaks through the songs like a cry from somewhere fathoms within him." (David Finkle *Huffington Post*) About the Author Gary Marmorstein has written about film, theater, and popular music for *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *Stagebill*, among other publications, and is the author of two previous books. He lives in New Jersey. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

PROLOGUE

I was in a Sentimental Sap, That's 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 decedent's safe-deposit box. Hart was considered by many to be the greatest of all American lyricists. Hart's 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 Hart's 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 Hart's 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," "Isn't It Romantic?," "My Heart Stood Still," "Blue Moon," "My Romance," "With a Song in My Heart," "The Lady Is a Tramp," "Thou Swell," "I Didn't 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 Hart's younger brother, Theodore, an actor known personally and professionally as Teddy, and Teddy's wife, Dorothy. Teddy had lived with Lorenz—or Larry, as he was

called—and 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 him—and few intelligent, able-bodied men have needed such looking after—especially 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 Larry’s 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 Sherry’s, 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, they’re cut off?” Yes, said Wattenberg, that’s what it meant. “That’s hardly fair,” Dorothy said. She pointed out that Larry’s 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 Teddy—more than enough to take care of the Harts and any children they might have. “In any case,” Wattenberg went on, “I followed your brother’s 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 Hart’s attorney since 1925 and, as he reminded Teddy and Dorothy, every legal action he’d 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 Surrogate’s 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 Hart’s 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 Hart’s financial manager, William Kron, whose position in the decedent’s 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 children’s 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 Hart’s participation in Lorenz Hart’s future royalties, which were sure to be considerable, would end with Dorothy’s 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 Hart—although he’d been bar mitzvahed at Mt. Zion synagogue in Harlem and been generous to several Jewish organizations, notably the Jewish Theatrical Guild—was 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 Rodgers’s wife, Dorothy. Felix Warburg, a close friend of Dorothy Rodgers’s family, had been first president of the Federation, and Dorothy Rodgers’s mother, May Adelson, was a founder of the Federation’s 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 wasn’t his. William Kron was said to be an ardent supporter of the Federation. It was just as likely, however, that the Federation’s inclusion in the will had been engineered by Rodgers to acknowledge his wife’s 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 earlier—on the day her brother-in-law died, in fact—she had gone to her doctor, concerned about abdominal discomfort that she thought was an ulcer, only to learn she was pregnant. Larry Hart’s will, dated June 17, 1943, was filed in New York City’s Surrogate’s 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 estate—the 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 Hart’s cousin Sidney Hertz (the family surname before Hart’s 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. Hart’s 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 Rodgers's 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 Kron's 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 Hart's Revolutionary War-era musical, *Dearest Enemy*, became a hit, he was frequently broke. In Rodgers's eyes, Kron, who had handled the financial affairs of playwright Edna Ferber and composer Jerome Kern, was the antidote to Larry's devil-may-care attitude about money. The Rodgerses saw Kron as saving not only Larry's money but saving Hart from himself. Dorothy Rodgers said, "Willy Kron, Larry's 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, ...