

A close-up portrait of Ella Fitzgerald, smiling and looking towards the camera. She has dark, curly hair and is wearing a blue patterned top. Her hands are clasped in front of her. The background is a solid blue color.

*Nerve*

MGV-4023

A PANORAMIC TRUE

HIGH FIDELITY RECORD

VOLUME 2

*Ella Fitzgerald sings  
the Rodgers and Hart Song Book*

## About The Songs...

In regard to Larry Hart's words I am perhaps the greatest living expert. Larry and I worked together for over twenty-four years, from the time I was sixteen and he was twenty-three until his death in 1943-when I was forty and he forty-seven. This was possibly the oldest partnership in the history of the theatre, with the exception of the Shuberts who have been united by blood as well as predilection. I have no fear that my devotion to these lyrics is solely emotional. It was necessary, during all those years, to examine these words and work with them not only in the stage of composition but in the stage of projection (the process of getting actors to sing the words intelligibly and to see that no distractions in the way of bad lighting or loud orchestra interfered). Mr. Hart's composer would have to be highly aware of the phonetic subtleties and semantic overtones in these lyrics, and I believe I have always been very much alive to them.

The reader may be curious about the work methods we employed in writing these songs and shows. Our work habits were almost as diversified as the subject matter. We always had a distaste for artistic self-pampering, as I still have today, and only rarely did we ever take one of those hide-out trips so popular with writers. Once was when we were preparing "On Your Toes" for rehearsals. Our writing had been interrupted by extracurricular pressures so often that we took a suite at the Ritz in Atlantic City for a weekend in the hope that we could finish one of three important songs that remained to be done. We returned to New York on Monday with all three completed, and I remember that we felt happy and rested.

Only one thing remained constant in Larry's approach to his job. He hated doing it and loved it when it was done. There was the never-ceasing routine of trying to find him, locking him up in a room, and hoping to fire his imagination so that actual words would get down on paper. It wasn't wise to leave him alone for a moment because he would simply disappear and have to be found all over again. His pencil would fly over the paper and soon the most difficult part of all would begin: the material had to be edited and he loathed changing any word once it was written down. When the immovable object of his unwillingness to change came up against the irresistible force of my own drive for perfection, the noise could be heard all over the city. Our fights over words were furious, blasphemous, and frequent, but even in their hottest moments we both knew that we were arguing academically and not personally. I think I am quite safe in saying that Larry and I never had a single personal argument with each other.

It seems to me that Larry's later lyrics were of a higher degree of excellence than his early ones and that they achieved this through a growing maturity of their own. Later on he seemed almost to substitute warmth for wit, and while he really didn't know how not to be clever, he began to show off less and to be more concerned with emo-

tion. "Where or When," for instance, had much of the philosophical in it, and I can think of no lyric more touched with tenderness than "Funny Valentine." In the face of the pinwheel brilliance of some of Larry's work, one is inclined to forget the deeper phases of his writing.

Larry and I were brought together in 1918 by a mutual friend who knew that each of us needed a collaborator. It shocks me to realize that this happened thirty-three years ago, but it excites me to think of the technical content of the discussion that went on that Sunday afternoon. I heard for the first time from the master (he was twenty-three, and seven years my senior) of interior rhymes, feminine rhymes, triple rhymes, and false rhymes. I listened with astonishment as he launched a diatribe against song writers who had small intellectual equipment and less courage, the boys who failed to take advantage of every opportunity to inch a little further into territory hitherto unexplored in lyric writing. "If you wanted to write about New York, you didn't have to be as naïve as 'East Side-West Side'." A couple of years later he said,

"We'll have Manhattan  
The Bronx and Staten  
Island too."

and Rodgers and Hart had written their first hit, although we weren't to find it out for several years.

—Richard Rodgers

## About Ella...

She doesn't really need a last name. Just say "Ella" and the recognition is instant. There's never been another singer like her, and everyone seems to agree with Bing Crosby's remark that "Man, woman or child, Ella is the greatest."

For a while, Ella was considered a "musician's musician" ...a "singer's singer." And then one day people woke up and discovered that they'd been listening to a lot of singers who tried to copy her style but who were unable to copy her taste...her subtlety...and her phrasing. They found out that Ella worked magic on any song she touched...making a fair-to-middling tune sound like a great one...making a great tune the answer to a composer's dream.

With her *Verve Song Books*, Ella has sung—for keeps—the best of Irving Berlin...Duke Ellington...Cole Porter...and, as you will find when you listen to this record, Rodgers and Hart.

Arranged especially for Ella by dynamic young Buddy Bregman, these songs show off to perfection both Ella's singing and the fantastic musical and lyric inventiveness of Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart.

A singer like Ella comes along once in a lifetime...and one of the happiest ideas of a lifetime is this combination of Ella and the songs of Rodgers and Hart. We think that—after one listening—you'll agree with Richard Rodgers, who said: "Whatever it is Ella does to my songs, they sound better."

## About The Arrangements...

While most arrangers stamp their own identity on the music they arrange, they rarely capture the spirit of both the melody and the lyric. Primarily, they complement the vocalist and are satisfied with that. In this recording, the rare exception is everywhere evident: Buddy Bregman accurately captures the soaring Rodgers melodies...gives full musical meaning to the very special Hart lyrics...and still allows Ella complete freedom for her sensitive interpretations.

### GIVE IT BACK TO THE INDIANS

from *Too Many Girls* (1939)

### TEN CENTS A DANCE

from *Simple Simon* (1930)

### THERE'S A SMALL HOTEL

from *On Your Toes* (1936)

### I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TIME IT WAS

from *Too Many Girls* (1939)

### EV'RYTHING I'VE GOT

from *By Jupiter* (1942)

### I COULD WRITE A BOOK

from *Pal Joey* (1940)

### BLUE ROOM

from *The Girl Friend* (1926)

### MY FUNNY VALENTINE

from *Babes in Arms* (1937)

### BEWITCHED

from *Pal Joey* (1940)

### MOUNTAIN GREENERY

from *The Garrick Gaieties* (1925)

### WAIT TILL YOU SEE HER

from *By Jupiter* (1942)

### LOVER

from *Love Me Tonight* (1931)

### ISN'T IT RO

from *Love Me Tonight*

### HERE IN MY ARMS

from *Dearest Enemy* (1925)

### BLUE MOON

the only Rodgers and Hart song published not as part of a show or movie score, but as a popular song.

### MY HEART STOOD STILL

from *A Connecticut Yankee* (1927)

### I'VE GOT FIVE DOLLARS

from *America's Sweetheart* (1931)