



Easy to Remember: The Great American Songwriters and Their Songs

William Knowlton Zinsser

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In this warm and affectionate book, William Zinsser, author of the best-selling classic *On Writing Well*, describes his lifelong love affair with American popular song and the American musical theater. These are the words and melodies that are as familiar to us as the flag, so firmly ensconced in our mental topographies that they have become part of our standard literature, songs adopted and adapted by generations of performers, jazz singers, and musicians, deeply lodged in the memory of everyone who has ever heard them.

All the Things You Are, Star Dust, Over the Rainbow, Laura, Stormy Weather, Some Enchanted Evening, Someone to Watch Over Me, My Funny Valentine the tunes are as "easy to remember" as breathing, but how were they written? What stars and what shows were they written for? Who were the men and women who wrote them? What makes the songs so good? Zinsser answers these questions. Starting with *Show Boat* in 1927, he provides a comprehensive overview, telling his story through the lives and careers of the great composers and lyricists: Jerome Kern, Oscar Hammerstein, George and Ira Gershwin, Rodgers & Hart, Irving Berlin, Harold Arlen, Cole Porter, Dorothy Fields, Hoagy Carmichael, Johnny Mercer, Harry Warren, Jule Styne, Frank Loesser, Stephen Sondheim, and many more.

Zinsser writes from an intimate knowledge of the songs, as a scholar of the American musical theater, and as a pianist-performer himself. The result is a book unlike any other in its authority, insight, and detail. Written with the author's usual elegance and humor, supported by lyrics that instantly bring back the songs and their emotional associations, *Easy to Remember* is handsomely illustrated with rare photographs of the songwriters and with sheet music covers of the songs they wrote one of America's gaudiest forms of poster art. With indices, song lists, and an extensive bibliography for show-tune aficionados, this is going to be the standard bedside reference for anyone who has ever found themselves seduced by this great American art form.

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