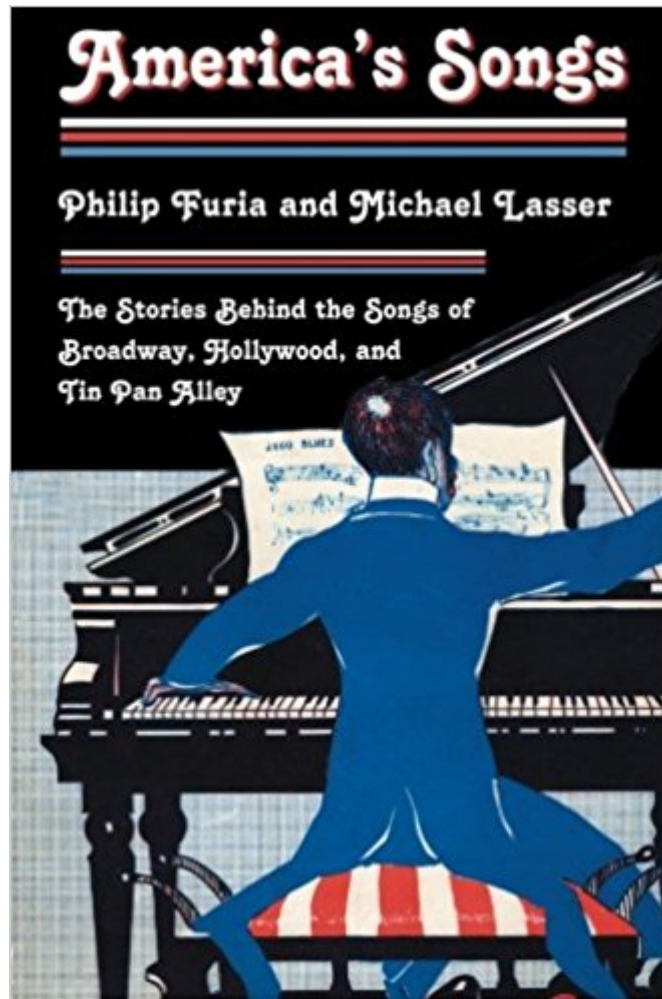


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# America's Songs: The Stories Behind The Songs Of Broadway, Hollywood, And Tin Pan Alley



## Synopsis

America's Songs tells the "stories behind" the most beloved popular songs of the last century. We all have songs that have a special meaning in our lives; hearing them evokes a special time or place. Little wonder that these special songs have become enduring classics. Nothing brings the roarin '20s to life like "Tea for Two" or "I'm just Wild About Harry"; the Great Depression is evoked in all of its pain and misery in songs like "Brother Can You Spare a Dime?"; "God Bless America" revives the powerful hope that American democracy promised to the world during the dark days of World War II; "Young at Heart" evokes the postwar optimism of the '50s. And then there are the countless songs of love, new romance, and heartbreak: "As Time Goes By," "Always," "Am I Blue"...the list is endless. Along with telling the stories behind these songs, America's Songs suggests, simply and succinctly, what makes a song great. The book illuminates the way each great song melds words and music -- sentiment and melody -- into a seamless whole. America's Songs also traces the fascinating but mysterious process of collaboration, the give-and-take between two craftsmen, a composer and a lyricist, as they combined their talents to create a song. For anyone interested in the history of the songs that America loves, America's Songs will make for fascinating reading.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This delightful and informative book caught my eye when I noticed that the much-esteemed songwriter, Ray Evans, wrote a blurb on the back. The book is arranged chronologically, and gives fascinating glimpses into what lead to the creation of many fantastic songs, and also explains what

makes these great songs great. To me, the star of the book is Irving Berlin, who really had an incredible genius for songwriting. The clever crafting of Berlin's lyrics hadn't been adequately appreciated by me, until that exciting book showed me the craft and the art which Berlin applied to his songs. Not that other greats are glossed over, Furia and Lasser really give a wonderfully expansive collection of (mostly) fellas, who made American music what it is, and influenced what it is. Highly recommended for those who love, theatre and music.

There was a lot of great info in this book, especially covering songs from the first half of the 20th century. But there were also some annoying errors and omissions. Among the errors: a photo of the original star of Cabaret (Jill Haworth) is labeled as Jan Clayton (who was the original star of Carousel several decades earlier). The authors write that Comden and Green only had three standards, and yet they include four in this book (New York New York, The Party's Over, Just in Time and Make Someone Happy). There are some odd choices, such as "It's Not Where You Start" (from Seesaw) that is not remotely a standard, but they omit "If He Walked Into My Life" (from Mame) and "The Way We Were." And much as we all love the musical Chicago, I don't think it merits a page-and-a-half (I'm not even sure "All That Jazz" qualifies as a standard) but there's no coverage of "Tomorrow" (from Annie) or "What I Did For Love" (A Chorus Line). The authors probably would have been smarter to just stop coverage in the 1950s or 1960s.

A delightful journey in melodic nostalgia. Philip Furia and Michael Lasser use their long experience with American popular music to tell us with insight and humor how more than 600 songs dating from 1910 to 1977 came to be written, how they were received, how they touched American culture. The surprise for the reader is the discovery of how many of the songs linger in one's memory, how many of the words one can recall, how many of the tunes one can still sing. Then the message of the place of the songs in American life comes home, how much they say about the way we lived. Not a book to be read from cover to cover but rather one to be browsed for favorite parts, one to be returned to time and again.

You really can read this book cover to cover...or the information on each song's background can stand alone. If you're interested in modern musical history, you won't want to miss this.

Although long out of print, this book is the go to source for information on composer and lyricist information on all of the music published up to that time. The author was a big name in the music

business, with contacts in all of the pop and rock and swing genre, and he offers basic data on thousands (literally) of compositions during the book's time period. It's not going to give you a biography of the Beatles or of Bobby Darin, but as a resource on the topic, it is without equal. I used it to give my group's vocalists a source of "fill" material to fill in the gaps between their performances - each entry can be expanded into thirty seconds of "patter" to keep the performance flowing.

A fascinating book; especially for those of us old enough to remember these classic songs. I read and reread this book a lot. It is not only to learn the who, how, why, and where of the songs... it is also to be reminded of many songs that I wouldn't otherwise remember. A great book!

America's Songs is a wonderful source of fascinating information on the lyricists and composers of the great standards. Anyone who loves those songs will find this book invaluable. Writers Furia and Lasser have produced a tour de force.

I simply love this book! It covers about 600 popular American songs from the good old days. The story behind each song is captivating. This leads me to appreciate each song not just for the melody but also the circumstances how each song is created. Absolutely fascinating and enjoyable!

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