

SARAH VAUGHAN

the rodgers & hart songbook



MY FUNNY VALENTINE
BEWITCHED
MY HEART STOOD STILL
LITTLE GIRL BLUE
A TREE IN THE PARK
IT NEVER ENTERED MY MIND
IT'S GOT TO BE LOVE
A SHIP WITHOUT A SAIL
THOU SWELL
WHY CAN'T I
IT'S EASY TO REMEMBER
MY ROMANCE

EmArcy
Great
American
Songbooks™



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11. MY ROMANCE 3:11
12. MY HEART STOOD STILL 3:09

All songs by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart.

Sarah Vaughan, vocals.

1 recorded February 10, 1954 in New York. Orchestra arranged and conducted by Richard Hayman.

2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12, recorded October 29 and October 31, 1956 in New York. Orchestra arranged and conducted by Hal Mooney.

7 Recorded March, 1958 at Mr. Kelly's in Chicago. Ronnell Bright, piano; Richard Davis, bass; Roy Haynes, drums.

9 recorded March 29, 1954 in New York. Orchestra arranged and conducted by Don Costa.

10 recorded October 27, 1955 in New York. Ernie Royal, Bernie Glow, trumpets; J.J. Johnson, Kai Winding, trombones; Julian "Cannonball" Adderley, Sam Marowitz, alto saxes; Jerome Richardson, reeds; Jimmy Jones, piano; Turk Van Lake, guitar; Joe Benjamin, bass; Roy Haynes, drums. Arranged and conducted by Ernie Wilkins.

11 recorded April 1, 1956. Orchestra arranged and conducted by Hal Mooney.

Original sessions produced by Bob Shad.

Produced for reissue by Richard Seidel.

Digitally remastered by Dennis Drake, PolyGram Studios, USA.

Design: Tom Hughes/Jeff Faville, Hughesgroup.

Cover Photo: William Claxton

All selections previously released.

DURING her long association with Mercury/Emarcy Records, Sarah Vaughan recorded a memorable 2-volume Gershwin set (Emarcy 814 187-1/4) and collaborated with her friend and mentor Billy Eckstine on an Irving Berlin album (Emarcy 822 526-1/2/4), but she was not treated to the Songbook concept that Norman Granz lavished on Ella Fitzgerald at Verve. (Years later, she made two fine Duke Ellington LPs for Granz' Pablo label).

Thus, while the performances on this record all stem from the 1950's, the programming concept is new, based on a felicitous idea and diligent research by producer Richard Seidel. And so we have, for the first time, a Rodgers & Hart Songbook by Sarah Vaughan, and most welcome it is.

The partnership of Richard

Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, begun when the composer was 17 and the lyricist 23 and ended some 25 years later by Hart's untimely death in 1943, was a remarkable one. It produced some of the finest and most durable works from the golden age of American songwriting. The integration of words and music achieved by these two was paralleled only by the synergy between George and Ira Gershwin, who, after all, were brothers.

The wedding of Rodgers' melodic gift and sensitivity and Hart's wit and daring was bonded by the high level of craftsmanship on which it functioned. Their best work was done for the musical theater and film, and its elegance and sophistication sets it apart. The range of these songs is surprisingly broad; as Alec Wilder rightly pointed out in his invaluable book *American*

Popular Song, there is no such thing as a typical Rodgers song.

Sarah Vaughan was in her early 30s when she made these recordings. Her association with Mercury, begun with the session that yielded *My Funny Valentine* (ending an 11-month period away from the studios), marked what must have been a welcome change. Her four years with Columbia had brought some hits and were highlighted by a lovely date with an all-star jazz group including Miles Davis, but the material handed her was mainly mediocre — even the Vaughan genius couldn't transcend such morsels as *Whippa-Whippa-Woo* and *De Gas Pipe She's Leaking, Joe*. Of the 12 songs contained here, some have become standards, a few are rarities, but all are excellent.

Sarah Vaughan is a phenomenon that can't be categorized in any case. Her voice is one of the marvels of our time — an instrument of such power, range, color and beauty that, had her

career taken a different turn, she might have become an operatic diva, or a queen of gospel singing. However, her brilliant improvisatory gifts have found fullest expression in jazz contexts.

This singer brings to anything she sings a musicality and sheer sonic beauty that lift it out of the ordinary. And some of her urge to toy with a phrase, to decorate a note, to subtly alter the written harmony, always breaks through — not to mention her marvelous feeling for melody and flawless sense of time.

Her approach to classic popular song has sometimes been chided for taking too many liberties with melody and harmony and paying insufficient attention to lyrics. Yet even the unfortunates who can't appreciate Sassy's inspired playfulness could not fault the interpretations here, which in several instances are as "straight" as anything she's done. That, let me hasten to add, should not be taken to imply that they are unimaginative.

My Funny Valentine ("Babes In Arms," 1937) has long been a mainstay in the Vaughan repertoire; she never sings it the same way twice. This is her first recording of this beautifully crafted song, which also has become a favorite of jazz instrumentalists, including Miles Davis and many others. The single-chorus performance lets the song speak for itself, but Sassy does append an affecting cadenza of her own.

Little Girl Blue ("Jumbo," 1935) is a tender, unsentimental song of unrequited love. Absent from this sensitive interpretation are the histrionics with which lesser lights often saddle it. The 3/4 time segment, here treated as a verse, was actually devised as an interlude between choruses — it works either way.

A Titter In The Park ("Peggy Ann," 1926) is the earliest song in this collection, and a seldom-heard little gem. We get the verse too. This is a happy urban love song, treated with panache

and charm by Miss Vaughan and nicely set by arranger Hal Mooney.

It's Got To Be Love ("On Your Toes," 1936) is a song that swings by itself and comes naturally to the singer, though she no doubt encountered it for the first time in the studio. The arrangement has the appropriate big-band swing flavor.

A Ship Without A Sail ("Heads Up," 1929) is a Rodgers & Hart masterpiece, a song that should be much better known. The great Lee Wiley made it her own, but Sassy stakes out her claim to it here, with the rare verse as a bonus. Like so many Hart lyrics, this one deals with loneliness; as always without self-pity and with a touch of wry humor ("My head is just a hat-place"). This is quite a song for 1929... for any year.

Bewitched ("Pal Joey," 1940) has justly become a classic. It's truly an elegant song, with a brilliant lyric and a lovely verse. Sassy does it up in style, unhampered by the some-

what soupy string arrangement; hear, among other things, how seamlessly she negotiates the transition to the bridge. And don't tell me she can't put a great lyric across!

Thou Swell ("A Connecticut Yankee," 1927) is the only live performance in this set, and the only one with small-group backing, (by Sassy's working 1958 trio: Ronnell Bright on piano, Richard Davis on bass and Roy Haynes on drums). This is a charming song, simple on the surface but of considerable rhythmic and harmonic ingenuity and rather uncommon structure (not AABA but ABAB/A). Most singers do it too fast, but Sassy picks a nice, relaxed tempo. Her second chorus is inventive and irresistible.

It Never Entered My Mind ("Higher And Higher," 1940) is another R&H classic, treated to a vintage Vaughan performance. She lets herself go on this (note what she does with "I even have to scratch my back myself," a line only Hart could have devised in

celebration of loneliness, though he tops himself with "uneasy in my easy chair"). The seldom-heard verse is included. Miles Davis and Ben Webster also recorded outstanding versions of this song.

It's Easy To Remember ("Mississippi," 1935) is the only R&H film song represented here, from a Bing Crosby vehicle with W.C. Fields as its real star. It's a fine, nostalgic song, making good use of repeated notes. Billie Holiday included it in her famous "Lady In Satin" album. Sassy adds a tag of her own devising.

Why Can't I ("Spring Is Here," 1929) is not often heard but has much to recommend it, not least the couplet "Two feet are ever cold/Four feet are never cold," and a musically interesting bridge which Sassy pounces on with gleeful dips. Her performance has great freedom; she's among friends — a big band studded with jazz stars and propelled by her own trio — and the arrangement is

crafted by Ernie Wilkins in his best Basie manner.

My Romance ("Jumbo," 1935), yet another evergreen, is a dramatic song that builds to a grand climax but avoids the overblown theatrical gesture. The melody, scalar in character, exemplifies Rodgers's brilliant craftsmanship, and has had much appeal to jazz musicians, notably Bill Evans. Sassy rises to the occasion; her reprise of the last half-chorus is exceptional.

My Heart Stood Still ("A Connecticut Yankee," 1927), one of the great R&H standards, is graced with a particularly fine verse, harmonically inventive and lyrically ingenious (the

internal rhyming of "sweetheart" with "indiscreet heart," for instance). The chorus has an unusual and effective bridge (Rodgers was a master builder of bridges), brilliantly crossed by the singer.

Sarah Vaughan has made many a heart stand still (or beat faster) since she recorded these songs. In essence, neither style nor voice have changed, only mellowed. She was and is a marvel.



Dan Morgenstern is Director of the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University.

Other Great American Songbooks you will enjoy:

Sarah Vaughan and Billy Eckstine: The Irving Berlin Songbook (Emarcy 822 526-2)
Ella Fitzgerald: The Jerome Kern Songbook (Verve 825 669-2)
Ella Fitzgerald: The Johnny Mercer Songbook (Verve 823 247-2)
Dinah Washington: The Fats Waller Songbook (Emarcy 818 930-2)
Mel Tormé: The Duke Ellington and Count Basie Songbooks (Verve 823 248-2)



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ADD Analoges Tonbandgerät bei der Aufnahme; digitales Tonbandgerät bei Schnitt und/oder Abmischung und bei der Überspielung.

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ADD Utilisation d'un magnétophone analogique pendant les séances d'enregistrement, utilisation d'un magnétophone numérique pendant le mixage et/ou le montage et la gravure.

AAD Utilisation d'un magnétophone analogique pendant les séances d'enregistrement et le mixage et/ou le montage, utilisation d'un magnétophone numérique pendant la gravure.

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DDD Si riferisce all'uso del registratore digitale durante le sedute di registrazione, mixing e/o editing, e masterizzazione.

ADD Sta ad indicare l'uso del registratore analogico durante le sedute di registrazione, e del registratore digitale per il successivo mixing e/o editing e per la masterizzazione.

AAD Riguarda l'uso del registratore analogico durante le sedute di registrazione e per il successivo mixing e/o editing, e del registratore digitale per la masterizzazione.

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