

**ROMANCING THE VERNACULAR: SAMMY CAHN AND THE ENACTMENT OF
REQUEST**

by

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SUMMARY

The lyrics of Sammy Cahn played a dominant role in shaping the Golden Age of American light music. He remains the most successful lyricist in cinema history, in terms of Academy Awards and Nominations, yet he has received little acclaim for his achievements. This thesis explores the diverse constituents of his creative genius, focusing on his ability to “romance the vernacular”, and write “bespoke” material on request. The argument follows a chronological path, tracing the major influences on Cahn’s life: vaudeville and musical theatre, the growth of the film industry, and the collaborators and performers who helped him achieve a level of mastery that he sustained for nearly fifty years. Particular emphasis is placed on his relationship with Frank Sinatra, on both a personal and professional level. Cahn had an acute awareness of the human condition and his ability to convey a range of emotions to match mood and moment displayed consummate craft and intellect, with a self-confidence that bordered on bravado. His contemporaries in the Golden Age of popular song have received due recognition, yet little has been written about Cahn, whose appreciation of the interaction between spontaneity and creativity remains unsurpassed by fellow lyricists. He had an intuitive understanding of the vernacular and an instinctive ability to write to order. The imagistic texture of the lyrics coupled with the prosodic intonation demonstrate an intimate correlation between personality and composition which is supported by biographical content. The argument, augmented by an audio-documentary, develops systematically through a study of the lyrics, focusing on the cultural and musicological significance of Cahn’s oeuvre. The material for both the written text and the two accompanying CDs are from personal archives and the Margaret Herrick Library in Los Angeles, which is the repository for the Sammy Cahn Collection, bequeathed to that institution after the death of Cahn in 1993.

KEY WORDS:

Sammy Cahn, Vitaphone, vernacular, vaudeville, parody, Jule Styne, Jimmy Van Heusen, Frank Sinatra, song lyrics, rhyme

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This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Henry Holloway, a world authority on the music of the Golden Era, whose vast collection of interviews and records, garnered over more than 40 years of broadcasting, provided the original recorded material used in this thesis.

His knowledge of popular light music was a source of inspiration and guidance.

“A renaissance of appreciation still awaits him and a re-evaluation is ripe.”

Michael Feinstein: 2015

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INTRODUCTION

The medium of broadcasting creates an interesting opportunity for representation. As a Principal Broadcaster, employed by the South African Broadcasting Corporation for twenty-one years, I was privileged to work in both the genres of radio and television; as the longest-serving Editor of the popular daily radio programme “Woman’s World”, I met and interviewed thousands of influential and well-known personalities.

I have always been drawn to the spoken word, to the nuances of inflections and the significance of pause. I was “trained” to listen for the hesitations, the changes of pace and pitch, which might suggest a reluctance to pursue a topic or avoid an issue. In the 1970s and 1980s, radio programmes on Radio South Africa (now re-named SAfm) were carefully researched, recorded and edited entities, involving hours of studio time. Broadcasters were not encouraged to be “personalities”; the focus was on the guest and the content of the programme, but the emphasis was on sound research. I developed a style of interviewing which engaged my guest in discussion, rather than a series of questions and answers. The technique was based on making a statement, rather than posing a question.

I offer this background to support what could be considered an unorthodox approach to my subject, Sammy Cahn, the most successful lyricist in cinema history in terms of Oscar award-winning songs and nominations, whom I believe deserves critical acclaim. A great deal had been written about many of his contemporaries, such as Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Ira Gershwin, Johnny Mercer, to name but a few, yet Cahn remains relatively unknown, although his songs remain in the repertoire of today’s singers. I intend to explore the diverse constituents of Cahn’s creative genius, focusing on his ability to “romance the vernacular”, with particular emphasis on the complex interaction between the spontaneity and creativity of his lyrics, his sympathetic matching of words and music, and the commercial restraints and demands associated within the genre of film-making.

As little has been written about Sammy Cahn, apart from his autobiography *I Should Care*, I have drawn on the many scholarly works about the genre of light music, popular entertainment in America in the early twentieth century, the growth of the film industry and, in particular, screen musicals, in order to contextualize the cultural and musicological significance of Sammy Cahn’s oeuvre. I am indebted to biographers and historians who have chronicled the accomplishments of Cahn’s contemporaries, offering detailed accounts of their private and professional lives. Such was my fascination with these musicians, and, in particular, the lyricists, that I have often drawn parallels and made comparisons to emphasise Cahn’s vernacular ease in his approach to lyric writing.

I am fortunate to have access to one of the world's largest private collections of music of the Golden Era and, with the permission of the American Society of Composers, Author and Publishers (ASCAP), I have selected, where possible, the original recordings of Sammy Cahn's songs in the compilation of the CDs. My study is augmented by an audio documentary, where words and music are wedded, and social commentary delivered in a register appropriate to radio interviewing.

With each passing month of research and mounting pages of text, I became more and more convinced that a broadcaster writing about a lyricist did no justice to either, and that my written text required the spoken word, and supporting music. My many years of compiling documentary material for radio persuades me that this is an appropriate method to place on record original material. I recognise, too, that this approach might be considered outside the boundaries of the conventional literary thesis, but it does sit within an area of English studies, demarcated as Popular Culture. I believe there is great merit in bringing Cahn's story into the public domain through the integration of words and music.

I was drawn to Sammy Cahn for a number of reasons: my fascination with his ability to "romance the vernacular", an attempt to explain why he is the most successful lyricist in cinema history, in terms of Academy Awards and Nominations, and to place on record some of the remarkable material I recorded in 1986 with Sammy Cahn in his home in Beverly Hills, in greater Los Angeles. This recording session was made possible through Cahn's earlier association with my husband, Henry Holloway, a fellow broadcaster with the SABC.

Henry had met and recorded a series of interviews with Cahn in 1982 and these were to form the basis of a thirteen-part radio series called "The Sammy Cahn Story", which would be aired in 1988 to commemorate Cahn's 75th birthday. Cahn had already appeared on Broadway in his successful one-man show called *Words and Music* and, being the showman that he was, was more than willing to talk about his work as a lyricist who loved to perform and demonstrate his songs. In the June/July 1988 issue of *Sheet Music*, dedicated to Sammy Cahn, singer Perry Como writes:

As far as I am concerned, Sammy is one of the finest demonstrators of songs that I have ever heard. I am sure that he could even make a bad song sound great – not that he has written any bad songs. (Sheet Music Magazine, Vol. 12. No 5)

Sammy Cahn's dry humour, coupled with the stories behind the songs, resulted in unique recordings that have a special place in our personal archives. With the blessing of Cahn's widow, Tita, I have embarked on a musical journey through Cahn's life, vicariously meeting composers, arrangers and singers along the way. I have plotted a chronological path which has required selecting written and spoken material from various sources. On the death of Cahn in 1993, Tita Cahn bequeathed his entire musical estate to the

Special Collections Department at the Margaret Herrick Library, which forms part of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. I was fortunate to engage the services of a most sympathetic and knowledgeable researcher who has proved invaluable in tracking down original manuscripts and correspondence.

When I interviewed Sammy Cahn I was immediately struck by his approach to lyric-writing. When I asked him which came first, the words or the music, his response was unequivocal: “the telephone call”. Having studied the techniques of other composers and lyricists of the Golden Age of Light Music, this atypical approach to lyrical composition, and Cahn’s instinctive versatility in manipulating the melody, has encouraged me to focus on Cahn’s intuitive understanding of the vernacular, and an instinctive ability to write “bespoke” material, given nothing more than a title, a preliminary idea or a few bars of music. The demands of cinematography impelled composers of the 1930s and 1940s to produce songs to suit every occasion and individual performer. Cahn wrote to order. He explained how he would start at the top and had no idea where the lyrics were going; it was as if the song wrote him. His lyrics depended on his sound knowledge of instrumental technique and composition; he had technical ability, but his improvisation of lyrics was influenced by the conventions of the time and the need to satisfy generic requirements. Cahn had an uncanny ability to satisfy. I will examine how success and satisfaction merged and the effect that competition had on motivation.

Cahn’s approach to lyric writing was uncomplicated; he matched words to music with apparent ease. But, as a lyricist, he relied on the musical support of his collaborators, and he was blessed with remarkable composers.

I play the piano in one key –the key of F. I believe that a word is only as great as the note it sits under, and, all my life, I have been blessed with great notes. I believe the art of matching words and music is a very special business. (Cahn to Holloway, 1986)

This statement offers challenging and fascinating conundrums which I shall explore as I develop the association between composer and lyricist. Cahn was known to be commercially astute, and his relationship with his musical partners (and singers) was largely based on financial success. He worked with many composers, but in particular with Saul Chaplin, Jule Styne and Jimmy Van Heusen. It is not possible to comment on Cahn’s lyrical ability without a thorough knowledge of these composers, their personalities and styles, and how Cahn adapted to working with them. He never appeared to force the process of song-writing. His creative confidence allowed him to find rhymes spontaneously, using everyday language while “manipulating” music to suit the words.

It will be necessary to recognise the constraints placed on composers and lyricists during the Golden Era of American popular song. The New York publishers of sheet music dominated the music industry in the 1920s and 1930s. Most of these publishers had offices in that area of New York City that became known as Tin Pan Alley, and their power was such that they derived a formula for mass marketing, which placed severe restrictions on musicians, and lyricists in particular. Cahn recognized that in order to be successful, he needed to conform to the dictates of Tin Pan Alley. This standardization of style could have been restrictive; for Cahn it was a challenge to explore levels of creativity with shifts in rhymes and syntax. It is important to state that I do not have an academic background in the formal study of music, but, guided by Cahn's own words (reproduced in both the written text and audio documentary), I feel competent to discuss his development as a lyricist in order to draw certain conclusions.

Composers who were writing for Hollywood musicals had the additional restriction of the Hays Code, implemented in 1933, which provided a set of censorship guidelines, governing the production of American motion pictures. Sammy Cahn had the *nous* to remain within those guidelines. The evolution of the American musical began with the songs of Tin Pan Alley, through the stage shows of Broadway, to the writers, composers, performers and directors of films. Its genesis was ironic; a creation in the worst depression of modern times, which offered Americans the gaiety and escapism to forget the harsh realities of the 1930s: from the early operettas, burlesque and vaudeville, to the musical extravaganzas of Busby Berkeley and Florenz Ziegfeld, to the "book musicals" in which collaborators had to set aside their egos and work to create an integrated musical. Cahn's ability to collaborate and adapt lasted well over five decades, after which he devoted his time to writing material for special people and special occasions. Given the limitations of additional external sources, I rely on personal recordings with Cahn in order to capture the essence of a unique talent that deserves both recognition and scholarship. Particular focus is given to his four Oscar winning songs: "Three Coins in the Fountain", "Call Me Irresponsible", "High Hopes" and "All the Way" where, with the help of Cahn's anecdotal evidence, we gain insight as to the demands made by film producers, recognising the value of songs in popularizing musicals, and singers with vocal strengths and weaknesses. Cahn's strength was a result of his many years of producing innovative and varied material for a wide range of performers. His reputation as the lyricist who "put more words in Sinatra's mouth than anybody else" (Cahn to Holloway, 1986) was to place him in the enviable position of being able to work with, and for, the best studios in Hollywood where musicals were a lucrative staple of the Golden Age. In the late 1920s and 30s, artists and technicians from the studios of Europe came to Hollywood to introduce a cosmopolitan style and approach. Their background was opera and operetta, while the American producers were steeped in the tradition of burlesque and vaudeville. Cahn describes his lyrics as having a "vaudeville finish" which was hardly surprising as he spent the

leisure time of his formative years visiting the vaudeville halls in lower Manhattan. I believe that Cahn's verbal virtuosity was largely due to his exposure to vaudeville, which offered a broad variety of styles, but the film industry would be the vehicle for his eventual success as a lyricist. His Academy award winners were in films, distributed by Twentieth Century Fox, United Artists and Paramount. With Jule Styne and Jimmy Van Heusen, Cahn worked for all the major studios in a cultural milieu where novelty and originality were highly prized. Each studio had a particular trademark, and Cahn was canny enough to provide songs that resonated those differences. His ability to showcase the stars made him a firm favourite in the Hollywood firmament.

I have been extremely fortunate to have been able to correspond with a number of respected singers, composers and band leaders; personal friends whose comments I value. At my request, they summed up their appreciation of Sammy Cahn and his work. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the following:

Larry O'Brien, Music Director, Glenn Miller Orchestra (1981 – 1983, 1988 – 2010.)

I am flattered, indeed honored, that you have asked me for my impressions and recollections of Sammy Cahn. I think the most meaningful impression would come from his favorite and most popular singer and personality, Frank Sinatra. I've been in the company of both men and their mutual admiration and affection was plainly evident. I recall the memorable moment when Joe Pasternak called Frank in and asked his advice of who might do the score for *Anchors Aweigh*. Kern, Gershwin, Rodgers and Hart? Frank said casually, "Sammy Cahn." You can't imagine the stunned reaction! Sammy Cahn! Who is he? Well, MGM wasn't ready yet to let young Sinatra pick the writers for this million-dollar production, and the first of many Sinatra scenes started. It came to such an impasse that Lew Wasserman of MCA went to Sammy and said, "Unless Frank gives in, he will lose the picture. Please talk to him." Sammy, it is said, went to Frank and said, "Frank you have done me more honor than I can handle. Why don't you pass this one and there will be others." Frank looked at Sammy and said, "If you're not there Monday, I'm not there Monday." Any nite you happen to catch *Anchors Aweigh*, you will notice it says 'Songs by Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne.'

2013. *O'Brien to Holloway*. Letter: October 4.

Ronny Whyte, American pianist, jazz singer and ASCAP award winning songwriter.

Sammy Cahn is without a doubt one of America's greatest lyricists. I have been singing his songs for more than 50 years! I recorded "Christmas Waltz" on my *Whyte Christmas* CD which came out a couple of years ago. It's one of my favorite holiday songs. Looking at my repertoire list, I have at least 19 songs that I have been doing of his for years, written with Nicholas Brodsky, Saul Chaplin, Gene DePaul, Axel Stordahl and Paul Weston, Jule Styne and Jimmy Van Heusen.

I met him only once as I recall. I was playing at a very posh party in an elegant Manhattan apartment...I saw him and played a couple of his more obscure songs. He came over to the piano and asked how I knew

them. I told him I specialized in some of the finer obscure songs in the American Popular Songbook. He seemed delighted.

2014. *Whyte to Holloway*. E-mail letter. December 26.

Perry Lambert, singer, actor, comedian and impressionist.

As you know the lyrics of Sammy Cahn have become a part of the American subconscious and as a music critic once described ‘providing the soundtrack for people’s memories.’ For example, during the 1940s, the solemn realities of World War II provided such a stoic backdrop to the romantic ballads of their day. It was with the lyrics of Sammy Cahn that such songs as “I Walk Alone”, “It’s been a Long, Long Time” and “I Fall in Love Too Easily” expressed patient lovers’ longing and their hope to be together.

I am currently working on a 100th birthday anniversary of the life and lyrics of Sammy Cahn called “Come Fly With Me - The Sammy Cahn Songbook” and have found that he took great care in his lyric writing. He was also known to be one of the fastest lyric writers.

Case in point, he was commissioned to write a song for the motion picture *Three Coins in the Fountain* for 20th Century Fox in 1954. Sammy asked if he could see the movie. They told him it was in pieces all over the lot. “Well, could I see the script?” The script is in Italy. “Then do mind telling me what this movie is about?” Sure, three girls go to Rome...throw coins into a fountain...hope they’ll fall in love. So Sammy wrote the song never seeing the movie and never seeing the fountain! Sammy won his second Oscar for “Three Coins in the Fountain” and it only took him an hour to write it! [1]

2013. *Lambert to Holloway*. Letter: June 14.

Dr Douglas Masek, internationally renowned saxophonist, master teacher and lecturer, Professor of Saxophone, Director, Music Outreach Programme, at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

“Ain’t That A Kick In The Head?”...from Cohen to Kahn to Cahn...no matter the spelling of the name “It’s Magic.” The master of romantic lyrics doing it “Day by Day” and “Time after Time”, he helped shape the importance of lyrics in some of our most memorable movies and brought fame to many of the legendary singers of a bygone era. His lyrics will live on for generations to come and “Until the Real Thing Comes Along” “You Can Fly! You Can Fly! You Can Fly!”

2014. *Masek to Holloway*. Letter.

Lamont Patterson, respected reporter and music critic of Las Vegas’ *Entertainment Today*.

This past January 15, the legendary Tin Pan Alley songsmith, Sammy Cahn put his last words to music. He would have been 80 come June 18. When Ol’ Blue Eyes appears this Wednesday thru Sunday in the Crystal Room of the Desert Inn and Country Club, among the eighteen or nineteen songs that he usually sings, you can be assured that a few Sammy Cahn gems will be included. Frank had this to say about the gifted wordsmith – “The world of American Popular Music lost one of its true giants – my dear friend,

Sammy Cahn. He was passionate about songwriting and everything related to words and music. His spirit and legendary lyrics will live on forever.”

1993. *Patterson to Holloway*. Signed Article: April 30.

Marlene VerPlanck, veteran American jazz and pop vocalist.

A number of years ago when I was getting ready for a cabaret show in New York at Freddy’s, I chose to do a song called “Walking Happy.” I happened to mention it to Frank Military, the man in charge of the music at Warner Bros/Chappell. Since Sammy Cahn, the lyricist, happened to be one of his closest friends, Frank suggested I come up to the office to meet Sammy, confident that he would be happy to show me the “moves” that went with the song. I did just that and the show could not have been better. “Walking Happy” was my opener, complete with Sammy’s coaching. Also, at that time, Sammy graciously gave me his song book and took the time to autograph it, which is now one of my treasured possessions.

The year following, I got into the jazz/cabaret scene full time and because I love incorporating new songs into my act, I began to learn songs, lots of songs. The more I did that, the more I sang Cahn/Van Heusen, Cahn/Jule Styne, Cahn/Brodsky...seemed like that name Sammy Cahn was showing up everywhere in my shows. Today, there are dozens of Sammy’s lyrics in my repertoire and so many of them are regulars in my performances. I feel they talk to me, fit my style and singing them makes me very happy. After all, Sinatra recorded eighty seven of Sammy Cahn’s songs and what was good for Sinatra is perfect for me.

2014. *VerPlanck to Holloway*. E-mail letter. January 2.

Lenore Raphael, a Steinway Concert Jazz Artist and award winning jazz composer.

In my years of being a pianist/singer in Manhattan’s posh clubs and restaurants, I have always loved Sammy Cahn’s music. Whether doing the torchy “Guess I’ll hang Out My Tears To Dry” or the very upbeat and happy “Come Fly With Me”, there was always something special about his lyrics.

I purchased his book on rhyming and there was a well known challenge about words in the English language that had no rhyme. One was “purple”, another “silver” and another “orange”.

Then I met Sammy Cahn backstage after the performance of the show “They’re Playing Our Song” on Broadway and by that time had been plagued by the challenge of rhyming those words. The best I could come up with was “My plans are far-range” for “orange” which I proudly told Sammy. He smiled a sort of kind smile and said “not bad.”

To this day I love his music and perform it frequently and will always remember those words... “not bad.” True praise from a master wordsmith.

2013. *Raphael to Holloway*. Letter.

Michael Feinstein, legendary pianist/singer and a personal friend of Sammy Cahn.

Creative genius who quietly changed the style of American Popular song by way of his conversational vernacular approach to musical wordplay in popular songs of the twentieth century.

Sammy was not quiet himself. If he was there, you knew it. He was no shrinking violet. He PROMOTED himself. And you loved him for it because he was so eminently and deservedly promotable. And quotable:

“Wonder Why, I’m not myself of late? I’m feeling strangely great, I wonder why?”

“The taller the tree is, the sweeter the peach, I’ll give you the whole megilla in a one word speech: reach!”

“Wrong. A five letter word that is used to denote incorrect. Wrong. A five letter word meaning that which is not circumspect. As in violate, as in abrogate, as in lacking tact, as in sordid act, as thief or crook, or salacious book, it is wrong. A word with tremendous allure, because it is preceded by you’re. There’s hardly an instance in time, when wrong is preceded by I’m.”

All of the above are arbitrary choices set down directly from memory, as they remain in my grey matter as shining examples of lyrical perfection in song writing. They are unforgettable.

What is that makes them great? Economy. Directness of expression, Every syllable counts. Naturalness. Singability. Craft. Joy. Honesty.

He wrote quickly and I don’t exactly know where the facility came from, specially when eyeing the bare facts of his bio. Born on the lower East side of New York and raised in a hot pot of culture and activity, he clearly soaked up and absorbed all that was around him. But, like Irving Berlin before him, he achieved a level of lyric mastery in a short period of time that belied his circumstance. It’s clear he was a genius when it came to writing and there is a natural facility that some never learn, yet whatever congealed within him appears to have happened from a combination of acute awareness of the human condition, a desire to succeed, years of writing special material and a self confidence that bordered on bravado. The heights he later conquered all came in natural progression from those simple beginnings. Whenever I am in New York I think about those early days and imagine Sammy in a humble flat hearing words and songs in the sounds of the sputtering steam pipe, while everyone else hears noise.

Though many might liken Sammy’s work in parallel to Sinatra’s similar “bull by the horns attitude”, he was much more than the seductive swagger and confidence of those songs tailored for Frank. The tenderness of his love songs and a gentle turn of phrase exhibited in so many of them prove that he was a romantic underneath it all. He understood love unrequited, fulfilled, and every permutation in between and put into 32 bars time and time again.

Knowing Sammy and just hanging around with him deeply enriched my life because he was a born teacher. He understood behaviour and had a unique way of looking at things. That, coupled with his ability to enlighten and explain a given situation, was masterful, and he charmed his way through life. As with words on paper, he knew how to reach people and bring out the best in them.

A renaissance of appreciation still awaits him and a re-evaluation is ripe. Sammy's songs carry a freshness undiminished by time. In today's climate his work stands out stronger than ever for those who are able to appreciate consummate craft and intellect and heart.

Maybe he didn't write for the ages but for a studio deadline, but what is good will endure.

His work will never be forgotten.

2015: *Feinstein to Holloway*. E-mail. 18March.

Notes:

[1] In a letter to me, dated June 14, 2013, Perry Lambert incorrectly described “Three Coins in the Fountain” as being Cahn’s second Oscar-winning song. It was his first Academy Award winner, which he received in 1954, written with Jule Styne.

CHAPTER 1

From Cohen to Cahn

Anytime you're feeling low
Wanna make your troubles go,
Shake your head from side to side...

I was born on the lower East side of New York City, so low, in fact, that if I took one step back I'd be in the river. The typical family - not very poor and, certainly, not very humble. Four sisters, an only son - an awesome responsibility. With brothers there might be some margin for error but an only son! I would be a doctor, or a lawyer or a dentist - and I'd play the violin. (Cahn to Holloway: 1986)

Samuel Cohen would be neither doctor, lawyer nor dentist, and he would abandon the violin for the piano which he mastered sufficiently to enable him to compose melodies to suit his lyrics. As Sammy Cahn he became the most successful lyricist in film history in terms of Academy Awards and Nominations. His formative years co-incided with the hey-day of vaudeville, which was eclipsed by the growth of the film industry, with the subsequent advent of sound. While many of his contemporaries were writing songs for shows on Broadway, Cahn saw a future in Hollywood. His instinctive versatility to write lyrics “to order”, using everyday words and expressions, and his almost preternatural understanding of the relationship of words, music and the performer, allowed him to excel in this medium. He had an unshakeable belief in his ability to write, and his sheer enjoyment of writing is evident in his verbal virtuosity, which ranged from the unpredictable to the sophisticated. His understanding of the vernacular and the imagistic texture of the lyrics demonstrate an intimate correlation between his personality and the demands of the studios. His sense of enjoyment and engagement is evident in his songs and, as success bolstered his creative confidence, his belief in his ability to react to requests grew. The anomaly remains that the most successful lyricist in film history has received the least acclaim. For over forty years, working with numerous collaborators, and various film studios, Sammy Cahn's lyrics were in demand, as were those of Lorenz Hart, Johnny Mercer, Ira Gershwin, Oscar Hammerstein II, Irving Berlin and Cole Porter, to name but a few, yet Cahn has not received the recognition he deserves.

A “renaissance of appreciation” is long overdue.

Samuel Cohen was born in New York City on the 18th June, 1913. His parents, originally from Galicia, had escaped the growing anti-Semitism that resulted in poor economic conditions for Jewish families and, together with thousands of Polish Jews, had emigrated in 1905 to the United States where Sammy's father opened a small restaurant in New York City.

My first impression of Sammy Cahn when I met him in his home in Beverly Hills was that of a little man with a gigantic talent that had earned him an unprecedented place in the history of light music. [1] The spectacles had been necessary since childhood; the moustache, pencilled on at the age of fourteen to disguise his Jewishness, with the change of name to Sam Valente, remained a trademark. Fourteen year old Sam, then a violinist, was a member of a small Dixieland band called Pals of Harmony, young Italians who felt that Sammy, plus moustache, might just look the part. Sammy would later change the name, abandon the violin, but retained the moustache. He had first heard the band when they played at his bar mitzvah. He recalls the occasion:

I hated the violin, but I made a deal with my mother and I adored my mother because she was the kind of lady you could make a deal with, the deal being that I would play the violin up until the night of my bar mitzvah, give a violin solo and that would be it! Well, while waiting for my bar mitzvah, I discovered the magic world of the movies, I discovered vaudeville, I also discovered that I had ulcers; but came the night of the bar mitzvah and I played that violin solo, and at one-o'clock in the morning an astonishing thing happened. My mother came up to me and said, "Sam, we got to go pay the orchestra."

"Pay the orchestra? These five fellas who had more fun than anybody at the party get paid?"

She said, "Sam they get paid."

So I walked over to the orchestra leader (I think his name was Stanley) and I said, "Do you do a lot of this?"

He said, "Yes we do a lot of this."

I said, "Well, how can I get to do some of this?"

And the very next year I was playing with this little orchestra in a holiday resort.

But their two week engagement at the Hotel Brigant at Atlantic City lasted just one session. Patrons, expecting a string quartet, were stunned when a slide trombone introduced a Dixieland rag. But despite the ignominious start to his career, fourteen year old Samuel Cohen was about to embark on a musical journey that would last over five decades.

His first song, and the only song for which he wrote words and music, was based on the shimmy head-dance of the time, and was called “Shake Your Head from Side to Side.”

Anytime you're feeling low
Wanna make your troubles go
Shake your head from side to side...

He was able to sell that song to the music publishers, Judd and Brown. As a minor, his father, Abraham Cohen, had to accompany him to sign a contract. The success of selling a song strengthened his resolve to devote himself to writing music and encouraged him to team with Saul Kaplan, who, just eighteen, was two years his senior.

During the course of fifty years of lyric writing, Cahn had numerous collaborators, but it was his first partner, Saul Kaplan, who would help mould his ability to write to order. Cahn had managed to persuade the young pianist to abandon his studies to become an accountant and join the Pals of Harmony. He would become Cahn's first collaborator in a partnership that would take them to Hollywood.

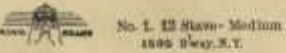
After the death of Sammy Cahn in 1993, his widow, Tita Cahn, bequeathed all his photographs, documents, letters and contracts to the Margaret Herrick Library (part of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences) in Los Angeles. I was able, with the help of researcher Joan Cohen, who had been recommended to me by the Archivist at the Library, to discover, in the huge collection of Cahn memorabilia that comprises the Sammy Cahn Collection, a hand written document of historic importance, signed Sammy Cahn and Saul Kaplan, dated 1933, and dedicated to Lou Levy. Sammy's mother disapproved of Levy whom she described as “a dancing no-goodnik” (Cahn, 1974:16) On Saturday nights, Levy would put on blackface, and dance with the Jimmy Lunceford Band at the Apollo Theatre. Cahn's mother so disliked Long-Shot Lou that Sammy left home to “room” with Levy in a seedy New York apartment block.

the beginning - Nov. 1933
 God knows what the end will be

Lou,

Who is finer than
 any of the songs
 we've written.

Sam Cahn
 Saul Kaplan

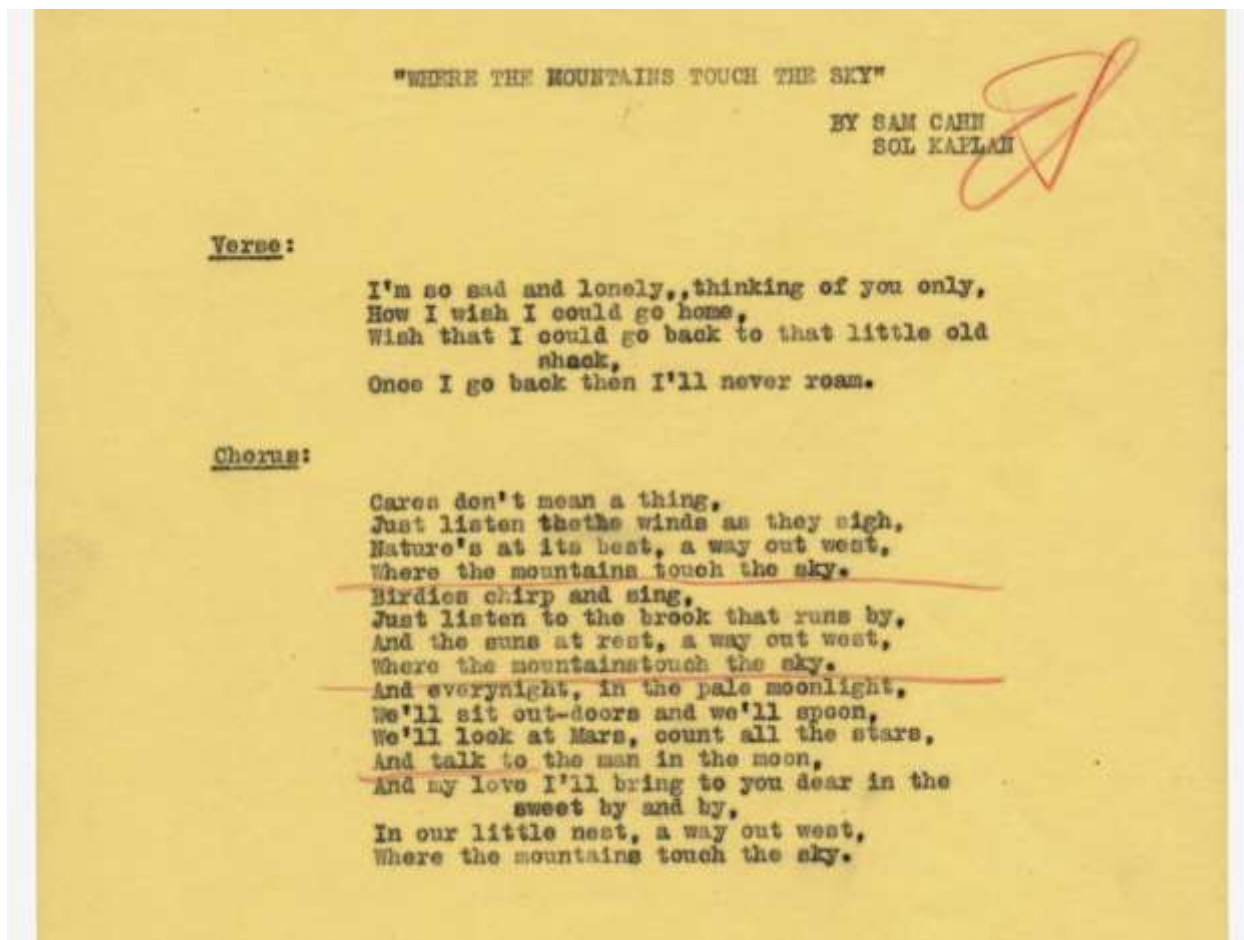


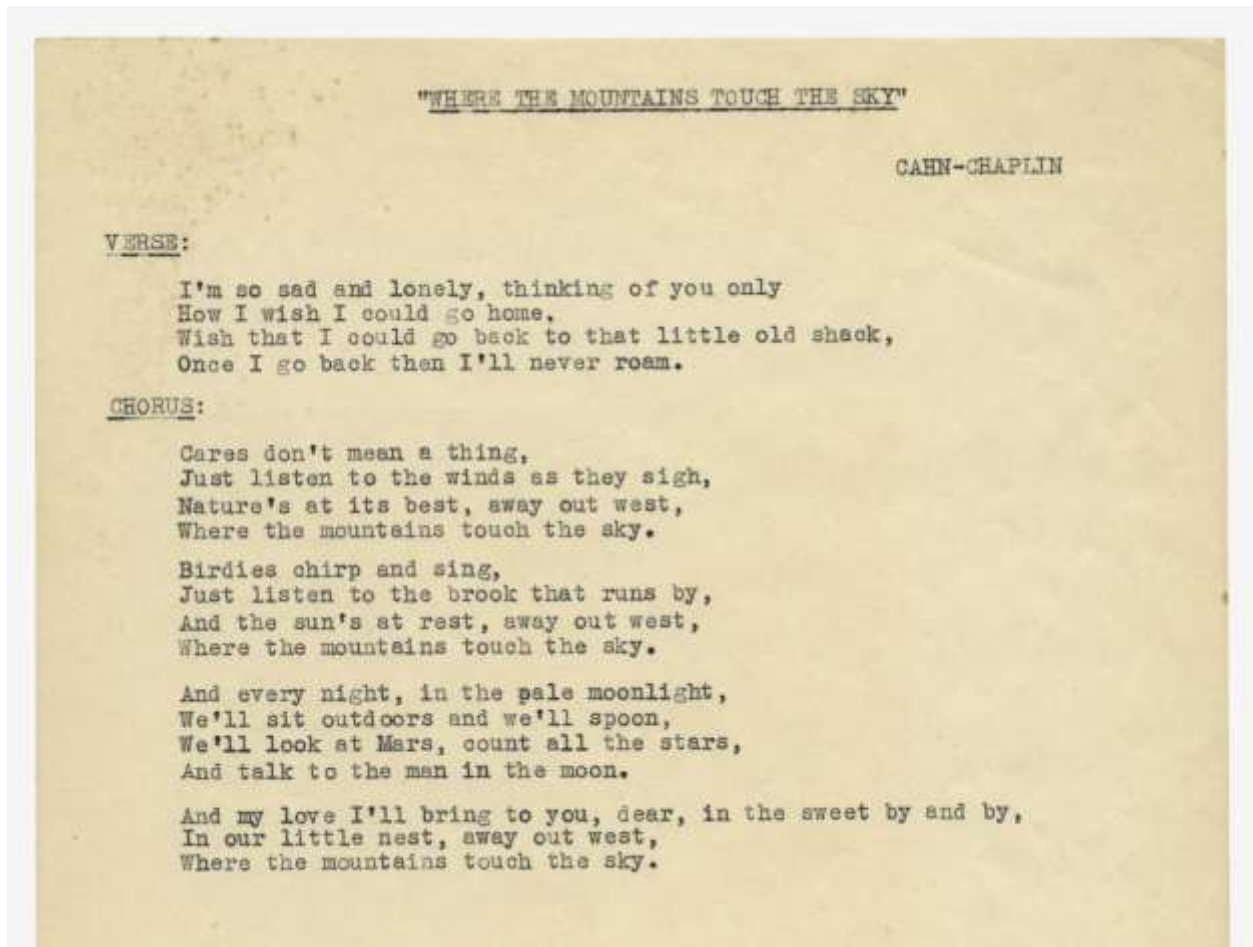
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[2] The song "Where the Mountains Touch the Sky" was dedicated to Lou Levy who was to remain a life-long friend and was responsible for Cahn's first song appearing in print.

In 1935, Levy established the Leeds Music Corporation with Cahn and Chaplin, and he went on to play a key role in the careers of some of the famous songwriters and singers of the time. He served on the Board of ASCAP from 1958 to 1970, and, in 1987, he received the Songwriters' Hall of Fame Abe Olman Award for Excellence in Music Publishing.

The same folder (file 942) in the Margaret Herrick Library in Los Angeles includes a typed copy of Cahn's lyrics of "Where the Mountains Touch the Sky" by Sam Cahn and Sol Kaplan, and a revised copy of the lyrics, signed Cahn-Chaplin. Apart from the change of names (which, as yet, was not official) there is little revision, other than punctuation and form. Throughout his lyric-writing career, Cahn wrote quickly and made few, if any, alterations.





In 1935, as Sammy Kahn and Saul Kaplan, the team wrote their first song to be published with the help of Lou Levy, for bandleader Jimmie Lunceford.

Rhythm is our bus'ness, rhythm is what we sell,
 Rhythm is our bus'ness, bus'ness sure is swell.
 If you're feeling blue, rhythm's what you need,
 If you've got rhythm, you're sure to succeed.

Seeing their names in print encouraged the pair to change their names from Cohen to Cahn, and from Kaplan to Chaplin. [3] While still in his teens, Sammy Cahn had changed his surname from Cohen to Khan so as not to get mistaken for Sammy Cohen who was a famous MGM comic. But when Sammy saw the names "Kahn and Kaplan" on the first copy of the song "Rhythm is our Business" he persuaded Saul Kaplan to change his name to Chaplin, while he adopted the new surname of Cahn so as to avoid any confusion with the well known lyricist Gus Kahn.

Bandleader Jimmie Lunceford is described by Cahn as “the single greatest leader of a black band that ever was” (Cahn, 1974:18) High praise indeed, but might well have been questioned by, for example, George T. Simon, recognised as the leading authority on Big Bands, whom I had the pleasure of meeting and interviewing in his apartment in New York City in 1986. Simon was Editor-in-Chief of the respected music magazine *Metronome* from 1939 to 1955. Initially a drummer for Glenn Miller, he wrote what could be considered the standard work on Miller’s Band, *Glenn Miller and his Orchestra*, published in 1974. George T. Simon described the Jimmie Lunceford band as:

The most exciting big band of all time!

Its music was great, but not that much greater than that of several other top swing bands and, in fact, not as consistently brilliant, as perhaps one or two others. But the Lunceford band was so far ahead of all the rest in one department – showmanship - that when it came to any battle of the bands, none could touch it. (Simon, 1967:328-329)

In preparing for my interview with Simon in 1986, I was briefed by Henry, an authority in his own right on Glenn Miller. Henry holds a world record for compiling and presenting the longest running radio series (115 half-hour programmes) on an individual musician with his programme, “Miller Magic”.

Adopting the style that I had evolved of “making a statement” rather than “asking a question”, I was able to engage George T. Simon in a remarkably revealing discussion about the longevity of Miller’s popularity and his place in the Swing Era. [4]

A few days later Henry and I spent the morning with Bob Crosby and his wife, June, a food writer. Henry focussed on Bob, his band, the Bobcats, and brother Bing. [5] Some years later Henry produced a most popular radio series called “Brother Bing and Brother Bob”, using some of the material recorded on that special day. I, on the other hand, missed a wonderful opportunity to quiz Bob about Bing’s relationship with Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen. Prior to his collaboration with Sammy Cahn, Van Heusen had composed many songs for Bing Crosby who was at the height of his fame. In 1960 Sammy Cahn received his eighteenth Academy Award Nomination for the song “The Second Time Around”, commissioned for the Bing Crosby film, *High Time*.

Jimmie Lunceford’s recording of the Cahn/Chaplin song “Rhythm is Our Business” in 1934 (it became his theme song) attracted the attention of Jack Kapp, who was Head of Decca Records and who was to become a guide and mentor to the two young musicians. At his suggestion they devoted all their time to

writing specifically for Decca artists, including the young Ella Fitzgerald, whose recording of their song “If You Should Ever Leave” marked one of their first great successes.

A force to be reckoned with in Cahn’s life would remain Lou Levy, described by Cahn as “the vegetable man’s kid from around the corner”. (Cahn, 1974:6) [6] He remained a lifelong friend and is credited with not only discovering Cahn and Chaplin, but also either discovered, managed or developed the careers of such artists as the Ames Brothers, Petula Clark, Bobby Darin, Eddie Fisher, Connie Francis, Woody Herman, Steve Lawrence, Buddy Rich and the Andrews sisters.

Lou Levy, Saul Chaplin and Sammy Cahn were regular patrons of the Apollo Theatre in Harlem where African-American performers would provide a show akin to a vaudeville show. Built in 1913, it was previously a white-only venue but, in 1933, the new owner, Sidney Cohen, refurbished and renamed the building the Apollo theatre which catered to the black community of Harlem. It was here that Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Dizzy Gillespie would perform, and its Monday night amateur talent competition launched the careers, among others, of Ella Fitzgerald, Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder, Sammy Davis Jnr. and Sarah Vaughn.

In order to understand Cahn’s development as a lyricist at this stage of his career, I feel that it is necessary to recognize the impact that the black musicians, performing in Harlem, had on both him and Saul Chaplin. The rhythms and harmonies of African-American music such as blues, spirituals and jazz were becoming increasingly attractive to white Americans, and composers, saturated with the concept of burlesque and vaudeville, started to exploit these musical tendencies and themes. The Harlem Renaissance emerged from the changes that had taken place in black communities since the abolition of slavery and the migration of blacks north, where work opportunities were available. As more blacks moved into New York City, a new mass culture emerged with its epicenter in Harlem.

Harlem was initially conceived as a suburb for white middle and upper-middle class citizens but with the influx of European migrants into Manhattan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (among them Sammy’s parents), Harlem, in particular, became an African-American neighbourhood, where a culture of writing, religious worship and music developed. A new image of the African-American emerged; from rural uneducated workers to urban sophistication. With this new identity came a new social consciousness, an appreciation of folk roots and culture and a growing pride in intellectual expansion. For the first time white American bandleaders were beginning to include African-American musicians and singers in their bands, while African-American musicians and performers were playing to

mixed audiences. Harlem's famous Cotton Club provided black entertainment for an exclusively white audience. Sammy Cahn would absorb a range of trends which would sustain his creativity for over fifty years. Cahn describes the experience of visiting the Apollo Theatre and being a member of the ninety-nine per cent black audience.

When the beat gets going... the building expands and contracts. I can't explain it but it's a frightening thing. The whole theatre literally starts to undulate and you feel that this place is going to cave – it can't handle the excitement. (Cahn, 1974:38)

George T. Simon in his book *The Big Bands* writes:

When the country started latching on to the big bands sound in the mid 30s, it was merely discovering the music that Duke Ellington and his band had been playing for close on 10 years. (Simon, 1967:187)

On the night when Cahn, Levy and Chaplin were in the Apollo theatre, two black singers sang a song called "Bei Mir Bist Du Schön," in the original Yiddish. Cahn was intrigued by the song and the reception it got from a very appreciative audience, and so, when approached a few days later by bandleader Tommy Dorsey for a song for his opening at the Paramount theatre, Cahn suggested "Bei Mir Bist Du Schön." Dorsey rejected the idea, but Cahn purchased a copy of the sheet music, contacted the music company that published it and received permission to write English lyrics. The Andrews Sisters, Patty, Maxene and La Verne, recorded the song which became a million seller record, the number one song for 1938 and a first for a female group.

'Bei mir bist du schön', please let me explain
'Bei mir bist du schön' means that you're grand.

'Bei mi bist du schön', again I'll explain
 It means you're the fairest in the land.

I could say "*Bella! Bella!*" even say "*Voonderbar.*"
 Each language only helps me tell you how grand you are.

I've tried to explain, *'Bei mir bist du schön'*
 So, kiss me and say you understand.

"Bei Mir Bist Du Schön" was to make the Andrews Sisters famous; Cahn rich enough to buy his parents a new house while Chaplin married Ethel Schwartz, and the success of the song established Cahn and Chaplin as a song-writing team. The phrase "a Cahn and Chaplin song" took on new meaning, in the

manner of Rodgers and Hart or Gilbert and Sullivan. Both Chaplin in his autobiography *The Golden Age of Musicals and Me* and Cahn in *I Should Care* describe the influence that vaudeville had on their music. Cahn writes:

I think a sense of vaudeville is very strong in anything I do, anything I write. (p. 8)

Cahn discovered vaudeville at the age of ten, when he attended his first show at Loew's Delancey Theatre in New York's Lower East side. Cahn, playing truant from school, would sit directly behind the orchestra leader in order to read the cues of the music. Vaudeville was to shape the way Cahn would write lyrics, fast but with a flourish that he describes as "a vaudeville finish".

To appreciate Cahn's extraordinary talent, it is necessary to recall the external factors that helped contribute to his growth as a successful lyricist. Cahn would be exposed to the changing musical trends of the time when operettas gave way to musical comedy, and burlesque to vaudeville. In the early years of the twentieth century, Americans still enjoyed the operettas that had originated in Austria and Germany and had a distinct European style. Plots were sentimental and based on love, settings were imaginary, and the waltz reigned supreme. But with the outbreak of World War 1, when anti-German sentiment swept America, the popularity of operettas declined, and American talent was needed to create entertainment and diversion. Musical comedy would provide a contemporary setting for American composers and lyricists. It was also an opportunity for music publishers to tap into a new market. As mass production made pianos more affordable, there was a growing demand for sheet music. Prior to 1900, established publishing firms had dealt in the sale of classical music compositions and choral church music. Now the American public wanted the sheet music they had heard their favourite performers sing in theatres across the country.

Since the first decades of the nineteenth century, Americans had enjoyed performances of Shakespeare, song and dance routines, acrobats and animals acts all in a single variety show. Venues ranged from dime museums which catered to the curious, amusement parks and town halls, which catered to the more genteel patrons while burlesque houses and music halls provided more risqué fare. Medicine shows offered a platform for jugglers and other novelty acts while selling tonics and elixirs; Wild West shows parodied frontier life with trick riding; variety drew on all 'entertainment' in order to lure and enthrall patrons. These elements were to form the basis of vaudeville which was to be more polished and refined and was able to broaden its appeal through a chain of theatres.

Many historians consider Benjamin Franklin Keith (1846 – 1914) to be the “Father” of American vaudeville. He maintained strict control of the acts in the programme and censored performers who did not conform to his standards of decency. There was a ruthless insistence that material should be appropriate for family audiences and warnings were pasted backstage of theatres. An example of such a warning is given by C. Samuels and L. Samuels in *Once Upon a Stage*.

Unless you want to be cancelled peremptorily, do not address anyone in the audience in any manner. If you do not have the ability to entertain Mr Keith’s audience with risk of offending, then do the best you can. Lack of talent will be less open to censure that would be an insult to a patron. If you are in doubt as to the characters of your act consult the local manager before you go on stage. If you are guilty of uttering anything sacrilegious or even suggestive you will be immediately closed and you will never again be allowed in a theatre where Mr Keith is in authority. (p. 89)

Despite a ruthless control of the acts in his shows, Keith still managed to bridge the gulf between “high” and “low” culture, bridging the social divide that existed between upper and working class citizens. The Industrial Revolution had drawn Americans to towns and cities where job opportunities allowed them increased leisure time and money. The public wanted affordable entertainment, and, as the phonograph, radio, film and television did not yet exist, vaudeville was able to fill that need. In the Encyclopaedia of New York City, Robert W. Snyder writes:

After the Astor Place Riot of 1849 [7] entertainment in New York City was divided along class lines: opera was chiefly for the upper middle and upper classes, minstrel shows and melodrama for the middle class, variety shows in concert saloons for men of the working class and the slumming middle class. Vaudeville was developed by entrepreneurs seeking higher profits from a widening audience. (p. 1226)

American culture at that time embraced ethnic, class and regional distinctions and was fast becoming industrialized and urbanized, with immigrants from different backgrounds all seeking entertainment. Vaudeville theatres housed a microcosm of American society with programmes that provided something for everybody.

Music was always an integral part of a vaudeville show, with a live orchestra as the key ingredient. The orchestra accompanied nearly every act, and musicians were expected to provide appropriate music for the strange and curious, as well as the artistic turns. Young Sammy Cahn, already a student of music, would have been aware of the range of material expected as the programmes were constantly changing to

keep patrons entertained. A popular word on the vaudeville circuit was the WOW finish which elicited soaring waves of applause from the audience.

If you let people know they should applaud, they *will* applaud. Just sing the end of ‘Three Coins in the Fountain’ – Make it mine! Make it mine! MAKE IT MINE! (Cahn, 1974:8)

The rapid growth of vaudeville was a factor that contributed to the development of Tin Pan Alley. [8]

As theatres spread across the country, so performers would visit publishing houses for new material. Music publishers changed their locations to co-incide with the theatre districts, eventually, in the 1920s, settling in the heart of New York City. The name Tin Pan Alley derived from the noise of the pianos used by the songwriters on West 28th Street, between Broadway and Sixth Avenue. It was here that music publishers hired musicians to create songs for sheet music which, as mass production made pianos more available, was in huge demand. Sheet music publishers dominated the music business. Vaudeville performers required new songs, but the publishers encouraged composers to write songs that could suit the range and temperament of any singer. A formula that was commercially successful was 32 bars, comprising four eight-bar units, usually in an AABA sequence. This formula made songs relatively easy to write. The standardization could have been considered constraining, but it provided a formulaic platform for Cahn, while allowing him opportunities to explore and experiment with rhyme. Sheet music publishers required that lyrics should be androgynous so that they could be sung by both male and female performers.

This persistence of a musical style was strengthened by the founding in 1914 of ASCAP (the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) which ensured that before songs could be used, fees needed to be paid to the Society, which, in turn, re-imbursed monies to copyright holders. This standardized style of saying “I love you” in 32 bars forced lyricists to explore levels of creativity in shifts of rhyme and imagery. The Decca recording by the Jimmie Lunceford band in 1934 of “Rhythm is our Business” brought Cahn and Chaplin (still Kahn and Kaplan) their first royalties. Years later Cahn was to be a Board Member of ASCAP, and, to commemorate his life and career, a special annual award has been made since 1995 to a promising lyricist from the ASCAP Foundation. That funding is supported by a grant from Cahn’s widow, Mrs Tita Cahn.

Sammy Cahn described his method of working thus:

Let me try to explain what my lyric writing is all about. First I am not sure what brings about an instant title when I hear a melody, but it seldom if ever fails me – a title flashes into my head. It sounds strange even phony to people when I insist that I don't write a song as much as the song writes me. What I do is sort of trigger it with a title and then follow wherever it leads.
(Cahn, 1974:46)

Cahn's writing was the result of a spontaneity, a sudden imagining arising in the moment, unlike the carefully crafted Porter lyric or the deliberation of an Oscar Hammerstein II song. Cahn had developed a sound knowledge of grammar and he had both linguistic novelty and creativity. This allowed him to pay attention to the structure of the song in addition to the individual words. His many years of working in the field of lyric-writing had created a vast store of fixed phrases and rhyming words that became his personal and extensive mental lexicon. In his book of 1907, *Creative Evolution*, Henri Bergson writes:

Every human work in which there is invention, every voluntary act in which there is freedom, every movement of an organism that manifests spontaneity brings something new into the world.
(Bergson, 1907:252)

The twentieth century saw more developments in the diversity of styles of music than any other century and Cahn was not afraid to adopt and adapt those styles. Of equal importance was his ability to write lyrics that suited the personality of the singer. Doris Day became a star when she sang Cahn/Styne songs which projected the image of the ingénue with a touch of the tomboy. Cahn was able to weave singing and conversation, based on a musical structure which, in turn, dictated the technical aspect of staging and filming. Cahn had developed an excellent understanding of the techniques of film making. This ensured his popularity with directors and producers.

Cahn's rhyming dictionary hints at his approach to writing. In 1984 he published *The Songwriter's Rhyming Dictionary* (re-issued in 2002 as *Sammy Cahn's Rhyming Dictionary* and listing fifty thousand words arranged phonetically, by vowel sounds and syllables rather than alphabetically (e.g. avant-garde, body guard, boulevard, disregard / anywhere, debonair, millionaire, savoir faire). He did not appear to have a preferred modality in which to express himself, but, rather, having selected his rhyming words, created lyrics that reflected those rhymes in the middle or end of his lines. In his Introduction to the Dictionary, Cahn writes:

What is the difference between a poem and a lyric? My answer is that a poem is meant for the eye, while a lyric is meant for the ear, but both reach the mind and touch the heart. Once I have written a song and have considered all the pros and cons of the lyric, the uppermost and final consideration is, Does it sing? and not only sing, but sing effortlessly. The cadences of the lyric

must leave the most subtle breathing spaces, as must the music. Words will not sing unless they are properly wedded to the proper notes. For this reason, no matter which composer I've worked with, when a song is finished we spend just as many if not more hours over the demonstration of the song as we did writing it.

I believe anyone can learn the concept of singability and that anyone can write lyrics. All you need are the rhyming words and something to say. (Cahn's *Rhyming Dictionary*: p. xiii)

It would seem that the rhyming words that Cahn selected formed an image that he was able to develop to underpin the melodic line. He appeared to make little conscious effort to link images and words, but rather to rely on a previous musical vocabulary, gleaned from years of listening to developing musical genres. This allowed him to devise phrases and sentences from thousands of words and a basic stock of grammatical patterns. Oscar Hammerstein II wrote painstakingly slowly and with careful deliberation. Cole Porter worked tirelessly to nurture his distinctive blend of vernacular ease and witty elegance. Ira Gershwin's most brilliant lyrics came from the phrases that fitted his brother's music. The melodies of Richard Rodgers provided the structure for the intricate rhymes of Lorenz Hart. Cahn was able to adapt his style to suit different collaborators and different singers.

Cahn's sound understanding of his subject brought about an unshakeable belief in his ability to deliver. His creativity involved an interaction between the domain in which he worked, his collaborator and the singer who would perform the song. He also needed to conform to the dictates of producers while offering lyrics that would have mass appeal.

One of the many frustrations of being a broadcaster is not honing in on and pursuing an important point. At the time of interviewing Sammy Cahn, in 1986, I was content with his anecdotes of the award-winning songs, and his relationships with his collaborators, failing to develop a discussion about his art (or craft?) of lyric writing. As a result, I feel compelled to accept Cahn's avowed explanation:

The thing about my work is that if I jump on a toboggan, who's taking the ride? The toboggan or me? I don't control what happens, I'm just on the slide, and I'm going to end up at the bottom, hopefully in one piece. (Cahn, 1974:40)

In order to develop my professed topic: *Romancing the Vernacular: Sammy Cahn and the Enactment of Request*, I think there is merit in examining how other lyricists, contemporaries of Cahn's, worked and to what effect. The answer to the perennial question, "Which comes first – the words or the music?" produces some surprising conundrums. Suzanne Langer in her book *Problems of Art* writes:

In a well-wrought song, the text is swallowed, hide and hair. (p. 84)

Anthony Burgess argues that in a song “what is said is not of great importance”. (Burgess, 1982:105)

I can fully appreciate the ire displayed by Mrs Oscar Hammerstein when she overheard someone praise “Ol’ Man River” as a “great Kern song.” Her response to that statement has been quoted many times: I beg your pardon, but Jerome Kern did *not* write “Ol’ Man River.” Mr Kern wrote *dum dum dum da*; my husband wrote “Ol’ Man River.” (Furia, 1990:3)

I do believe that Cahn would have expressed the same frustration, and perhaps this helps explain why Sammy Cahn does not feature in any major work on the songs of the Golden Age. Many of his contemporaries, although given just recognition, regarded their art as dependent on the music. The brilliant lyricist, Lorenz Hart, whose work with Richard Rodgers was to produce songs that remain in the repertoire of today’s singers, regarded his writing as dependent upon the music. He acknowledged his subordinate role by breaking with theatrical tradition to allow the composer’s name to precede his. Not so Cahn! Cahn and Chaplin, Cahn and Styne, Cahn and Van Heusen, Cahn and Nicholas Brodsky; while Cahn granted that much of his craft was the artful blend of words and music, he paid tribute to the collaborators who had provided him with sympathetic and creative melodies.

Broadway was on the brink of the golden age of stage musicals. Charles Hamm acknowledges the growth of a New York City style:

Even more than had been the case during the formative years on Tin Pan Alley, the field was dominated by composers and lyricists born and trained in New York. There was little effective cultural input from the rest of America into New York in these days. (Hamm, 1979:377)

The musical metropolis was New York City where Broadway was to offer opportunities for composers of light music; a number of these would make an indelible mark on the nation’s culture.

Cahn was writing lyrics when George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Richard Rodgers, and many others, created their best stage scores, while writing film scores at the same time. Each brought a special quality to the music with the marriage of verbal and musical ideas.

George Gershwin’s compositions spanned both popular and classical genres. His musical training had followed a European classical tradition, and works such as “Rhapsody in Blue” and “Porgy and Bess”

showed intellectual prestige, while his virtuosity captured the spirit of the times as he manipulated musical trends to create music that was both refined and ingenious. He searched for a musical language to drive his work. Many fellow composers were churning out successful (often predictable) Broadway tunes, but Gershwin believed that his music should reflect the language and setting of the characters. In search of an approach to spirituals and folksongs, he travelled through South Carolina, listening and talking to Negroes. Gershwin conceived “Porgy and Bess” as a folk opera, based on a contemporary work, the 1925 novella, *Porgy*, by Dubose Heyward. Performances of opera tended to attract mainly the affluent American, so Gershwin attempted populist form that could be both artistically pleasing and entertaining. Critics questioned how a White Southern author and two Jewish musicians from New York City could tackle the complexity of southern African-American life, yet still manage to create a timeless opera. George Gershwin’s collaboration with his older brother, Ira, resulted in over twenty musicals, with Ira helping George create a new style by experimenting with timing and unusual rhymes. Yet Ira seemed less concerned about rhyme than colloquial phrasing. He considered lyric writing was a skill of fitting words to music, finding the ready-made slang that would fit his brother’s melody.

One of Gershwin’s greatest songs “The Man I Love” was in strong contrast to the Tin Pan Alley axiom that songs should be able to be sung by both male and female performers. Ira settled for the words:

Maybe I shall meet him Sunday...
 Maybe Monday...
 Maybe not...
 Still I’m sure to meet him one day... (“The Man I Love”, 1924)

“Someone to watch over me” (1926) had cleverly split rhymes:

Although he may not be the kind of *man some* would think of as *handsome*

In “S’ Wonderful”, (1927) Ira Gershwin slices and slides words:

‘S awful nice! ‘S paradise –
 ‘S what I care to see!

The partnership between the brothers was mercurial. Ira’s habit of careful planning and deliberation often annoyed George. In his biography, *Gershwin*, Jablonski describes Ira’s dismay on hearing, for the first time, the melody of “Fascinating Rhythm” from the 1924 show, *Lady Be Good*.

For God’s sake, George, what kind of lyric do you write to a rhythm like that?

(Jablonski, 1988:84)

George and Ira's work was the result of suggestion and counter-suggestion, with the more assertive George frequently making the final decision. Ira habitually worried over the lyrics, but his patience ensured lyrics that were fresh and innovative. With the untimely death of George at the age of thirty-eight, Ira collaborated with various composers, helping to establish himself in his own right, and not merely dependent on his brother.

The career of Richard Rodgers included the highly successful collaboration with Lorenz Hart and, then, with Oscar Hammerstein II. Hart's lyrics, in particular his love lyrics, display an underlying vulnerability and sadness while being technically sophisticated. He set a new standard for intricately witty rhyming. Typical of a Hart song was the 1926 "Mountain Greenery" with its triple rhymes.

Beans
could get
no keen-
er re-
cept-
ion in a beanery

In "Manhattan", a list song based on the names of places, Hart rhymes in blatant Brooklynes:

The city's clamour can never spoil
The dreams of a boy and goil ("Manhattan", 1926)

The intricate "ragging" of a word against music uses the pauses of Rodgers' melody to fragment the lyrics:

What street
compares with Mott Street
in July?
Sweet pushcarts gently gli-
ding by ("Manhattan", 1926)

Hart enjoyed manipulating internal and polysyllabic rhymes:

I'm wild again
beguiled again
A simpering, whimpering child again
Bewitched, bothered and bewildered am I
("Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered", 1941)

Rodgers' music provided a structure for Hart's intricate rhymes. With the death of Hart in 1943, Richard Rodgers turned to Oscar Hammerstein II who praised Hart "not only for his rhyming grace but for his ability to contain such rhymes within perfectly colloquial diction." (Hammerstein, 1949:20)

Broadway songs no longer "stood alone" but were expected to be integrated into the plot and characterization. Hammerstein II had worked with Jerome Kern on the 1927 score of *Show Boat* which set precedents in style, with its integration of story, music and theme – social injustice. The musical score, with its sweep and substance, was replete with minstrel, African and "coon" musical forms, with a sense of social outrage underpinning the plot. *Show Boat* was to define the Broadway musical for the next thirty years, although the lyrics of its most successful song would be re-written to adapt to changing social conventions and sensitivities. [9]

Niggers all work on the Mississippi
 Niggers all work while de white folk play
 Pullin' dose boats from de dawn to sunset
 Gittin' no rest till de judgement day.

Don't look up an' don't look down
 You don' darst make de boss man frown
 Bend your knees an' bow your head
 An' pull dat rope until you're dead.

Let me go 'way from the Mississippi
 Let me go 'way from de white man boss
 Show me dat stream called de River Jordan
 Dat's de stream dat I long to cross.

He don't plants taters, he don't plant cotton
 And dem dat plants 'em, is soon forgotten
 But 'Ol Man River, he jes keeps rollin' along.

You an' me, we sweat and strain
 Body all achin' and racked wid pain
 Tote dat barge! Lif dat bale!
 Git a little drunk an' you lands in jail

Ah gits weary, an' sick of tryin'
 Ah'm tired of livin' an' skeered of dyin'
 But 'Ol Man River, he jes keeps rollin' along .

While fellow composers and lyricists were offering social commentary in their shows, Cole Porter brought escapism and gaiety to Americans longing to forget the hard realities of coping with the economic deprivations that resulted from the Depression. Porter, who wrote both words and music, combined worldly elegance with off-beat humour, sexual innuendo and rhyming ingenuity. His urbane and polished songs were crafted with an insouciance that was both scandalous and fascinating, with melodies that equalled the best of his contemporaries.

Porter implied rather than stated:

Birds do it, bees do it,
Even educated fleas do it,
Let's do it,
Let's fall in love. (‘Let's Do It’, 1928)

He was a master of the clever word-play, using puns and double entendres. He created a technique of repetition of repeating a word but shifting its meaning.

Do do that voodoo that you do so well (‘You Do Something To Me’, 1929)

In ‘It's De-lovely’ (1936) the simple prefix offers a range of possibilities:

It's delightful, it's delicious
It's delectable, it's delirious
It's de-limit, it's deluxe, it's de-lovely.

Porter was a master at skilful phrasing:

If-I-took
e-ven-one
sniff-that-would
bore-me-ter
rif-ic'-ly (‘I Get A Kick Out Of You’, 1934)

One of Porter's contemporaries was Irving Berlin who, like Porter, wrote words and music, despite (in Berlin's case) having no musical training. Berlin produced an unparalleled number of songs. He described his method of working:

Writing both words and music I can compose them together and make them fit. I sacrifice one for the other. If I have a melody I want to use, I plug away at the lyrics... and vice versa. Nearly all other writers work in teams, one writing the music and the other the words. They are either forced to fit someone's words to their music or someone's music to their words. Latitude – which begets

novelty – is denied them and in consequence both lyrics and melody suffer. Three fourths of that quality which brings success to popular songs is the phrasing. I make a study of it – ease, naturalness, every-day-ness – and it is my first consideration when I start on lyrics.

(Bergreen, 1990:65)

Berlin was able to adapt his musical and lyrical style to suit the changing musical fashions and vernacular, producing songs that were masterpieces of economy and clarity. Like all the composers of the Golden Era, he adhered to the dictates of Tin Pan Alley, but his personal style was influenced by ragtime and syncopation, while his themes were intensely patriotic. In an article in the New York Times of January 2, 1916, Berlin is quoted as having said:

My ambition is to reach the heart of the average American, not the highbrow or the lowbrow, but that vast intermediate crew which is the real soul of the country. The highbrow is likely to be superficial, over-trained, supersensitive. The lowbrow is warped. My public is the real people.

In 1988, Henry and I approached the directors of a prestigious theatre restaurant, Rosenfontein, in Cape Town, with the suggestion that, to mark the one hundredth birthday of Irving Berlin on May 11, we devise a musical show based on his life and music. After all Jerome Kern confirmed:

Irving Berlin has no “place” in American music; Irving Berlin IS American music.

(Furia, 1990:46)

Amongst the correspondence Henry had with Irving Berlin is a letter of thanks from his private secretary, Hilda Schneider. She thanked Henry for sending copies of the first four radio programmes and expressed Berlin’s appreciation and interest in listening to the series. [10] Irving Berlin’s death in 1989 marked a century since enterprising music publishers established Tin Pan Alley.

Over his fifty year career Cahn had numerous collaborators who each offered him a range of possibilities to write lyrics to suit their different musical styles. Lyrics could range from the racy, somewhat bizarre, phrases required by the jazz musician and bandleader Jimmie Lunceford to the more serious and refined sentiments composer, Nicholas Brodsky, needed for the tenor, Mario Lanza. Cahn segued from the easy relationship with his first collaborator Saul Chaplin and the work they did for vaudeville acts to his successful partnership with Jule Styne whom Cahn describes as:

...one of the single most talented musicians I have ever worked with. We wrote rocking-chair songs which meant the kind of hits where the publishers sat and rocked while the songs did all the work for themselves (p. 62)

But it was with Jimmy Van Heusen that Cahn would win three of his four Academy Awards. Van Heusen was adaptable, and prepared to adjust his style to suit Cahn's words. Cahn writes:

James Van Heusen really knows how to lure a lyric out of these bones. He's patient and will play the melody in every form – light, heavy, quick, slow (p. 101)

When reading about Cahn's relationships with his collaborators, it is apparent that, in most cases, Cahn was the dominant partner. The fact that he could write lyrics so freely with few alterations implied a confidence in his ability, even an arrogance, which would have been supported and fuelled by his success.

Notes:



[1] Marilyn Holloway interviewing Sammy Cahn in his home at Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, 1986.

[2] “Where the Mountains Touch the Sky” was discovered amongst the Sammy Cahn papers of the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Special permission for this document to be used was granted by Mrs Tita Cahn who had donated the contents of Cahn’s study to be housed at the Margaret Herrick Library in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles. The collection occupies 27 linear feet and, with the help of funding by UNISA, I was able to hire American

researcher, Joan Cohen, who is familiar with the Library and its contents, to conduct a thorough search on my behalf. It was a painstaking process that took almost a year to complete.



[3] Saul Chaplin and Sammy Cahn



[4] Henry and Marilyn Holloway with George T. Simon



[5] The Holloways with Bob and June Crosby



[6] Saul Chaplin, Lou Levy and Sammy Cahn

[7] The Astor Place Riot was precipitated by the rivalry between the Irish-born actor, William MacReady and the American, Edwin Forrest. MacReady's appearance at the Astor Place Opera House in 1849 provided the opportunity for increased rivalry between the two men, and his performance in the title role of *Macbeth* was greeted with some hostility by members of the audience. Irish-American relations were strained and New York was ready to defend MacReady. A crowd gathered, which included working-class Irish immigrants, and the state militia was called to control the riot. Troops were attacked and retaliated and, in the ensuing fight, many lives were lost. The riot increased class separation and segregation in New York City and, as part of that process, entertainment was divided into 'high' and 'low' class orbits.

[8] I am indebted, in particular, to David A. Jansen who, in his book *Tin Pan Alley*, traces the influences the Alley had on songwriters, performers and publishers from 1886 to the mid 1950s.

[9] "Ol' Man River", with music by Jerome Kern and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II is from the 1927 musical, *Show Boat*. The song was unusual for the time when Broadway was presenting glamorous musicals with witty, sophisticated lyrics. *Show Boat* contrasts the struggles and hardships of African-Americans with the uncaring and relentless flow of the Mississippi River. The most famous version of "Ol' Man River" was sung by Paul Robeson in the 1936 film version of *Show Boat*. Throughout his

career, Robeson continued to alter the words. Except for the change of the word ‘niggers’ to ‘darkies’ the lyrics performed by Robeson in the 1936 film remain exactly as written by Oscar Hammerstein II.

Robeson’s changes to the lyrics were sung by him and no other singer, and were as follows:

Instead of “Dere’s an ‘ol man called de Mississippi, / Dat’s de ol’ man dat I’d like to be ...”

Robeson sang “There’s an ol’ man called the Mississippi / That’s the ol’ man I don’t like to be...”

Instead of “Tote dat barge! / Lif’ dat bale! / Git a little drunk / An’ you lands in jail...”

Robeson sang “Tote that barge and lift that bale! / You show a little grit / and you land in jail...”

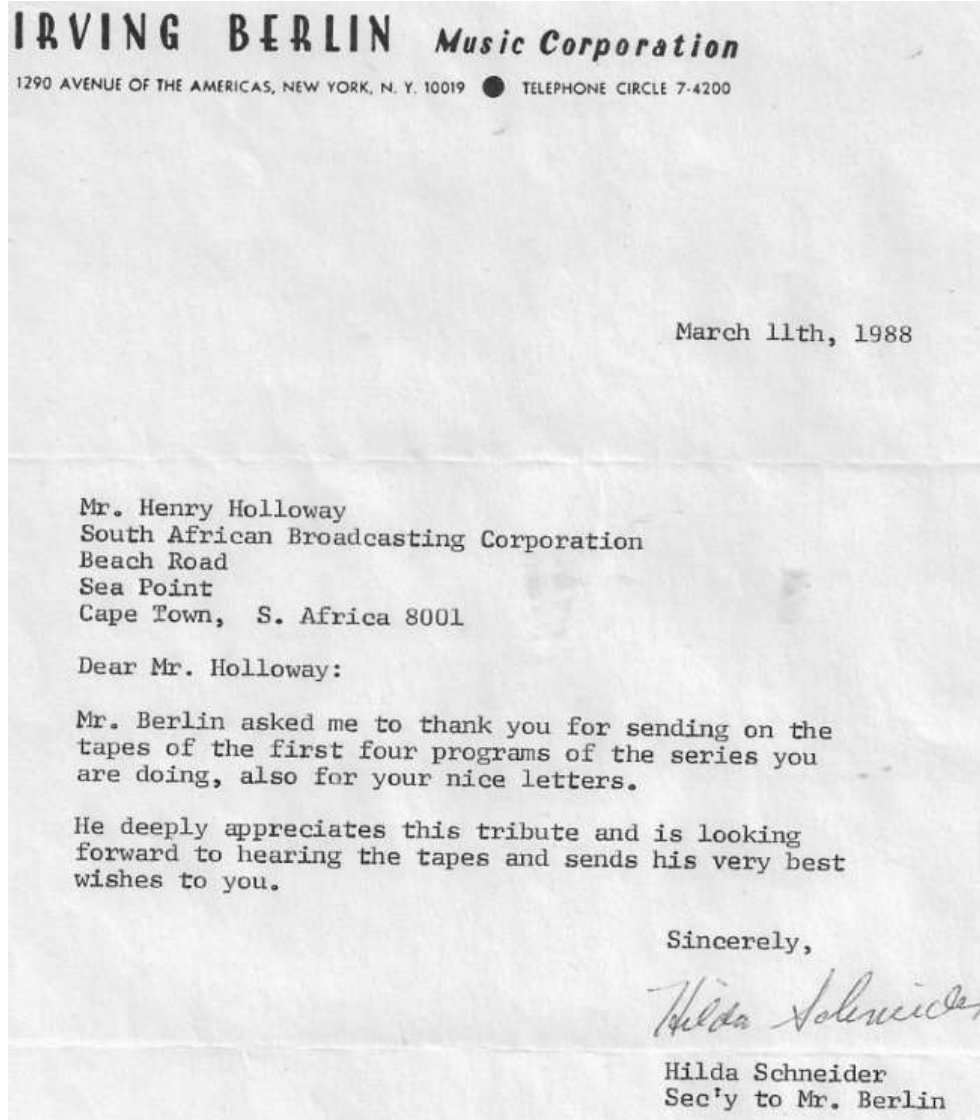
Instead of “Ah gits weary / An’ sick of tryin’ / Ah’m tired of livin’ / An’ skeered of dyin’ /

But Ol’ Man River, / He jes’ keeps rollin’ along!”

Robeson sang “But I keeps laffin’ / Instead of cryin’ / I must keep fightin’ / Until I’m dyin’ /

And Ol’ Man River / He’ll just keep rollin’ along.”

The changes in Robeson’s interpretation shift the image of Joe from a resigned and sad character to a man empowered and able to persevere despite his difficult circumstances.



[10] Letter from Hilda Schneider, Private Secretary to Irving Berlin.

CHAPTER 2

From Vaudeville to Vitaphone

This is my first affair,
So please be kind.
Handle my heart with care,
Oh, please be kind.

Now you will ask me which comes first - the words or the music? I will tell you swiftly - the phone call. One day the phone rang in our office and it was Roy Mack, a director, to say, "Can you fellas write me a ballad for one of these shorts?" - and this is indicative of how Saul Chaplin and I used to write.

"Say, Saul, what do you think of this for an idea for a song?"

This is my first affair
So please be kind-

He said, "You don' wanna do that! What you wanna do is -"

This is my first affair
So please be kind.
Handle my heart with care
Oh, please be kind.

This is all so grand,
My dreams are on parade,
If you'll just understand,
They'll never, never fade.

And this ballad from a short subject gained some attention. And so we were called to the office of Mack Goldman, of the Warner Brothers Music Company, a legendary music man, fastidious, impeccable, with the thinnest lips of any man you ever met in your life. Singing a song to Mack Goldman was no easy task, but I took my stance and I sang:

Tell me your love's sincere,
Oh, please be kind.
Tell me I needn't fear,

Oh, please be kind.

‘Cause if you leave me dear
I know my heart will lose its mind.
If you love me,
Please be kind.

Through those thin lips he said, "What do you mean? Your heart will lose its mind?"

I said, "Mr Goldman, sir, assuming that the heart is an entity all to itself, it could very – "

His thin lips got even thinner and he said, "You gonna walk around with the copies and explain it?"

I have never explained a line in a song since.

In 1932 Cahn and Saul Chaplin were employed by Vitaphone Studios, based in Brooklyn. Its success was largely linked to the fact that if a cinema were to play a Warner film, theatre owners were obliged to include two or three short fillers, made by Vitaphone. In his autobiography, Cahn writes:

Vitaphone made short subjects, one-reelers, two-reelers, and if you wanted to run a Warner Brothers movie in your theatre you have to take two or three of these. It was never a question of them having to be good, only of having to be *made*. Over and over they used to say to me: "We don't want 'em good, we want 'em by Tuesday". Our schooling in this "We want 'em by Tuesday" world was invaluable. We wrote for almost every entertainer known or unknown, because they all came through the doors of Vitaphone Studios. It was mainly my years of writing special material for the Vitaphone short subjects that prepared me for any eventuality.
(Cahn, 1974:22-23)

The growth of the lower priced cinema in the early 1910s saw the start of the decline of vaudeville. Cinema in the United States had first been shown in vaudeville halls as part of the entertainment. Owing to lack of sound, musical accompaniment was provided by live orchestras, and it would be several years before filmmakers could address the problem of the "talkies", and silent films remained "chasers" to the more popular vaudeville acts. By now Hollywood had created a multi-million dollar industry, using only images and gestures, but this changed in 1926, when Warner Brothers, in collaboration with Western Electric [1] took a gamble on Vitaphone and introduced a sound-on-disc system. The sound track was printed onto discs and not the film itself, and these discs would be played on a turntable, physically

coupled to a projector. The system was far from perfect; discs would wear out, were not always synchronized with the film and could not easily be edited.

Initially the executives of Warner Brothers Studio were not convinced about the future of talking films. They considered that music was the way to offer sound. An entire office building on the First National Vitaphone Lot was devoted to songwriters under contract. Composers were replacing authors. Amongst these composers was the team of Cahn and Chaplin. [2]

We wrote song, songs of every type. Songs for bands, songs for acrobats, songs for ice-skaters including one of the worst ever written, "I'm a Musical Magical Man" – used in a short that featured dancing trumpets. Roy Mack, one of the short-subject director-producers would take us to the warehouse and show us some costumes. Then he'd say; "Write a song for that costume." (Cahn, 1974:25)

Commissioned to write a love song, Cahn and Chaplin's "Please Be Kind", in 1938, became the first song in the history of Vitaphone to be listed on the Hit Parade.

By the late thirties Cahn and Chaplin were working for Vitaphone and also for Hermann Starr, the Head of the Music Publishers' Holding Corporation, a subsidiary of Warner Brothers, who suggested that Cahn and Chaplin move to California to try their luck with a growing film industry.

Warner Brothers traded us to Columbia Picture Studios. They sent us out to Hollywood with a letter to the famous, or is it infamous, Harry Cohn. The letter said:

Dear Harry,
This will introduce Sammy Cahn and Saul Chaplin. Please use them.
They're gratis.

We spent three long years with Harry Cohn and we wrote him all the hits he deserved - none. (Cahn to Holloway, 1986)

In his autobiography *The Merchant Prince of Poverty Row*, author Bernard F. Dick describes how Cohn was a latecomer to film-making. Broadway had been his beat and Tin Pan Alley his milieu. Raised on Poverty Row with little education, he plugged songs for a living and only moved to Hollywood to rival his brother Jack who was at Universal studios. Since he was not a typical studio mogul, Columbia was not a typical studio. The smallest of all the studios in Hollywood, it had earned the reputation of producing

Academy Award winning films. After an ignominious start at Columbia, Cahn would become a close confidant. Cahn and Chaplin remained with Columbia Pictures from 1940 until 1942 when the partnership dissolved. But the film industry had grown from silent features to talking films, and Cahn was to experience and absorb these changes. Cahn acknowledges that the movies and vaudeville were his 'real school' (Cahn, 1974:7) and so, in 1926, when Warner Brothers released *Don Juan*, thirteen-year old Sammy embraced the medium that was to shape his career for forty years.

Don Juan starred John Barrymore and Mary Astor in a feature film with a pre-recorded background score, performed by the New York Philharmonic, plus a few sound effects. There was, as yet, no dialogue. The film was shown with several Vitaphone short clips, presented by well-known opera and vaudeville stars. Warner Brothers wrote:

Like the rumbling of a coming storm, word-of-word comment comes low and sincerely, but gathering power as it sweeps onward, it carries like lightning to the four corners of the earth. Such will be the praise for 'Vitaphone.'
(Vitaphone advertisement in Film Daily, 30 July, 1926:2a)

Don Juan was a huge success, yet many studios remained unconvinced, believing that silent features would continue to dominate the film industry. Although 1926 was the significant year for Vitaphone, many audiences in the smaller cities did not have access to the new technology. It was in the synchronized shorts that Vitaphone seemed to combine the elements of radio, telephone and the phonograph. The combination of vaudeville, musical revue and theatre appealed to most cinema goers who understood and were comfortable with these genres. Even Warner Brothers was reluctant to change its system to one of technical uncertainty. The "star" system, as it existed, would be disrupted; replacing the orchestra was a solid business idea, but now audiences wanted to hear actors talk and sing. A vote of no-confidence came from Thomas Edison, the patriarch of electrical science:

I don't think the talking movie industry will ever be effective in the United States. Americans prefer silent drama. They are accustomed to the moving picture as it is and they will never get enthusiastic over any voices being mingled in. Yes, there will be novelty in it for a little while, but the glitter will soon wear off and the movie fans will cry for silence for a little orchestra music.

I believe that the experiments will prove highly successful. I am certain that voices can be reproduced to fit in just the right place with the play on the screen, but the American people do not want it and will not welcome it. We are wasting our time going on with the project.

(Film Daily, 4 March, 1927:1-2)

But the premiere of *The Jazz Singer* in October of 1927 was not only to change these beliefs but to change the motion picture industry. As the film ended, Sam Goldwyn's wife, Frances, looked around at the celebrities in the audience. She saw "terror in their faces" as if they knew that "the game they had been playing for years was finally over." (Scott Eyman, 1927:60) The excellent reviews for *The Jazz Singer* forced the major film studios to contemplate the possibilities of sound and song in film. But none of the studios was prepared to rush into production.

"The effect on the overseas market would be disastrous. Only a small part of the world speaks English," Adolph Zukor argued on behalf of Paramount. "Studios would have to be rebuilt," added Jesse Lasky.

"We have too big an investment in the silent picture," pronounced Universal Head, Carl Laemmle.

At MGM, Louis B. Mayer was content to let Warner Bros. make the next move. "Let them develop it if they can. Then we'll see about it." (Furia, 2010:23)

The Jazz Singer was the first full-length film to use recorded dialogue and song. The combination of America's most popular singer, Al Jolson, and the new medium of sound was a resounding financial success, and what was originally considered a passing fad became an inevitability. The film made a movie star out of Jolson, and a fortune for Warner Brothers. In his book, *A Pictorial History of the Movies*, Deems Taylor writes:

There has been no revolution like it. It passed with such breakneck speed – at such inflationary cost, with such ruthless self-interest, that a whole art form was sundered and consigned to history almost before anyone could count the cost in economic terms or guess the consequences in human ones and certainly before anyone could keep an adequate record of it. There has never been such a lightning re-tooling of an entire industry – even wartime emergencies were slower nor such a wholesale transformation in the shape and acceptance of new forms of mass entertainment...the shape and especially the sound of cinema movies today was decoded during those few years. Not in any cool-headed rational fashion, but amidst unbelievable confusion, stupidity, ancient ambition and greed. (pp. 201-202)

Cahn and Chaplin's decision to work for Vitaphone was to hone their ability to write quickly and for a variety of singers. The years spent writing special material for the Vitaphone shorts provided invaluable lessons in a relentless schedule of compositions. Cahn was constantly reminded:

We don't want 'em good, we want 'em by Tuesday. (Cahn, 1974:23)

Initially the executives of Warner Brothers Studio were not convinced about the future of talking films. They considered that music was the way to offer sound. An entire office building on the First National Vitaphone lot was devoted to songwriters under contract.

Cahn was always to acknowledge that working for the Warner Brothers subsidiary was one of the most important factors that shaped his career and cemented a working relationship with Saul Chaplin, based on mutual respect, despite the fact that Cahn took the initiative, providing the lyrics and prompting Chaplin to write melodies accordingly. In his autobiography, *The Golden Age of Movie Musicals and Me*, Saul Chaplin expresses his frustration over not being giving credit for anything other than being an accompanist to Cahn's demonstrations of the songs, although he concedes that Cahn's confidence was irresistible, and his ability to "sell" a song was without equal. Chaplin records in his book the advice given them by the Head of the Music Department at Columbia, Morris Stoloff:

Don't play the songs for them for at least two weeks. Otherwise they'll expect you to be this fast always, and someday you might need more time and they won't let you have it. The other thing to remember is that most people think that if you wrote something this quickly, it can't be any good. So wait. (Cahn, 1974:15)

While Chaplin might have welcomed having more time to compose, Cahn pursued a relentless pace, resulting in hundreds of songs which would ultimately make him the most successful lyricist in cinema history.

By the time Jolson's next film, *The Singing Fool*, was released in 1928, Warner Brothers had ensured that their entire chain of theatres was equipped with Vitaphone sound systems. The premiere of the film was at New York's Winter Garden, where Jolson had performed many of his Broadway shows. Jolson, who was in the audience, wept as he received a standing ovation, but it was the new songs, written for the film by the song-writing team of DeSylva, Brown and Henderson, that allowed Jolson to show both his singing and acting abilities to full advantage. For the first time, song was wedded to the dramatic content of the story and, as such, the film was an improvement on *The Jazz Singer*. Cahn, too, had the ability of writing lyrics to suit the style and personality of the performer. From the glorious voice of Mario Lanza to the "girl-next-door" Doris Day, Cahn tapped into a repertoire of words and moods that created the emotional impact of an unforgettable few moments on film.

By 1929 sound had supplanted the silent film, but had proved to be a disaster for vaudeville. American audiences now demanded talking film, and studios were competing to purchase existing plays and songs,

while commissioning new ones from Broadway's composers. Many vaudeville stars offered their acts to Vitaphone to film in exchange for a single payment, which had the effect of hastening the end of vaudeville. But many of those stars found it difficult to adapt to the new format, while orchestra musicians were no longer required to provide a live score.

Fox studios, however, seized the opportunity of using Vitaphone to present newsreels, which included celebrities and politicians. In *A Song in the Dark: The Birth of the Musical Film*, film historian Richard Barrios writes that most of the major studios (including MGM, Paramount and Universal) met behind closed doors and secretly agreed that "the threat of sound should be officially ignored, abrogated, or at least forestalled as long as possible." (p. 32)

But the success of *The Jazz Singer* was to alter film sound forever. There was now a public demand for talking films; even the mediocre part-talkies were attracting audiences.

Metro Goldwyn Mayer had been the last of the major studios to adapt to sound production. Its early success had been largely due to the control of the studio head, Louis B. Mayer, who combined a shrewd head for business with an unerring eye for talent. With Mayer in control of all producers, he could balance MGM's output of budget films and prestige productions. His passion for singers was encouraged by Production Chief, Irving Thalberg, who was convinced that musicals would be the perfect medium for sound, with new techniques for sound editing and pre-recorded soundtracks providing for more adventurous camera angles. Early sound cameras were stationary, which meant that movie musicals could not include effective dance sequences, but dance director Busby Berkeley reshaped musical theatre by synchronizing images to sound, which allowed cameras to move on custom-built booms and monorails. MGM continued to produce excellent musicals, providing a vehicle for stars such as Fred Astaire, Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra. Cahn would eventually write for all three of them, despite their different talents, but it was his association with Frank Sinatra that was to earn Cahn three of his four Oscars.

The 1930s and 40s were the great decades for the film musical, born through the worst depression in modern time, and which provided Americans with an immediate and accessible escape route from bread-lines and dole queues. The musical could also circumvent the Hays Code with its endless lists of "Shalt Nots". One of these was that "dancing in general is recognised as an art and a beautiful form of expressing human emotions. But dances which suggest or represent sexual actions, whether performed solo or with two or more, dances intended to excite the emotional reaction of the audience... violate

decency and are wrong.” (Bergan, 1985:57-81) But Hollywood musicals of the 1920s were pre-Hays and tended to ignore plot in favour of stars, dance numbers and popular songs.

But the advent of the talking movies brought about renewed pressure for stricter controls. In the early 1920s three major scandals had rocked Hollywood; the manslaughter trial of Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle, thought to have killed actress Virginia Rappe; the murder of director William Desmond Taylor whose revelations about his bisexuality had been nothing short of sensational; and the death of actor Wallace Reid, suspected of drug abuse. Tinsel-town was decidedly tarnished, and the public outcry over perceived immorality brought about the creation in 1922 of the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors Association, headed by Will H. Hays, a popular and well-connected Republican lawyer. By 1927, Hays had compiled a list of topics which he considered Hollywood would be wise to avoid.

In his Production Code he enumerated three main principles:

No picture shall be produced that will lower the moral standard of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.

Correct standards of life, subject only to the requirements of drama and entertainment, shall be presented.

Law, natural or human, should not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation.

In addition to the general principles, there were specific restrictions:

Nudity and suggestive dances were forbidden

The ridicule of religion was forbidden, and ministers of religion were not to be represented as comic characters or villains

The depiction of illegal drug use was forbidden, as well as the use of liquor “when not required by the plot or for proper characterisation”

Methods of crime (e.g. safe-cracking, arson, smuggling) were not to be explicitly presented

References to alleged “sex perversion” (such as homosexuality) and venereal disease were forbidden, as were depictions of childbirth

Murder scenes had to be filmed in a way that would discourage imitations in real life and brutal killings could not be shown in detail

The sanctity of marriage and home had to be upheld. Adultery and illicit sex, although recognised as sometimes necessary to the plot, could not be explicit or justified and were not supposed to be presented as an attractive option

Portrayals of miscegenation were forbidden

“Scenes of Passion” were not to be introduced when not essential to the plot. “Excessive and lustful kissing” was to be avoided, along with any other treatment that might “stimulate the lower and baser element”

The flag of the United States was to be treated respectfully, and the people and history of other nations were to be presented “fairly”

The treatment of “Vulgarity” defined as “low, disgusting, unpleasant, though not necessarily evil, subjects” must be “subject to the dictates of good taste.” Capital punishment, “third- degree methods,” cruelty to children and animals, prostitution and surgical operations were to be handled with similar sensitivity.

The language section banned various words and phrases that were considered to be offensive.

Cahn tells the story of his lyrics “To Love and be Loved” from the 1958 film *Some Came Running*:

I wanted to say “To sleep in your arms is the goal I pursue” - they would not let me say “to sleep in your arms” censorship-wise. So the song says “To stay in your arms is the goal I pursue”. (Cahn to Holloway, 1986)

To love – and be loved
That’s what life’s all about
Keeps the stars coming out
What makes a sad heart sing – the birds take wing.

To love and be loved
That’s what living is for
Makes me want you the more, the more we cling.

Let others race to the moon
Through time and space to the moon
My goal is greater than this
To reach your lips, to share your kiss

To stay in your arms
Is the dream I pursue
To be sheltered and safe from the storm
To be cozy and ever so warm

And for always to love
And be loved by you

The Production Code had no effective means of enforcement, so an amendment, known as the Production Code Administration, came into being on June 13, 1934, which required that all films obtain a certificate

of approval, before being released. The film studios worked within the confines of the Production code until the late 1950s, when movies faced serious competition from television and from foreign films that were not controlled by the Production Code. Films were released without a certificate of approval, despite themes that violated the code. Enforcement became impossible and the Code was abandoned in favour of the rating system: G for General audience, M for Mature content, R was Restricted (no one under 17 permitted without an adult) and X for sexually explicit content.

MGM's first multi-million dollar musical was to star Frank Sinatra in the film *Anchors Aweigh*. Cahn describes in his autobiography how Joe Pasternak had quizzed Sinatra about his choice of songwriter. After all, he could opt for Kern, Gershwin, Rodgers and Hart...

Frank said casually, "Sammy Cahn". Silence. Then: "Sammy Cahn? We don't mind hiring him but who is he?" Frank said, still very cool, "Since you aren't doing the singing, and I am, let me be the judge of who writes the words I sing."

MGM wasn't quite ready for this, and the first of the many Sinatra scenes unreel. It came to such an impasse that Lew Wasserman, Head of MCA, came to me to plead, "Unless Frank gives in, he'll lose the picture. Won't you talk with him?"

I of course went to Frank and said, "Frank, you've already done enough for me. Why don't you pass on this one? There'll be others."

He looked at me – and this is where it will always be between us – and said: "If you're not there Monday, I'm not there Monday."

I was there Monday. So was he. (p. 91)

Cahn's lyrics, with music by Jule Styne, for the 1944 film *Anchors Aweigh*, were to win another Academy Award Nomination.

I fall in love too easily
 I fall in love too fast
 I fall in love too terribly hard
 For love to ever last

My heart should be well-schooled
 'Cause I've been fooled in the past
 And still I fall in love too easily
 I fall in love too fast

My heart should be well-schooled
 'Cause I've been fooled in the past
 And still I fall in love too easily
 I fall in love too fast

“I Fall In Love Too Easily” with music by Jule Styne and lyrics by Sammy Cahn.

It took a talent such as Frank Sinatra to turn those words into a glorious song, and so began a professional relationship with Cahn that was to last many years. Cahn is attributed to “having put more words into Frank Sinatra’s mouth than any other man”. (Cahn, 1974:87)

The growing popularity of Frank Sinatra had no effect on Cahn’s writing style. He wrote the Sinatra lyrics with the usual casual speed and everyday vernacular, and their partnership was to prove beneficial for both, with Sinatra singing three of the four of Cahn’s Oscar-winning songs: “Three Coins in the Fountain”, “High Hopes” and “All the Way”.

Cahn had the opportunity to write for the popular singers of the time. His past successes did not go unnoticed by the studios, nor did the ease with which he wrote, irrespective of his collaborator. His lyric-writing was a process helped by a good story-line, an understanding of the requirements of the director and producer, the range and style of the star and the skill of the composer. He delighted in “romancing the vernacular”, and his lyrics resonated with an honest simplicity that made them accessible to both performers and listeners. Many of his contemporaries considered that writing for stage was creatively more challenging than writing for films. Lyrics needed to be heard at the back of the theatre, and use was made of notes with long open vowels – “oohs” and “aahs” – that would carry. The popular singers of the time, such as Ethel Merman, so beloved by Cole Porter, could ‘belt out’ a song and repeat a performance for months on end. Composers had the satisfaction of the warm reception of audiences whose clamorous acclaim, night after night, was emotionally, as well as financially, rewarding. Broadway musicians were involved in the production throughout, working with producers and singers and often re-writing material. On opening night, their names might appear above those of the stars. On the other hand, in Hollywood, songwriters had little to say about the manner in which their songs should be delivered. Film historian Richard Barrios notes in *A Song in the Dark*:

The film spectator was deemed on a lower plane than the more sophisticated Broadway equivalent, and songs had to be tailored accordingly. Simpler and more accessible modes of current tunes were held as the prototype for film use. In this formula, lyrics were kept plain and often repetitive, rhyme schemes were obvious, melody and harmony non-adventurous. (p. 9)

There was a general sense that theatre songs had more aesthetic value than those written for films. But, as early as the 1930s, Paramount, Warner Brothers, and RKO were offering audiences sophisticated songs, often spectacularly choreographed. By 1940 MGM had recognised the need to integrate songs as part of the dramatic narrative. These songs could either be presented as “performances”, by actors who portray singers, and sing in auditions, rehearsals or performances, or as “integral” songs which allowed characters to show emotion arising from the situation. Lyricists and composers working in the medium of film were often also providing music as background and title songs. Cahn excelled writing title songs. With a mere outline of the situation and the character, he provided words that would be indelibly linked with the film. A perfect example would be “Three Coins in the Fountain” written with composer Jule Styne. Producer Sol C. Siegel had requested a title song to be called “Three Coins in the Fountain.” When Cahn requested to see the film or read the script in order to establish the storyline, Siegel responded:

“You can't read the script because the script's in Italy!”

“Well then could you give us a tiny clue as to what the film's about?”

He said, “What's the film about? Three girls go to Rome, they throw coins in the fountain, and they hope they'll fall in love.” And he left.

Well he did leave us a title and a clue, so I went to the typewriter, put the piece of paper in the typewriter. Frank Sinatra went on to record the song; it became the title theme of the film; it went on to win the Academy award; it went on to become the Number One song in the Number One picture in the world. [3]

Three coins in the fountain
 Each one seeking happiness
 Thrown by three hopeful lovers
 Which one will the fountain bless?

Three hearts in the fountain
 Each heart longing for its home
 There they lie in the fountain
 Somewhere in the heart of Rome

Which one will the fountain bless?
 Which one will the fountain bless?

Three coins in the fountain
 Through the ripples how they shine
 Just one wish will be granted
 One heart will wear a Valentine

Make it mine!
 Make it mine!
 Make it mine!

An important phrase in my avowed proposal is “the enactment of request”. Cahn had developed a formula for writing lyrics, developed through the years of scripting special material for Vitaphone short films. His ingenious rhyming, his use of repetition, his ability to create verbal images became trademarks of his work.

Did you say ‘I’ve got a lot to learn?’
 Well, don’t think I’m trying not to learn,
 Since this is the perfect spot to learn,
 Teach me tonight.

Starting with the ‘A,B,C’ of it,
 Right down to the ‘X,Y,Z’ of it,
 Help me solve the mystery of it,
 Teach me tonight.

The sky’s a blackboard high above you,
 If a shooting star goes by,
 I’ll use that star to write I love you,
 A thousand times across the sky.

One things isn’t very clear, my love,
 Should the teacher stand so near, my love?
 Graduation’s almost here, my love,
 Teach me tonight.

Cahn describes the background to “Teach Me Tonight” which he wrote with Gene de Paul:

Which comes first - the words or the music? Always the phone call. One day the phone rang in my office and it was a buddy of mine called Ed Traubner to say, “Would you please write a song with Gene de Paul? It would cheer up Gene de Paul if you would write a song with him.”

So Gene de Paul came out to the studio. We had a bit of lunch, he went to the piano and I said, "Gene, shoot your best shot."

"Would you mind playing that just a little bit slower, Gene, please?"

"Say Gene, what do you think of this for an idea for a song? "Teach me Tonight."

Did you say I've got a lot to learn, not to learn, spot to learn, how to learn - teach me tonight."

He seemed to like the idea, so I said, "Well what comes first in teaching is the ABC, so starting with the ABC, working right down to the XYZ, it would help me solve a mystery, teach me tonight.

Next in teaching, you have chalk on the blackboard, so the sky's a blackboard high above you, should a shooting star go by, I'll use that star to write I love you, a thousand times across the sky.

And finally, in teaching, you have graduation: so one thing isn't clear my love, should the teacher stand so near my love, graduation's almost here my love and we had a song.

(Cahn to Holloway, 1986)

Cahn retained an ability to write lyrics for over fifty years, through the various musical changes of Dixieland, Ragtime, Boogie-Woogie, Swing, creating songs for a changing market. His most successful lyrics, in terms of Academy Award winnings songs, were written in the 1950s and 1960s, by which time Cahn had been working professionally for over thirty years. With time, he had matured as a lyricist and his intimate knowledge of the demands of the film studios, coupled with the idiosyncrasies of the stars, had fuelled his enthusiasm. The studios wanted his work and Cahn delivered with speed.

I had been writing "material" for acts for years, and it was this constant turning out of special lyrics for special occasions that has, I believe, helped my facility, and if I may boast just a little, my tremendous speed with lyrics. I am sure that there are many who might have written these lyrics better, but none faster! (Sheet Music Magazine, June/July, 1988) [4]

Cahn's confidence in his ability to write never wavered. He was motivated by both an interest in, and enjoyment of, writing, even for the sake of writing, while appreciating the external rewards that were derived from his successes. The approval and acceptance of his peers, plus the financial gains of producing award-winning songs, were potent stimuli. Cahn responded to the challenge of "romancing the

vernacular”, writing lyrics quickly, but in the knowledge that his work would receive both reward and recognition. Cahn’s response to the question: Which comes first, the words or the music? has always been: the telephone call. His passion, commitment and love of words were employed with a critical detachment when under pressure.

His lyrics are deceptively simple, but he had an intuitive ability to match mood and music, using everyday words that reflected the speech of the average American, but, enhanced by a sweeping melodic line, resonated with romance. His creativity was never at odds with his speed of writing. This made him a valuable and respected studio musician, at a time when studios were competing to produce films that were cost-effective and audience-pleasing.

Cahn’s most productive years were with Saul Chaplin, Jule Styne and Jimmy Van Heusen, but he wrote equally successfully with a number of other composers. Inspiration could come from a title, a bar of music, a complete melody – Cahn displayed amazing adaptability. In his autobiography, he expresses the creative drive to succeed. This drive was partly due to self-gratification; as his successes mounted, so did the financial rewards. Cahn often writes: Now who do I talk money to? His assurance bordered on arrogance, yet it was this confidence that gave him the creative freedom to write spontaneously. While fellow lyricists such as Ira Gershwin and Lorenz Hart were carefully crafting their phrases, Cahn appears to have seized upon an idea and written with apparent ease, an ease he retained as he moved from the medium of writing for vaudeville to Vitaphone and, finally, for films, an environment in which he was to flourish.

Notes:

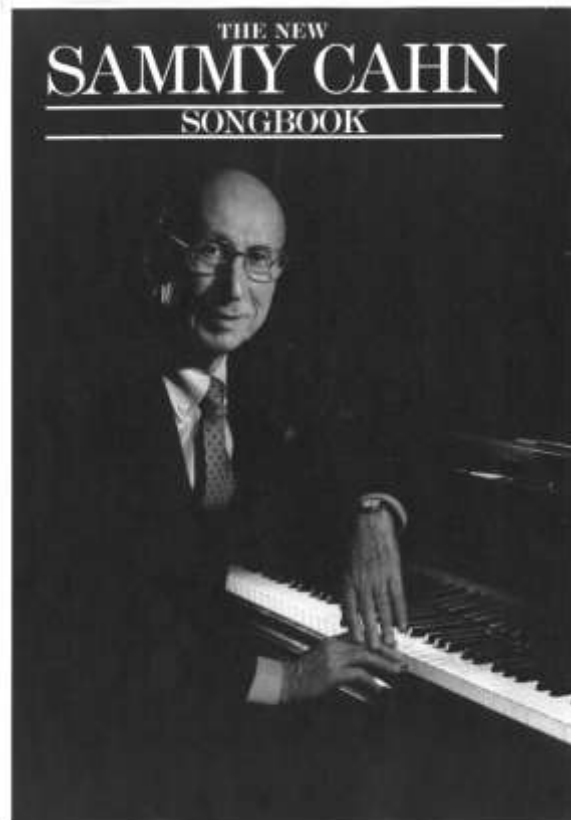
[1] In the early 1920s, Western Electric was developing sound-on-film and sound-on-disc systems. Warner Brothers opted for the disc technology and re-named the format, Vitaphone. The studio introduced Vitaphone to the public on August 26, 1926, with the release of the silent film, *Don Juan*, which had been linked to a musical score and sound effects. Sam Warner struggled to persuade his brother, Harry Warner, that sound was to be the future of the film industry. With Harry's agreement *The Jazz Singer* premiered, a year later, on October 6, 1927 at the Warner Theatre in New York City, and established Warner Brothers as the major film studio in Hollywood.



[2] Saul Chaplin and Sammy Cahn (courtesy Mrs Tita Cahn)



[3] Henry and Marilyn holding the Oscar for “Three Coins in the Fountain”



[4] Sheet Music Magazine June/July, 1988

CHAPTER 3

Cahn and Collaborators

When somebody loves you,
It's no good unless he loves you
All the way.

I believe that a word is only as great as the note it sits under and all my life I have been blessed with great notes. I believe that the art of matching words and music is a very special business.

In a career spanning over fifty years, Sammy Cahn would enjoy a number of successful partnerships with composers, each of whom drew different elements from Cahn's lyrical repertoire.

By exploring the factors that created an environment of co-operation, a picture emerges of a man whose overwhelming self confidence could become a destructive force, yet, when he did find a partner whose creativity matched his own, that teamwork took him to the height of his profession.

Cahn's awards were the result of his collaboration with Jule Styne and Jimmy Van Heusen, but various composers contributed to his success, and the singers who performed his songs were destined for greatness, irrespective of the composers.

With a single-mindedness that belied his youth, Cahn left home at the age of sixteen to pursue his ambition to write songs. "Shake Your Head From Side To Side" was the only song for which he wrote words and music, and it was bought by music publishers, Judd and Brown. This first success so encouraged Cahn that, together with his young collaborator, Saul Kaplan, he managed to write ten songs a day. He writes in *I Should Care*: I believe that songwriting should be a joyful experience. (p. 46)

He was working at the time when the film industry had adopted sound; piano production was on the increase with a subsequent demand for sheet music; the advent of radio and the availability of phonograph records all helped develop the music industry. Cahn had been exposed to the changes in musical trends from ragtime, the blues and boogie-woogie to jazz and swing. In discussion with me in 1986, he described New York City as "both a Mecca and a melting pot" and that he "was in the right place at the right time." I believe that part of his success was both his ability to absorb and adapt. He never lost his enjoyment of writing. The approval and acceptance of peers, plus the financial gains of producing award-

winning songs, were potent stimuli. Cahn responded to the challenge of writing lyrics quickly, but in the knowledge that his work would receive reward and recognition. Cahn's response to the question: What comes first, the words or the music? has always been "The telephone call."

In Cahn's autobiography, there are many gleeful extracts of how Cahn negotiated the contracts. Sheet music produced useful revenue; writers received three cents for every copy sold. Cahn negotiated a sliding scale which increased a cent with the sale of every additional 100,000 copies. His first song with Jule Styne was "Five Minutes More" and sold 600,000 copies; "I'll Walk Alone" was printed over one million times, and resulted in the *Time* magazine describing Cahn and Styne as "next to Rodgers and Hammerstein, the most successful songwriting team." (Cahn, 1974:63) Cahn recalls the "deal" for "Three Coins in the Fountain." Frank Sinatra had recorded the song which would become the number one song in the world, in the number one film in the world, and earn the first Academy Award for Cahn and Styne.

In the excitement, giant Twentieth-Century Fox forgot a small detail. They forgot to make a deal for the song. There's nothing on paper – no contract – which means that Jule Styne and Sammy Cahn owned the number one song in the number one picture in the world. Enter Sol C. Siegel.

"Fellas," says Sol in a nice-guy conspiratorial, "we're in great trouble, we forgot to make a deal for the song and –"

"What that means is that *you're* in great trouble," I said with open hands and face.

"You *can't* own the number one song in the number one picture in the world."

"We do," we both said.

Siegel pleaded with us to give the song back. We refused. He pleaded. Jule and I conferred. We gave him *half* the song back... So now, whenever you hear Make it mine! Make it mine! Make it mine!...*Half* of it is ours. And, believe me, that's not so bad. (Cahn, 1974:119)

Cahn's creativity was never at odds with his speed of writing. He was able to produce work that was both appropriate and novel. This made him a valuable and respected studio musician, at a time when studios were competing to produce films that were cost effective and audience-pleasing. The genre of vaudeville with its variety and pace had fascinated Cahn. He had been a regular patron since the age of ten, and played truant from school to attend performances at Loew's Delancey Street Theatre and The Palace Theatre, which was considered by performers to be the most desirable theatre in New York City. To "play the Palace" indicated that an entertainer had reached the pinnacle of a career in vaudeville, and it was here that a youthful Cahn had seen many of the performers for whom he would later write music. These included Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire. Music was an integral part of a vaudeville show and a live

orchestra accompanied nearly every act, providing appropriate music for the strange and curious, in addition to the more sophisticated acts. Cahn writes:

I used to sit behind the orchestra leader and read the music cues off his music and get to feel a sense of show business. I saw all the great stars. I think a sense of vaudeville is very strong in anything I do, anything I write. They even call it a “vaudeville finish” and it comes through in many of my songs. Just sing the end of “All the Way” – “It’s for sure I’m gonna love you, All the way, all the way”, or “Three Coins in the Fountain” – Make it mine! *Make it mine!* MAKE IT MINE! If you let people know they should applaud, they *will* applaud. Maybe that’s why so many singers love to sing my songs. (Cahn, 1974:8)

Cahn’s relaxed style embraced colloquialisms and Americanisms that were popular at the time, and his rhymes ranged from the unpredictable to the sophisticated. Cahn admits that he never used words such as “disparage” or “gentry”, but in “Love and Marriage” found them useful when rhyming with “marriage” and “elemnt’ry”; he writes that he came from a one-syllable neighbourhood, but delights in using “irresponsible”, “unreliable”, “undependable” in “Call Me Irresponsible”; when writing specifically for the perfect diction of Julie Andrews, he linked “adorable” with “Gomorrable”, and “kissable” with “permissible” in “Thoroughly Modern Millie”; with Frank Sinatra, Cahn supplied the internal rhymes that allowed Sinatra to phrase: “Once I get you/ Up there/ Where the air is rarefied” – Cahn knew his singers and their abilities, and, accordingly, wrote to order.

Unlike many of his contemporaries who divided their time between Broadway and Hollywood, Cahn specialised in writing lyrics for songs in films. He made a point of meeting the various studios’ Heads and their producers, and this familiarity created a domain of trust and understanding. Harry Cohn of Columbia Studios was a personal friend, as was Louis B. Mayer of MGM, Jack Warner of Warner Bros and Darryl Zanuck, Head of Twentieth Century Fox. The mutual respect that existed between Cahn and these studio moguls ensured that Cahn and his collaborators were actively engaged in writing. Cahn’s film credits begin in 1937 and end in 1974.

Cahn’s formative years were in New York City where he wrote “special material” for anyone requiring a song, while trying to make contact with the music publishers. In the interview I recorded in 1986, Cahn says:

In the beginning I had to try and open doors to get to the music publishers which was very, very difficult, so I was discouraged many, many times in the beginning. Matter of fact, I remember vividly, I had an appointment with this eminent music publisher and we were to see him at three-o-clock, and we got there at two thirty, and we were waiting very, very anxiously. At two fifty-nine, exactly, Mr Paul Whiteman, the eminent Paul Whiteman, king of jazz, he was a huge man, came walking through the door, and the music publisher looked at me as if to say “What can I do

about this?" And I understood and left brokenhearted, and I promised myself that I would never go to another music publisher unless he sent for me. (Cahn to Holloway, 1986)

In 1933 Cahn's friend, Lou Levy, conveyed the message to Cahn that bandleader Jimmie Lunceford wanted a special band number. Sammy Kahn and Saul Kaplan (as they were known at the time) sat down to write their first song to be published, "Rhythm is our Business."

Rhythm is our bus'ness, rhythm is what we sell,
Rhythm is our bus'ness, bus'ness sure is swell.
If you're feeling blue, rhythm's what you need,
If you've got rhythm, you're sure to succeed.
Rhythm is our bus'ness, rhythm is what we sell.

He's the drummer man in the band.
When he does tricks with the sticks,
The boys in the band all play 'hot licks.'

He plays saxophone in the band.
When he runs up and down the scale,
He's sure to get you 'hot' without fail.

He plays on the bass in the band.
When he slaps on all those strings,
Happiness to you, that's what he brings.

He's the trumpet man in the band.
He's the boy that 'hit 'em high';
He makes you think that he's in the sky.

Jimmie Lunceford, like Cahn, had been influenced by vaudeville, and the effect was reflected in his choice of music. A song such as "Rhythm is our Business" displayed a playfulness and a sense of swing with somewhat bizarre lyrics, and the Decca recording of the song in 1934 brought Cahn and Kaplan to the attention of Jack Kapp, who was Head of Decca Records and who suggested that they write specifically for Decca artists.

Seeing their names in print encouraged the pair to change their surnames from Cohen to Cahn, and from Kaplan to Chaplin. Sammy Cahn describes how he initiated the change:

I said to Kaplan, "You're going to have to change your name."
He bristled and said, "Why? It looks good."

I said, "It doesn't look good at all. Kahn and Kaplan –that's a dress firm."

He said, "Why don't you change your name?"

I said, "That's fair. From now I'll be Cahn with a C."

He said, "Okay. I'll be Caplan with a C."

I said, "Cahn and Caplan, that's still a dress firm. From now on it's Cahn and Chaplin."

(Cahn, 1974:19)

The sixteen-year old Cahn was already making the decisions. The young team ventured into the "We want 'em by Tuesday" world, writing for Decca, and then for Vitaphone shorts to be filmed in Brooklyn by Warner Brothers. They were now billed only by surname "Cahn and Chaplin" in the tradition of Rodgers and Hart, or Gilbert and Sullivan, and the phrase "a Cahn and Chaplin song" took on a new meaning.

We started to write special material. We wrote for comics, for strippers, for snake charmers, for sword swallowers and belly dancers. If it moved we wrote for it. One day the phone rang in our office and it was Roy Mack, a director, to say "Can you fellas write me a ballad for one of these shorts?" and this is indicative of how Saul Chaplin and I used to write.

Say, Saul, what do you think of this for an idea for a song?

This is my first affair, so please be kind.
Handle my heart with care, oh please be kind.
This is all so grand, my dreams are on parade.
If you'll just understand, they'll never, never fade.

Cahn had an intuitive talent that could turn an idea into a song. He described the process:

Writing a song is kind of like a privilege. What I mean is, I don't write a song as much as it writes me and I feel very privileged to be there. (Cahn: Sheet Music Magazine, June/July, 1988)

Cahn could begin with an initial idea and, using a repertoire of learned strategies, create form.

He recognised that the lyric had to inspire the composer, be appropriate for the singer and appeal to the audience. One confusing word and the listener was lost. The language style should be conversational with words that roll off the tongue; matched vowel sounds and consonants were unnecessary if the listener was satisfied by the rhyme. In Cahn's *Rhyming Dictionary*, all entries are based on sound rather than the

literal spelling. He would isolate the last accented vowel sound and determine the number of syllables in his rhyme word and then compile the list alphabetically, so that he could make a selection, for example, from *autograph*, *epitaph*, *belly laugh*, *photograph*, *paragraph*, *better half*, *telegraph*.

Love and marriage, love and marriage
 It's an institute you can't disparage,
 Ask the local gentry
 And they will say it's element'ry.

Cahn recalls his choice of words for "Love and Marriage" which he had written with composer Jimmy Van Heusen:

I don't think I've used the word "disparage" six times in my life. I never use the word "gentry". Even Van Heusen, who has a college degree, didn't come up with words like these.
 (Cahn, 1974:104)

Many of Cahn's songs depended on the AABA formula developed during the first part of the twentieth century, particularly during the Golden Age of Tin Pan Alley, by songsmiths who wrote mostly for musical theatre and then, later, for films. The formula was based on two verses with identical music but different lyrics, a bridge section which was different, both musically and lyrically, and then a return to the melody of the first two verses. This allowed the melody to flow and build to a climax, and to give the song a "shape".

Cahn believed a successful lyric had a strong beginning, and often used time-proven first line options, such as a question, "Did you say I've got a lot to learn?"; a provocative statement, "Love is lovelier the second time around"; a setting, "My kind of town, Chicago is" or offered a visual picture, "Just what makes that little ol' ant, Think he'll move that rubber tree plant".

His lyrics developed from the unknown to the conclusion or solution, in a series of lines arranged in a recurring pattern of metre and rhyme. I consider the song "Teach Me Tonight" to be an excellent example of Cahn's technique where he starts with a question, identifies the problem, then develops the idea and offers a solution.

Did you say I've got a lot to learn?
 Well, don't think I'm trying not to learn,
 Since this is the perfect spot to learn,
 Teach me tonight.

("Teach me Tonight", 1953)

Cahn and Chaplin had all the necessary preconditions for a successful partnership. While still in their teens, and despite the disapproval of their parents, both abandoned their studies to follow a career in music. They acknowledged the influence of vaudeville in shaping their ability; they had penned songs for musical theatre and understood the dictates of Tin Pan Alley and the requirements of sheet music publishers who wanted songs to conform to a formula of 32 bars and be androgynous, so as to appeal to both male and female performers. They had learned to cope with a relentless schedule of composition; their years of writing special material prepared them for any eventuality and would sustain them in Hollywood, and back to New York. Cahn was determined and supremely confident. He had a flair for performing their songs. This flair would cause conflict, yet remain an important part of his success.

Cahn and Chaplin had both worked in New York City as “pluggers” in their teens in vaudeville theatres, sitting amongst the audience to sing a song of the chorus, and encourage audience participation. Pluggers were employed by music publishers during the day, and in theatres and music halls during the evenings. This “plugging” of a song was a cheap but effective way of achieving wide attention. The growth of Tin Pan Alley had co-incided with that of vaudeville. Performers constantly wanted new material to freshen their acts and they would visit the various publishing houses in search of original songs, often demonstrated by their songwriters. Cahn and Chaplin spent their days doing the rounds of the music publishers who rented offices in the Brill Building, in the heart of New York City’s music district. Named after the Brill Brothers, who owned a haberdashery on street level, the eleven-storey building housed various music publishers, in particular Southern Music, Mills Music, Famous Music and Arthur Piantadosi, whom Cahn and Chaplin visited daily, unsuccessfully, with a batch of new songs. The Brill Building was the perfect destination for an aspiring songwriter; a musician could sell a song to a publisher, have it arranged and sheet music copies duplicated, book a demonstration studio, hire musicians and singers, and finally cut a demonstration record, all in the same building. Cahn and Chaplin finally received a breakthrough when they received a call from Georgie Joy of Saintly-Joy Music Company, who wanted to publish “Rhythm Is Our Business”. They were now in demand as they were able to tailor a song to suit the style and range of the performer, or create special material for their exclusive use. They devoted their time to writing for certain Decca artists. Amongst these was Ella Fitzgerald, whose recording of “If You Should Ever Leave” was a huge success; Jimmie Lunceford and his Orchestra recorded “Rhythm Is Our Business”; the Andrews Sisters had their first hit with “Bei Mir Bist Du Schon”. Cahn became a close friend of trumpeter Louis Armstrong, who needed material when playing at the Cotton Club. Cahn writes:

At the Cotton Club most of the songs were written to help work out a piece of business in a show. They had a little boy for an act and needed a way of getting him into the show. I had the idea of a shoeshine boy coming forward through the tables which is how "Shoe Shine Boy" got written in 1936. (Cahn, 1974:160-161)

Cahn was never at a loss for ideas. Connie Immerman of Connie's Inn, a rival club to the Cotton Club but with the same philosophy of providing Black entertainment for White clientele, requested a song for the African-American gospel singer Sister Rebecca Tharpe. Cahn wrote the lyrics for the song "I Bring You Religion On A Mule".

They hired a little white mule. She came riding in on it. Two days later Connie Immerman said to me "You and your ideas!" I said, "Isn't the song stopping the show?" Connie said, "Sure it's stopping the show. Everybody's quitting. Somebody found out that the mule is getting more than the chorus girls." I've never suggested an animal act since. (Cahn, 1974:161)

Cahn derived huge pleasure from demonstrating his songs. His years as a "plugger" had prepared him for what he describes as "the moment of truth". (p.23)

I love to demonstrate my songs. If I didn't get to demonstrate my songs I would go into another business. I must tell you I consider myself the most expensive singer in the world. I walk into the room without an orchestra, make-up or lights. Just me, a little guy with eyeglasses and a moustache to sing a song you've never heard, and if you like what I sing you owe me.

I take my stance, as I always do. I lower my head, one arm goes back, the other comes up, so does my head, and I *lean* in, and I sing. (pp. 23-24)

Throughout his career, Cahn would fastidiously coach the delivery of words, irrespective of the status of the performers who had mixed reactions to his tuition.

Doris Day did not take kindly to his instruction. Despite the fact that Cahn was instrumental in arranging her first screen test which would change her career from band singer to one of the most acclaimed singers of the twentieth century, Doris Day never worked with Cahn again, although she did record many of his songs. Bing Crosby was gracious in rehearsal. When Cahn was demonstrating a song to him, Crosby exclaimed:

"You're pretty good!"

I said to keep up the image, "Pretty good? I'm the best!"

"What about Mack Gordon?"

Mack Gordon was a legendary lyricist.

"Mack Gordon? He's disqualified," I said. "He really sings."

(Cahn, 1974:162)

Cahn describes the experience of demonstrating a song to Mario Lanza. “It took real chutzpah!” Frank Sinatra was incredulous when Cahn insisted he hit the F in the song “The Tender Trap”. Sinatra had just completed the recording with Nelson Riddle and his Orchestra when Cahn said:

“You can’t finish the song like that!”

Sinatra looked at me and said, “Who can’t finish the song like that?”

I said, “You can’t. You’re supposed to go: You fell in love and love –”

He said, “That’s an F!”

I said, “Yes, and you’re Frank Sinatra.”

Cahn insisted, and Sinatra recalled Nelson Riddle and his Orchestra to repeat the recording to Cahn’s satisfaction.

Cahn and Van Heusen were asked to write the score for the film *Papa’s Delicate Condition*, starring Fred Astaire. Halfway through Cahn’s demonstration of “Call Me Irresponsible”, Astaire halted the singing to say:

“That’s one of the best songs I’ve ever heard.”

Cahn’s response: “That’s one of the best *half* songs you ever heard, and I believe it’s the weaker half!” (Cahn, 1974:166)

This supreme confidence often caused tension between Cahn and his collaborators. Chaplin, in particular, felt that Cahn took the credit for the song, reducing his role to that of an accompanist.

Cahn finally fulfilled his life-long ambition to be a performer when his one-man show, *Words and Music*, opened on Broadway on 16 April, 1974, to rave reviews. Clive Barnes of *The Times* wrote:

Mr Cahn pretends to be a lyricist...But don’t be fooled. Inside every song writer...there is a performer trying to get either in or out...[Sammy Cahn] is undeniably one of the most successful, memorable and happy lyric writers of the last 40 years. His second claim to fame is even more interesting. He is probably the best bad singer in the world...As a singer he has so much style that if God had made him Frank Sinatra, then the world would have been something.
(Cahn, 1974:193-194)

That particular review reduced Cahn to tears. Months later, *Words and Music* opened in London, at the New London Theatre. The critics were enthusiastic:

Sammy Cahn is a great personality, one of the big-hearted Jewish Show Biz Raconteurs. (Antony Thorncroft, *Financial Times*)

A very funny comic...spinner of hilarious stories...a happy, very tuneful evening. (Arthur Thirkell, *Daily Mirror*)

Irresistible...an original type of entertainment...an enchanting hybrid containing the best elements of all. (Benny Green, *The Observer*)

A relaxed, civilised evening. He sends himself up hilariously. (James Green, *Evening News*)

A delightful entertainment. (Ian Christie, *Daily Express*)

In my interview recorded with Sammy Cahn in 1986, he describes the years travelling with his one-man show as the happiest of his career. He was finally totally in control of his lyrics and their delivery.

Saul Chaplin appreciated the mutual benefit of the collaboration, yet in his autobiography, *The Golden Age of Movie Musicals and Me*, Chaplin complains that he never received recognition from Cahn for being anything more than an accompanist, despite the fact that rarely a week passed without them having at least one song on the Hit Parade. The partnership eventually dissolved. Chaplin remained in Hollywood, but moved to Columbia Pictures where he would collaborate with Al Jolson in 1947 to write the million-selling hit “The Anniversary Song”. Another move, this time to MGM, gave him the opportunity to work with Cole Porter on *Kiss Me Kate* (1953) and *High Society* (1956). As a film music supervisor and associate producer, he won Academy Awards for his work on the scores of *An American in Paris* (1951), *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1953) and *West Side Story* (1961). It is ironic that when Sammy Cahn received his first Academy Award in 1954 for “Three Coins in the Fountain”, written with Jule Styne, Chaplin received his first Oscar for *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. Cahn had certainly provided the impetus for a fruitful relationship but it would seem that his overpowering ego dampened Chaplin’s creativity. Once released from the relationship, Chaplin flourished in Hollywood, working with most of the songwriters and performers of the time. In another twist of fate, it was Chaplin who hired Cahn in 1968 to write the title song for the film *Star!* for which Sammy Cahn received an Academy Award Nomination, with composer Jimmy Van Heusen. Cahn and Chaplin remained life-long friends, and it was Cahn who inducted Chaplin into the Songwriters’ Hall of Fame in 1985.

When I met and interviewed Sammy Cahn in his home in Beverly Hills, the most prominent feature in his office was his desk, complete with typewriter and telephone – an almost symbiotic relationship between the two objects. Cahn explained:

There is the typewriter; it sits embodied into the desk, sunken into the desk. I am almost humbled by the fact that I take a piece of paper, put it in the typewriter and I just type. And as I watch myself type I am often humbled by the fact that I am able to do this. Now and then, when a line fights me, I will stop. I will stand up, adjust a framed picture, I will go get a sip of water and then come back to continue to write. It comes so easily to me it is almost, almost embarrassing.
(Cahn to Holloway, 1986)

Years later, my search through the Sammy Cahn Collection at the Margaret Herrick Library in Los Angeles would provide dozens of Cahn's original lyrics, typed, it appears with no alterations. I offer, as an example, the first song that Cahn, aged sixteen, wrote with Kaplan.

From the time that I met you,
I never felt that way I do,
Like Niagara Falls, I'm falling for you!

You did something to my soul,
And I lost my self control,
Like Niagara Falls, I'm falling for you.

And now that you're mine, dear
Everything's O.K.
And I am still yours,
'Till the waters turn around,
And run the other way!

Cupid also played a part,
For his dart went thru my heart,
Like Niagara Falls, I'm falling for you.

These lyrics were found in File 761 of the Sammy Cahn Papers. The many copies of various lyrics sent to me by researcher Joan Cohen show clearly that Cahn seldom, if ever, needed to make corrections to the words.

Joan Cohen had been recommended to me by Jenny Romero, the Co-ordinator of the Special Collections Department at the Margaret Herrick Library in Los Angeles. This Library was the repository for all the

contents of Sammy Cahn's office which had been bequeathed to the Library by Mrs Tita Cahn. Mrs Cahn had graciously permitted me to conduct a long distance search through the various Files which included, among others, the Production files, Television files, Stage files, Biography files, Subject files, Cahn-Chaplin files, and Music Manuscript files.

Mrs Cohen is an experienced researcher who specialises in film musicals and undertook the arduous task of searching through the vast Sammy Cahn Collection, and arranging for photocopying. I had requested funding from UNISA to undertake this research in person, but was obliged to rely on both Joan Cohen and Jenny Romero, and, later, Kristine Krueger from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to carry out my instructions. The process took place over a period of two years.

In 1942, Sammy Cahn embarked on a new phase in his career with the talented composer Jule Styne, the son of Russian immigrants who had emigrated to London and then, in 1912, to the United States where they had settled in Chicago. Here young Julius Stein studied music and, within months, was playing with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and, later, with the Detroit and St Louis Orchestras. Despite his talent, a career as a concert pianist was considered impossible because his hands were too small and, to the dismay of his parents, he began visiting the jazz clubs. His biographer, Theodore Taylor, quotes Styne in the book, *Jule: The Story of Composer Jule Styne*.

Listen, whatever music I write, whatever musical intuition I have, it was all made in Chicago. I've drawn on Chicago for show after show. Between the blacks and the whites you have the whole jazz and big band hall of fame. Think about it; never before and never since has so much musical talent been gathered in any one spot on earth, at any one period. God, it was a feast...
(p. 23)

Stein had his first success as a songwriter in 1927 with the catchy tune "Sunday", which he co-wrote with Ned Miller, Chester Conn and Bennie Kreuger. This hit earned him a place with the well-established Chicago band of Ben Pollack, whose members at various times included Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller and Charlie Spivak. With that debut, he re-named himself Jule Styne.

I'm blue every Monday, thinkin' over Sunday
That one day when I'm with you
It seems that I sigh all day Tuesday
I cry all day Wednesday
Oh my, how I long for you
And then comes Thursday
Gee it's long, it never goes by

And Friday makes me feel
 Just like I'm gonna die
 But after pay day, it's my fun day
 I shine all day Sunday
 That one day when I'm with you

By the late 1920s, Jule Styne was not only playing piano for Pollack, and, later, his own band, but composing songs. In 1934, he moved to New York City where he became a vocal coach for the Broadway entertainer, Harry Richman. This experience helped him move to Hollywood where he was employed by Twentieth Century Fox Film Studios as a vocal coach to stars such as Shirley Temple, Tony Martin and Alice Faye. But Styne wanted to compose and took a drastic cut in salary when he moved to Republic Studios, where he was to write cowboy songs for Roy Rogers and Gene Autry. But it was here that he met Sammy Cahn. Cahn recalls the occasion:

From the beginning it was fun. He went to the piano and played a complete melody. I listened and said, "Would you play it again, just a bit slower?" He played and I listened. I said again, "One more time, just a little bit slower." I then said, "I've heard that song before"—to which he said, bristling, "What the hell are you, a tune detective?" "No," I said, "that wasn't a criticism, it was a title: I've heard that song before."

It seems to me I've heard that song before;
 It's from an old familiar score,
 I know it well, that melody.

It's funny how a theme recalls a favourite dream,
 A dream that brought you so close to me.

I know each word because I've heard that song before,
 The lyric said "Forever more."
 Forevermore's a memory.

Please have them play it again,
 And I'll remember just when I heard that lovely song before.
 ("I've Heard That Song Before", 1942)

Styne was to become both a versatile and prolific songwriter, but his initial collaboration with Sammy Cahn was short-lived. Once the music for the film *Youth on Parade* was written, Styne moved on to

another score, this time working with Frank Loesser. But the Harry James recording of “I’ve Heard That Song Before”, sung by Helen Forrest, was a huge success, which re-united Cahn and Styne.

Cahn had always drawn inspiration from various sources and, as the United States had entered World War II, he turned his attention to charting the course of the war. Once again, a title provided the outline. “Five Minutes More” went on to sell 600,000 copies, followed by the million-seller “I’ll Walk Alone” and, in 1945, “It’s Been a Long, Long Time”. Cahn recalls somewhat wryly that in suggesting to Styne that the lyrics could be: “Just kiss me once, then kiss me twice, then kiss me once again/ It’s been a long, long time” that he was offering him *half* the song.

Just kiss me once
Then kiss me twice
Then kiss me once again,
It’s been a long, long time.

Haven’t felt like this, my dear
Since can’t remember when,
It’s been a long, long time.

You’ll never know how many dreams I dreamed about you
Or just how empty they all seemed without you

So, kiss me once,
Then kiss me twice,
Then kiss me once again,
It’s been a long, long time.

The song-writing team of Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne was now one of the most successful in film history. [1] They developed a routine for work: Cahn would hand Styne a piece of paper with a title or verse. They would work independently and then merge their efforts. Biographer, Theodore Taylor, quotes Styne as saying:

I swear to God that Sammy must have been thinking all day and all night. Even when he had a girl in his arms, he must have been thinking about a lyric. He could write things in a minute. He was incredibly fast. Sammy wanted to stay in action, not sit in creative loneliness like a Loesser or Alan Lerner. Sammy would be bent over the typewriter, answer the phone, “Yeh, I’ll have the broads tonight,” hang up, and go right on with the lyric, usually a good one. Incredible man. He never wanted to leave me without an idea for a song. (Taylor, 1979:90)

But it was Styne's limbering up on the piano that resulted in the song "It's Magic" which launched Doris Day. Cahn and Styne had been asked to write the songs for the film *Romance on the High Seas* and, while Styne was warming up with his usual waltz-into-tango sequence, Cahn, who needed a song for a nightclub sequence in Cuba, said to Styne:

"What's that?"

Jule said, "Just something I've been playing for two years."

"Play it again, slowly." And he did.

"Once more, slower." He did, and we wrote "It's Magic."

You sigh, the song begins
You speak and I hear violins
It's magic.

The stars desert the skies
And rush to nestle in your eyes,
It's magic.

Without a golden wand or mystic charms
Fantastic things begin when I am in your arms.

When we walk hand in hand
The world becomes a wonderland,
It's magic.

How else can I explain
Those rainbows when there is no rain,
It's magic.

Why do I tell myself
These things that happen are all really true
When in my heart I know the magic is my love for you.

While Styne's "limbering up" tango inspired the song "It's Magic", which was nominated for an Academy Award in 1948, his daily practice of the waltz prompted Cahn to question:

"Hey, Jule, has there ever been a Christmas waltz?"

He said no. I said, "Play that waltz of yours." He did so. "Again, Jule, just a little slower." He played slower. "Just a little slower please, Jule." He slowed it way down, and I started writing the song that begins:

Frosted window panes
 Candles gleaming inside
 Painted candy canes on the tree
 Santa's on his way, he's filled his sleigh with things
 Things for you and for me.

It's that time of year
 When the world falls in love,
 Every song you hear seems to say,
 Merry Christmas, may your New Year dreams come true
 And this song of mine
 In three quarter time
 Wishes you and yours
 The same things too.

Cahn had been uneasy about writing "a Christmas song". In 1942, Irving Berlin had written "White Christmas", destined to become the most successful single of all time, but Frank Sinatra had requested a Christmas song, and Cahn was not in a position to refuse. "The Christmas Waltz" was recorded by Sinatra in 1954. [2] The same year Cahn and Styne were to receive their first Academy Award.

Styne and Cahn were under contract to Twentieth Century Fox.

One day the door opened and in walked Sol C. Siegel, the producer, to say, "Can you fellas write me a song called "Three Coins in the Fountain?"

I said, "I can write you a song called 'Eh'."

He said, "Don't be funny. We need a song called "Three Coins in the Fountain" because the New York office wants to call the film *We Believe in Love*."

I said, "Can we see the picture please?"

He says, "You can't see the picture please! The picture is all over the lot! The dubbing, the looping, the scoring the picture, you can't see the picture."

"How about if we read the script?"

He says, "You can't read the script because the script's in Italy!"

"Well then could you give us a tiny clue as to what's the film about?"

He said, "What's the film about? Three girls go to Rome, they throw coins in the fountain, and they hope they'll fall in love." And he left.

Styne often claimed that the lyrics were more important than the music. He was generous in giving credit to both collaborators and singers. Throughout his long career, he was known for his fastidious and careful craftsmanship, and his ability to tailor his music to suit the vocal talents of his performers. He succeeded in persuading Sol C. Siegel to change the name of the film to *Three Coins in the Fountain*, but the song “Three Coins in the Fountain” was about to put Styne’s patience to the test. Cahn had given him the words:

Three coins in the fountain
Each one seeking happiness
Thrown by three hopeful lovers
Which one will the fountain bless.

Styne produced a melody which Cahn wanted repeated three times. Styne was incredulous and requested a bridge to serve as a link. Cahn’s response:

You know something Jule? This is a typewriter, it’s a typewriter. It can only type the same line twice the same way. You happen to have a piano. How about trying to help it?

Styne changed his music.

Frank Sinatra recorded the song, which became the Academy Award Winner for 1954, bringing Cahn and Styne their first Oscar. [3] It seems ironic that the only song that Cahn found frustrating and difficult to write would be his first Oscar-winner. It was an example of the combined efforts of composer, lyricist and performer, and Cahn had the good fortune to enjoy lasting associations with talented musicians and singers, and, in particular, with Frank Sinatra, who would sing three of Cahn’s Academy Award winners.

While a rift between Cahn and Styne had been created, and Styne decided to return to New York City and focus on writing for theatre, Cahn’s relationship with Sinatra was to strengthen through his new collaboration with Jimmy Van Heusen.

Van Heusen, who was born Edward Chester Babcock in 1913, changed his name to James (Jimmy) Van Heusen, prompted by a bill-board for Phillips-Van Heusen shirts and then re-located from Syracuse to New York City, where he would work in Tin Pan Alley. Success came when he teamed up with lyricist Johnny Burke and began writing for Paramount Pictures and, in particular, for Bing Crosby, the most

popular American singer at the time. In 1944, Van Heusen, working with Burke, received his first Oscar for the song “Swinging on a Star”, sung by Bing Crosby in the film *Going My Way*. Burke remained with Paramount Studios until his death in 1964. During the years of Burke’s illness, Van Heusen and Cahn had formed a successful collaboration.

Chapter 10 of Cahn’s autobiography begins:

I’m never “with song”, like “with child”, but in forty years it has never, never deserted me. If people don’t ask “Which comes first, the music or the words?” they ask, “Where do you get ideas for your songs?”

The process is so elusive. There seem channels of disaster everywhere. A movie or show with a good script or ‘book’ (story) helps, of course. The personality and the role of the star, the need of the producer and the director, they all add in. Mostly, though if a fella sits down at a piano and plays a pretty melody, sooner or later, it comes for me.

James Van Heusen really knows how to lure a lyric out of these bones. He’s patient and will play the melody in every form – light, heavy, quick, slow. After that we *know* if it doesn’t come, we close the piano and walk away. In the case of “The Tender Trap”, the title started it off and so the lyrics came before the music. (Cahn, 1974:101)

“The Tender Trap” was the first song that Cahn would write with Jimmy Van Heusen.

One day the phone rang and it was Frank Sinatra to say, “I’m doing a film called *The Tender Trap*. We need a title song.”

Now when I hear the word “trap” I hear the word “snap” and the song is finished.

I went to Jimmy Van Heusen’s home, I went to the typewriter and I typed:

You see a pair of laughing eyes
And suddenly you’re sighing sighs,
You’re thinking nothing’s wrong
You string along, boy, then snap!

I was about to say ‘You’re in the tender trap’ but something made me add:

Those eyes, those sighs,
They’re part of the tender trap.

I gave the lyric to Mr Van Heusen who proceeded to write one of the worst melodies you ever heard. But it was our first assignment and I didn't say a word.

I went home that night and I was really troubled by this melody, but the next day, to his eternal credit, Van Heusen said, "Sam, that tune I played last night wasn't very good, was it?"

I said, "Wasn't very good? That's one of the worst."

He said, "Listen to the way it goes today."

You're hand in hand beneath the trees
 And soon there's music in the breeze
 You're acting kind of smart
 Until your heart just goes whap!
 Those trees, that breeze,
 They're part of the tender trap.

Some starry night,
 When her kisses make you tingle,
 She'll hold you tight
 And you'll hate yourself for being single.

And all at once it seems so nice,
 The folks are throwing shoes and rice,
 You hurry to a spot
 That's just a dot on the map!
 You wonder how it all came about
 It's too late now, there's no getting out
 You fell in love
 And love is the tender trap.

Cahn maintained that "singability" was the most important consideration when writing lyrics, and he and Van Heusen were often at odds over the words. Van Heusen had been accustomed to the painstaking writing of Johnny Burke; he did not care to work at Cahn's pace and would often privately rewrite his melody. But their first song together "The Tender Trap" was nominated for an Academy Award in 1955, and it seemed that "Cahn's meat-and-potatoes lyrics and Van Heusen's polka-dot and moonbeams" music (Cahn, 1974:104) were destined for great things.

In 1954, Frank Sinatra suggested that Cahn and Van Heusen do the score for a television special, based on the Thornton Wilder play, *Our Town*, starring Sinatra, with Eva Marie Saint and a young Paul Newman. The first act is called “The Daily Life” and the second act is “Love and Marriage”.

I turned to Jimmy and said, “Since we’re doing a musical, Mr Van Heusen, would you *please...?*” Whereupon he went to the piano and started thumping out oom-pah, oom-pah which led to:

Love and marriage/ Go together like a horse and carriage
 Love and marriage/ It’s an institute you can’t disparage...
 Ask the local gentry/ And they will say it’s element’ry

I don’t think I’ve used the word “disparage” six times in my life. I never use the word “gentry.”

Speaking of unlikely words born of the necessity of rhyme, we once also needed a rhyme for “lady.” Well there are very few rhymes for “lady.” What are you going to use? “Shady?” “Brady?” I came up with “Tipped his straw cady.”

Van Heusen said, “What? Cady? What the hell is that?”

I said, “Look it up. It means “tipped his straw hat.” I’m still damned if I knew where I got that from.

Songs can and do come out of the most inane lines. (Cahn, 1974:104)

From Van Heusen’s “oom-pah, oom-pah” came the first song ever to win an Emmy award: “Love and Marriage”, sung by Frank Sinatra.

Love and marriage, love and marriage
 Go together like a horse and carriage,
 This I tell ya, brother,
 Ya can’t have one without the other.

Love and marriage, love and marriage,
 It’s an institute you can’t disparage,
 Ask the local gentry,
 And they will say it’s element’ry.

Try, try, try to separate them,
 It’s an illusion,
 Try, try, try
 And you will only come to this conclusion.

Love and marriage, love and marriage,

Go together like a horse and carriage.
 Dad was told by mother,
 You can't have one,
 You can't have none,
 You can't have one without the other!

Frank Sinatra's career was inexorably linked with that of the big bands. In 1939 he toured with the Harry James Band before being released from his contract to join Tommy Dorsey. In an interview I recorded with George T. Simon, arguably the leading authority on the Big Bands, Simon said:

Duke Ellington's was the most musically creative band...the best all-round dance band was the Tommy Dorsey band...the most underrated band was the Claude Thornhill band...the most exciting band was the Jimmie Lunceford band...the most commercially successful band was the Glenn Miller band. (Simon to Holloway, 1986)

The foreword to Simon's book, *The Big Bands*, (4th Edition) is written by Frank Sinatra, who pays credit to Dorsey:

A singer can learn, should learn, by listening to musicians. My greatest teacher was not a vocal coach, not the work of other singers, but the way Tommy Dorsey breathed and phrased on the trombone. (xiii)

Sammy Cahn writes:

As a trombonist Tommy Dorsey was one of the most total and special instrumentalists that ever lived. It came from his tremendous chest cavity and breath control. Dorsey could take a deep breath and play eighteen bars, two bars beyond the bridge or halfway through the chorus...I believe one of the hidden keys to Sinatra's phenomenal success is his breath control, learned from Dorsey. (Cahn, 1974:88)

Composer/arranger Axel Stordahl was also to take advantage of the meteoric rise of bandleader Tommy Dorsey, whose soaring trombone notes influenced popular music for over a generation. Stordahl joined the Dorsey band in 1935 as third trumpet player and part-time arranger. When he began altering stock arrangements in the band's repertoire, his highly developed harmonic ability did not go unnoticed by Dorsey, and he was soon Dorsey's lead arranger. When the young singer, Frank Sinatra, joined the Dorsey band, Stordahl's sensitive arrangements perfectly matched Sinatra's supple, yearning voice, and, when in 1942, Sinatra left the band to embark on a solo career, Stordahl joined him as his musical director.

Sinatra was set to take the music world by storm, projecting a vulnerable intimacy that was unprecedented in American popular music. Stordahl tailored his arrangements to frame Sinatra's voice; he created the perfect backdrop for the singer and certainly played a major role in his rise to stardom.

In 1944, Stordahl and fellow arranger Paul Weston shared an apartment with Sammy Cahn.

I lived with a gentleman called Axel Stordahl, the great, great arranger with Tommy Dorsey, and Axel Stordahl and Paul Weston were making an arrangement of "I've Heard That Song Before".

As I came into the room, they said,

"Look at him. It takes him fifteen minutes to write a song and it takes us hours to make it sound good."

And I said to them, "Why don't you fellas write a song?"

They said, "We have written a song."

And I said, "Can I hear it?"

They said, "After we write the introduction to *this* song."

And I said, "What kind of an introduction would you like to "I've Heard That Song Before"?"

A long introduction or a short introduction?"

I said, "As far as I'm concerned you can give me one note – " and the Tommy Dorsey arrangement of "I've Heard That Song Before" has a one-note introduction.

So they finished the arrangement and now these two fellas go to the piano and they played. And I said to myself immediately, and this is the God-given talent that I am most grateful for, I can't explain it, I said to myself I would call that "I Should Care".

They finished and I said, "What do you call this song?"

They said, "We don't call it anything."

I said, "You don't have words?"

They said, "No." And I said, "From the top –

I should care
I should go without sleeping
I should care,
I should go without weeping.

Strangely enough I sleep well,

'Cept for a dream or two.
 But then, I count my sheep well,
 Funny how sheep can lull you to sleep.

So, I should care
 I should let it upset me.
 I should care,
 But it just doesn't get me.

Maybe I won't find
 Someone as lovely as you,
 But I should care
 And I do.

The song "I Should Care" was recorded by Frank Sinatra in 1945, and is also the title of Sammy Cahn's Autobiography. Chapter 9 begins: I understand I'm considered to have "put more words into Frank Sinatra's mouth than any other man."

Cahn had an intimate understanding of Sinatra's persona, plus his ability to phrase. Sinatra was an analytical singer who knew just how to inflect a word or syllable to shift rhythm and bring a special sincerity to a song. Both Sinatra and Cahn benefitted from their collaboration. In the 1950s the naturally informal diction of Cahn's lyrics played a large part in building the image of the "loosey-goosey unpredictable ring-a-ding guy" (Lahr, 1997:64) Sinatra had every reason to be confident – he was about to replace Bing Crosby as the greatest singer of all time.

In his autobiography, Cahn describes what he calls "the definitive story" of his relationship with Frank Sinatra. Sinatra had been signed to do the multi-million dollar musical *Anchors Aweigh*, co-starring Gene Kelly and Kathryn Grayson. Joe Pasternak of MGM asked Sinatra whom he would like to do the score and suggested Kern, Gershwin, Rodgers and Hart. Sinatra insisted on using Sammy Cahn, and a partnership was forged that would bring fame and fortune to Sammy Cahn, and three of his four Oscars, "Three Coins in the Fountain" (1954), "All the Way" (1957) and "High Hopes" (1959), were all sung by Frank Sinatra.

Sinatra asked Jimmy Van Heusen and me to do the songs for the film *The Joker Is Wild*, based on the life of the legendary Joe E. Lewis, the comedian, and we had to write a very

special song because when this picture begins Joe E. Lewis is a young entertainer, singing around the nightclubs of Chicago.

When somebody loves you
It's no good unless he loves you
All the way.

Happy to be near you,
When you need someone to cheer you
All the way.

Later in the film when the boys from Chicago leave him almost for dead, he tries to make a comeback singing the same song.

When somebody loves you
It's no good unless he loves you...

And you know he's never going to hit those notes again.

And so the day came for us to sing the song at Frank Sinatra and we were told to go to the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas. When we got to the hotel we were told that Frank Sinatra would hear the song during the breakfast hour. So five-o'clock that afternoon he came out of his bedroom suite looking like all the pictures of Dorian Gray. He saw me and he said, "Listen to you singing before breakfast?"

I said, "Frank, it's a draw. I have to look at you while I'm singing."

He said, "Let me hear the song."

And we gave him the full treatment.

When somebody loves you,
It's no good unless he loves you,
All the way.

Happy to be near you,
When you need someone to cheer you
All the way.

Taller than the tallest tree is,
 That's how it's got to feel;
 Deeper than the deep blue sea is,
 That's how deep it goes,
 If it's real.

When somebody needs you,
 It's no good unless he needs you
 All the way.

Through the good or lean years
 And for all the in-between years,
 Come what may.

Who knows where the road will lead us?
 Only a fool would say.
 But if you let me love you
 It's for sure I'm gonna love you
 All the way,
 All the way.

“All the Way”, from the film *The Joker is Wild* with words by Sammy Cahn and music by Jimmy Van Heusen, won the Academy Award in 1957. [4]

Two years later, Cahn and Van Heusen collected another Academy Award for the song “High Hopes”, introduced by Frank Sinatra and the young Eddie Hodges in the film *A Hole in the Head*. Cahn describes the background to the song in an interview with Spencer Leigh for the BBC, recorded during Cahn's run of his one-man show, *Words and Music*:

Originally I only had the idea for the title: High hopes, high apple-pie in the sky hopes.

That was all I had and then Van Heusen came back with some music, and I said, “No, no. Maybe we should write from the viewpoint of the animals.”

I realised that I had made a faux pas as he had written the best animal song ever in “Swinging on a Star”. We were in a bungalow at Twentieth Century Fox and I looked around and saw a stream of ants. I said, “No, I don't mean animals, I mean insects. Those ants have a sense of fulfilment, going up and down all day. Feller gets a sock on the jaw and, as he falls to the ground, a stream of ants goes past his nose.” What makes the song funny for me is that I have never seen an ant near a rubber tree plant, but when you say

Just what makes that little ol' ant
Think he'll move a...

It can't be anything but rubber tree plant. You can't say "acacia" because the architecture of the song calls for "rubber tree plant." When we sang the song to Sinatra, he laughed and the song became a smash, smash hit, and won the Academy Award for 1959. [5]

Next time you're found
With your chin on the ground
There's a lot to be learned
So look around.

Just what makes that little ol' ant
Think he'll move that rubber tree plant,
Anyone knows an ant can't
Move a rubber tree plant.

But he's got high hopes,
He's got high hopes,
He's got high apple-pie in the sky hopes.
So anytime you're gettin' low
'Stead of lettin' go,
Just remember that ant.
Oops! There goes another rubber tree plant!
Oops! There goes another rubber tree plant!

When troubles call
And your back's to the wall,
There's a lot to be learned,
That wall could fall.

Once there was a silly old ram,
Thought he'd punch a hole in a dam;
No one could make that ram scam,
He kept buttin' that dam.

'Cause he had high hopes,
He had high hopes;
He had high apple-pie in the sky hopes.
So anytime you're feelin' bad,
'Stead of feelin' sad,
Just remember that ram.
Oops! There goes a billion-kilowatt dam!

Oops! There goes a billion-kilowatt dam!

A problem's just a toy balloon
 They'll be bursting soon
 They're just bound to go "Pop!"
 Oops! There goes another problem, kerplop!
 Oops! There goes another problem, kerplop!
 Kerplop!

Cahn believed that the initial "performance" of a song was vital in introducing it, and he derived great pleasure in singing "at" producers and performers.

In my interview with Cahn, he says: "To me the greatest thrill of song-writing is the demonstration of the completed song. I always liked to do it myself. I would stand right in front of Sinatra and I would sing it to him. It was an amazing thing to be doing."

Cahn explains in his autobiography that he had harboured a lifelong ambition to write for Fred Astaire. He was given the opportunity when he was invited, together with Jimmy Van Heusen, to provide the songs for the film *Papa's Delicate Condition*.

"Call Me Irresponsible" was the only song that I wrote for a gentleman called Fred Astaire. One day the phone rang and they were asking me to do a film called *Papa's Delicate Condition*, meaning papa's drinking problem, to star Fred Astaire. I went out to the Paramount Studios to the offices of Robert Emmett Dolan, the producer. He gave us a script by Phoebe and Henry Ephron. And the script dealt with the word "irresponsibly." "He's the most irresponsible man. Did you ever meet anyone as irresponsible as this gentleman?"

One night I turned to Jimmy Van Heusen and said, "Do you like a title, Call Me Irresponsible?"

He said, "How do you mean that?"

I said, "Well:

Call me irresponsible
 Call me unreliable
 Throw in undependable too

We finished that song in about an hour and a half at the best.

But Cahn never had the satisfaction of hearing Astaire sing the song. Astaire was called away by MGM to complete a prior commitment, and the song and the film were abandoned, until seven years later, when Jackie Gleason was chosen to play the role of ‘Papa’. The song went on to win the Academy Award for 1963 and Cahn’s fourth Oscar. [6]

Call me irresponsible,
Call me unreliable,
Throw in undependable too.

Do my foolish alibis bore you?
Well, I’m not too clever
I just adore you.

Call me unpredictable,
Tell me I’m impractical,
Rainbows I’m inclined to pursue.

Call me irresponsible,
Yes, I’m unreliable,
But it’s undeniably true,
I’m irresponsibly mad for you!

The single word “irresponsible” was the inspiration for the award-winning song, which Cahn describes somewhat gleefully allowed him to write lyrics which contained five syllable words: **I bring that to your attention because I come from a one-syllable neighbourhood.** (Cahn to Holloway, 1986)
But Cahn and Van Heusen wrote four more songs, including “Walking Happy.”

Van Heusen and I stayed up until two in the morning, trying every which way to write a good song for a drunk. Finally I turned to him and said, “How would you describe the walk of a drunk? Stumbling? Sloppy? Without cohesion?” We then physically explored every conceivable kind of walk. I acted them out. I must have walked thirty miles that night and was in shock from fatigue when I came home. We had our song when we finally decided a drunk walks “happy”.
(Cahn, 1974:167)

There’s the kind of walk you walk
When the world’s un-done you,

There's the kind of walk you walk
When you're walking proud.

There's the kind of walk you walk
When the neighbours shun you,
There's the kind of walk you walk
That attracts a crowd.

There's the kind of walk you walk
When somebody loves you;
That's very much like walking on a cloud.

Good fortune's found you, Chappie,
And your life's a happy Valentine,
When you're walking happy
Don't the bloomin' world seem fine!

In 1967, Cahn had his first opportunity to write lyrics for Julie Andrews, who had made her debut in 1964 in the film *Mary Poppins*, for which she had received the Academy Award for Best Actress. The following year, *The Sound of Music*, with music by Richard Rodgers and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, was a major commercial success. But when Ross Hunter of Universal Pictures telephoned Cahn to request the title song for the film, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, Cahn exclaimed to Van Heusen:

A title song called "Thoroughly Modern Millie?" Sing it? You can't even say it!

But Cahn recognised that with her perfect diction and pure four-octave voice, Julie Andrews would be able to sing whatever he wrote. But Cahn so disliked the title that he placed it right at the end of the song, unlike his usual scheme of placing the title at the beginning and repeating it regularly.

There are those, I suppose
Think we're mad –heavens knows
The world has gone to wrack and to ruin.
What we think is chic, unique and quite adorable
They think is odd, and Sodom and Gomorrhable but the fact is

Everything today is thoroughly modern
(Check your personality)
Everything today makes yesterday slow
(Better face reality)

It's not insanity, says *Vanity Fair*,
In fact it's stylish to raise your skirts
And bob your hair –

In a rumble seat the world is so cosy
 (If the boy is kissable)
 And that tango dance they wouldn't allow
 (Now is quite permissible)

Good-bye, good goody girl
 I'm changing and how,
 So beat the drums, 'cause here comes
 Thoroughly modern Millie now!

“Thoroughly Modern Millie” went on to win two Gold Records and an Academy Award Nomination for Cahn and Van Heusen in 1967.

While Julie Andrews could cope with crisp consonants and plosives, when Cahn wrote for tenor Mario Lanza he chose words with long vowels to demonstrate the brilliance of Lanza, whose operatic training allowed him to sustain notes. Joe Pasternak of MGM had telephoned Cahn and initiated a meeting with the Russian-born composer, Nicholas Brodsky, who handed Cahn a printed manuscript, titled “Love Theme for Mario Lanza.” Cahn realised that there would be no chance of manipulating the music to suit his lyrics. Cahn was at his most creative when he could write words before the melody was composed. He was always sympathetic to the vocal range and technical abilities of the performer. For most of his career, Cahn was required to supply words to match a theme, title or personality of a singer and, so to some extent, his lyrics were “controlled” by various factors. Cahn was to write a number of songs with Nicholas Brodsky, including “Be My Love”, which earned an Academy Nomination in 1950.

Be my love
 For no one else can end this yearning;
 This need that you and you alone create.

Just fill my arms
 The way you've filled my dreams,
 The dreams that you inspire
 With ev'ry sweet desire.

Be my love,
 And with your kisses set me burning;
 One kiss is all I need to seal my fate,

And hand in hand,
 We'll find love's promised land.

There'll be no one but you, for me eternally,
If you will be my love.

The 1960s would find Sammy Cahn dividing his time writing with both Nicholas Brodsky and Jimmy Van Heusen, who, with lyricist Johnny Burke, had written many songs for Bing Crosby. In 1960 Cahn and Van Heusen were commissioned to compose for the Crosby film, *High Time*.

Jimmy Van Heusen and I are required to write a song for a widower and a widow. Now what kind of song would you write for a widower and widow? I'm glad you're dead you rascal you? You'll be the death of me? One day I turned to Jimmy Van Heusen, I said, "What do you think of a title: *The Second Time Around*?"

And he said, "How do you mean?"

And I said, "Well, you know –"

Love is lovelier the second time around
Just as beautiful with both feet on the ground.

It's that second time you hear your love song sung
Makes you think perhaps that love like youth is wasted on the young.

Love's more comfortable the second time you fall,
Like a friendly home the second time you call.

Who can say what brought us to this miracle we found?
There are those who bet love comes but once, and yet
I'm oh, so glad we met the second time around.

The Cahn/Van Heusen team received another Academy Nomination in 1960 for "The Second Time Around".

Cahn would continue to work with Jimmy Van Heusen throughout the 1960s and, together, they received an additional six Academy Award Nominations, but in 1973 Cahn teamed up with a fellow musician, George Barrie, who was the owner of *Fabergé Incorporated*. Together with an existing cosmetics company, *Rayette*, Barrie had acquired *Fabergé Inc.*, in 1964, for \$26 million. He proved to be both an entrepreneur and a pioneer in the field of cosmetics, using celebrities to promote the company's products. The *Brut* toiletry line became the best selling perfume in the world for men, and was endorsed by friends Cary Grant and Roger Moore, both to become Members of the Board of *Fabergé Inc.* Barrie also established a film-making division, *Brut Productions*. Cahn describes his first meeting with Barrie:

Barrie who likes to play piano even more than I do – wrong, *nobody* likes to play the piano more than I do – sat doodling some bits of melody. One of them was attractive enough for me to ask what he called it. He said he didn't call it anything.

“I think you ought to title your work and record it on cassettes so you can keep track of what you're writing.” He said he would. A bit later Stan Krell, who worked for Barrie, said, “You know, Sam, if you would write a lyric for one of George's tunes, he'd just damn well die!”

I said, “Let him send me a tune and its title and I'll write a lyric, and let's see if he dies.”

Some weeks later a cassette arrived. It was titled “The Happy Hooker” which will teach me to tell people to title their own tunes. Still, title aside, it was a most contagious melody and agreeably suited to a faintly more elegant title, “Touch of Class”. Once I decided on the title, it practically wrote itself.

What he has is pure pizz-zazz
 Plus a touch of class!
 It's all there, that savoir faire,
 Plus a touch of class!
 He walks in and grins that grin
 And they all fall en masse
 Got to be the total he
 Plus a touch of class!

The film *A Touch of Class*, starring Glenda Jackson and George Segal, won the Academy Award for 1973, and Cahn and George Barrie received an Academy Award Nomination for the song “All that Love Went to Waste”, followed in 1974 by another Nomination for the song “Now That We're In Love” from the film *Whiffs*.

Cahn writes:

Barrie may be the chief executive officer of a successful fragrance company, and president of a promising entertainment-producing company, but deep under he's still a musician, a man who'd rather sit around a piano with chums than most anything else. (Cahn, 1974:184)

Cahn's association with Barrie was to be his final collaboration. He fulfilled a lifelong ambition to be a “singer” when, in 1974, he opened his one-man show *Words and Music* at the Golden Theatre on Broadway. [7]

I have harboured a Walter Mitty desire to perform, working it out of my system by the way I deliver my songs when I'm selling them. If, as the Broadway critics most kindly agreed, I am a performer, I here and now confess to them that I have been rehearsing for fifty-one years.

(Cahn, 1974:186)

Words and Music ran for nine months in New York City, after which Cahn toured extensively with the show throughout America, finally moving to the New London Theatre in Drury Lane.

Notes:



[1] Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne at work



[2] Frank Sinatra rehearsing with Cahn and Styne



[3] Composer Dimitri Tiomkon receives an Oscar for the score for *The High and the Mighty*; Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne each receive an Oscar for “Three Coins in the Fountain” at the 27th Academy Award Ceremony, 1954. (From the Academy Awards show photographs collection of the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.)



[4] Maurice Chevalier flanked by Jimmy Van Heusen and Sammy Cahn at the 30th Academy Award Ceremony in 1957. Cahn and Van Heusen received an Oscar for “All the Way”. (From the Academy Awards show photographs collection of the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.)



[5] Jimmy Van Heusen and Sammy Cahn with Oscars for “High Hopes” awarded at the 32nd Academy Award Ceremony in 1959. (From the Academy Awards show photographs collection of the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.)



[6] Sammy Cahn's daughter Laurie, accepts an Oscar on behalf of her father from actress Shirley Jones for the song "Call Me Irresponsible", with music by Jimmy Van Heusen at the 36th Academy Award ceremony, 1963. (From the Academy Awards show photographs collection of the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.)



[7] Henry and Sammy Cahn in his office with a copy of the cover of his *Words and Music* show

CHAPTER 4

Puns and Parodies

Time after time
I tell myself that I'm
So lucky I met Jule Styne.
So lucky that he
Wrote all those notes for me
Notes that made my words seem super-fine!

(Songwriters' Hall of Fame Dinner, Americana Hotel, May 15th, 1972, New York City)

For songwriters the move to Hollywood ensured a regular salary, plus royalties on their songs. The world of Tin Pan Alley was becoming a thing of the past as songs now had their origins in films. Phrases and words that had emerged from Broadway had become part of the American vernacular. In 1919 H.L. Mencken published his dictionary *The American Language* in which he expressed his belief that American English was more colourful than British English. The American public was used to catchphrases such as “wow ‘em”, “take somebody for a ride”, “ain’t it swell” and lyricists, including Sammy Cahn, used these vernacular idioms.

Next time you're found
With your chin on the ground
There's a lot to be learned
So look around.

Just what makes that little ol' ant
Think he'll move that rubber tree plant;
Anyone knows an ant can't
Move a rubber tree plant.

But he's got high hopes,
He's got high hopes;
He's got high apple pie in the sky hopes.
So any time you're gettin' low,
'Stead of lettin' go,
Just remember that ant.
Oops! There goes another rubber tree plant!
Oops! There goes another rubber tree plant!

When troubles call
And your back's to the wall,

There's a lot to be learned,
That wall could fall.

Once there was a silly old ram,
Thought he'd punch a hole in a dam;
No one could make that ram scam,
He kept buttin' that dam.

'Cause he had high hopes,
He had high hopes,
He had high apple pie in the sky hopes.
So any time you're feelin' bad,
'Stead of feelin' sad,
Just remember that ram.
Oops! There goes a billion-kilowatt dam!

So keep your high hopes,
Keep your high hopes;
Keep those high apple pie in the sky hopes.
A problem's just a toy balloon,
They'll be bursting soon,
They're just bound to go 'Pop!'
Oops! There goes another problem, kerplop!
Oops! There goes another problem, kerplop!
Kerplop!

"High Hopes", from the film *A Hole in the Head*, with music by Jimmy Van Heusen and lyrics by Sammy Cahn, won the Academy Award for Best Original Song of 1958. The song was also used as a campaign theme for John F. Kennedy, a personal friend of Frank Sinatra. Van Heusen was sceptical about coping with the name "Kennedy".

Cahn juggled the original lyric and wrote instead:

Just what makes that little 'ol ant/ Think he'll move that rubber tree plant/
Anyone knows an ant/ can't/ Move a rubber tree plant

K-E-double N-E-D-Y/ Jack's the nation's favourite guy/
Everyone wants to back/Jack/ Jack is on the right track/
And he's got high hopes...

Sinatra recorded the special campaign lyrics, rewritten to cheer on the 1960 Democratic candidate.

Everyone is voting for Jack
 'Cause he's got what all the rest lack
 Everyone wants to back – Jack
 Jack is on the right track.

'Cause he's got high hopes,
 He's got high hopes,
 Nineteen Sixty's the year for his high hopes.
 Come on and vote for Kennedy
 Vote for Kennedy
 And we'll come out on top!
 Oops- there goes the opposition- ker-
 Oops- there goes the opposition- ker-
 Oops- there goes the opposition- KERPLOP!
 K-E-DOUBLE N-E-D -Y
 Jack's the nation's favourite guy,
 Everyone wants to back- Jack
 Jack is on the right track.
 'Cause he's got high hopes
 He's got high hopes,
 Nineteen Sixty's the year for his high hopes.
 Come on and vote for Kennedy
 Vote for Kennedy
 Keep America strong.
 Kennedy, he just keep rollin' - a
 Kennedy, he just keep rollin' - a
 Kennedy, he just keep rollin' along.

(John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum)

Cahn had always enjoyed writing parodies of his songs and those of fellow lyricists, especially for Frank Sinatra. When Sinatra was to perform at the Royal Albert Hall in 1980, he asked Cahn to write new lyrics to Cole Porter's "Let's Do It", using British references to replace the brilliant Porter images. Cahn contacted his friend, British-born Jackie Collins, for some information about England. And, in the Cahn version of "Let's Do It", the focus fell heavily on the British Prime Minister.

Birds do it, bees do it,
 History proves a few MPs do it,
 Let's do it, let's fall in love.
 Lords do it, earls do it,
 Boys with boys and girls with girls do it,
 Let's do it, let's fall in love.

Birds do it, bees do it
 Even educated fleas do it,
 Let's do it, let's fall in love.
 Romantic sponges they say do it,
 Oysters down in oyster bay, do it,
 Let's do it, let's fall in love.

And Margaret Thatcher I hear does it,
 And the Prime's in her prime,
 With cool veneer does it -
 When does she find the time?
 (Cahn, 1980)

The most refined ladybugs do it,
 When a gentleman calls.
 Moths in your rug do it,
 What's the use of moth balls?
 (Porter, 1928)

Cole Porter's generosity with regard to his colleagues was widely recognised. Cahn had been approached to make changes to certain Porter lyrics for the second film version of *Anything Goes*. Porter willingly agreed, and later wired Cahn, "Congratulations, you did a better job than I did" to which Cahn replied, "Thank you. You're more of a gentleman than a judge of lyrics" (Eells, 1967:297) but Cahn was to honour Cole Porter in 1991, which marked the 100th anniversary of Porter's birth, when ASCAP paid tribute to Porter at Carnegie Hall.

For the occasion, Cahn selected the witty and urbane "You're The Top".

He's the top!
 No one came quite near him

You're the top!
 You're the Colosseum.

He's the top!
 Hence we're here to cheer him.

You're the top!
 You're the Louvre Museum.

All his rhymes, bespoke the times
 With style and wit
 And although real fond I'm
 of Steve Sondheim
 He'll admit

You're a melody with a symphony
 by Strauss
 You're a Bendel bonnet
 You're a Shakespeare sonnet
 You're Mickey Mouse.

Cole's the Best!
 And if praise we're hurlin'
 I suggest
 Cole's the gentile Berlin

You're the Nile,
 You're the Tow'r of Pisa,
 You're the smile
 On the Mona Lisa.

Earning royalties, at ASCAP he's non-stop!
 (He's not really gone
 Songs play on and on)
 Quoting Cole by Sammy Cahn
 He's the top!
 (Cahn, 1991)

I'm a worthless check, a total wreck
 A flop!
 But if baby
 I'm the bottom
 You're the top!
 (Porter, 1934)

On the occasion of Ringo Starr's marriage to girlfriend, Maureen, Sinatra serenaded the bride with Cahn's lyrics to "That's why the lady is a tramp", with lyrics originally written by Lorenz Hart to the music of Richard Rodgers.

There's no one like her
 But no one at all,
 And as for charm,
 Hers is like wall to wall.
 She married Ringo
 And she could have had Paul.
 That's why the lady is a tramp.

Creates excitement
 Whenever it's dull.
 She just appears
 And there goes the lull.
 She merely smiles
 And you're out of your skull,
 That's why the lady's a tramp.

The folks who do and don't meditate
 Agree she's great.
 They mean
 Maureen,
 I've got more lyrics right after this vamp.
 Because the lady is a champ.

(Cahn, 1965)

She gets too hungry for dinner at eight
 She likes the theatre but never comes late.
 She never bothers with people she hates.
 That's why the lady is a tramp.

Doesn't like crap games with Barons and Earls
 Won't go to Harlem in ermine and pearls.
 Won't dish the dirt with the rest of the girls,
 That's why the lady is a tramp.

She likes the free, fresh wind in her hair,
 Life without care,
 She's broke, that's oke.
 Hates California, it's cold and it's damp,
 That's why the lady is a tramp.

(Hart, 1937)

In 1987, the Ford's Theatre Lincoln Medal was awarded to Mrs Nancy Reagan who was First Lady of the United States from 1981 to 1989. This annual award recognises an individual's accomplishments and mettle of character, as exemplified by President Abraham Lincoln. For the occasion, Cahn composed special lyrics for Mrs Reagan and for Mikhail Baryshnikov, who shared the stage with the President's wife.

Pardon him please
 If he feels ill at ease,
 With a real live girl.
 Nancy by name
 With the First Lady's fame
 And a real live girl.
 Grand ballerinas as you might suppose
 He understands when they're up on their toes,
 But here tonight
 He is awed by the sight
 And the glow that you feel

Baryshnikov
 Can be shy as a dove
 With a real live girl.
 He won't amaze
 With those wild tourjetes
 With a real live girl.
 And Mrs Reagan is floating on air
 He thinks she's Ginger
 And he's Fred Astaire,
 But here tonight he is awed by the sight
 And the glow that you feel

With a real live girl.
(Cahn, 1987)

From a real live girl.

Cahn wrote the lyrics based on the 1962 Broadway show *Little Me*, written by Neil Simon, with music by Cy Coleman and lyrics by Carolyn Leigh.

Pardon me miss
But I've never done this
With a real live girl.
What could be harmful
In holding an armful
Of a real live girl.
Pardon me if your affectionate squeeze
Fogs up my goggles and
Buckles my knees,
I'm simply drawn in the sight, and the sounds,
And the scent and the feel
Of a real live girl.

(Carolyn Leigh, 1962)

Cahn restricted his creativity to one-liners for Dean Martin:

The girl that I marry
Will have to be
A nympho who owns a distillery.
(Cahn)

You made me love you
You woke me up to do it -
(Cahn)

Kiss me once, then kiss me twice
Then kiss me once again
It takes a long, long time.
(Cahn)

This is my first affair
So what goes where?
(Cahn)

When somebody loves you

The girl that I marry
Will have to be
As soft and as pink as a nursery
(Irving Berlin, 1946)

You made me love you
I didn't want to do it -
(Joseph McCarthy, 1913)

Kiss me once, then kiss me twice
Then kiss me once again
It's been a long, long time.
(Cahn, 1945)

This is my first affair
So please be kind.
(Cahn, 1938)

When somebody loves you,

It's no good unless he loves you,
All the ways.
(Cahn)

It's no good unless he loves you
All the way.
(Cahn, 1957)

It's impossible
To make love in a Toyota
It's impossible
(Cahn)

It's impossible
Tell the sun to leave the sky
It's just impossible
(Sid Wayne, 1970)

In his parodies, Cahn adopted a comic rather than satirical approach. The intention was to highlight a particular event or person, and to entertain, rather than as a medium for social or literary criticism. While Cahn's parodies are not as well known as his original lyrics, they amuse and enlighten, varying from subtle wit to bawdiness. Cahn was quite at ease with his own stylistic peculiarities, troping his own voice in a form of self parody. The emphasis in Cahn's parodic lyrics fell on the general aesthetic of "naughtiness", making fun of a person or a situation. Cahn relied on a vast store of rhyming words and fixed phrases which allowed him to focus on structure rather than words. He obviously had sound grammatical knowledge, linguistic ability and creativity which could be supported by this extensive mental lexicon of words. He was able to transform given formulas with a twisting of everyday language. *Sammy Cahn's Rhyming Dictionary* is more than a collection of rhyming words; his rhymes are singable, with 50,000 words arranged phonetically, according to vowel sounds, rather than alphabetically. He writes:

Once I have written a song and have considered all of the pros and cons of the lyric, the uppermost and final consideration is "Does it sing?" and not only sing but sing effortlessly. I believe anyone can learn the concept of singability and anyone can write lyrics. All you need are the rhyming words and something to say. (p. xiii)

Cahn's pragmatic approach to his lyric writing might prompt the notion that the standard of his lyrics was inferior to that of his contemporaries, yet he remains the most successful lyricist in the history of the film industry, in terms of Academy Awards and Nominations. His closest rival is Johnny Mercer with four Oscars and eighteen Nominations. The most prolific of the songwriters, Irving Berlin, received one Oscar and six Nominations, Cole Porter was nominated four times, Ira Gershwin received three Nominations. Cahn is not listed in any scholarly work on the composers and lyricists of the Golden Age of Light music. In his book, *The Poets of Tin Pan Alley*, a history of America's great lyricists, author Philip Furia devotes full chapters to all of the "greats", including Irving Berlin, Lorenz Hart, Ira Gershwin, Cole Porter, Oscar Hammerstein II, Howard Dietz, E.Y. Harburg, Dorothy Fields, Leo Robin and Johnny Mercer, all of whom were Cahn's contemporaries. Sammy Cahn is not mentioned.

It can be argued that Cahn wrote predominantly for films, but together with Jule Styne he wrote lyrics for the Broadway musicals *Glad to See You* (1944), *High Button Shoes* (1947), *Look to the Lilies* (1970) and, with collaborator Jimmy Van Heusen, *Skyscraper* (1965) and *Walking Happy* (1966).

The Golden Age of the film musical co-incided with that of the Broadway stage musical, and composers and lyricists such as George and Ira Gershwin, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, and many others, created their best stage scores while writing film scores at the same time. Each brought a special quality to the music with the marriage of verbal and musical ideas.

George Gershwin's impact on the American musical scene is of social as well as musical significance. His compositions reflected elements of urban jazz, country blues and ragtime and were rooted in popular song and dance. His brother, Ira, was fascinated with the phrasing, idioms and vocabulary of American speech, rather than rhymes. Ira Gershwin was able to find a phrase that would fit the rhythm of his brother's music. Prior to 1924, the brothers wrote independently; George was recognised as an Alley composer and Ira dabbled with writing society verse. Their first big hit was "Fascinating Rhythm" from *Lady Be Good*, which starred Fred and Adele Astaire, and it was an example of Ira's ability to fit syllables to musical accents, using internal 'is' rhymes between the hard alliteration of the *d*'s and *t*'s.

So darn persistent
the day isn't distant
When it'll drive me insane

Ira found that contractions kept a lyric colloquial and also intensified the pace.

-comes in the morning
Without any warning

In "S Wonderful" (1927) he enjoys snipping words:

don't mind telling you,
in my humble fash,
that you thrill me through
With a tender pash.

In "I Got Rhythm", Ira abandoned rhyme for alliteration, repeating the *m* and harsh *k* and *g* sounds:

I got rhythm
I got music

I got my man
Who could ask for anything more

“I Got Rhythm” from the 1930 Broadway musical *Girl Crazy* helped make a star of Ethel Merman.

After George’s sudden death in 1937, at the age of thirty-eight, Ira continued to write lyrics, but seldom captured the casual sophistication of the songs he had written with his brother, George.

The career of Richard Rodgers included the highly successful collaboration with Lorenz Hart, who set a new standard for intricately witty rhyming. Their songs were a perfect blend of words and music. “Manhattan”, from the 1925 Broadway show *Garrick Gaieties*, brought overnight success through the sales of sheet music and records. It was the first popular song whose lyrics made headline news.

The *Evening Graphic*, May 20, 1925 used the headline: “Rhymes that Do”

The *Morning Telegraph*, October 4, 1925, praised “Manhattan” as a “New York song”

The *Atlanta Constitution*, July 26, 1925 described the song as “the most popular piece in New York”

In an interview with the *Herald Tribune*, May 31, 1925, Lorenz Hart expressed amazement that the elaborate rhymes should have proved so popular.

We’ll bathe at Brighton
the fish you’ll frighten
when you’re in
Your bathing suit so thin
will make the shellfish grin
fin to fin

(“Manhattan”, 1925)

With the death of Hart in 1943, Richard Rodgers turned to Oscar Hammerstein II and, in so doing, established possibly the most successful collaboration in Broadway history. Songs no longer “stood alone” but were part of the plot and characterization. [1] Hammerstein II had worked with Jerome Kern, whose score for *Showboat* in 1927 marked a significant milestone in that it set a precedent in both style (integrating story and music) and theme (social injustice).

Niggers all work on the Mississippi
Niggers all work while de white folk play
Pullin’ dose boats from de dawn to dusk
Gittin’ no rest till de judgement day.

Hammerstein, like Cahn, insisted that his lyrics should be “singable” and, with that in mind, he wrote the words first while Rodgers “tried to match his music to the lyricist’s meaning, feelings, forms and theatrical purposes.” (Gottfried, 1984:175)

Oklahoma! re-defined theatre by offering audiences “real” characters in a musical that was pure American, with songs that advanced the story. In “Surrey with the Fringe on Top” one can hear the cadence of the horses’ hoofs, while the words *flutters/strutters/shutters* seem obvious but clever rhyming choices.

Watch that fringe and see how it flutters when I drive them high-steppin’ strutters
Nosey pokes’ll peek through the shutters and their eyes will pop!

In his lyrics, Hammerstein strove for heightened but homespun poetic imagery.

The wind will whistle as we rattle along
The cows’ll moo in the clover
The river will ripple out a whispered song
And whisper over and over

By 1928, Cole Porter, who had been trying to gain public attention with his ‘list’ songs, had a huge success with “Let’s Do It” from the Broadway musical *Paris*. The song would be Porter’s first successful catalogue song which uses the list as a framework to support the heightening passionate intensity.

Birds, do it, bees do it.
Even educated fleas do it.
Let’s do it,
Let’s fall in love.
In Spain, the best upper sets do it
Lithuanians and Letts do it
Let’s do it, let’s fall in love

(“Let’s do it”, 1928)

In his song “You’re the Top”, Porter’s wit and seemingly effortless polish is intended for a sophisticated audience who would understand the references among the list of superlatives.

You’re the top!
You’re Mahatma Gandhi.
You’re the top!

You're Napoleon Brandy.
 You're the purple night of a summer night in Spain,
 You're the National Gall'ry
 You're Garbo's salary,
 You're cellophane! ("You're the Top!" 1934)

Porter was "at the top" with sly and suggestive words:

While tearing off
 A game of golf I might make a play for the caddy,
 But when I do,
 I don't follow through
 'Cause my heart belongs to Daddy.

Mary Martin made her New York debut in 1938 in Porter's musical *Leave it to Me*, with a show-stopping rendition of "My Heart belongs to Daddy."

One of Porter's contemporaries was Irving Berlin, who, like Porter, also wrote words and music. He was able to adapt his musical and lyrical style to suit the changing musical fashions and vernacular, producing songs that were masterpieces of economy and clarity. Like all the composers of the Golden Era, he adhered to the dictates of Tin Pan Alley, but his personal style was influenced by ragtime and syncopation, while his themes were intensely patriotic.

In an article in the New York Times of January 2, 1916, Berlin is quoted as having said:

My ambition is to reach the heart of the average American, not the highbrow or the lowbrow, but that vast intermediate crew which is the real soul of the country. The highbrow is likely to be superficial, overtrained, supersensitive. The lowbrow is warped. My public is the real public.

In 1942, Irving Berlin received the Academy Award for the Best Original Song, "White Christmas", sung by Bing Crosby in the musical *Holiday Inn*. This was to be Berlin's only Oscar in a career that spanned nearly seven decades. In his autobiography "*As Thousands Cheer: The Life of Irving Berlin*", author Laurence Bergreen quotes Berlin's words to his transcriber, Helmy Kresa:

I want you to take down a song I wrote over the weekend. Not only is it the best song I ever wrote, it's the best song *anybody* ever wrote. (p. 386)

"White Christmas" was to become the best-selling single of all time and the poignant touch given it by Bing Crosby, whose casual and romantic style suited the mood of the song, ensured its popularity as a

wartime classic. [2] “White Christmas” seems to have escaped Cahn’s parodic treatment, but, in 1961, when the humour magazine, *Mad*, published a special issue, *Sing Along with Mad*, many of Berlin’s most successful and popular songs were included. The magazine’s brand of satire appealed predominantly to younger readers, and the issue was described as “a collection of parody lyrics to 57 old standards which reflect the idiotic world we live in today.” [3] The irreverent parodies prompted Berlin to band together with a number of music publishers and composers, such as Cole Porter and Richard Rodgers, and sue the magazine for copyright infringement, seeking \$25 million dollars in damages. Berlin, in particular, believed that the magazine had corrupted the value of his songs and it would be two years before a decision was reached. But the Trial Court and the Circuit Court ruled in favour of *Mad* magazine. On March 23, 1964, Judge Irving R. Kaufman declared that there had been no copyright infringement. As Berlin had based his claim on infringement, in part, on the fact that *Mad* parodies employed the same *meter* as his lyrics had, this argument worked against Berlin. Judge Kaufman wrote: We doubt that even so eminent a composer as Irving Berlin should be permitted to claim a property interest in iambic pentameter. (*New York Times*, March 24, 1964). When the Supreme Court declined to hear Berlin’s appeal, the legal right to song parody was codified into United States law.

Parody needs to mimic an original to make its point, and so has some claim to use the creation of its victim’s imagination... it can provide social benefits by shedding light on an earlier work, and, in the process, creating a new one. We thus line up with the courts that have held that parody, like other comment or criticism, may claim “fair use” under 107.

Copyright Law of the United States of America and Related Laws contained in Title 17 of the United States Code 107.

Sammy Cahn’s lyrics might have lacked the insouciance of a Cole Porter composition; the creative rhyming of Ira Gershwin and Lorenz Hart; the poetic imagery of Oscar Hammerstein II; the “ragging” of Irving Berlin, but he “wrote on demand” for the film studios and their performers, and he both understood and loved the medium. In *Sheet Music Magazine* June/July, 1988, Cahn writes:

I tell my children if anyone ever asks you what your father did for a living, you tell them he wrote lyrics.

The Editor-in-Chief of the Magazine, Edward J. Shapnaphy, writes:

Sammy Cahn is the one songwriter who has reached out to embrace his audience not only with his art, but with himself. And one gets a feeling of a whole lot of love going on when Sammy and his fans and friends interact.

It is ironic that Sammy Cahn, as President of the Songwriters' Hall of Fame, devoted so much time and effort in creating an awareness of aspiring and talented new songwriters while being denied the recognition that he surely deserved. He knew only too well how helpful support could be. I recall his enthusiasm and eagerness to talk about music when I interviewed him. He was justifiably proud of the memorabilia, Oscars, photographs and letters that lined the walls of his office. Michael Feinstein, the legendary pianist/singer, lists the qualities that identify a Cahn lyric:

Economy. Directness of expression. Every syllable counts. Naturalness. Singability. Craft. Joy. Honesty. (2015: *Feinstein to Holloway*. E-mail 18 March)

In 1957, Cahn and Van Heusen won the Academy Award for the song "All the Way", which was sung by Frank Sinatra in the film *The Joker is Wild*. That same year Cahn re-wrote the words for Frank Sinatra's 42nd birthday.

Frank Sinatra's calling
And it means tonight we're balling
All the way.

When somebody loves you
It's no good unless he loves you
All the way.

Many fears soon plague us –
Is it Palm Springs, is it Vegas?
Who can say?

Happy to be near you
When you need someone to cheer you
All the way.

Thank God there's just one Sinatra
With two Franks, it wouldn't play.
So drink up to the Rat Pack
And be proud that you're with that pack
All the way, all the way.

Who knows where the road will lead us?
Only a fool would say.
But if you let me love you,
It's for sure I'm gonna love you
All the way, all the way.

(Cahn, 1957)

(Cahn, 1957)

Did Cahn employ a parodic rhetoric to draw attention to his commercial successes? I believe not. Although he had been writing this 'special material' for years, it was after the 1970s that he devoted much of his energy to writing parodies from which he appeared to derive enormous fun and satisfaction. In 1973, at the age of 60, Cahn began writing his autobiography *I Should Care*, and the following year he

opened his one-man show *Words and Music* at the Golden Theatre on Broadway, followed by another successful run in England at the New London Theatre, which opened to rave reviews:

Arthur Thirkell of *The Daily Mirror*: “A very funny comic... spinner of hilarious stories”

Benny Green of *The Observer*: “Irresistible...an original type of theatre entertainment”

James Green of *The Evening News*: “A relaxing, civilised evening. He sends himself up hilariously”

In my interview with Sammy Cahn in 1986, he recalled the special lyrics he had written for Cary Grant, based on the song “The Most Beautiful Girl in the World” with music by Richard Rodgers and lyrics by Lorenz Hart for the 1936 musical, *Jumbo*.

That was at the Friars Club in New York City. There are very few songs that are written for men to sing about men. I said, “There’s only one song that fits this gentleman and it’s written about a girl”, but he’ll forgive me the change.

The most beautiful man in the world
Isn’t me, no.
Isn’t Dino.
But as we know
It’s the man that we honour tonight.

The most talented man in the world
Not John Gielgud
Though he’s real good
Would he feel good
With a Friar to his left and a Friar to his right.

Cary stands alone.
Nicest man we’ve known.
And that great physique
You would have to say is most unique.

The most beautiful man in the world
Counting tall men,
Counting small men,
Counting all men
Counting men with a talent they cannot supplant
Is the one and only wonderful Cary Grant.
(Cahn, 1982)

The most beautiful girl in the world
Picks my ties out
Eats my candy,
Drinks my brandy,
The most beautiful girl in the world.

The most beautiful star in the world
T’sn’t Garbo,
T’sn’t Dietrich,
But a sweet trick
Who can make me believe it’s a natural world.

Social? Not a bit!
Natural kind of wit.
She’d shine anywhere
And she hasn’t got platinum hair.

The most beautiful house in the world
Has a mortgage
What do I care
It’s “Good-bye” care
When my slippers are next to the ones that
belong
To the one and only beautiful girl in the world.
(Hart, 1936)

Cahn's autobiography describes many occasions at the Friars Club, so famous for its risqué celebrity roasts, and the perfect venue for Cahn's special lyrics. On page 185 there is a somewhat wry mention of Sammy's 61st birthday party to be celebrated at the Friars Club, where he would be serenaded by friends, singing Cahn lyrics.

Of all the Cahns we'll name, which will hist'ry blame,
Genghis? Ali? Or Sammy?

On that occasion Sammy's wife, Tita, shared the spotlight with a parody of a song, written by Jerome Kern and with lyrics by Dorothy Fields, for the musical film *Swing Time*.

A fine romance,
My friends this is,
I'm now known as the star's missus.

A fine romance
with no kisses
A fine romance, my friend this is.

His conversation now tends to just embarrass –
He only quotes from Clive Barnes
and Leonard Harris.

We should be like a couple of hot tomatoes
But you're as cold as yesterday's mashed
potatoes.

A fine romance
My friends, this is,
There's no time now for mere kisses.
Romantic'ly I'm now not at all beholden

A fine romance,
You won't nestle,
A fine romance, you won't wrestle,
I might as well play bridge with my old maid
aunt

His only matinees now are at the – Golden.
(Cahn, 1974)

I haven't got a chance – this is a fine romance.
(Dorothy Fields, 1936)

Cahn never doubted his potential, and seized every opportunity to show his mastery with words. He derived enormous personal satisfaction in finding the correct turn of phrase to support the melody. He displays a sense of fun in using the lyrics of some of the most successful songs of the time. For over forty years, beginning with his first song in 1933, "Shake Your Head From Side To Side", he sustained a verbal vitality, and the pleasure he derived from success was a form of hedonism, supported by the financial rewards of writing award-winning lyrics. Cahn's parody was comic rather than critical. His earlier memories of vaudeville and burlesque had equipped him to write a form of verbal caricature which exaggerated the salient features and style of a song. I believe Cahn would have been amused by the following description of parody as described in the *Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* of 1965, edited by Alex Preminger:

Although parody is a parasitic art and written at times with malice, it is as fundamental to literature as laughter is to health... The best parody surpasses imitation. It stands on its own feet, containing enough independent humour to be funny beyond aping the original.

(pp. 600 – 602)

Close and careful examination of Cahn's parodies will provide sufficient evidence to conclude that the original lyrics were superior, but there can be no doubt that Cahn relished the opportunity to poke gentle fun at the lyricist – which, in most cases, was himself.

In making a selection of the parodies for inclusion in this chapter, I was assisted by archivists at the Margaret Herrick Library in Los Angeles, which houses the vast Sammy Cahn Collection, and from whom I requested copies of certain original documents to support my hypothesis that Cahn “wrote on demand”, not merely for monetary gain, but for charity benefits and sheer fun.

For twenty years Cahn had been President of the Songwriters' Hall of Fame, which was established in 1969 to induct and honour songwriters, lyricists and composers. It was founded by Cahn's closest rival, in terms of Academy awards and nominations, lyricist Johnny Mercer, who received eighteen nominations (to Cahn's twenty-six) and winning, as did Sammy, four coveted statues. [4] Like Cahn, Mercer had been strongly influenced by vaudeville; like Cahn he moved to Hollywood where he teamed up with composer Harold Arlen; like Cahn he was to write lyrics for Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire. Cahn describes the moment when he had to demonstrate the song “Call Me Irresponsible” for Fred Astaire, who was to star in the film, *Papa's Delicate Condition*.

Call me irresponsible
Call me unreliable
Throw in undependable too.

We finished that song in about an hour and a half at the best, and now I turned to Van Heusen and said, “Let's do this song for Fred Astaire.” And Van Heusen who hates to demonstrate a song as much as I love to demonstrate a song – in any case, I finally, finally convinced him because I had been waiting almost twenty five years to stand in front of Fred Astaire.

Fred said, “That is just a remarkable song” and we exchanged flatteries and then he said to me, “Would you like to know why you got this assignment?” and I said, “Yes, I would.”

He said, "Johnny Mercer wasn't available."

I said, "I consider that a high compliment."

He said, "No. I will give you the compliment now. The next time Johnny Mercer leaves town, I won't worry about it."

The song went on to win the Academy award.

I'd be irresponsible
I'd be unreliable,
You can throw in "Hutzpadick" too

Call me irresponsible
Call me unreliable,
Throw in undependable too.

If I didn't toss a few views in
With regard to that giant James Van Heusen

Do my foolish alibis bore you?
Well I'm not too clever I just adore you.

I was most impractical
Words like unpredictable
They were words that I hardly knew...

Call me unpredictable,
Tell me I'm impractical,
Rainbows I'm inclined to pursue.

Edward Chester Babcock he,
Truly educated me,
Things without him might have been grim,
I'm irresponsibly glad for him!
(Cahn, 1972)

Call me irresponsible,
Yes, I'm unreliable,
But it's undeniably true,
I'm irresponsibly mad for you!
(Cahn, 1963)

The bond and admiration between Cahn and Mercer was strengthened when Cahn took over the Presidency of the Songwriters' Hall of Fame in 1973. One of the first events he helped organise was a "tribute", sung by and written for Frank Sinatra. It was a parody to the tune "Mr Wonderful" which had been written in 1955 by the team of Jerry Bock, George David Weiss and Larry Holofcener.

May I state, this is great
And the kind of evening few people rate,
But with your choice tonight, I agree,
Mister Wonderful "That's me!"

Why this feeling, why this glow
Why the thrill when you say hello?
It's a strange and tender magic you do
Mr Wonderful, that's you.

There are those, I suppose,
Who could never live up to these Ku-dos
Entertainer of a whole cent-tur-eeeeee,
Mister Wonderful "That's me!"

Why this trembling when you speak
Why this joy when you touch my cheek?
I must tell you what my heart knows is true
Mr Wonderful, that's you.

I tried to duck this honor but I'm not adept
And who else would have the 'hutzpah' to –except?

Guys like Hope, have the scope
But I'm sure Bob, Burns and Benny said "Nope!"
And I'm sure that Benny asked for a fee
So Mister Wonderful – "That's me!"
(Cahn, 1973)

And why this longing to know your charms
To spend forever here in your arms?

Oh there's much more I could say
But the words keep slipping away
And I'm left with only one point of view
Mr Wonderful, that's you.
(Bock, Weiss, Holofcener, 1956)

Music publishers Abe Olman and Howard Richmond founded, together with Johnny Mercer, the Songwriters' Hall of Fame. Olman, in particular, was a major name in the music publishing industry, and is accredited with being amongst the first to recognise the benefit of promoting a song through the medium of film, and ensuring that the film's theme song was included in the opening credits. Sammy Cahn had a deep regard for both Abe and "Howie" and, on 12 August, 1978, to mark Abe Olman's 90th birthday, he wrote a special medley for Abe which included an adaptation of "It's been a long, long time."

Sounds forlorn but he was born
In eighteen eighty eight
It's been a long, long time!

I've a fear that no one here
Can quite recall that date
It's been a long, long time!

As far as I'm concerned
You all can think what you wish
But no one here's more older
Or more Jew-ish

Let me smile cause no gentile
Has Olman's years or weight
It's been a long, long time!
(Cahn, 1978)

Kiss me once, and kiss me twice
Then kiss me once again,
It's been a long, long time.

Haven't felt like this, my dear
Since can't remember when,
It's been a long, long time.

You'll never know how many dreams
I dreamed about you
Or just how empty they all seemed
Without you.

So, kiss me once, then kiss me twice,
Then kiss me once again,
It's been a long, long time.
(Cahn, 1945)

The tribute to Abe Olman was a medley which included a parody "I'll be seeing you" which was composed in 1938 by Sammy Fain, with lyrics by Irving Kahal. Years later, in 1977, when Fain celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday, Cahn acknowledged Fain, with new words to the 1919 Gershwin melody "Swanee", made so popular by Al Jolson.

Sammy! Kindly note
 Has never wrote a hit
 Quite like Tammy!
 Without Paul Webster he ...
 Would be a runner
 In the needle industry, that

Sammy, right or wrong,
 Thinks every song
 He writes is a whammy!

His tunes are all Puccini they say
 No wonder that he's "Double-A!"
 (Cahn, 1977)

Swanee, How I love you
 How I love you!
 My dear old Swanee.
 I'd give the world to be
 Among the folks
 in D-I-X-I

Even though my mammy's
 Waiting for me, praying for me
 Down by the Swanee.

The folks up north will see me no more
 When I get to that Swanee shore.
 (Irving Caesar, 1919)

Sammy Cahn's relationship with songwriter Leo Robin started with a screenplay Cahn had written with Alex Gottlieb. Gottlieb sold it to Howard Hughes of RKO, who, in turn, hired Jule Styne and Leo Robin to handle the score. But, ever the professional, Cahn paid tribute to Leo Robin and his collaborator, Ralph Rainger, in June 1982.

Thanks for the memories!
 Of lyrics thru the years
 Songs the whole world cheers
 The kind of ASCAP credits
 that drives BMI to tears
 We thank you so much!

Thanks for the memories!
 Of songs with mass appeal
 Songs like 'My Ideal'
 That test the times, with inner rhymes,
 To make the Sondheims kneel
 We thank you so much!

Since no one we know
 can quite match you,
 We're tossing these compliments at you
 In lieu of erecting a statue
 Of the grandest type –
 a statue to your pipe –

And thanks for the memories

Thanks for the memory
 Of candlelight and wine
 Castles on the Rhine,
 The Parthenon and moments on the
 Hudson River Line!
 How lovely it was!

Thanks for the memory
 Of rainy afternoons
 Swingy Harlem tunes
 And motor trips and burning lips
 and burning toast and prunes
 How lovely it was!

Many's the time that we feasted
 And many's the times that we fasted
 Oh well, it was swell while it lasted
 We did have fun
 and no harm done.

And thanks for the memory

When you were just supreme
 With Rainger as a team
 Seems ev'ry show, on radio,
 you wrote the goddamn theme
 (And anyone who writes so good,
 ain't as nice as you seem)
 And thank you so much!
 (Cahn, 1982)

Of sunburns at the shore
 Nights in Singapore,
 You might have been a headache
 but you never were a bore.
 So thank you so much.
 (Robin, 1938)

“Thanks for the Memory”, with music by Ralph Rainger and lyrics by Leo Robin won the Academy Award in 1938. Robin was inducted into the Songwriters’ Hall of Fame in 1972.

Sammy Cahn became a member of ASCAP in 1936, and served on the Board of Directors from 1977 until his death in 1993. [5] An astute business man, Cahn had always negotiated fees and contracts and was very aware of the importance of mass marketing through the medium of radio. So on the occasion of WNEW’s 50th anniversary (a New York radio station owned by CBS), Sammy Cahn, acting on behalf of ASCAP, was delighted to honour them. He started his medley with a parody of his own lyrics from the song “Time after time” which he had written in 1947 with Jule Styne.

Time after time
 I tell myself that I’m
 So lucky they play Jule Styne
 So lucky they play
 Van Heusen every day
 And the lyrics that they use are mine.

I only know what I know
 Each spin, brings on, the dough
 And on that station I do fine –
 So time after time
 I tell myself that I’m
 So lucky they play Jule Styne!
 (Cahn, 1984)

Time after time
 I tell myself that I’m
 So lucky to be loving you,
 So lucky to be the one
 You run to see
 In the evening when the day is through.

I only know what I know
 The passing years will show
 You’ve kept my love so young, so new.
 And time after time
 You’ll hear me say that I’m
 So lucky to be loving you.
 (Cahn, 1947)

Sammy Cahn was the obvious choice to write the lyrics for a charity benefit called “Swing into Fall” held in December, 1971, by ASCAP, to raise funds for the Muscular Dystrophy Association of America and attended by many songwriters and their spouses. Cahn selected the song “Three Coins in the Fountain” to single out three prominent women in the audience.

Three marvellous ladies
 Are here to brighten up the hall
 Three marvellous ladies
 To help us swing into the fall

Three coins in the fountain,
 Each one seeking happiness,
 Thrown by three hopeful lovers,
 Which one will the fountain bless.

Three wonderful ladies
 None of which I'd dare to slight
 Three wonderful ladies
 Adding to the glamour of the night

Three hearts in the fountain,
 Each heart longing for its home,
 There they lie in the fountain
 Somewhere in the heart of Rome.

Which one couldn't join these three
 Mrs Nixon in Washington, D.C. –

Which one will the fountain bless?
 Which one will the fountain bless?

Dor'thy Fields and Mrs Louis Armstrong
 And Mrs Oscar Hammerstein
 The one represents the immortal 'Satchmo'
 The other two copyrights divine.
 Make them mine!
 Make them mine!
 Make them mine!

Three coins in the fountain,
 Through the ripples how they shine
 Just one wish will be granted
 One heart will wear a valentine.
 Make it mine!
 Make it mine!
 Make it mine!

(Cahn, 1971)

(Cahn, 1954)

Sammy Cahn appeared to have had a great deal of fun at ASCAP's birthday party for Harry Warren, born Salvatore Guaragna, one of eleven children born to Italian immigrants who lived in Brooklyn. Cahn greatly admired the musician who had written prolifically for the movie industry and had received three Oscars, plus numerous nominations. Cahn compiled a selection of Harry Warren compositions, including "That's Amore", with words by Jack Brooks.

Harry once changed his name
 But it's almost the same
 It's Guaragna!
 Picked a name that is prized
 Tho' Americanized
 It's Guaragna!

When the moon hits your eye
 Like a big pizza pie
 That's amore
 When the world seems to shine
 Like you had too much wine
 That's amore

You and I, daily have to try
 Just to qualify and, - be known too
 Years ago, as you have to know
 I was Sammy Cahn –
 and – Sammy Cohen too

Bells will ring ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling-a-ling
 And you'll sing "Vita Bella"
 Hearts will play tippy-tippy-tay-tippy-tippy-tay
 Like a gay tarantella.

Tho he's gone to the top

When the stars make you drool

In his heart he's a Wop
He's Guaragna!

Just like pasta fazool
That's amore!

Tho some people he knew
Used to think he's a Jew
Now and then

When you dance down the street
With a cloud at your feet
You're in love!

What he's got, name or not
Is a lot so please serve the
La – sagna

When you walk in a dream
But you know you're not dreaming
Signore!

There's no way he could pass
With that fat Dago ass
He's Guaragna!
(Cahn, 1979)

Scuzza me, but you see,
Back in old Napoli,
That's amore!
(Jack Brooks, 1953)

In 1955 Frank Sinatra suggested that Cahn and Van Heusen write the score for the televised version of the Thornton Wilder classic, *Our Town* – an hour-and-a-half special, starring Frank Sinatra. In his autobiography, Cahn writes:

For years people had been saying that Sammy Cahn's meat-and-potatoes lyrics and Jimmy Van Heusen's polka-dot-and-moonbeams music made for a happy combination. It seemed a good marriage for the romantic yet down-to-earth story and mood of Wilder's *Our Town*, a play about a typical small New England American town – its people, their births, lives, deaths and meaning in the scheme of things.
(Cahn, 1974:104)

The first act of *Our Town* was called "The Daily Life" and the second act was "Love and Marriage". Cahn describes how he turned to Van Heusen and said:

"Since we're doing a musical, Mr Composer, may I have a vamp?"

Love and marriage,
Love and marriage,
Go together like a horse and carriage-
This I tell ya brother,
Ya can't have one without the other.

Love and marriage,
Love and marriage,
It's an institute you can't disparage,
Ask the local gentry
And they will say it's element'ry.

Try, try, try to separate them,
 It's an illusion.
 Try, try, try
 And you will only come to this conclusion.

Love and marriage,
 Love and marriage,
 Go together like a horse and carriage.
 Dad was told by mother,
 You can't have one,
 You can't have none,
 You can't have one without the other!

In 1956 "Love and Marriage" became the first song ever to receive the coveted Emmy Award for the "Best Musical Contribution in the Television series, *Our Town*".

It also went on to be the very successful television jingle for Campbell Soups.

Soup and sandwich,
 Soup and sandwich,
 Have your favourite Campbell soup and sandwich,
 Anytime or weather,
 Soup and sandwich go together.

Soup and sandwich go together
 Always delicious,
 Hmm, hmm, they belong together
 Like Mr and Mrs.

Soup and sandwich,
 Soup and sandwich,
 Have nutritious Campbell soup and sandwich,
 Anytime or weather,
 Soup and sandwich go together.
 (Hmm, hmm, good!
 Campbell's, of course!)

Notes:

[1] *The Poets of Tin Pan Alley* by Philip Furia, which traces the history of America's great lyricists, has been a valuable source of information.

[2] White Christmas:

Bing Crosby's recording of "White Christmas" has been credited with sales of 50 million copies, which makes it the best-selling single of all time. There has been debate about this claim because the recording was released prior to the advent of the United States' and United Kingdom's singles charts. In 2007, the Guinness Book of Records concluded that the Crosby version of "White Christmas" had, according to their survey, sold at least 50 million copies, and that Elton John's recording in 1997 of "Candle in the Wind" was a runner-up with 33 million copies. But, in 2009, the Guinness Book of Records decided to name both songs "winners", stating that Elton John's record is "the best-selling single since US and UK singles charts began in the 1950s" while maintaining that "the best-selling single of all time was released before the first pop charts" and that distinction belongs to "White Christmas."

(Guinness Book of Records, 2009, pp. 14-15 and p. 169)



[3] Sing Along with MAD, 1961

<https://www.etsy.com/listing/70164781/sing-along-with-mad-vintage-mad-magazine>

[Accessed 21 November 2015]

[4] Henry and I had not had the chance to meet the legendary Johnny Mercer, but we did interview his widow, Ginger, when she visited South Africa in 1985. She was accompanied by Marc (Red) Cramer, who was the Director of the Johnny Mercer Foundation, and willingly agreed to record material for Henry's programme "Back to the Big Bands" and also for my programme "Woman's World".

[5] Composer Victor Herbert founded ASCAP in New York City on February 13, 1914, to protect the musical compositions of songwriters and publishers. With the advent of radio in the 1920s, ASCAP was able to demand licence fees from radio stations. These rates continued to increase and so stations, who wanted to reduce the cost of playing music, created their own royalty agency, Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI) in 1939, in competition to ASCAP. In an e-mail to me on 14 June 2015, Jim Steinblatt of ASCAP wrote:

BMI is owned and operated by broadcasters. ASCAP is a membership organisation, whose board of directors is made up of songwriters, composers and music publishers elected by the members, all of whom are songwriters, composers and publishers.

Radio and television were to provide a new stream of income.

CHAPTER 5

The Sinatra Phenomenon

Love and marriage, love and marriage
 Go together like a horse and carriage,
 This I tell ya, brother,
 You can't have one without the other.

Sammy Cahn was one of the most gifted lyricists of the twentieth century, and the most successful, in terms of Academy Awards and Nominations. While lovers of light music (especially songs of the 30s, 40s and 50s) know the names of Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, George and Ira Gershwin, Rodgers and Hammerstein, to name but a few, the name “Sammy Cahn” – a lyricist who has written some of the best loved songs of our time – is elusive. His songs remain in the repertoire of today’s celebrated singers, indubitably due to the fact that Frank Sinatra elected to sing Cahn songs. Together Sinatra and Cahn made musical history.

The 1955 song “Love and Marriage”, from the televised version of Thornton Wilder’s play *Our Town*, starring Frank Sinatra, was the first song to win an Emmy Award. Cahn believed that the songs that he and Jimmy Van Heusen wrote for the show were amongst their best work. It was a guaranteed success with the winning combination of Sinatra, Cahn/Van Heusen and Nelson Riddle, providing the music to the classic Thornton Wilder play. In 1954, Sinatra had suggested that Cahn and Van Heusen write the score for *Our Town*. Cahn writes: For years people had been saying that Sammy Cahn’s meat-and-potatoes lyrics and Jimmy Van Heusen’s polka-dots-and-moonbeams music made for a happy combination. It seemed a good marriage for the romantic yet down-to-earth story and mood of Wilder’s play. (p. 104) The title of the award-winning song came from the title of the second act, “Love and Marriage”. Cahn had no difficulty in linking *marriage/carriage/disparage*, and the song was written. It was a title that summed up the relationship between Frank Sinatra and Sammy Cahn, and with Jimmy Van Heusen, whom Sinatra had introduced to Cahn to write the songs for his film *The Tender Trap*, to be followed by *Our Town*. Van Heusen provided sweeping melodies that were both ingenious and harmonically profound to support the incisive, warm and heartfelt Cahn lyrics. The architecture of the music was remarkable, particularly in the slow-tempo love ballads that so suited the young Sinatra. Cahn and Van Heusen were true professionals, able to craft songs for the specific need and occasion. Both from New York and both born in 1913, they wrote their best songs in Hollywood. Between them they earned five Oscars for Best Song; one each individually, and then three as a team. Both had worked previously with other partners: Van Heusen with Johnny Burke and Cahn with Jule Styne, but their eventual

collaboration resulted in award-winning songs. Writing for Sinatra brought out the best in all three of them. Cahn writes in the foreword to *The New Sammy Cahn Song Book*, published by Alfred Publishing:

Lyric writing has always been a thrilling adventure for me, and something that I have done with the kind of ease that only comes with joy! From the beginning the fates have conspired to help my career... many may have written lyrics better – but none faster! Glen Gray and Tommy Dorsey became regular customers and through Tommy came the enduring and perhaps most satisfying relationship of my lyric writing career – Frank Sinatra.

In 2013, to mark the centennial of Sammy Cahn, Will Friedwald wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* that singer Michael Feinstein (whose personal letter to me is in the Introduction to this thesis) had said:

Cahn and Van Heusen were a dynamic combination, being so modern in what they brought to songs of their era. Sinatra always stayed true to what they wrote because they imbued those songs with his persona and he didn't have to change anything or interpolate hip phrases to make them his own. It was the perfect combination of writer and singer.

In the foreword to his biography, *Sinatra: The Artist and the Man*, John Lahr quotes Sinatra as saying:

I am a symmetrical man, almost to a fault.

That quote poses a conundrum.

The young singer who caused teenage girls to swoon was also believed to have links with members of the Mafia; Sinatra's love for his teenage sweetheart and their children was in sharp contrast to his much-publicised romances with some of the most beautiful women in Hollywood; his rapid rise as a recording star was as dramatic as his fall from favour, and eventual return to fame.

Sinatra's life as depicted by his many biographers reveals a complex and fascinating man whose career would be so interwoven with that of Sammy Cahn that each benefitted from the relationship.

Two young men, from vastly different backgrounds and cultures, but with the common bond of music, would become united in their quest to be the best in their particular fields.

Cahn's first experience of the professional world of music was when he joined a small group of Italian musicians called the Pals of Harmony as a violinist. Their first engagement at the Hotel Brigant in Atlantic City lasted a single session and Cahn started to think of another career path – songwriting.

Saul Kaplan was the piano player for the Dixieland group and would become Cahn's first collaborator and composer of their first song in 1934, "Rhythm is Our Business". That same year Sinatra left home for New York City where he would sing with any small group needing a boy singer. He was only seventeen years old. His first break came when he entered a talent contest called The Major Bowes Original Amateur Hour, a weekly radio programme broadcast by NBC, from the stage of the Capitol Theatre in New York City. Edward Bowes received thousands of applications a week, and decided to team Sinatra with three other singers (Jimmy Petrozelli, Patty Principe and Fred Tamburro) to form a group called The Hoboken Four. They sang the Mills Brothers' hit "Shine", accompanied by a ukulele. Thanks to the enthusiastic response from the audience and at-home listeners who telephoned in their approval, the group won first place, and went on to tour with one of Major Bowes' travelling vaudeville shows. [1] Vaudeville, of course, was to play a huge part in the life of Sammy Cahn. The impact that it had on the young Cahn has been more fully explored in Chapter 2.

With the success of Amateur Hour, Sinatra recognized the potential of radio, and he left the road show to land his first permanent engagement at the Rustic Cabin, a roadhouse near Englewood in New Jersey. [2] Sinatra's engagement with the Harry Arden Band would offer him valuable radio exposure, as the band had fifteen minutes on air every night on a programme called The WNEW Dance Band Parade. Nearly all network radio programmes were broadcast twice, first for the East coast and then, three hours later, for the West coast. Network broadcasts were important to the bands who could not afford to purchase exposure and publicity. Bands would accept low fees for engagements with radio exposure, often remaining for weeks in order to get national recognition. It was while listening to the radio that Harry James, who at the time was playing for Benny Goodman, heard Sinatra and, when James set out on his own in 1939, he traced Sinatra to the Rustic Cabin and offered him a job. James wanted to change Sinatra's name to Frankie Satin, but it was as Frank Sinatra that the young singer joined the band. Later that year, July 13, 1939, Sinatra, as an un-named vocalist, made his first recordings: "Melancholy Mood" and "From the Bottom of my Heart". [3]

George T. Simon, who was writing for *Metronome* magazine at the time, reviewed the Harry James Band the following month. He explains in his authoritative book, *The Big Bands*, that the manager of the band, Jerry Barrett, was anxious to know what he thought of the new singer.

"He wants a good write-up more than anybody I've ever seen, so give him a good write-up will you, because we want to keep him happy and with the band." (p. 266)

Despite the write-up, which commended Sinatra for his “very pleasing vocals” and “easy phrasing”, Sinatra would break his contract with Harry James to join the popular Tommy Dorsey Band. According to the Down Beat poll of December 1939, the Harry James’ Band had dropped to number 12 in the top dance bands, while Tommy Dorsey was amongst the top three (together with Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller).

Sinatra’s musical education was about to begin, with the help of Tommy Dorsey and arranger Axel Stordahl.

Sinatra would learn to phrase by watching Dorsey playing his trombone. He appeared to play without taking a breath for anything from ten to sixteen bars. Sinatra began to train by swimming underwater at the Stevens Institute of Technology; he exercised and he ran. He tried to “play” his voice like Dorsey’s trombone – able to sing eight bars without taking a breath. He knew the combined value of precise diction, yet conversational delivery. He was aware that the beat need not necessarily fall where the rhyme does. Sinatra was an intuitive musician, yet an analytical singer. He knew that to inflect a word or a syllable that seems not to require that inflection, can shift the rhythm and increase the sincerity of the words, making them more like speech. Ira Gershwin was often irritated when Sinatra ‘changed’ the rhythm that he had intended in the lyrics he had written; Cole Porter was incensed. Sammy Cahn, on the other hand, understood Sinatra to the extent that he anticipated what the singer would do, and, in demonstrating the song to him, would pre-empt his interpretation.

In an article in *The Washington Post* of October 2, 1988, journalist Richard Harrington quotes Sammy Cahn’s response to working with Sinatra:

He never turned down a song I sang to him. I used to stand in front of Sinatra and sing the song to him – and I am unerring when I sing a lyric. To say the words when they roll with the notes, to give the words and notes their proper inflection is very, very special. And Sinatra is unerring, as am I.

Sammy Cahn’s first collaborator, Saul Chaplin, who wrote for Sinatra at the beginning of his career, writes:

He did a thing even then which makes a song very much more affecting. Let’s take a word like “mine”. For most people the “i” sound would be important, but with Frank he lays the emphasis on the consonant. That’s interesting, because most singers don’t do it. They think the sound of the vowel is more interesting than the sound of the consonant. But you know you can do the “n” sound much more softly. It helps sustain the line. It goes right into the next thing. (Lahr,1997:24)

In the fifteen months between 1940 and 1941, Sinatra recorded twenty-nine singles with Tommy Dorsey, appeared with Dorsey and his orchestra in two films, *Las Vegas Nights* and *Ship Ahoy*, and was voted Billboard's Best Male Vocalist of 1941. When Sinatra was in Los Angeles playing at the Hollywood Palladium, he would drop in on Cahn and Chaplin at their office across the street from Columbia Pictures. Conversation centred on Sinatra's dissatisfaction that his name was never mentioned on record labels. He had threatened to terminate his contract with Dorsey unless he received personal credits. Dorsey finally capitulated, but the relationship was strained.

Bing Crosby biographer Gary Gibbins, in his book *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams*, has been a source of well-documented facts about Crosby, and I am indebted to his carefully researched and scholarly work. Since childhood, Sinatra had idolized Bing Crosby but, while he often adopted the sailor's cap and pipe, he never wanted to sound like him; what appealed to Sinatra was Crosby's wealth. Bing was the first major recording star, making his first record in 1927. People with phonographs could enjoy his songs in the comfort of their homes. Sinatra could appreciate the financial benefits of being a recording star. In the early 1930s Crosby had only one rival, a singer named Russ Columbo, the son of Italian immigrants. Via the medium of radio, a 'war' ranged between the "Battle of the Baritones", Crosby on CBS and Columbo on NBC. But Columbo had the additional asset of being classically handsome. He had appeared in two films and received thousands of letters every week from fans. But the rivalry ended when Columbo was fatally wounded in an accidental shooting; Crosby was left unrivalled.

During his days as a street singer, Sinatra had had to use a megaphone to project his voice. But Amateur Hour had shown Sinatra the virtues of the microphone, which allowed a more intimate sound and soft articulation which created a new expressive style. Sinatra learned to use the microphone as an extension of his voice. [4] Crosby had made the microphone an indispensable partner for his easy-going style. He understood the paradox of an electrical appliance that could make a voice more human and expressive. Lyricists, including Sammy Cahn, found that the microphone could bring a subtle conceit to life. There was no longer the need to belt out songs to reach the back of the audience in a theatre on Broadway; here was a means of making a song "speak" to every listener. Cahn's strength lay in the simplicity of everyday words that resonated with colloquial speech patterns. This very simplicity allowed Sinatra to interpret and phrase the lyrics.

Crosby's influence on popular singing was enormous and many of the young singers of the time, including Perry Como, Dean Martin and Dick Haymes, attempted to copy the Crosby sound. Sinatra believed that the world did not need, nor want, another Crosby, so he worked on a new style which

matched his physical qualities of frailty, innocence and vulnerability. The public, and, in particular, the young women, loved it. Crosby was forced to take Sinatra seriously.

In 1941 Sammy Cahn was sharing an apartment with Axel Stordahl at the Castle Argyle, an apartment hotel just behind the Hollywood Palladium where the Dorsey band was playing. Tommy Dorsey had heard Stordahl playing trumpet on a radio broadcast and, in 1935, had offered him a job with his band. But Stordahl was also a talented arranger and would have a profound effect on the fortune of the Dorsey band and later on Sinatra. He began altering stock arrangements. George T Simon writes:

Tommy Dorsey's must be recognized as the greatest all-round dance band of them all. Others may have sounded more creative. Others may have swung harder and more consistently. But of all the hundreds of well-known bands, Tommy Dorsey's could do more things better than any other could. The "Sentimental Gentleman of Swing" was a master at creating moods – warm, sentimental and forever musical moods – at superb dancing and listening tempos. And his selected arrangers could sustain those moods – Paul Weston, Axel Stordahl and Dick Jones... and he showcased singers who could project those moods – Jack Leonard, Frank Sinatra, Jo Stafford. When Leonard left the band, Sinatra blossomed. (p. 159)

Cahn describes in his autobiography that Sinatra telephoned and declared that he planned to leave Dorsey and return to New York, and invited Stordahl to join him. In September 1942 both men left the Dorsey band and returned to New York City. Sinatra accepted any engagement he was offered, but now, without Dorsey's restraining hand, he began wooing the audience. When the manager of the Paramount Theatre, Bob Weitman, heard about the alluring young singer, he arranged a solo appearance for Sinatra as an "Extra Added Attraction" on Benny Goodman's New Year Show at the Paramount. Cahn joined Sinatra to watch his sensational debut. The response to Sinatra was overwhelming and continued throughout the four-week engagement. *Time* magazine commented:

Not since the days of Rudolf Valentino has American womanhood made such unabashed public love to an entertainer.

In September 1944 the magazine *Seventeen* was launched, which declared female readers to be "bosses of business". Adolescents had disposable income and their purchasing power was enormous. The hysteria that surrounded Sinatra reaffirmed the collective power of young women, in particular.

When Sinatra opened his third season at the Paramount Theatre on 11 October, 1944, 200 police, 421 police reservists, 20 radio cars and 2 emergency trucks were deployed to control the thirty thousand teenagers, mostly girls. They screamed and swooned at the sight of Sinatra, who was known to them from

radio, primarily as “a voice”. Thousands of girls professed to be spell-bound just from having heard “The Voice” over radio, but were now able to hear him in person. Radio had been instrumental in creating an intense, almost overwhelming response.

That same year *The Frank Sinatra Show* sponsored by Lever Brothers had its debut on CBS. The show was recorded and broadcast on Wednesday evenings from CBS’s largest audience studio on Vine Street. [5] Fans would camp outside the studio from early morning complete with picnic baskets and scrapbooks of Sinatrabilia. Millions of listeners could hear the show, conducted by Axel Stordahl, who became one of the first arrangers to tailor his work to suit the vocal qualities of a singer. Stordahl used the orchestra to create a soft, opulent sound, with strings and understated rhythms. He often assigned up-tempo tunes to other arrangers, but elected to arrange ballads for Sinatra, whose style began to evolve as he honed his talent as a vocalist rather than a band singer. The show continued for fourteen years, and was later re-named *Songs by Sinatra*. The exposure was enormous, and Sammy Cahn’s songs were heard by an adoring public.

Thousands of fan clubs sprang up around the country with names such as “The Society for Souls Suffering from Sinatritis.” An entire vocabulary evolved around the words “swoon” and “Sinatra”. Sinatra’s celebrity status seeped into semantics. The New York Paramount Theatre was referred to as the “Para-Sinatra”; after a throat infection had confined Sinatra to Mnt Sinai, the hospital was dubbed “Mnt Sinaitra”. Sinatra inspired hyperbole: Lean Lark, The Bony Baritone, The Groovy Galahad, Too-Frank Sinatra, Croon Prince of Swing, Moonlight Sinatra, Swoonlight, The Swoon King, The Swing-shift Caruso, Sultan of Swoon, Swan of Swoon, Mr Swoon, The Larynx, The Svengali of Swing.

Fans were signing their letters “Frankly Yours” and changing the notation for postscripts from P S to F S.

When Sammy Cahn returned to Los Angeles, he engineered an engagement for Sinatra at the Hollywood Bowl, before 18,000 people, and a benefit at the Mocambo, a popular dance-till-dawn nightclub on Sunset Strip, frequented by motion picture stars and producers. Sinatra’s appearance there brought him to the attention of Louis B. Mayer and film producer Joe Pasternak of MGM. Sinatra returned the favour when, in 1945, he was signed to do MGM’s first multi-million dollar musical, *Anchors Aweigh*, co-starring Gene Kelly and Kathryn Grayson. Pasternak asked Sinatra who he would like to handle the score, suggesting Jerome Kern, George and Ira Gershwin, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart. Sinatra insisted on using Sammy Cahn and a relationship was forged that would last for decades. Amongst the songs written

for Sinatra to sing in the film was the ballad “I fall in love too easily” by Jule Styne, with lyrics by Sammy Cahn.

I fall in love too easily
 I fall in love too fast
 I fall in love too terribly hard
 For love to ever last

My heart should be well-schooled
 'Cause I've been fooled in the past
 And still I fall in love too easily
 I fall in love too fast

My heart should be well-schooled
 'Cause I've been fooled in the past
 And still I fall in love too easily
 I fall in love too fast

Both the lexical and temperamental affinity shared by Cahn and Sinatra was characterised by a fresh vernacular informality – what Cahn referred to as “meat-and-potatoes lyrics”. (p. 153) Cahn employed the same format for another popular song “Five Minutes More”, in which he repeated the title phrase six times within the space of sixteen bars. From a strictly compositional perspective such repetition might seem excessive, but when placed within a dramatic context the lyrics, and the simplicity of the rhymes, adopt a pleasing authenticity. How many young men preparing to leave for war are going to be able to muster a compelling argument? Cahn and Styne composed a song that went on to sell 600,000 copies.

Give me five minutes more,
 Only five minutes more,
 Let me stay,
 Let me stay in your arms.

Here am I begging for
 Only five minutes more
 Only five minutes more of your charms.

All week long I dreamed about our Saturday date,
 Don't you know that Sunday morning you can sleep late?

Give me five minutes more,
 Only five minutes more,
 Let me stay,
 Let me stay in your arms.

It was Cahn's lyrics that helped shape the naïve boy-next-door image that Sinatra projected in films such as *Anchors Aweigh*, *It Happened in Brooklyn* (1947) and *Double Dynamite* (1951). With Cahn's help, Sinatra created a persona of the bow-tied young man described by Bruce Bliven in a 1944 issue of *The New Republic*:

He has a head of tousled black curls and holds it awkwardly to one side as he gestures clumsily and bashfully with his arms, trying to keep the crowd quiet enough for him to sing.

There is a solidity and sureness about him that are out of all proportion to his physical frailness.

Cahn writes many times that he simply wrote songs, and that it was Sinatra who made them “Sinatra songs”, but this is only partly true. Coming from the mean streets of New York City, Sammy Cahn shared many formative experiences with Sinatra. Both were street-wise, and comfortable with the colloquial speech patterns of the times. Cahn had studied the lyricists that were having success either on Broadway or in Hollywood. Their lyrics ranged from the wittily elegant to exquisitely crafted, yet Cahn elected to write with a vernacular ease that resonated with young fans, who were comfortable with the simplicity of the phrases which Sinatra said “fit my mouth the best”. (Lahr, 1997:67) What made Cahn's lyrics so appropriate and appealing is that they offered the singer a combination of fragility and arrogance, loneliness and accessibility that made the audience forget he was singing someone else's words; he owned the lyrics.

Lew Irwin writes in *Sinatra: A Life Remembered* :

I heard Sinatra sing at the Copa; heard him grab that night-club audience; heard him grab me.

He knew the meaning of the lyrics and sang them to you, powerfully, dramatically, vocal chords swelling out from his thin neck, face contorted with passion, blue eyes moist with meaning – that thin vibrant man sang like nobody of the time, like nobody of today. (p. 36)

In 1943 Sinatra signed with Columbia Records as a solo artist. By the end of that year he was more popular in a Down Beat Poll than Bing Crosby, Perry Como, Bob Eberly or Dick Haymes. Sinatra was soon selling a million records a year; many of those songs had lyrics by Sammy Cahn.

After the 1945 film, *Anchors Aweigh*, which was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Film, Sinatra's apotheosis was complete. He received an Academy Award for *The House I Live In*, which was a ten-minute short about racial tolerance, an issue that Sinatra continued to support throughout his long career. A punctured eardrum made him ineligible for active service and, with so many musicians and

performers engaged in duty abroad, he remained centre stage (Cahn was rejected because of his poor eyesight). But Sinatra, who had married his teenage sweetheart Nancy in 1939, embarked on a series of extra-marital affairs with some of the most glamorous actresses in Hollywood. Press negativity surrounding his Mafia connections, his eventual divorce from Nancy, and highly publicized romance with Ava Gardner resulted in a dramatic slide in his popularity. Fans were bewildered. The boy-next-door married to the girl-next door image faded, and Sinatra's ratings on the Down Beat Poll slid to Number 5 behind Billy Eckstine, Frankie Laine, Bing Crosby and Mel Tormé. When Nancy Sinatra announced their separation, Sinatra was dropped from Your Hit Parade, and record sales ceased.

Columbia Records did not renew his contract

Sinatra attempted a comeback by singing at the Copacabana. Cahn was there to share his success and writes that, after the show, he said to Sinatra:

I've seen every second-rate singer pass you. If I called a music publisher and said, "Do you have a number for Frank Sinatra?" they'd hang up on me. I'm doing very well – I'm making \$100,000 a year – but I'll quit what I'm doing and stay with you. And we both know that I'm not being altruistic, because if you do what you're capable of I'll make twenty times that.
(Cahn, 1974:96)

Cahn's unshakeable faith in Sinatra was not misguided.

1953 brought a dramatic change in Sinatra's career. He received an Oscar for his role in *From Here to Eternity*, his first non-singing role. He signed a seven-year contract with Capitol records with a new arranger, Nelson Riddle, who provided a new jazzier sound and with whom he would work for many years.

In the biography *Sinatra: The Life*, Nelson Riddle is quoted:

It's not only that his intuition as to tempi, phrasing and even configuration are amazingly right, but his taste is so impeccable... there is still no-one who can approach him.
(Summers and Swan, 2015:192)

Sinatra went on to form his own label, Reprise, and, not surprisingly, Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen wrote the title song of the first album, "Ring-a-Ding-Ding".

Life is dull, it's nothing but one big lull
 Then presto you do a skull
 And find that you're reeling
 She sighs and you're feeling like a toy on a string
 And your heart goes
 Ring-a-ding ding, ring-a-ding ding, ring-a-ding ding

How could that funny face that seemed to be common place
 Project you right in to space without any warning?
 Don't know if it's morning, night time, winter or spring
 What's the difference?
 Ring-a-ding ding, ring-a-ding ding, ring-a-ding ding

She takes your hand, this captivating creature
 And like it's planned, you're in the phone book
 Looking for the nearest preacher

Life is swell, you're off to that small hotel
 And somewhere a village bell
 Will sound in the steeple, announcing to people
 Love's the loveliest thing and the bell goes
 Ring-a-ding ding, ring-a-ding ding, ring-a-ding ding

Sinatra had won and lost, and won again. The fragility had gone from his voice, and he portrayed an adult's sense of happiness and hurt. He was ready to sing the best songs of his career, many of them with lyrics by Sammy Cahn, who travelled with him, shared a room with him and became his confidante.

In 1954 Cahn had written the lyrics to "Teach me Tonight" with composer Gene de Paul. He offered Sinatra a more "adult" version.

Did you say, 'I've got a lot to learn'?
 Well, don't think I'm trying not to learn.
 Since this is the perfect spot to learn,
 Teach me tonight.

I've played love scenes in a flick or two
 And I've also met a chick or two.
 But I still can learn a trick or two
 Hey, teach me tonight.

Starting with the 'A,B,C' of it,
 Right down to the "X,Y.Z" of it.
 Help me solve the mystery of it,
 Teach me tonight.

I who thought I knew the score of it,
 Kind of think I should know more of it,
 Off the wall, the bed, the floor of it
 Hey, teach me tonight.

The sky's a blackboard high above you.

The midnight hours come slowly creeping

If a shooting star goes by
I'll use that star to write I love you,
A thousand times across the sky.

One thing isn't very clear, my love,
Should the teacher stand so near, my love?
Graduation's almost here, my love,
Teach me tonight.

When there's no one there but you.
There must be more to life than sleeping
Single in a bed for two.

What I need most is post graduate
What I feel is hard to articulate
If you want me to matriculate,
You'd better teach me tonight.

What do you get for lessons?
Teach me, come on and teach me
Teach me tonight.

Having regained stardom, Sinatra continued to enjoy successes, in films, recording sessions and shows. In 1954 *Metronome* magazine named him “Singer of the Year” while *Down Beat* voted him “Best Male Vocalist”. The same year brought success for Sammy Cahn when he received his first Oscar for the song “Three Coins in the Fountain”, sung by Sinatra, with music by Jule Styne. Two more Oscars were to follow with collaborator Jimmy Van Heusen for “All the Way” (1957) and “High Hopes” (1959). Both songs were first sung by Frank Sinatra. Throughout the fifties, Cahn played a huge role in building an image for Sinatra of a loosey-goosey ring-a-ding unpredictable guy. His lyrics had the “common touch” that suited Sinatra’s conversational delivery, yet careful diction. The technique and breath control that he had developed allowed him to use longer and more irregular phrasing; he knew that inflection could shift rhythm and increase sincerity.

In his autobiography, Sammy Cahn admits, most readily, that his relationship with Frank Sinatra was both personally and professionally gratifying. Sinatra continued to sing Cahn songs, and Cahn’s intimate understanding of Sinatra’s range and preference for the vernacular that came so easily to the lyricist, made them formidable partners. Each has placed on record an appreciation of the importance of the marriage of words and music. With Van Heusen, in particular, Cahn could craft deceptively simple phrases, knowing that the composer would provide sweeping melodies. But over the years, Cahn had developed “a system” for writing with speed and comparative ease, with lists of rhyming words that would later appear in print. Cahn followed trends, not only in music, but in speech, and was master of the art of ‘romancing the vernacular.’

Cahn’s career began with his first composition “Shake your Head from Side to Side”, written in 1933, which he sold to the publishers Judd and Brown. It was the first and only song for which he wrote both

words and music, and was based on the shimmy headshake dance that was a craze at the time. His final song was recorded in 1973 by Frank Sinatra, “Let Me Try Again!” Paul Anka had adapted the French song, “Laisse moi et temps”, written by Romuald Caravelli and Michel Jourdan, and Cahn supplied the words. This beautifully crafted ballad, like so many of Cahn’s lyrics, displays a simplicity that belies the emotions that are so intricately woven into the structure of each chorus.

Cahn would follow dance and musical trends throughout his long career, and wrote lyrics for some of America’s most celebrated singers, including Frank Sinatra. His lyrics, with their naturally informal diction, “played a large part in building the image of the loosey-goosey unpredicable ring-a-ding-guy.” (Lahr, 1997:64) Cahn recognized qualities in Sinatra that could be translated to musical terms. He offered colloquialisms that imitated the nonchalant street swagger, using throwaway phrases that captured his individuality, and so highlighted a unique talent.

Although *The Songwriter’s Rhyming Dictionary* (later re-named *Sammy Cahn’s Rhyming Dictionary*) [6] was first published only in 1982, and reprinted a number of times, and despite Tita Cahn’s comment that “Sammy’s dictionary was in his most marvelous head” (Tita Cahn to Marilyn Holloway in an e-mail dated March 8, 2016) it is not unreasonable to assume that over the years Cahn had compiled copious lists of rhyming words which allowed him to work with great speed. He exudes good humour when introducing his Dictionary, which lists 50,000 words, compiled phonetically, according to vowel sounds rather than alphabetically. [7]

He writes on the first page of his Introduction: “As a youngster I learned how to write a song by playing a game. I would take the words of other great lyrists of the day and change them. I still do this today, although now I get paid for it! I have never worked on a song that I did not enjoy writing.”

He explains the importance of the “singability” of the lyrics, and that words will not sing unless wedded to sympathetic notes. This “marriage” requires close collaboration with the composer, with often intense discussions about rhyming patterns. Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen debated the use of the sound of *t* at the end of a line. Van Heusen felt the consonant was too hard. A lengthy discussion ensued over the second half-chorus for “The Second Time Around”.

Love’s more comf’table
 The second time you fall
 Like a friendly home
 The second time you call.
 Who can say, what led us to this miracle we found?
 There are those who’ll bet,

Love comes but once, and yet
 I'm, oh, so glad we met
 The second time around!

Cahn demonstrated the “singability” of the *bet/met/yet*, and finally won his case by singing from “I’ve grown accustomed to her face”, from the musical *My Fair Lady*, with words by Alan Jay Lerner and music by Frederick Loewe.

I was serenely independent and content
 Before we met.
 Surely I could always be that way again, and yet ...

Cahn admits that he, like many other lyricists, chooses sound over sense when selecting his rhyming words, and offers an example from “Darktown Strutters Ball”, a classic 1917 song by Shelton Brooks.

I’ll be down to get you in a taxi, honey.
 You better be ready by half past eight.
 Now, dearie, don’t be late.
 I wanna be there when the band starts playing.
 Remember when we get there, honey,
 Two steps we’re gonna have them all.
 We’re gonna dance out both our shoes,
 When they play “The Jelly-Roll Blues”
 Tomorrow night at the Darktown Strutters Ball.

A lyricist would often use an impure rhyme, or no rhyme at all, and Cahn was no exception.

I’ll walk alone
 Because, to tell you the truth, I’ll be lonely
 I don’t mind being lonely
 When my heart tells me, you
 Are lonely, too.

As there are very few words that rhyme with lonely, he chose to repeat the word, and used the impure rhymes of *rather* and *gather*, as he wanted to follow with the thought of gathering dreams.

I’ll walk alone
 They’ll ask me why and I’ll tell them I’d rather;
 There are dreams I must gather
 Dreams we fashioned the night
 You held me tight.

The dictionary is organized so as to offer as many rhyming combinations as possible. The entries are based on an approximation of *sound*, rather than a literal spelling of the word, and the dictionary is, in Cahn's words, an "Alice-in-Wonderland dictionary", because the words are alphabetized by the *end sounds* rather than the initial letters.

Two basic steps are given in using the dictionary:

Isolate the last accented vowel sound as the vowel sound is the dominant note, while preceding or following consonants are of secondary importance. [8] An example is the word "millionaire" with the "aire" being the dominant sound. Cahn suggests the following rhyme words: (pp. 7-8)

anywhere, billionaire, debonair, Delaware, everywhere, overbear, questionnaire, rocking chair, savoir faire, solitaire. thoroughfare, unaware, underwear

In the lyrics of the song by Cole Porter "Who wants to be a millionaire?" written for the 1956 film *High Society*, Porter chose the combination of *millionaire* and *everywhere*.

Who wants to be a millionaire?
I don't.
Have flashy flunkeys everywhere.
I don't.
Who wants the bother of a country estate?
A country estate is something I'd hate!

Find the number of 'sounds' in the rhyme word. For example, in the rhyme words *star/far*, the rhyme sound is *are*. It is a single sound rhyme in a single-syllable word.

The dictionary lists:

are, bar, car, czar, far, jar, mar, par, scar, spar, star, tar

In "Gigi" Alan Jay Lerner writes to the music of Frederick Loewe

Oh, Gigi, while you were trembling on the brink,
Was I out yonder somewhere blinking at a star?
Oh, Gigi, have I been standing up too close or back too far?

Another single sound rhyme in a single-syllable word is *right/night*.

Cahn suggests: bite, blight, bright, fight, flight, height, kite, light, mite, (might), night, (knight) right, rite, (write), sight, (site, cite) slight, spite, sprite, tight, trite, quite, white

I need no soft lights to enchant me,
 If you'll only grant me the right
 To hold you ever so tight
 And to feel in the night
 The nearness of you.

“The Nearness of You”, lyrics by Ned Washington and music by Hoagy Carmichael.

In the words *thrilling/willing*, the rhyme is *illing*, a double sound rhyme in a two-syllable word.

Cahn offers the following words in his dictionary:

billing, chilling, drilling, filling, grilling, killing, shilling, spilling, stilling, swilling, thrilling, tilling, willing,

Oh, but your lips were thrilling,
 Much too thrilling,
 Never before were mine so
 Strangely willing

“Heart and Soul” by Frank Loesser, music by Hoagy Carmichael.

In the words *talking/stalking* the rhyme is *alking*, a double sound rhyme in a two-syllable word, while *sincerity/prosperity* is a triple sound rhyme *erity* in a four-syllable word.

Bridegroom and bride!
 Knot that's insoluble.
 Voices all voluble
 Hail it with pride.
 Bridegroom and bride!
 We in sincerity
 Wish you prosperity.
 Bridegroom and bride.

“The Gondoliers”, lyrics by W.S. Gilbert and music by Arthur Sullivan.

All the word lists given by Cahn are for one, two or three syllable words and include as many appropriate rhyme words as possible. In his own lyrics, Cahn tended to use single or two-syllable words, but he

expressed great satisfaction in his five-syllable lyrics for “Call Me Irresponsible” in which he rhymed *irresponsible/ unreliable/ undependable*.

Call me irresponsible,
 Call me unreliable,
 Throw in undependable too
 Do my foolish alibis bore you?
 Well, I'm not too clever
 I just adore you.

A foundation of popular music is the verse/chorus structure so favoured by Cahn. Most of his songs have an introductory verse that suggests the main theme. For example, in one of Sinatra's favourite songs, “(Chicago is) My Kind of Town” the verse delivers the storyline;

Don't ever, ever ask me what Chicago is,
 Unless you've got an hour or two or three.
 'Cause I need time to tell you what Chicago is,
 All the things Chicago is to me.
 Gee! It's –

Cahn follows the verse with a joyous list of details, which follow naturally after the introduction.

Performers often opt to sing only the chorus, but Cahn points out quite forcibly that the verse “sets the scene” for the chorus and is, in many cases, an integral part of the song. The verse to “Thoroughly Modern Millie” is another good example.

There are those I suppose
 Think we're mad – heaven knows
 The world has gone to rack and ruin,
 What we think is chic, unique, and quite adorable
 They think is odd, and Sodom and Gomorrhable – but the fact is –

The first version of the verse was

They like to yell is hell
 And most deplorable.

It seems that Jimmy Van Heusen felt the words *yell* and *hell* did not suit the persona of the performer, Julie Andrews, and the words were changed.

They think is odd, and Sod
om and Gomorrah-able – but the fact is –

However, when writing for Frank Sinatra, Cahn adapted the phrase “If you could use some exotic *views*” from the song “Come Fly with me” to “If you could use some exotic *booze* /There’s a bar in far Bombay”. That particular song uses the inner rhymes that Cahn favoured.

Come fly with me
We’ll float down to Peru
In Llama land, there’s a one-man band
And he’ll toot his flute for you.

There is a warning by Cahn that lyricists can over-rhyme. He gives the example of Ira Gershwin changing his lyrics for “Someone to Watch over me”. Gershwin first wrote:

Altho’ he may not be the man some
Girls think of as hand-some
He’s worth a king’s ransom to me.

Gershwin changed the lyrics to

Altho’ he may not be the man some
Girls think of as hand-some
To my heart he carries the key.

Lorenz Hart could have written in his lyrics for “The Most Beautiful Girl in the World”

The most beautiful girl in the world
Eats my candy, drinks my brandy, and she’s handy.
The most beautiful girl in the world.

Instead Hart wrote:

The most beautiful girl in the world
Picks my ties out, eats my candy, drinks my brandy.
The most beautiful girl in the world.

Cahn acknowledges that his writing “special material” helped hone his skills at rhyming, particularly when parodying the lyrics of other writers. But he took particular pleasure when re-writing his own words. He adapted “Time after Time”, written in 1947, when called upon to write for the prestigious corporation AT&T (American Telephone and Telegraph Company) founded by Alexander Graham Bell in 1885.

Time after time
I tell myself that I’m
So lucky to be loving you,

So lucky to be the one you run to see
In the evening when the day is through.

I only know what I know,
The passing years will show
You’ve kept my love so young, so new.

And time after time you’ll hear me say
That I’m so lucky to be loving you. (“Time after Time”, 1947)

The AT&T version:

Time after time
I take the normal dime
And try to make the normal call.
I hear the coin drop, the tone begin and stop,
Then a lonely silence and that’s all.

I only know what I know,
You guys owe me some dough,
And, chums, the sum’s not very small.
‘Cause time after time
I’ve used more than one dime
And never made a call at all!

The final paragraph to the Introduction to Cahn’s *Rhyming Dictionary* has these words of encouragement to aspiring lyricists.

Any word at all is rhyme-able.
Rhyme-able! Rhyme-able!
Take a simple name like Nicholas.
You can rhyme it with ridich-olas
If you aren’t too metich-olas

It will come out rhyme-able
 If the rhythm's double-time-able
 Happy words are always rhyme-able
 And they're fun to do

Love-able, skies above-able,
 Please-able, birds and bees-able,
 Joy-fully, girl and boy-fully.

They're rhyme-able! Rhyme-able!
 And when things aren't too sublime-able,
 It's amazing what a rhyme or two can do for you!

Throughout the 1960s, Cahn and Van Heusen continued to provide songs for Frank Sinatra, but in 1967 the Cahn/Van Heusen partnership was dissolved, leaving each to go their separate ways. Cahn received another two Academy Award Nominations in 1973 and 1974, writing with composer George Barrie, before moving back to New York City to work with former collaborator Jule Styne on a show *Look to the Lilies*. Here he met and married Tita Basile in 1970. Cahn finally achieved a life-long ambition to sing his own songs in front of an audience, when his one-man show *Words and Music* opened to rave reviews at the Golden Theatre on Broadway. Jimmy Van Heusen would settle in Rancho Mirage where he married for the first time, and where he would continue to see Sinatra, who had married Barbara Marx in 1978. In an e-mail to me in March 2016, Tita Cahn explained that, while they all remained in touch, they all began new lives.

Sinatra continued to perform. By the 1980s his voice had lost much of its power and flexibility, his memory was failing, but he continued to captivate audiences. He performed for the last time on February 25, 1995.

Sammy Cahn died on January 15, 1993. In a letter to me, Tita Cahn wrote on February 22, 2016:

Frank was very much at Sammy's funeral, sitting in the same row across the aisle from me. And I saw him throughout the service, sobbing and dabbing his eyes with a handkerchief. Particularly when Frank Military, the legendary publisher at Warner-Chappell, spoke [9]

Frank Sinatra died on May 14, 1998 at the age of 82. He was laid to rest in Desert Memorial Park, in Cathedral City, California, The words "The Best is Yet to Come" are etched on his tombstone. [10] This

was the last song Sinatra sang in public. The night after his death, the lights on the Empire State Building in New York City were changed to blue, in a final tribute to the man known to millions as Ol' Blue Eyes.

Notes:

FORM 2
APPOINTMENT: *9/8/35*

9/8/35
"MAJOR BOWES' AMATEUR HOUR"
(Please write plainly in ink)
("Hoboken Four") *entered #*

Name: *Frank Sinatra and the 3 Flashes*
Address: *184 Garden Street - Hoboken, N.J.*
Telephone: *Hob. 3-0985 - (Will call)*

Type of Entertainment: *Singing - Dancing + Comedy*
Give facts of your Vocations, Past and Present and all Details of Interest:
Fred Tamburro - 533 Adams St. Hoboken
Jimmy Petros - 214 Monroe " "
Patty Prince - 23 A - 20 St. West New York

List all Previous Radio Appearances if any: *W.A.A.T. for trials*

FOR AUDITION DEPARTMENT USE ONLY
(DO NOT FILL IN)

Rating of Program: *A+ - 1* Program to be Listed as:
Date: *9/4/35* Auditioned by: *Major Bowes*
Selection: *"Shine"*
Alternate:

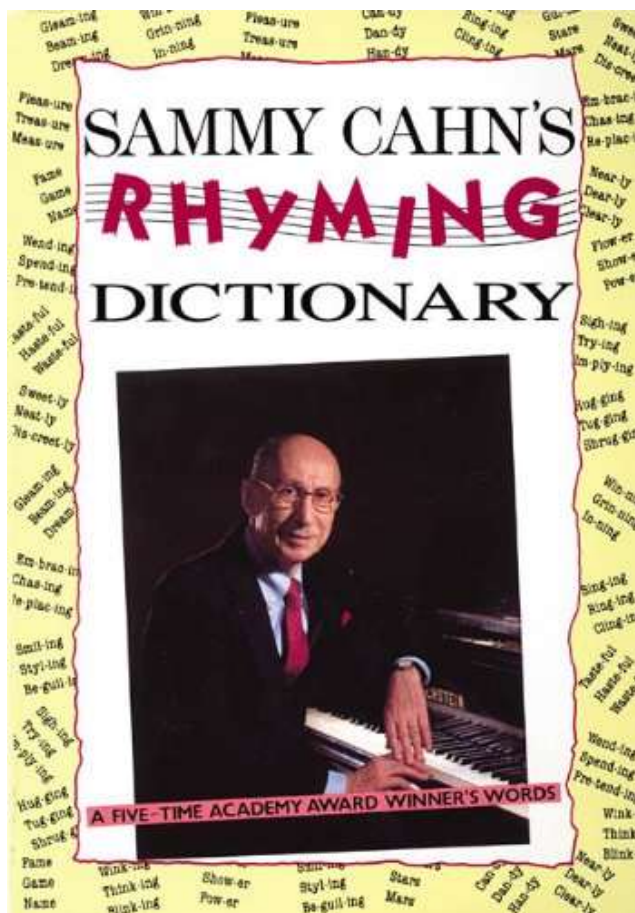
[1] Contract between Major Bowes and The Hoboken Four

[2] The roadhouse no longer exists. The site is now a petrol station which boasts a bronze plaque dedicated to Sinatra, erected in 1975, with the words: It must truly be said that he did it his way and it all started here.

[3] “Melancholy Mood” was composed by Walter Schumann, with lyrics by Vick R. Knight Snr. “From the Bottom of My Heart” was composed by Andy Gibson, with lyrics by Harry James, Morty Beck and Billy Hays.

[4] The one microphone that defined the Sinatra sound was the Telefunken U47, which enhanced sound in the mid-range frequencies, making the voice sound brighter. It was the same microphone used at the SABC, distributed under the different brand name of Neumann.

[5] The theatre today is known as the James Dolittle Theatre.



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Single ay (ā) sounds

*As an old native-born Californian would say,
It's a most unusual day.*

—*"It's a Most Unusual Day,"* lyric by Harold
Adamson, music by Jimmy McHugh

ay (ā)			
1 —————	sway	dismay	railway
a	they	display	relay
bay	tray	entrée	repay
bray	way	essay	risqué
clay	(weigh)	fair play	roadway
day	yea	fairway	runway
Fay	2 —————	Friday	some way
fray	abbé	gourmet	stairway
gay	André	halfway	stingray
gray	archway	hallway	subway
(grey)	array	headway	Sunday
hay	astray	heyday	survey
(hey)	away	highway	Thursday
jay	beret	horseplay	today
Kay	betray	hurray	touché
lay	birthday	inlay	toupée
(lei)	bobsleigh	lamé	Tuesday
may	Bombay	Mayday	waylay
nay	bouquet	midday	weekday
pay	Broadway	midway	3 —————
play	byway	mislay	appliqué
pray	café	Monday	attaché
(prey)	Cathay	nosegay	breakaway
ray	chalet	obey	canapé
say	chambray	okay	castaway
slay	chassé	padre	Chevrolet
(sleigh)	cliché	parfait	Christmas
spay	convey	parlay	Day
spray	coupé	passé	consommé
stay	croquet	pathway	déclassé
stray	decay	payday	disarray
	delay	portray	disobey
		prepay	

[9] Frank Military was a life-long friend and colleague of both Frank Sinatra and Sammy Cahn. He was Senior Vice President of Warner-Chappell Music Publishing Company and, in his capacity as a music publisher, had worked with both Cahn and Sinatra for over forty years. He died on March 8, 2014.

[10] “The Best is Yet to Come” was composed in 1959 by Cy Coleman, with lyrics by Carolyn Leigh. It was the last song that Sinatra sang in public on February 25, 1995.

CHAPTER 6

Sammy Cahn in conversation with Marilyn Holloway

It seems to me I've heard that song before
It's from an old familiar score,
I know it well that melody.

It was a chance meeting with Pamela Deal, the originator and Editor of *Woman's World*, considered the flagship magazine programme on the English Service of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, that brought me to an audition at the Sea Point studios in 1972. With a Degree of Bachelor of Arts and Teacher's Diploma in Speech and Drama, both from the University of Cape Town and awarded in 1965, I was ill-equipped for microphone technique or studio etiquette. My vocal training had been for the stage, not the intimacy of a studio, and I had no knowledge of recording equipment nor an ability to edit, which in those days required a blade and splicing tape. But the audition was successful and I was invited to join the *Woman's World* team – a misnomer for the two broadcasters who had the relentless task of recording, compiling and presenting a daily weekday edition, and a digest of highlights for broadcast each Sunday morning. When I presented the final broadcast of *Woman's World* on June 30, 1992, the anniversary of the programme's 40th birthday, the “team” still comprised two broadcasters, with the added luxury of a secretary.

I had, within the course of my first year, enjoyed a meteoric rise from assistant to the Editor of *Woman's World*, Linda van Alphen, who accepted the challenge of moving to the new medium (in South Africa) of television, to Editor of the programme, and the responsibilities of meeting daily deadlines.

Working fast became a way of life; although the interviews were pre-recorded and edited, the presentation was “live” and driven by a sound engineer. Each programme was compiled and scripted on the day of broadcast, which allowed for topicality and last minute inclusions. I was conscious of my over-projection and sibilance, and used a pop-cap over the microphone to soften plosives. Language advisor Tom McGhee had zero tolerance for grammatical errors or mispronunciations; Main Control in Cape Town expected (and received) programmes of a duration of 44 minutes and 55 seconds, which allowed them 5 seconds to cross to Johannesburg for *Little People's Playtime*, which started every afternoon at a quarter to five.

Interviews were conducted either in the Sea Point studios and recorded on reel tapes, or on a portable Uher recorder. These tapes, in turn, would be physically edited on a reel-to-reel machine in my office.

Recording the Sammy Cahn documentary has been a unique experience for me, with a sound engineer, Clive Gaunt, using only a microphone and a computer.

My interviews with Sammy Cahn were made possible by my husband, Henry Holloway, a fellow broadcaster and a world authority on the music of the Golden Age. In 2003 he was honoured by the Big Band Academy of America with their prestigious Golden Bandstand Award, joining previous recipients such as Frank Sinatra, Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman. Since joining the SABC in 1974, Henry has met and interviewed many of the iconic figures in the world of light music. This material was used as the basis of a number of series of programmes, including “The Sammy Cahn Story”, a 13 part musical documentary. I was therefore able to access Henry’s personal archives for recordings, correspondence and photographs.

The spoken material for this documentary comes from various sources; Henry’s interviews with Cahn in 1982, followed by mine in 1986, material recorded by Cahn for us at Warner Brothers studios, and extracts from Cahn’s album *Words and Music*. Sifting through the cassettes, tapes, reels and records has been a joyous, if time-consuming, experience. Conscious of my hypothesis, I took care to select extracts that would be pertinent to my avowed proposal that Cahn “wrote on demand”, using everyday words that resonated with “ordinary” Americans. Once I had selected Cahn’s material, I arranged it in chronological order and prepared a detailed script of extracts and their durations. This was to lay the groundwork for the transcription, which is a re-creation of the CDs (spoken and sung material). I elected to use two different fonts; Times New Roman to indicate my voice, and **Comic Sans MS** for Cahn’s spoken words. I have also employed the musical symbols ♪ and ♫ in the written text to show where music, and then song, forms part of the text. A “working” page has been included.

Where possible the original music was used, and here Henry’s private collection has been invaluable. All the Academy Award winners are included, plus most of the remaining nominations. Conscious of the constraints of time, music has been faded in and out under speech tracks.

None of this would have been possible without the patience, professionalism and dedication of Clive Gaunt, with whom I had worked at the SABC. I visited his home studio eight times over a period of two years.

Throughout this compilation I have been in touch, via e-mail and telephonically, with Mrs Tita Cahn, Sammy’s widow, and the Musical Director of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, Michael Kerker. American researcher Joan Cohen conducted research on my behalf at the Margaret Herrick Library in Los Angeles, which houses the entire Sammy Cahn Collection, bequeathed

to them by Mrs Cahn. The Conclusion to this thesis contains details of the exacting process of acquiring permission from the relevant sources to utilize documents and photographs.

Call me irresponsible,
Call me unreliable,
Throw in undependable too.

Do my foolish alibis bore you?
Well, I'm not too clever.
I just adore you.

Call me unpredictable,
Tell me I'm impractical,
Rainbows I'm inclined to pursue.

Call me irresponsible,
Yes, I'm unreliable,
But it's undeniably true,
I'm irresponsibly mad for you!

Handwritten scribbles

Handwritten sketches and notes:
A vertical line with a wavy shape to its left.
A vertical line with a pointed bottom.
A scribble that says "Add for PR".
A scribble that says "W".
A scribble that says "? 16 (1)".

Handwritten notes:
X
Bri...
?

MH: A beautiful version of 'Call me Irresponsible' sung by Jack Jones - and, not as was originally intended, by Fred Astaire who was called away by MGM to complete a prior commitment. So Cahn never had the pleasure of hearing Fred Astaire sing one of his songs. The picture was abandoned and seven years later Jackie Gleason was chosen to play the part of 'Papa' in the film. The producers considered the song inappropriate - too self pitying - but Cahn insisted that it remain and it went on to win the Academy Award for 1963, and Cahn's fourth Oscar.

Jackie Gleason singing

Handwritten notes:
A scribble that says "Self / do".
A scribble that says "??"

MH: 'Call me Irresponsible' taken from the soundtrack of the film, and finding Jackie Gleason in a very delicate condition. }

In 1964 Sammy Cahn had two nominations competing for the coveted award; 'Where Love has Gone' and 'My Kind of Town.' }

SC: 'My kind of Town.' Again back to my problem with all the new young writers.

When we had to write a song about Chicago we knew there was a song called Chicago.

Chicago, Chicago, that toddlin' town

So we wouldn't write a song called Chicago because for the main reason I am President of the Songwriters Hall of Fame, I'm on the Board of Directors of ASCAP and you know ASCAP- a Performing Rights Society - has monitors and the monitors listen to the

SAMMY CAHN AUDIO DOCUMENTARY

Sound design technical report

Sammy Cahn's speech tracks were sourced from recordings of interviews with him by Marilyn Holloway & from a 13-part radio series entitled 'The Sammy Cahn Story', presented by Henry Holloway, and also from the Cahn LP album 'Words & Music'. Working from the documentary scripts, the Cahn speech tracks were recorded onto computer as wav. [digital] sound files, in the correct sequence. The clean music cuts were also recorded, as well as those music cuts which faded in or out under Cahn's voice. Some of the music cuts had to be replaced as the durations were generally too short for what was required in the scripts. These cuts were sourced from CD, LP & the internet [YouTube]. Music fading in under the end of Cahn's original voice tracks presented a problem in adjusting the duration of the music – this was overcome by cutting in from, say CD, the identical music but, say, 2 verses earlier. This took precise matching of levels & quality to produce a seamless transition from the original music track to the 'new' track & took a more than few attempts to get each cut just right. After dubbing the speech tracks, unwanted sections needed to be edited out. This was done by separately recording the required sections onto a CD compilation. A CD was then burnt without pauses between the tracks then played back & recorded again on computer as a continuous file. To illustrate – let us say there are 3 continuous sentences, A, B & C. B is not required, so sentences A & C are recorded as separate cuts, then added to a CD compilation, burnt without pauses between the cuts, then played back & recorded onto computer as a single track. That's 4 procedures. Then each music track that played behind any of the speech cuts, both narration & Cahn, was packaged [recorded as an entity] with its corresponding speech. This was to ensure each section was neat & balanced.

The narration was recorded over various days – Part 1 on one occasion, Part 2 some weeks later. A change & addition to Part 2 at a later stage necessitated re-recording some of the speech tracks & inserting & editing these changes plus music onto the master file. A small amount of limiting/compression was utilised when recording the narration in order to slightly reduce the dynamic range – this gives a touch more 'punchier' sound to the voice. This processing was not applied to the Cahn speech cuts as it would have been applied on the original recordings.

Once all the speech & music cuts had been finalised [the attached screenshot photo 01 shows the folder housing all the sound files – this is just the top portion of the page showing +- 40 files, there were over 300 in total] these files were added to a CD compilation & a CD burnt without pauses between the tracks. Screenshot photos 02 & 03 illustrate one of the compilations. This single track CD was then critically listened to & notes made of possible further edits [shortening gaps, adjusting sound levels, use of equalization]. This was again re-recorded onto computer, and the final master copy produced.

If this documentary were to be made in a professional sound studio it would all be accomplished in a more efficient & speedy manner, but would require a staff of 3 – a producer, a sound engineer & an equipment operator – likely at a cost of thousands per hour. I would estimate that a total of between 12 & 15 hours of studio time would be needed to facilitate the production of this 2 hour 7 minute documentary :

3 hours Cahn speech dubbing & editing

3 hours music preparation

2x 30 minutes narration recording

6 hours [4x 1 ½ hour sessions] final packaging

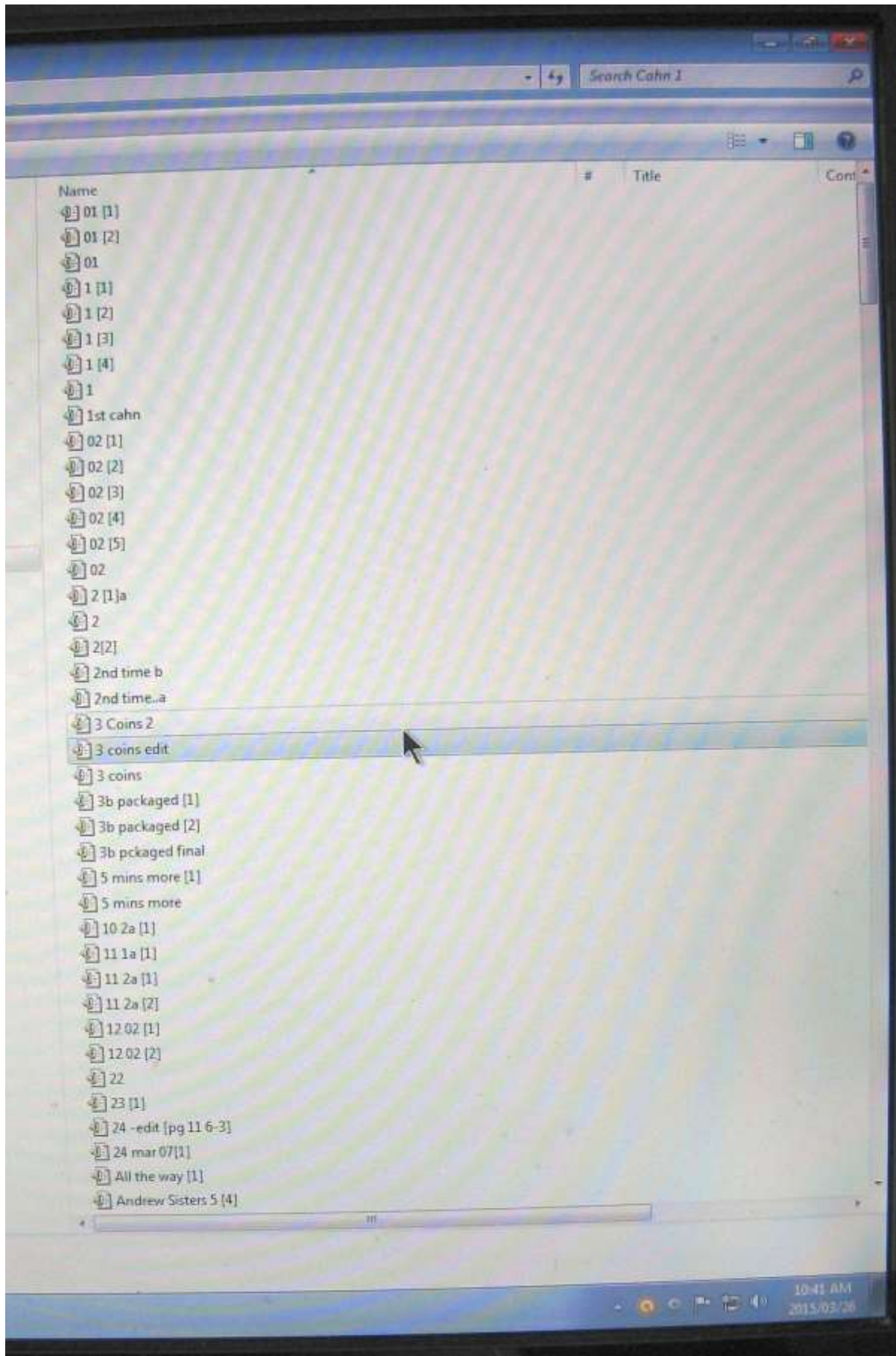
1 hour final editing

A little about my background

I was a broadcast studio sound engineer at the SABC in Cape Town for 34 years, specialising in music productions in my later years. After retiring, I ran a small Sound /PA business in Hermanus, providing & operating sound equipment for functions in & around the Overberg. We recently relocated to Somerset West. I have a small home studio where this audio documentary was produced.



Clive Gaunt



My Audio CD

Add the audio files you want to burn. You can add audio files from your hard drive or from Audio CDs.

#	File	Artist	Track Length
1	MH 2.1 (7a)	MH 2.1 (7a)	01:39
2	(1)	(1)	01:07
3	(2)	(2)	01:40
4	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 3	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 3	00:27
5	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 4 (1)	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 4 (1)	02:31
6	(4)	(4)	02:42
7	(3a)	(3)	00:03
8	5 mins more (1)	5 mins more (1)	01:51
9	It's been 1	It's been 1	00:35
10	It's been (3)	It's been (3)	02:07
11	11	track	01:34
12	(1)	screentest	00:11
13	SC M Pd 6 (5)	SC M Pd 6 (5)	06:13
14	post.omas.sp (3)	post.omas.sp (3)	03:24
15	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 7 (2)	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 7 (2)	01:36
16	MH 2.3 (1)	MH 2.3 (1)	01:35
17	4 feet	Rg 13 edit	01:35
18	2nd edit	trachma	02:38
19	3 Coins 2	3 Coins 2	08:50
20	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 10 (1)	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 10 (1)	02:03
21	3 coins edit	3 coins edit	01:08
22	4 (1)	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 10 (2)	01:23
23	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 10 (3)	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 10 (3)	00:43
24	I should care edit	I should care edit	03:21
25	MH 2.5 (2)	MH 2.5 (2)	00:47
26	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 11 (2)	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 11 (2)	01:51

My Audio CD

Add the audio files you want to burn. You can add audio files from your hard drive or from Audio CDs.

#	File	Artist	Track Length
1	MH 2.1 (7a)	MH 2.1 (7a)	01:39
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4	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 3	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 3	00:27
5	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 4 (1)	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 4 (1)	02:31
6	(4)	(4)	02:42
7	(3a)	(3)	00:03
8	5 mins more (1)	5 mins more (1)	01:51
9	It's been 1	It's been 1	00:35
10	It's been (3)	It's been (3)	02:07
11	11	track	01:34
12	(1)	screentest	00:11
13	SC M Pd 6 (5)	SC M Pd 6 (5)	06:13
14	post.omas.sp (3)	post.omas.sp (3)	03:24
15	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 7 (2)	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 7 (2)	01:36
16	MH 2.3 (1)	MH 2.3 (1)	01:35
17	4 feet	Rg 13 edit	01:35
18	2nd edit	trachma	02:38
19	3 Coins 2	3 Coins 2	08:50
20	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 10 (1)	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 10 (1)	02:03
21	3 coins edit	3 coins edit	01:08
22	4 (1)	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 10 (2)	01:23
23	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 10 (3)	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 10 (3)	00:43
24	I should care edit	I should care edit	03:21
25	MH 2.5 (2)	MH 2.5 (2)	00:47
26	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 11 (2)	Sammy Cahn Pd. Master 11 (2)	01:51

Transcript of CD: Sammy Cahn in conversation with Marilyn Holloway.

Part 1

This is Part 1 of an audio-documentary which focuses on the lyrics of Sammy Cahn, recognized as the most successful lyricist in cinema history, in terms of Academy awards and nominations. A great deal has been written about the composers of the Golden Age of Light Music, yet Sammy Cahn remains relatively unknown, despite a career that spanned five decades.

In 1986, I spent a day with Sammy Cahn in his home in Beverly Hills, in greater Los Angeles, where I was able to interview him against a backdrop of his Oscars and photographs. This recording session had been made possible through Cahn's earlier association with my husband, Henry Holloway, a fellow broadcaster at the South African Broadcasting Corporation, and a world authority on the music of the Golden Age.

Henry had met and recorded a series of interviews with Cahn in 1982, and these were to form the basis of a 13 part radio programme called "The Sammy Cahn Story" which would be aired on Radio South Africa in 1988. Cahn had already appeared on Broadway in his successful one-man show called *Words and Music* and, being the showman that he was, was more than ready to talk about his work as a lyricist who loved to perform and demonstrate his songs. And so, when I arranged to meet and talk to Sammy Cahn, he was more than willing to share his story with me.

Sammy Cahn was a joy to interview. I, as a Principal Broadcaster, employed by the SABC, was privileged to meet and interview hundreds of influential and well-known personalities from various walks of life, but Cahn's wry humour, coupled with the stories behind the songs, resulted in unique recordings that were to have a special place in our personal archives. In 2013, to mark the 20th anniversary of Cahn's death in 1993, and, with the blessing of his widow, Tita Cahn, still living in the family home in Beverly Hills, I embarked on a musical journey back through Cahn's life, vicariously meeting composers, arrangers and singers along the way. I plotted a chronological path which required selecting spoken material from various sources and recorded at different times and places, but throughout Cahn's droll accounts there remains the emphatic ease with which he approached the art of lyric-writing, and which supports the hypothesis that he "wrote on demand" with an ability to adapt to suit any genre, composer and performer.

I believe that a word is only as great as the note it sits under and, all my life, I have been blessed with great notes. I believe that the art of matching words and music is a very special business and I would like to give you a personal example of this art.



Call me irresponsible,
Call me unreliable,
Throw in undependable too.

Do my foolish alibis bore you?
Well, I'm not too clever,
I just adore you.

Call me unpredictable,
Tell me I'm impractical,
Rainbows I'm inclined to pursue.

Call me irresponsible,
Yes, I'm unreliable,
But it's undeniably true,
I'm irresponsibly mad for you!

I trust you noticed that lyric contains five syllable words in it. I only bring that to your attention because I come from a one syllable neighbourhood.

I was born on the lowest part of the lower east side of New York City, so low, in fact, that if I took one step back I'd be in the river. The typical family - not very poor and, certainly, not very humble. Four sisters; an only son - an awesome responsibility. With brothers there might be some margin for error but an only son! I would be a doctor or a lawyer or a dentist - and I'd play the violin. Well, I hated the violin but I made a deal with my mother and I adored my mother because she was the kind of a lady you could make a deal with, the deal being that I would play the violin up until the night of my bar mitzvah, give a violin solo and that would be it! Well, while waiting for my bar mitzvah, I discovered the magic world of the movies, I discovered vaudeville, I also discovered I had ulcers but came the night of the bar mitzvah and I played that violin solo, and at one-o'clock in the morning an

astonishing thing happened. My mother came up to me and said, "Sam, we got to go pay the orchestra."

"Pay the orchestra? These five fellas who had more fun than anybody at the party get paid?"

She said, "Sam, they get paid."

So I walked over to this orchestra leader (I think his name was Stanley) and I said, "Do you do a lot of this?"

He said, "Yes, we do a lot of this."

I said, "Well, how can I get to do some of this?"

And the very next year I was playing with this little orchestra in a holiday resort.

It was while playing with this little orchestra that I wrote my first song - words and music - first and last song for which I wrote words and music.



Any time you're feeling low
 You want to make your troubles go?
 You shake your head from side to side.

It's a simple remedy,
 All you do is you do like me,
 You shake your head from -

Would you believe that went on to become popular?

In this very same orchestra there was this marvellous musician, Saul Chaplin, who actually made an arrangement of "Shake Your Head", and so we were called to the office of a music publisher who wanted to publish "Shake Your Head". In this music publisher's office a wonderful thing happened - I ran into an old buddy from the neighbourhood, a Lou Levy, a lindy hop dancer, later to become the discoverer of the Andrews Sisters, and a music publisher himself. He said, "What are you doing here?"

I said, "I write songs."

He said, "You do?"

I said, "I do."

And he began to encourage Saul Chaplin and I to write songs together, to the extent that we wrote six to eight songs a day. And every day we would take one of these songs to the office of Arthur Piantadosi, a music publisher, and every day Arthur Piantadosi turned one of these songs down. After eight months of this, Chaplin, who was much brighter than I am, said, "Why do we go back there?"

I said, "Because he lets us in!"

Now since we could not make it with a music publisher, we started to write special material. We wrote for comics, for strippers, for snake charmers, for sword swallows and belly dancers. If it moved we wrote for it.

In 1926, Warner Brothers had released the film *Don Juan* – a feature film with a pre-recorded background score. There was, as yet, no dialogue. The film was shown with several Vitaphone short clips, presented by well-known opera and vaudeville stars. Cahn and Chaplin were now writing specifically for Decca artists and for Vitaphone.

Now you will ask which comes first- the words or the music. I will tell you swiftly - the phone call. One day the phone rang in our office and it was Roy Mack, a director, to say, "Can you fellas write me a ballad for one of these shorts?" - and this is indicative of how Saul Chaplin and I used to write.

Say, Saul. What do you think of this for an idea for a song?



This is my first affair,
So please be kind –

He said, "You don't wanna do that! What you wanna do is :



This is my first affair,
So please be kind
Handle my heart with care

Oh, please be kind.

This is all so grand,
My dreams are on parade,
If you'll just understand,
They'll never, never fade.

And this ballad from a short subject gained some attention. And so we were called to the office of Mack Goldman, of the Warner Brothers Music Company, a legendary music man, fastidious, impeccable, with the thinnest lips of any man you ever met in your life. Singing a song to Mack Goldman was no easy task but I took my stance and I sang:



Tell me your love's sincere,
Oh, please be kind.
Tell me I needn't fear,
Oh, please me kind.

'Cause if you leave me, dear,
I know my heart will lose its mind.
If you love me,
Please be kind.

Through those thin lips he said, "What do you mean? 'Your heart will lose its mind'?" I said, "Mr Goldman, sir, assuming that the heart is an entity all to itself, it could very—"

His lips got even thinner and he said, "You gonna walk around with the copies and explain it?"

I have never explained a line in a song since.

This song from a Vitaphone short subject went on to become Number 1 in the Hit Parade, and, to show their gratitude, Warner Brothers traded us to Columbia Picture Studios. They sent us out to Hollywood with a letter to the famous, or is it the infamous, Harry Cohn. The letter said:

Dear Harry,
 This will introduce Sammy Cahn and Saul Chaplin. Please use them.
 They're gratis.

We spent three long years with Harry Cohn and we wrote him all the hits he deserved - none.

A Sammy Cahn song to top the American Hit Parade was "Bei Mir Bist Du Schön", the year 1938. Cahn had first heard it at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem, sung in Yiddish, by two black singers. The audience loved it despite the fact they could not understand the words. Cahn bought a sheet music copy of the song, contacted the music company that published it and received permission to write English lyrics. The end result – the number one song in the world, recorded in 1938, by the Andrews Sisters.



'Bei Mir Bist Du Schön', Please let me explain
 'Bei Mir Bist Du Schön', means you're grand.

'Bei Mir Bist Du Schön', Again I'll explain
 It means you're the fairest in the land.

I could say Bella, Bella, even say Voonderbar,
 Each language only helps me tell you how grand you are.

I've tried to explain, 'Bei Mir Bist Du Schön'
 So, kiss me and say you understand.

The Andrews Sisters with their million seller record and the first for a female group.

Cahn and Chaplin remained with Columbia Pictures from 1940 until 1942 and, during that time, Cahn failed to make any impression at all on the famous, or is it infamous, Harry Cohn. In fact the composers failed to make any impression on any one, and the partnership dissolved. While Cahn was out of work, Chaplin remained in Hollywood and went on to become a film music supervisor and associate producer with a number of Academy awards and nominations to his credit. But 1942 marked the start of the collaboration between Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne, who was born in the slums of London but grew up in Chicago where he became a most accomplished pianist. The partnership between Cahn and Styne brought Cahn back to Columbia Pictures, and the infamous Harry Cohn whose studio was renowned for winning Academy award after Academy award. Styne and Cahn had signed to do five films, and Cahn was about to enter a new phase of his career with the talented Jule Styne.

I found out he had this habit - he needed to limber up before he could compose, and always first with a Viennese waltz; ♪ from the Viennese waltz, ♪ he would segue into a tango. ♪ Why a Viennese waltz and a tango when we were doing a Western I never figured out. But always these two songs.

Having limbered up he played me this melody for the first time:

♪

"Would you mind playing that just a little bit slower, Jule, please?"

♪

"I've heard that song before."

He said, "What are you? A tune detective?"

I said, "Forgive me, Jule. I don't mean I've heard the song - I mean that as a title. Would you take it slowly, from the top, please?"

♪

It seems to me I've heard that song before;
It's from an old familiar score,
I know it well, that melody.

Having established the title and the rhyme scheme - 'ee' and 'or' -

♪

It's funny how a theme recalls a favourite dream,
A dream that brought you so close to me.

I know each word because I've heard that song before,
The lyric said 'Forever more.'
Forevermore's a memory.

Please have them play it again,
And I'll remember just when I've heard that lovely song before.

To show his extreme gratitude, Mr Styne dropped me.

But of all the songs he wrote, one song emerged as a giant hit, thanks to the talents of Harry James and Helen Forrest "I've heard that song before."



Harry James recorded “I’ve heard that song before” on 31st July 1942 as his very last song before the great musicians’ strike against the recording companies in the 1940s. It was released on the B side to a Johnny Burke/Jimmy Van Heusen tune, but it turned out to be a more popular song and a great financial success. Jule Styne was impressed.

And one day the phone rang and it was Jule Styne to say, “Sammy, I think we ought to write some songs.”

And I said, “You know something, Jule? I agree with you. I think we ought to write some songs.”

And we wrote some songs.

We wrote songs for the fun of writing songs, songs like:



Give me five minutes more
 Only five minutes more
 Let me stay,
 Let me stay, in your arms.

Did you hear what I just said?



Give me five minutes more
 Give me five minutes more
 Let me stay,
 Let me stay, in your arms.

Here am I begging for
 Only five minutes more,
 Only five minutes more of your charms.



Give me five minutes more,
 Only five minutes more,
 Let me stay,
 Let me stay in your arms.

Here am I begging for
 Only five minutes more,
 Only five minutes more of your charms.

All week long I dreamed about our Saturday date.
 Don't you know that Sunday morning you can sleep late?

Give me five minutes more,
 Only five minutes more,
 Let me stay,
 Let me stay in your arms.

“Five Minutes More”, sung by Frank Sinatra not only sold 600,000 copies of sheet music, it also topped the Hit Parade for 4 weeks in 1946, and was runner-up for a further 5 weeks. By now, sixteen Sammy Cahn songs had scaled the Hit Parade – with no fewer than seven reaching the number 1 spot. In addition, four of Sammy Cahn's songs had been nominated for Academy awards.

Jule Styne and I began our collaboration during the war years and we were trying to chart the course of the war with or without the aid of the joint Chiefs-of-Staff, who can't carry a tune anyway.

I turned to Jule Styne one day and said, “You know something, Jule? I have a feeling that this war is coming to an end and we should have a song ready for when the boys come back, and what do you think of this for a title?”



Kiss me once,
 And kiss me twice,
 And kiss me once again,
 It's been a long, long time.

I didn't realize, when I gave him the title, I gave him half the song because this is what he wrote:



Never thought that you would be
 Standing here so close to me
 There's so much I feel that I should say
 But words can wait until some other day.

Kiss me once
 Then kiss me twice,
 Then kiss me once again,
 It's been a long, long time.

Haven't felt like this, my dear,
 Since can't remember when.
 It's been a long, long time.

You'll never know how many dreams I dream about you,
 Or just how empty they all seem without you.

So, kiss me once,
 Then kiss me twice,
 Then kiss me once again,
 It's been a long, long time.

Kitty Kallen with Harry James and his orchestra in 1944. Four years later Sammy Cahn was to write the lyrics of one of the most successful songs of his career. His background story to this particular song is taken from the disc "Words and Music" which is the recorded version of his one-man show which regaled audiences all over America, and as far afield as London. It is with the blessing and permission of Mrs Tita Cahn and the Musical Director of ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers), Michael Kerker, that I use these anecdotes and their accompanying lyrics.

One day the phone rang and it was the Hungarian-in-residence at Warner Brothers, Michael Curtiz. He was about to make a film called *Romance on the High Seas* and he asked would Jule Styne and I do the score. Of course we would do the score. Who'll we do the score for?

He said, "You'll write for Judy Garland."

Number 1 star in Hollywood! So we started to write for Judy Garland and he said, "Stop! Cannot get Judy Garland. You'll write for Betty Hutton." Number 2 star in Hollywood! So we started to write for Betty Hutton, and he said, "Stop! Cannot get Betty Hutton. Have genius idea. You'll write for her sister, Marion."

I said, "Mr Curtiz, Marion Hutton is a band singer - a fine band singer, but, if you want band singers, we know one of the best. May we bring her?"

He said, "Of course."

So I called the second Levy in my life, an Alfred Levy, who was managing a young girl called Doris Day.

I said, "Al, if you can bring Doris out to the studio, I guarantee we will get her an audition and a screen test."

Next day she came out to the studio. She didn't look very, very well-dressed; her hair wasn't especially groomed. I looked at her very carefully and said, "OK, a chorus and a half of "Embraceable You.". What's to hate?"

She tried to sing "Embraceable You" and started to cry hysterically and fell on the couch. "Say, Al, you want to explain that? The crying hysterical bit on the couch?"

He said, "Well, you see, Sam, she and her husband separated this morning and this was their song."

I said, "Come on. All! Spare me this. We've got to do an audition!"

Well, she pulled herself together and we went into Mr Curtiz' office and he asked her to sing. She sang "Embraceable You", and he looked at me and said, "We make screen test."



You sigh, the song begins,
You speak and I hear violins,
It's magic.

The stars desert the skies
And rush to nestle in your eyes,
It's magic.

Without a golden wand or mystic charms
Fantastic things begin when I am in your arms.

When we walk hand in hand
The world becomes a wonderland,
It's magic.

How else can I explain

Those rainbows when there is no rain,
It's magic.

Why do I tell myself
These things that happen are all really true
When in my heart I know the magic is my love for you.

That song won for Sammy Cahn his fifth Oscar nomination (the year 1948) and "It's Magic" was on the American Hit Parade for fifteen weeks. Doris Day was set to become one of the most acclaimed singers of the twentieth century.

Jule Styne enjoyed a most successful partnership with Sammy Cahn, but he also wrote songs with other lyricists, and, despite the fact that he preferred writing for theatre rather than films, Frank Sinatra ensured that, in various movies of the 1940s, Styne tunes (with lyrics by Cahn) continued to be nominated for Academy awards.

One day the phone rang and it was Jule Styne to say, "Sam, Frank Sinatra wants a Christmas song."

I said, "A Christmas song - after "White Christmas"? We're not writing a Christmas song."

He said, "Sam, Frank Sinatra wants a Christmas song."

Well, when you accent wants after Frank Sinatra like that - well I went to Jule's place and he started.

♪

"Say Jule. Has there ever been a Christmas waltz?"

He said, "Not to my knowledge."

I said, "Would you mind slowing Vienna down a little bit? ♪ From the top ..."

♪

Frosted window panes, candles gleaming inside,
Painted candy canes on the tree,
Santa's on his way, he's filled his sleigh with things
Things for you and for me.

It's that time of year
When the world falls in love,
Every song you hear seems to say,

Merry Christmas, may your New Year dreams come true
 And this song of mine
 In three quarter time
 Wishes you and yours
 The same thing too.

Sinatra sings Cahn.

In 1950 MGM required Cahn to write lyrics for their new singing sensation, Mario Lanza. Lanza was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Italian immigrants who had exposed him to opera from an early age. He had studied classical singing and made his debut in 1942, at the age of 21. His performances won him critical acclaim, and a country-wide concert tour brought him to the attention of Louis B. Mayer of MGM who offered him a 7 year contract. Amongst his first films was *The Toast of New Orleans* and his recording of "Be My Love" was to be his first million seller.

One day the phone rang and it was MGM's Hungarian-in-residence, Joseph Pasternak. He was about to make a film to introduce a new talent, a Mario Lanza, and would I please come out to the MGM studios to meet a Hungarian composer, called Nicholas Brodsky. May I describe Mr Brodsky for you?

He was a short-statured gentleman with jet-black patent leather hair, and the kind of a shape if you pushed him over he rolled back up.

Pasternak said, "Nicky, will you please go to the piano and play for Sammy the love theme for Lanza?" Nicholas Brodsky went to the piano and played the love theme for Lanza in this manner.

♪

Pasternak said, "Can you put words to that?"

I said I could put words to it if I could hear it! This fella plays like he has eleven fingers on each hand. I never heard so many notes! Charlie Waterfalls! And so for the first time in the history of Hollywood, a pianist was hired to play for the composer. Luckily, luckily Nicholas Brodsky had had operatic training and this was very helpful to me because I made Nicholas Brodsky sing every word to each note as I wrote it so I'd have some idea of how it might sound when Lanza sang it. And it sounded like this:



Be my love,
 For no one else can end this yearning;
 This need that you and you alone create.

Just fill my arms
 The way you fill my dreams,
 The dreams that you inspire
 With ev'ry sweet desire.

Be my love,
 And with your kisses set me burning;
 One kiss is all I need to seal my fate.

And hand in hand,
 We'll find love's promised land,
 There'll be no one but you, for me eternally.
 If you will be my love.

Of course, I pointed to all the missing notes.



“Be My Love”, and another Academy Nomination for Sammy Cahn, with music by Nicholas Brodsky.

I spent a number of hours with Sammy Cahn in the June of 1986, recording material for the radio programme “Woman’s World.” This was a popular daily magazine programme which was started in 1952 by Pamela Deal who, after a stint with the BBC during the war years, returned to South Africa with the concept of a programme that would appeal to women. After a number of Editors, including the well-known Sue MacGregor, who moved to London where she presented the British equivalent “Woman’s Hour” and was awarded the OBE in 1992, I joined the English Service of the South African Broadcasting Corporation in 1972, as assistant to the then Editor of the programme. A year later I had taken over the reins and was to remain Editor and Presenter for the next twenty years. It was inevitable that our honeymoon (Henry and I were married in 1986) would be a working holiday, as, armed with excellent but heavy recording equipment, we gathered interviews from music legends across the United States. Somewhat in awe of Mr Cahn, and in earshot of my husband, I asked the inevitable question – but felt vindicated by the rather unusual reply.

Which comes first - the words or the music? Always the phone call. One day the phone rang in my office and it was from a buddy of mine called Ed to say, "Would you please write a song with Gene De Paul? It would cheer up Gene De Paul if you would write a song with him."

I said, "Let's be sensible. I am liable to write a song with Gene De Paul will depress him more than ever."

So Gene De Paul came out to the studio. We had a bite of lunch, he went to the piano and I said, "Gene, shoot your best shot."

♪

Would you mind playing that just a little bit slower, Gene, please?

♪

Say Gene, what do you think of this for an idea for a song? "Teach me tonight".

Did you say I've got a lot to learn, what to learn, not to learn, spot to learn, how to learn - teach me tonight."

He seemed to like the idea, so I said, "Well what comes first in teaching is the ABC, so starting with the ABC, working right down to the XYZ, it would help me solve a mystery, teach me tonight."

Next in teaching, you have chalk on the blackboard, so the sky's a blackboard high above you, should a shooting star go by, I'll use that star to write I love you, a thousand times across the sky.

And finally in teaching you have graduation, so one thing isn't clear my love, should the teacher stand so near my love, graduation's almost here my love,

...And we had a song."

And since we were at the studio, the studio had first refusal, so they refused it first.

But the public certainly did not refuse it as the American Hit Parade showed late in 1954 and again in 1955.



Would you say, 'I had a lot to learn'?
Well, don't think I'm trying not to learn,
Since this is the perfect spot to learn,
Teach me tonight.

Starting from the ABC of it,
Right down to the XYZ of it.
Help me solve the mystery of it,
Teach me tonight.

The sky's a blackboard high above you.
If a shooting star goes by
I'll use that star to write I love you,
A thousand times across the sky.

One thing isn't very clear, my love,
Should the teacher stand so near, my love?
Graduation's almost here, my love,
Teach me tonight.

Cleo Laine with "Teach me Tonight".

The year 1954 was a most significant year in the career of Sammy Cahn. It was to earn for Cahn, working with composer Jule Styne, the first of his four Oscars.

I'm sure that you're all familiar with the song called "Three Coins in the Fountain" but I am sure that none of you are familiar with the story behind the song. So if you will come with me and with Jule Styne to the 20th Century-Fox studios in Beverly Hills - we have been hired to write the first, the very first Cinemascope musical, *Pink Tights*, to star Frank Sinatra, Marilyn Monroe and Dan Dailey, and we wrote one of the great, great scores ever written in the history of a Hollywood musical. I tell you that because you're never going to hear it! Because when this film was about to start Marilyn Monroe ran off to Japan with

some ball player called DiMaggio (give you an idea how long ago that was!) So there we were at the studio with nothing much to do, and one day the door opened and in walked Sol C. Siegel, the producer, to say, "Can you fellas write me a song called "Three Coins in the Fountain"?"

I said, "I can write you a song called 'Eh!' "

He said, "Don't be funny. We need a song called "Three Coins in the Fountain" because the New York office wants to call the film *We Believe in Love*."

I said, "Can we see the picture, please?"

He says, "You can't see the picture please! The picture is all over the lot!

The dubbing, the looping, the scoring the picture, you can't see the picture."

"How about if we read the script?"

He says, "You can't read the script because the script's in Italy!"

"Well then could you give us a tiny clue as to what the film's about?"

He said, "What's the film about? Three girls go to Rome, they throw coins in the fountain, and they hope they'll fall in love." And he left -

Well he did leave us a title and a clue, so I went to the typewriter, put the piece of paper in the typewriter. The first line was easy-

♪

Three coins in the fountain,
Each one seeking happiness,
Thrown by three hopeful lovers,
Which one will the fountain bless.

I gave the piece of paper to Mr Styne. Now it would take a computer to estimate the various notations it would take to cover those four lines, but Mr Styne, being the great composer he is, began to play.

♪

That's nothing much.

♪

Fair.

♪

Ugh-ugh!

♪

Ah!

♪

Having established that that was the perfect theme for this film, he was three-quarters finished, because that repeats three times in the lyric. So he handed back the paper.

"You want to know something, Jule? This song is finished. I don't know what else to say! I've said everything I had to say in these first four lines."

He said, "How about mentioning Rome?"

That's fair -

♪

Three hearts in the fountain,
Each heart longing for its home.
There they lie in the fountain,
Somewhere in the heart of Rome.

Now this song is finished.

He said, "Write the bridge."

The bridge is the connecting link between the parts that repeat.

He said, "Write the bridge."

"I don't know what to write."

He said, "Will you please try to write a bridge."

Well I've agonized over lyrics in my life but never like this. I paced, I stared, I finally, in total frustration, lifted the piece of paper and I typed;

♪

Which one will the fountain bless?
Which one will the fountain bless?

He said, "Which will one the fountain bless? Which one will the fountain bless? Wouldn't you like to rhyme it?"

"No, I wouldn't like to rhyme it."

He said, "Just like that! Which one will the fountain bless? Which one will the fountain bless?"

I said, "Just like that!"

And just as angrily he played -

♪

"That's terrible!"

He said, "Of course, it's terrible. What am I supposed to do with 'Which one will the fountain bless? Which one will the fountain bless?'"

"You know something, Jule? This is a typewriter; it's a typewriter. It can only type the same line twice the same way. It's a typewriter. You happen to have a piano. How about trying to help it?"

♪

Isn't that prettier?

And then he said, "This bridge is only four bars."

I said, "Which bridge is only four bars?"

He said, "This bridge."

Well, songs are written in eight bar sections. Why is he saying this bridge is only four bars?

"Say, Jule, did you write it correctly?"

He said, "What's there to write? Which one will the fountain bless? Two - Which one will the fountain bless? Four -It's only four bars!"

Well, the way they're writing songs nowadays, you have bridges which are eleven and an eighth bars, thirteen and a quarter bars, forty-nine and a half bars -

"Let me hear that bridge again -



Which one will the fountain bless?
Which one will the fountain bless?

I like it."

He said, "If you like it, finish it."



Three coins in the fountain,
Through the ripples how they shine.
Just one wish will be granted,
One heart will wear a Valentine.
Make it mine!
Make it mine!
Make it mine!

At this point the door re-opened and back came Sol Siegel to say, "How are you doing?" I said, "We have a song. We have a song, but if you will give us about one hour we will line it, we will do it for you."

He said, "Line it? Didn't you write it?"

What he didn't understand is after you write a song comes the important work, preparing the song for demonstration, finding the proper key, the proper accompaniment.

He said, "Look, if you have a song, please let me hear it. We're fighting time. If you have a song, please let me hear it."

I turned to Jule Styne and said, "Well, let's all hear it," and I sang for the first time:



Make it mine!
Make it mine!
Make it mine!

He said, "It's great. Let's go do it for Zanuck. Darryl, the boys have a song." And I sang for the second time to Darryl Zanuck:



Make it mine!
 Make it mine!
 Make it mine!

Zanuck said, "It's sensational! Will you make a demonstration record?"

I said, "Me? Make a demonstration record? Me you've got to see to believe."

He said, "Who can we get to make this record?"

I said, "Well, Sinatra is walking around here, getting a quarter of a million dollars for not making a picture, how about if I ask him?"

He said, "Would you? Fine."

"Say Frank, we have just written a song for the studio and they wanted me to make the demonstration record."

He said, "You? Brrrrrrrrrr!"

I said, "That's what I thought. Would you do it?"

He said, "Sure. When?"

"Tomorrow."

"Fine."

I raced to the music department to the office of Lionel Newman and I said, "Lionel, are you going to have any musicians around here tomorrow afternoon?"

He said, "Quite by accident tomorrow afternoon I will have sixty men here. We are scoring *The Captain from Castile*."

I said, "Do you think you can whip up an orchestration?"

He said, "I'd be happy to."

The next day Frank Sinatra came out to the studio. Jule Styne took him to the piano, taught him the song, and the three of us sauntered over to the sound stages. We opened those massive doors and there they sat - all sixty of them, ceiling to floor, door to door, orchestra.

Sinatra said, "What the hell's that?"

I said, "Frank, that's a sixty-piece orchestra."

He said, "I can see it's a sixty-piece orchestra! What the hell are they doing here?"

I said, "Frank, they happen to be here."

"They happen to be here? They happen to have an orchestration in my key?"

"Frank, they happen to have an orchestration in your key. But if you'd rather do it with Jule Styne at the piano, I'll have them take five."

He said, "Them – take five! It'll take them an hour to get outta here! Let me hear the orchestration."

And that's when the magic started. Lionel Newman raised his arms and he brought in the strings, ♪ and then he brought in the harp - the water. ♪ Frank Sinatra went on to record the song; it became the title theme of the film; it went on to win the Academy award; it went on to become the Number One song in the Number One picture in the world.



Three coins in the fountain
 Each one seeking happiness
 Thrown by three hopeful lovers
 Which one will the fountain bless

Three hearts in the fountain
 Each heart longing for its home
 There they lie in the fountain
 Somewhere in the heart of Rome

Which one will the fountain bless?
 Which one will the fountain bless?

Three coins in the fountain
 Through the ripples how they shine
 Just one wish will be granted
 One heart will wear a Valentine

Make it mine!
 Make it mine!
 Make it mine!

Frank Sinatra singing the award-winning song “Three Coins in the Fountain”, which gave Cahn his first Gold Statue. And amongst our Cahn memorabilia is a photograph of Henry and me holding the coveted 1954 Oscar.

The memories of the lean Hollywood years with Saul Chaplin were about to fade. Cahn’s relationship with Jule Styne was fun, fruitful and financially rewarding. As Henry planned the 13 part series “The Sammy Cahn Story” for broadcast in 1988, he discovered a gap in the chronological puzzle; we had neglected to quiz Cahn about his important relationship with the arrangers Axel Stordahl (of Tommy Dorsey fame) and Paul Weston. The ever-obliging Cahn happened to be in New York City and arranged to record some additional material at Warner Brothers studio. I take a certain pride in the fact that our recordings, on a portable machine, were, to my mind, superior, but we needed to place on record that for Cahn the grim early years of struggle in Hollywood were over.

“I should Care” was the second song I wrote after the song that took me out of the depths of despair. The first one with Jule Styne was called “I’ve Heard that Song Before”, and it turned into a tremendous, tremendous hit song. And I walked into my apartment, and I lived with a gentleman called Axel Stordahl, the great, great arranger with Tommy Dorsey, and Axel Stordahl and Paul Weston were making an arrangement of “I’ve heard that Song Before”. As I came into the room, they said, “Look at him. It takes him fifteen minutes to write a song, and it takes us hours to make it sound good.”

And I said to them. “Why don’t you fellas write a song?”

They said, “We have written a song.”

And I said, “Can I hear it?”

They said, “After we write the introduction to this song.”

And I said, “What kind of introduction would you like to “I’ve heard that song before”? A long introduction or a short introduction?” I said, “As far as I’m concerned you can give me one note”—and the Tommy Dorsey arrangement of “I’ve Heard that Song Before” had a one-note introduction. And it started like this.

♪

And so they finished the arrangement and now these two fellas go to the piano and, as vividly as if it was an hour ago, I can see these two fellas go to the piano - Axel Stordahl on the left hand and Paul Weston on the right hand and they played .

♪

And I said to myself immediately, and this is the God-given talent that I am most grateful for, I can't explain it, I said to myself I would call that "I Should Care."

They finished and I said, "And what do you call this song?"

They said, "We don't call it anything."

I said "You don't have words?"

They said, "No."

And I said, "From the top-

I should care
I should go around weeping

And they said, "That's nice."

Now if they say 'that's nice', the song is written, because all I do from then on is follow that lead.

♪

I should care
I should go around weeping,
I should care,
I should go without -

Has to be 'sleeping', can't be weeping, creeping, peeping

♪

I should care
I should go without sleeping

Now I follow

♪

Strangely enough I sleep well
'Cept for a dream or two,

But then, I count my sheep well,
 Funny how sheep can lull you to sleep

And the rest you know.



I should care,
 I should go around weeping.
 I should care,
 I should go without sleeping.

Strangely enough I sleep well,
 'Cept for a dream or two,
 But then, I count my sheep well.
 Funny how sheep can lull you to sleep.

So, I should care,
 I should let it upset me.
 I should care,
 But it just doesn't get me.

Maybe I won't find
 Someone as lovely as you,
 But I should care
 And I do.

Sammy Cahn's lyrics to the music of Axel Stordahl and Paul Weston. The singer – Vic Damone. And the title of the song "I Should Care" is also the title of Sammy Cahn's autobiography, a signed copy of which is amongst our prized possessions. Cahn quotes the words of the song in his foreword to the book, published in 1974, and dedicated to, and I quote:

For all my beautiful friends but most of all for my beautiful Tita.

Mrs Cahn still plays a very active part in ensuring Sammy Cahn's lyrics continue to be recorded and enjoyed. "I Should Care" (the year 1944) was to become a prophetic title.

Matter of fact, the song "I Should Care" became a tremendous, tremendous standard song, and my two friends came to me and said to me, "Why don't we write another hit?" And I smiled and said, "Play me another hit melody."

And they went to the piano and they played.



And I said to myself, I would call that "Day by Day", and the two songs are among the two most popular songs in my catalogue of songs.



Day by day I'm falling more in love with you
And day by day my love seems to grow,

There isn't any end to my devotion,
It's deeper, dear, by far than any ocean

I find that day by day – you're making all my dreams come true,
Come what may I want you to know

I'm yours alone and I'm in love to stay,
As we go through the years, day by day.

Billy May and his orchestra, providing the music for Frank Sinatra.

In Part 2, the focus falls predominantly on Cahn's relationship with Jimmy van Heusen and Frank Sinatra.

Transcript of CD: Sammy Cahn in conversation with Marilyn Holloway.

Part 2

Cahn's collaboration with Saul Chaplin was to provide a musical foundation that supported a range of musical styles, and their work, writing songs for Vitaphone shorts, would bring them to the attention of Warner Brothers film studios. But despite their move to Hollywood, they failed to make an impression, and the partnership dissolved.

But 1942 marked the beginning of the Sammy Cahn/Jule Styne years which resulted in a string of Academy Award Nominations.

The song "Let it Snow" was written on the hottest day of the year in Hollywood, California. Jule Styne and I were in the offices of Edwin H. Morris Music Company, and it was really stifling, and I said to him, "Why don't we get out of here, go down to the beach and cool off?"

And Jule Styne, typically, said, "Why don't we stay here and write a winter song."

So I went to the typewriter and I typed:



Oh the weather outside is frightful
But the fire is so delightful
And since we've no place to go
Let it snow! let it snow! let it snow.

Now why did I say Let it snow! let it snow! let it snow! three times?

This is a little lesson in lyric writing - that is lyric writing for music. If I had said:



Oh the weather outside is frightful
But the fire is so delightful
And since we've no place to go
Let it snow!

It would just hang there - it has to be: Let it snow! let it snow! to fill out the lyric form.

That song is my closest association with Irving Berlin and "White Christmas". Happily, through the years, if you have Christmas shows and Christmas entertainments, you'll hear "White Christmas" and "Let it Snow".



Oh! The weather outside is frightful
 But the fire is so delightful
 And since we've no place to go,
 Let it snow! Let it snow! Let it snow!

It doesn't show signs of stopping
 And I brought some corn for popping;
 The lights are turned way down low.
 Let it snow! Let it snow! Let it snow!

When we finally kiss goodnight,
 How I'll hate going out in the storm!
 But if you really hold me tight
 All the way home I'll be warm.

The fire is slowly dying,
 And, my dear, we're still goodbye-ing,
 But as long as you love me so,
 Let it snow! Let it snow! Let it snow!

Dean Martin taking some liberties with the lyrics.

Martin, plus Sammy Davis Jnr, Peter Lawford, Joey Bishop and Frank Sinatra were better known as the 'Rat Pack' and they 'ruled' Las Vegas in the 1950s and 60s. But the leader was undeniably Frank Sinatra. Sammy Cahn was about to start the most successful phase of his career with composer Jimmy Van Heusen.

One day the phone rang and it was Frank Sinatra calling to say, "I'm doing a film called *The Tender Trap*. We need a title song."

Now when I hear the word 'trap' I hear the word 'snap', and the song is finished.

I went to Jimmy Van Heusen's home, I went to the typewriter and I typed:



You see a pair of laughing eyes
 And suddenly you're sighing sighs,
 You're thinking nothing's wrong
 You string along, boy, then snap!

I was about to say "You're in the tender trap" but something made me add:



Those eyes, those sighs,
 They're part of the tender trap.

I gave the lyric to Mr Van Heusen who proceeded to write one of the worst melodies you ever heard. But it was our first assignment and I didn't say a word. I went home that night and I was really troubled by this melody, but the next day, to his eternal credit, Van Heusen said, "Sam, that tune last night wasn't very good, was it?"

I said, "Wasn't very good? That's one of the worst."

He said, "Listen to the way that it goes today."

I must tell you I was at the Sinatra recording of "The Tender Trap" with Nelson Riddle. When it came to the end of the song, Sinatra sang:



And all at once it seems so nice,
 The folks are throwing shoes and rice,
 You hurry to a spot
 That's just a dot on the map!
 You wonder how it all came about,
 It's too late now, there's no getting out
 You fell in love.
 And love is the tender trap.

I said, "You can't finish the song like that?"

Sinatra looked at me and said, "Who can't finish the song like that?"

I said, 'You can't. You're supposed to go:



You fell in love
And love –

He said, "That's an F!"

I said, "Yes, and you're Frank Sinatra."

He called back Nelson Riddle and you listen to where he hits that F. What I think separates Frank Sinatra from all the rest of them is he would have hit that F –if he didn't have it.



You see a pair of laughing eyes
And suddenly you're sighing sighs,
You're thinking nothing's wrong,
You string along, boy, then snap!
Those eyes, those sighs,
They're part of the tender trap.

You're hand in hand beneath the trees
And soon there's music in the breeze,
You're acting kind of smart,
Until your heart just goes whap!
Those trees, that breeze.
They're part of the tender trap!

Some starry night
When her kisses make you tingle,
She'll hold you tight
And you'll hate yourself for being single.

And all at once it seems so nice,
The folks are throwing shoes and rice,
You hurry to a spot
That's just a dot on the map!

You wonder how it all came about,
It's too late now, there's no getting out
You fell in love,
And love is the tender trap!

The title song from the 1955 MGM film, *The Tender Trap*, starring Frank Sinatra and Debbie Reynolds.

Later that year (1955) the phone rang and Sammy Cahn was asked to write the songs for a musical adaptation of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. One of these songs "Love and Marriage" not only scaled the American Hit Parade, it won the Emmy award. It was the first song to win an Emmy which recognises excellence in the television industry.

"Love and Marriage" was written for a television special called *Our Town*; the Thornton Wilder classic American play, *Our Town*. Where did the title come from? If you read Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, the first act is called *The Daily Lives*, and the second act is called *Love and Marriage*. I turned to Van Heusen and said, "Since we are doing a musical, Mr Composer, may I have a vamp?"



Love and marriage,
Love and marriage,
Go together like a horse and carriage -

And the rest you know.



Love and marriage, love and marriage,
Go together like a horse and carriage,
This I tell ya, brother,
Ya can't have one without the other.

Love and marriage, love and marriage,
It's an institute you can't disparage,
Ask the local gentry
And they will say it's element'ry.

Try, try, try to separate them,
It's an illusion.
Try, try, try
And you will only come to this conclusion.

Love and marriage, love and marriage,
Go together like a horse and carriage.
Dad was told by mother,
You can't have one,
You can't have none,

You can't have one without the other!

Once again, another Cahn/Van Heusen song sung by Frank Sinatra.

I have sung my songs to all the great, great entertainers, but the man I really adore singing a song at - not to, but at - is Frank Sinatra. And Frank Sinatra asked Jimmy Van Heusen and me to do the songs for the film *The Joker is Wild*, based on the life story of the legendary Joe E. Lewis, the comedian, and we had to write a very special song because when this picture begins Joe E. Lewis is a young entertainer singing around the nightclubs of Chicago.

♪

When somebody loves you
It's no good unless he loves you
All the way.

Happy to be near you,
When you need someone to cheer you
All the way.

Later in the film when the boys from Chicago leave him almost for dead, he tries to make a comeback singing the same song.

♪

When somebody loves you
It's no good unless he loves you...

And you know he's never going to hit those notes again.

And so the day came for us to sing the song at Frank Sinatra and we were told to go to the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas - gives you an idea of how long ago that was. When we got to the hotel, we were told that Frank Sinatra would hear the song during the breakfast hour. So five-o'clock that afternoon he came out of his bedroom suite looking like all the pictures of Dorian Gray. He saw me and he said, "Listen to you singing before breakfast?"

I said, "Frank, it's a draw. I have to look at you while I'm singing."

He said, "Let me hear the song."

And we gave him the full treatment.



Who knows where the road will lead us?
 Only a fool would say.
 But if you let me love you
 It's for sure I'm gonna love you
 All the way,
 All the way.

He opened his little black lids, showed us his little old red eyes and said, "Tsk! Tsk! Let's eat."

And from Frank Sinatra that is high praise.



When somebody loves you,
 It's no good unless he loves you
 All the way.

Happy to be near you,
 When you need someone to cheer you
 All the way.

Taller than the tallest tree is,
 That's how it's got to feel;
 Deeper than the deep blue sea is,
 That's how deep it goes,
 If it's real.

When somebody needs you,
 It's no good unless he needs you
 All the way.

Through the good or lean years
 And for all the in-between years,
 Come what may.

Who knows where the road will lead us?
 Only a fool would say,
 But if you let me love you,
 It's for sure I'm gonna love you
 All the way,
 All the way.

The definitive version of “All the Way” sung by Frank Sinatra. The song from the film *The Joker is Wild* won a second Oscar for Sammy Cahn, with music composed by Jimmy Van Heusen.

The following year, 1958, Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen wrote another wonderful song.

The song “To Love and be Loved” is one of my personal favourite songs. It was written for the film *Some Came Running* and the story I like to tell about the song is, that at the end of the song, I wanted to say “To sleep in your arms is the goal I pursue” - they would not let me say “to sleep in your arms” censorship-wise. Can you imagine how far we have gone censor wise? So the song says, ♪ “To stay in your arms is the goal I pursue”. But that’s my - one of my favourite lyrics and someday, when I re-print this song, I will make it say “To sleep in your arms is the goal I pursue.”



To love – and be loved
That’s what life’s – all about
Keeps the stars – coming out
What makes a sad heart sing – the birds take wing

To love – and be loved
That’s what living – is for
Makes me want you the more – the more we cling

Let others race – to the moon
Through time and space – to the moon
My goal is greater than this
To reach your lips – to share your kiss
To stay – in your arms
Is the dream – I pursue
To be sheltered- and safe – from the storm
To be cozy – and ever so warm
And for always – to love
And be loved – by you

That was the Jack Jones version of the song “To Love and be Loved”, written originally for Frank Sinatra, for the 1958 film, *Some Came Running*.

Cahn and Van Heusen received another Academy Award nomination for Best Music in the Song Category.

In 1960 Sammy Cahn equaled the lyric-writing record of Johnny Mercer when he received his 18th Academy Award nomination for the song “The Second Time Around”, commissioned for the Bing Crosby film, *High Time*.

Jimmy Van Heusen and I are required to write a song for a widower and a widow. Now what kind of a song would you write for a widower and a widow? I'm glad you're dead you rascal you? You'll be the death of me?

One day I turned to Jimmy Van Heusen, I said, “What do you think of a title “The Second Time Around”?”

And he said, “How do you mean?”

And I said, “Well, you know -

♪

Love is wonderful the second time around,
Just as beautiful with – ”

He said, “No. What you want is -

♪

Love is lovelier the second time around,
Just as beautiful with both feet on the ground.”

Jimmy Van Heusen was almost, you might say, the official melody-writer for Bing Crosby and, at that point in Mr Van Heusen's life, when he needed lyrics I supplied them. And when I asked Van Heusen what kind of man Bing was to write for, he said he's very, very simple to write for - he never ever turns down a song.

Love is lovelier the second time around,
Just as wonderful with both feet on the ground.

It's that second time you hear your love song sung,
 Makes you think perhaps that love like youth is wasted on the young.

Love's more comfortable the second time you fall,
 Like a friendly home the second time you call.

Who can say what brought us to this miracle we found?
 There are those who bet love comes but once, and yet –
 I'm oh, so glad, we met the second time around.

Bing Crosby paid tribute to his younger rival Frank Sinatra by saying: a singer like Frank Sinatra only comes along once in a lifetime, but why does it have to be my lifetime? Prophetic words, as Sinatra was about to deliver another Oscar to Sammy Cahn when, in 1959, Cahn competed against himself for an Oscar with two Academy Award nominations, and one of those songs became the Academy Award winner.

Jimmy Van Heusen and I were doing a film called *A Hole in the Head* and, as a rule, I don't walk around with little rhymes in my mind; I just walk around carefree and relaxed because I know the script will have all the ideas for the lyrics. But one night a bit of a rhyme flipped into my head -

♪

High hopes
 High apple-pie in the sky hopes.

And almost like ESP, Jimmy Van Heusen said to me the very next day, "Frank wants us to think of a song that he can sing to the young boy." And I said, "Isn't that funny? How about this for a title? "High hopes" - high apple-pie in the sky hopes."

And Van Heusen started going right to the piano, and he said, "Let me work on that."

He came back the next day and he played me a melody similar to:

♪

When you're down and out
 Lift up your head and shout
 You're bound to have some high hopes.

It wasn't what I had in mind at all.

And he said, "No let me try another one."

Came back the next day and he played something like:

♪

Sing hallelujah! Hallelujah!
And you're bound to have some high hopes.

It wasn't what I had in mind either, so I said, "May be we shouldn't write this from the view point of people, but from the view point of animals." No sooner did I say that than I realized I had made a terrible faux pas because Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke had written the single best animal song ever written.

♪

Or would you rather be a mule?
A mule is an animal –

I said, "No, I don't mean animals, I don't mean animals." And I was really, really in a dilemma. I didn't know what I meant and I said, "Ah..ah..I mean insects. Insects!"

He said, "Insects?"

I said, "Yes, an ant, for instance, an ant must have a sense of fulfillment."

He said, "An ant has a sense of fulfillment?"

I said, "What do they do? Just go up and back?"

I said, "Look. Picture in your mind a man is hit on the jaw, he's lying on the ground, a stream of ants go by his nose."

And the next thing we had :

Next time you fall with your chin on the ground
There's a lot to be learned
Just look around.

And now if you'll listen to Frank Sinatra's record, you will understand what a happy ending we have to this story.



Next time you're found
With your chin on the ground,
There's a lot to be learned,
So look around.

Just what makes that little ol' ant
Think he'll move that rubber tree plant;
Anyone knows an ant can't
Move a rubber tree plant.

But he's got high hopes,
He's got high hopes,
He's got high apple-pie in the sky hopes.
So any time you're gettin' low,
'Stead of lettin' go,
Just remember that ant.
Oops! There goes another rubber tree plant!
Oops ! There goes another rubber tree plant!

When troubles call
And your back's to the wall,
There's a lot to be learned,
That wall could fall.

Once there was a silly old ram,
Thought he'd punch a hole in a dam;
No one could make that ram scam,
He kept buttin' that dam.

'Cause he had high hopes,
He had high hopes;
He had high apple-pie in the sky hopes.
So anytime you're feelin' bad,
'Stead of feelin' sad,
Just remember that ram.
Oops! There goes a billion-kilowatt dam!
Oops! There goes a billion-kilowatt dam!

A problem's just a toy balloon
 They'll be bursting soon,
 They're just bound to go 'Pop!'
 Oops! There goes another problem, kerplop!
 Oops! There goes another problem, kerplop!
 Kerplop!

Oscar number 3 for Sammy Cahn for "High Hopes", with music by Jimmy Van Heusen.

In 1961 Cahn was confronted with a professional dilemma. He and Van Heusen were asked to write a song for a film called *Pocketful of Miracles*. But Van Heusen and lyricist Johnny Burke had already written a song with a similar title "Pocketful of Dreams". Van Heusen convinced Cahn that, as there was no copyright on a song title, they could write with a clear conscience. The result: another Academy nomination.

Jimmy Van Heusen and I were in New York City working on a show called *Skyscraper* when the phone rang from California. It was Frank Capra calling from the Paramount studios to say that he'd just finished a film called *Pocketful of Miracles*.

I don't want to touch it with a ten foot pole but Van Heusen said we must, we must do whatever Frank Capra says because he's the fella who directed the film that had *High Hopes* in it. I said to Van Heusen:

♪

Practicality doesn't interest me
 Love the life that I lead
 I've got a pocketful of miracles
 And with a pocketful of miracles
 One miracle a day is all you need.

And Van Heusen went to the piano and he wrote a melody that went something like this:

♪

(mm) Practicality (mm) doesn't interest me
 (mm) Love the life that I lead

After we finished this song Van Heusen said to me "What do you think?"

I said, 'I think it's terrible.'

He said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "Well this song needs a choreographer. (mm) Practicality (mm) doesn't..."

So he said, "Why don't we put a word there?"

I said, "Like for instance?"

He said, "Well,

♪

Real practicality
Sure doesn't interest me

I said, "Real practicality! Sure doesn't interest me! That's even more terrible!"

And we stared at each other and finally I said, "What if we said:

Pee-racticality dee-oesn't interest me

He said, "Pee-racticality? Dee-oesn't interest me? What does that mean?"

I said, "I don't know what it means but I know I'll be more comfortable singing that than

(Mm) – practicality (mm) – doesn't interest me

So the song now goes

♪

Pee-racticality dee-oesn't interest me

and was nominated for an Academy Award."

♪

Pee-racticality dee-oesn't interest me
Love the life that I lead.
I've got a pocketful of miracles
And with a pocketful of miracles
One little miracle a day is all I need.

Tee-roubles more or less bee-other me I guess
When the sun doesn't shine
But there's that pocketful of miracles
And with a pocketful of miracles
The world's a bright and shiny apple that's mine, all mine.

I hear sleigh bells ringing
 Smack in the middle of May
 I go around like there's snow around
 I feel so good, it's Christmas every day

Lee-ife's a carousel, fee-ar as I can tell
 And I'm riding for free
 So, if you're down and out of miracles
 I've got a pocketful of miracles
 And there'll be miracles enough for you and me.

"Pocketful of Miracles" from the 1961 film of the same name. The singer: Frank Sinatra.

Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen won their third Oscar together in 1963. It was Cahn's fourth gold statuette making him, in terms of Oscar winners and nominations, the most successful lyricist in the history of light music.

"Call me Irresponsible" was the only song that I wrote for a gentleman called Fred Astaire. One day the phone rang and they were asking me to do a film called *Papa's Delicate Condition* - meaning papa's drinking problem - to star Fred Astaire. I went out to the Paramount studios to the offices of Robert Emmett Dolan, the producer. He gave us a script by Phoebe and Henry Ephron. And the script dealt with the word 'irresponsibly'. 'He's a most irresponsible man.' 'Did you ever meet anyone as irresponsible as this gentleman?'

One night I turned to Jimmy Van Heusen and said, "Do you like a title "Call me Irresponsible"?"

He said, "How do mean that?"

I said "Well:

Call me irresponsible
 Call me unreliable
 Throw in undependable too

We finished that song in about an hour and a half at the best, and now I turned to Van Heusen and said, "Let's do this song for Fred Astaire." And Van Heusen who hates to demonstrate a song as much as I love to demonstrate a song - in any case, I finally, finally convinced him because I had been waiting almost twenty five years to stand in front of Fred Astaire.

He said that is just a remarkable song and we exchanged flatteries and then he said to me, "Would you like to know why you got this assignment?" and I said, "Yes, I would."

He said, "Johnny Mercer wasn't available."

I said, "I consider that a high compliment."

He said, "No. I will give you the compliment now. The next time Johnny Mercer leaves town, I won't worry about it."

The song went on to win the Academy Award.



Call me irresponsible,
Call me unreliable,
Throw in undependable too.

Do my foolish alibis bore you?
Well, I'm not too clever.
I just adore you.

Call me unpredictable,
Tell me I'm impractical,
Rainbows I'm inclined to pursue.

Call me irresponsible,
Yes, I'm unreliable,
But it's undeniably true,
I'm irresponsibly mad for you!

A beautiful version of "Call me Irresponsible" sung by Jack Jones, and not, as was originally intended, by Fred Astaire who was called away by MGM to complete a prior commitment. So Cahn never had the

pleasure of hearing Fred Astaire sing one of his songs. The picture was abandoned and seven years later Jackie Gleason was chosen to play the part of “Papa” in the film. The producers considered the song inappropriate – too self-pitying but Cahn insisted that it remain and it went on to win the Academy Award for 1963, and Cahn’s fourth Oscar.



Jackie Gleason talking and singing

“Call me Irresponsible” taken from the soundtrack of the film, and finding Jackie Gleason in a very delicate condition.

In 1964, Sammy Cahn had two nominations competing for the coveted award; “Where Love has Gone” and “My Kind of Town.”

“My Kind of Town.” Again back to my problem with all the new young writers. When we had to write a song about Chicago we knew there was a song called “Chicago”.



Chicago, Chicago, that toddlin’ town

So we wouldn’t write a song called “Chicago” because for the main reason I am President of the Songwriters Hall of Fame, I’m on the Board of Directors of ASCAP and you know ASCAP- a Performing Rights Society - has monitors and the monitors listen to the radio and when they hear a song called “Chicago” which “Chicago” are they listening to? So I didn’t want to spoil another fella’s title so instead of writing “Chicago” I wrote:



My kind of town Chicago is

And you know what that song turned out to be. It’s one of my most important copyrights, and it didn’t affect the other copyright.



This is my kind of town, Chicago is
My kind of town Chicago is

My kind of people too,
People who smile at you

And each time I roam, Chicago is
Calling me home, Chicago is

One town that won't let you down,
It's my kind of town!

Frank Sinatra re-writing Cahn's lyrics. "My kind of Town" went on to win another Oscar nomination for Cahn and Van Heusen.

In 1967 Sammy Cahn accepted a tough assignment which was to win him another Academy Award nomination.

One day the phone rang and it was Universal Picture Studios, Ros Hunter. He said, "Can you come out to the studio. We're about to make a film for star Julie Andrews, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*." On the way to the studio I turned to Jimmy Van Heusen and said "You know something, Jimmy? He can't want us to write a song called a "Thoroughly Modern Millie"? Sing it? You can hardly speak it!" When we came out to the studio Ros Hunter leaped from his desk and said, "Isn't that the catchiest title you have ever heard?" I hated that title so much I got even. I didn't use it but once at the very end of the song. But when we brought the song to the studio, they got even - they turned it down! They said "Write us another "Thoroughly Modern Millie"." Another! I didn't think we could write the first one! "You know something, Van Heusen? It occurs to me that they would like for us to write them the kind of song that sounds like it already has been written, so you're going to have to forget that you're this great composer and just try to write something real corny.

♪

Psst! Psst! Psst! James I think if you tried you could get cornier!

♪

That's corny! "

Now if there's anything in the world I hate it's notes without words and you know that part 'da da la da da la da la'. It didn't have any notes! I said, "Van Heusen, would you mind playing that slower, please?"

♪

Everything today is thoroughly modern
 (Check your personality)
 Everything today makes yesterday slow
 (Better face reality)

They accepted that song. It went on to win two *Gold Records*, and happily financed my second marriage.

♪

There are those, I suppose
 Think we're mad – heaven knows
 The world has gone to wrack and to ruin,
 What we think is chic, unique and quite adorable
 They think is odd, and Sodom and Gomorrable – but the fact is

Everything today is thoroughly modern
 (Check your personality)
 Everything today makes yesterday slow
 (Better face reality)

It's not insanity, says *Vanity Fair*
 In fact it's stylish to raise your skirts
 And bob your hair-

In a rumble seat the world is so cozy
 (If the boy is kissable)
 And that tango dance they wouldn't allow
 (Now is quite permissible)

Good-bye, good goody girl,
 I'm changing and how,
 So beat the drums 'cause here comes
 Thoroughly modern Millie now!

Everything today is thoroughly modern
 Bands are gettin' jazzier, everything is starting to go,
 Cars are gettin' snazzier
 Men says "It's criminal what women'll do"

What they're forgetting is this is 1922!

Have you seen the way they kiss in the movies?

Isn't it delectable?

Painting lips and pencil lining your brow

Now it's quite respectable

Good-bye, goody goody girl

I'm changing and how,

So beat the drum, 'cause here comes

Thoroughly modern Millie now!

Despite the fact that Cahn and Saul Chaplin had not worked together for many years, Chaplin remained in Hollywood and went on to become an associate producer in the early 1960s and worked on some major musicals such as *Singing in the Rain*, *West Side Story*, *The Sound of Music* and, in 1968, *Star*, with Julie Andrews portraying Gertrude Lawrence who rose from minstrel's daughter to become the First Lady of Broadway. Chaplin approached Cahn to write the title song of *Star* – a song which went on to be another Academy Award nomination.



If the lady's naughty but proper

If the lady's chic-er than chic

If her escorts must wear a topper

And each man's the man of the week

If she rides around in a brand new foreign car

The chances are the lady's a star!

If the lady's brilliantly wicked

If she makes the dialogue flash

If the lady's way with a ditty

Makes the ditty seem like a smash

If her songs add up to a fancy repertoire

The chances are the lady's a star!

If her smallest party is really expensive

With tons of expensive caviar

If the lady is someone

With the same credentials someone

With the same essentials someone

Who is worshipped from afar

She's a genuine, positive,

Totally marvellous,

Perfectly wonderful – Star!

Sammy Cahn's collaboration with the Russian-born composer Nicholas Brodsky, who had been strongly influenced by opera and operettas, was rewarding in terms of Academy Award nominations with "Wonder Why" in 1951, followed a year later with "Because You're Mine", and then, in 1955, "I'll never stop loving you." Cahn describes in his autobiography that it took real "chutzpah" to demonstrate "Because You're Mine" to Mario Lanza, and that working with Doris Day at Warner Bros gave him ulcers. But Vic Damone happily introduced the song "Wonder Why" in the film *Rich, Young and Pretty*, in which he starred with Jane Powell.



Wonder why I'm not myself of late
I'm feeling strangely great, I wonder why
I suppose some genius could explain
Why I walk in the rain, just let him try

I guess there is a simple explanation
Unless I've come up with a new sensation
It could be that she's caught up with me
And all the mystery I'm speaking of
Is simply that I went and fell, I fell in love

"Wonder Why", words by Sammy Cahn, music by Nicholas Brodsky who also wrote the music for "Because You're Mine" and "I'll Never Stop Loving You."



Because you're mine the brightest star I see
Looks down, my love, and envies me
Because you're mine
Because you're mine

Because you're mine
The breeze that hurries by
Becomes a melody and why?
Because you're mine
Because you're mine

I only know for as long as I may live,
I'll only live for the kiss that you alone may give me.

And when we kiss that isn't thunder, dear,
It's only my poor heart you hear,

And it's applause,
Because you're mine.



I'll never stop loving you
Whatever else I may do
My love for you will live 'til time itself is through
I'll never stop wanting you
And when forever is through
My heart will beat the way it does each time we meet.
The night doesn't question the stars that appear in the skies
So why should I question the stars that appear in my eyes
Of this I'm more than just sure
My love will last and endure
I'll never, no, I'll never stop loving you.

Despite the fact that Sammy Cahn was responsible for the film debut of Doris Day when he persuaded her to audition for the Warner Bros. film, *Romance on the High Seas*, there was very little love lost between the lyricist and the singer, but, ever the professional, Doris Day still sang Cahn lyrics with music by Jule Styne.



It's a great feelin'
To suddenly find
The clouds are silver lined
When the sun breaks through.
It's a great feelin'
To walk down the street
See the folks you meet
Smilin' back at you.

As long as I've got someone to embrace,
As far as I'm concerned the world is such a lovely place.

It's a great feelin'
Your credit is nil,
You'll never make a mill!
But, nonetheless, I state,
If you're in love
You're feelin' great!

The Cahn/Styne partnership resulted in six Academy Award Nominations in the 1940s, including “I’ll Walk Alone” in 1944, sung here by Johnny Desmond.



I’ll walk alone
 Because to tell you the truth, I’ll be lonely
 I don’t mind being lonely
 When my heart tells me you are lonely too

Please walk alone,
 And send your love and your kisses to guide me
 Till you’re walking beside me,
 I’ll walk alone
 I’ll always be near you wherever you are each night
 In every prayer
 If you call I’ll hear you, no matter how far
 Just close your eyes and I’ll be there

So walk alone
 And send your love and your kisses to guide me
 Till you’re walking beside me,
 I’ll walk alone.

The final words (in song) in this audio-documentary come from Frank Sinatra who said on the occasion of Cahn’s 75th birthday and I quote from the magazine *Sheet Music* of June/July 1988:

You have come a long way since those lean and hungry days back in the 1930s when we were both reaching for the brass ring. I will always be indebted for the words you put in my mouth then, and all those you have favoured me with since.

Love ya,
 Frances Albert.



Once I get you
 Up there! Where the air is rarefied,
 We’ll just glide, starry-eyed.

Once I get you
 Up there!

I'll be holding you so near,
You may hear angels cheer,
'Cause we're together.

Weather-wise, it's such a lovely day!
You just say the words
And we'll beat the birds
Down to Acapulco Bay.

It's perfect
For a flying honeymoon, they say,

Come fly with me!
Let's fly!
Let's fly!
Pack up!
Let's fly away!

Notes: I believe that the audio-documentary supports an earlier statement made:
"The written text requires the spoken word and supporting music."

It might be considered appropriate to house the CDs (and their transcripts) in the Music Library at UNISA for students pursuing an interest in lyric writing and music of the Golden Age.

Conclusion

Romancing the vernacular throughout his life-long love affair with music, and, in particular, the quirky and quotidian words of his songs, Sammy Cahn pursued his passion with a dogged resolution. His early love of musical theatre, with its constantly changing programmes, excited his imagination. In his autobiography there are many references to the influence of vaudeville on his writing, and, how as a child, he would sit behind the musical director in order to follow notes on his sheet music. Cahn was to retain his love for the quaint and quirky, elements that are reflected in his first few songs, but, as he matured as a lyricist, those elements were replaced by an ease of expression that belied a consummate skill.

Cahn was at a loss to explain the procedure of lyric-writing. With a humility seldom associated with Cahn, he would declare that he simply did not understand the creative process. Once he had an idea or a title, the words would simply flow. Unlike the sophistication of Cole Porter, the lyricism of Jerome Kern, and the “ragging” of Irving Berlin, Cahn let the lyrics “write themselves”. Cahn was neither a visionary nor an idealist, yet his fertile imagination and his innate creativity resulted in lyrics that resonated with his personality. He had discovered that, with the support of excellent collaborators whose melodies could lift his words to a higher level, he could focus on singability and the naturalness of words.

Cahn readily acknowledged that his lyrics required inspired “notes”, and that he had been blessed with talented collaborators. He worked with many composers, but special recognition must be given to Saul Chaplin, Jule Styne and James (Jimmy) Van Heusen, each of whom helped hone Cahn’s ability with words, at different stages of his career. For Cahn, lyrics were not intended to be poems on the page, but words and phrases to be revived in performance. There are many examples in this thesis of lyrics that are strikingly simple and appear lacking in sophistication, but words that seem banal change in emphasis and signification when put to music (hence my inclusion of the two CDs that accompany this written text).

Cahn understood – and gloried in – the distinctive genre of the popular song, and his playfulness with words and rhymes made his lyrics accessible throughout his long career. Tin Pan Alley had dictated that “love” sold songs, and Cahn seized the theme, taking it through an entire range of emotions from playfulness to yearning.

In an e-mail to me on March 18, 2015, Michael Feinstein, who was a personal friend and confidante of Cahn, wrote:

The tenderness of his love songs and a gentle turn of phrase exhibited in so many of them prove that he was a romantic underneath it all. He understood love, unrequited, fulfilled and every permutation in between and put into 32 bars time and time again.

A large number of Cahn's songs were about love. He "romanced" his lyrics with imagistic phrases and sentences that hinted at despair, or joyous recognition of a reciprocal emotion. Despite the simplicity of the words, the underlying feelings are starkly evident in sentences such as:

I'll be holding you so near,

You may hear angels cheer ("Come Fly With Me")

We were close to it, caught the rainbows we chased,

Then we watched the sky fall, all that love went to waste

("All That Love Went To Waste")

Since love is gone, can't pull myself together

Guess I'll hang out my tears to dry ("Guess I'll Hang Out My Tears To Dry")

You smile, the song begins,

You speak and I hear violins,

It's magic ("It's Magic")

If a shooting star goes by,

I'll use that star to write I love you all away across the sky ("Teach Me Tonight")

The promises we made are whispers in the breeze ("Written on the Wind")

Tin Pan Alley could have stifled creativity, but it provided a platform for Cahn who experimented with rhyme and the use of the vernacular. He had an ability to romanticize a mundane moment and to react,

seemingly spontaneously, to an image or title. This singular quality would never desert him through fifty years of lyric writing, and Cahn often expressed his own amazement at this ability.

Cahn could appear cynical, worldly-wise, with an air of bravado, and his lyrics were imbued with the urban slang and colloquial speech of New York City, yet it was that vernacular ease that resonated throughout his romantic lyrics. The despair and regrets of unrequited love, the quiet happiness of shared intimacies, the magic of a brief encounter – Cahn had experienced these emotions, and was able to articulate them with a simplicity and sincerity that inspired singers, in particular, Frank Sinatra.

Sinatra and Cahn had become friends before Sinatra's sensational debut at the Paramount Theatre in 1942, which was a trajectory to Hollywood and stardom. By 1945 their mutual respect had developed into a relationship that was professionally rewarding. Cahn often stated that he merely wrote songs, but it was Sinatra who "owned" them. Cahn's phrases of love and longing suited the fragility of the young Sinatra and, when his voice and persona changed, Cahn was at hand with lyrics that personified worldliness and loss of innocence. Cahn's lyrics were now streetwise and savvy, and the words that he wrote for Sinatra in the 1950s and 60s are a verbal barometer of his understanding of the man, as well as the singer.

Cahn admits readily that his success was largely due to Sinatra's selecting to sing his songs, but he had an intuitive appreciation of the vocal qualities and ranges of other singers. His lyrics for Julie Andrews were written to highlight her crisp articulation and remarkable range; he used open vowel sounds that allowed Mario Lanza the power and ability to sustain the notes; the girl-next-door image of Doris Day was reflected in words that were fresh and innocent. Cahn studied the talents of performers and provided words that were appropriate for both the singer and the situation. He loved hearing his songs sung.

Cahn had a love affair with rhyme, and, although he only published his rhyming dictionary in 1984, his mental lexicon never failed and was a source of extraordinary words. Cahn wrote that he believed that the sound of the word was more important than the sense, but the simplicity and honesty of his lyrics offered a delicate, often sophisticated, combination of both.

Love is lovelier the second time around,
 Just as wonderful with both feet on the ground.
 It's that second time you hear your love song sung,
 Makes you think perhaps that love like youth is wasted on the young.
 Love's more comfortable the second time you fall,
 Like a friendly home the second time you call.

Who can say what led us to this miracle we found?
There are those who'll bet love comes but once, and yet
I'm, oh, so glad we met the second time around.
("The Second Time Around")

Cahn writes in his autobiography:

I'm often asked if I live my lyrics. Well, I'm certainly living one of them "The Second Time Around". I'm married to that beautiful girl Tita who loves music and lyrics as much as I do, and loves me. (p. 194)

Sammy Cahn was the eternal romantic, in both his professional and private life. He both experienced, and wrote about, love lost and regained. His lyrics continue to be sung and remain legacies of the passion of a man whose devotion to his craft never wavered.

Songography of Academy Award Winners and Nominations

Academy Award Winners

- 1954 Three Coins in the Fountain (music by Jule Styne) introduced by Frank Sinatra in the film *Three Coins in the Fountain*
- 1957 All the Way (music by Jimmy Van Heusen) introduced by Frank Sinatra in the film *The Joker is Wild*
- 1959 High Hopes (music by Jimmy Van Heusen) introduced by Frank Sinatra and Eddie Hodges in the film *A Hole in the Head*
- 1963 Call Me Irresponsible (music by Jimmy Van Heusen) introduced by Jackie Gleason in the film *Papa's Delicate Condition*

Academy Award Nominations

- 1942 I've Heard That Song Before (music by Jule Styne) introduced by Martha O'Driscoll (dubbed by Margaret Whiting) in the film *Youth on Parade*
- 1944 I'll Walk Alone (music by Jule Styne) introduced by Dinah Shore in the film *Follow the Boys*
- 1945 Anywhere (music by Jule Styne) introduced by Rita Hayworth (dubbed by Martha Mears) in the film *Tonight and Every Night*
- 1945 I Fall in Love Too Easily (music by Jule Styne) introduced by Frank Sinatra in the film *Anchors Aweigh*
- 1948 It's Magic (music by Jule Styne) introduced by Doris Day in the film *Romance on the High Seas*
- 1949 It's a Great Feeling (music by Jule Styne) introduced by Doris Day in the film *It's a Great Feeling*
- 1950 Be My Love (music by Nicholas Brodsky) introduced by Mario Lanza and Kathryn Grayson in the film *The Toast of New Orleans*
- 1951 Wonder Why (music by Nicholas Brodsky) introduced by Jane Powell and Vic Damone in the film *Rich, Young and Pretty*
- 1952 Because You're Mine (music by Nicholas Brodsky) introduced by Mario Lanza in the film *Because You're Mine*
- 1955 I'll Never Stop Loving You (Music by Nicholas Brodsky) introduced by Doris Day in the film *Love me or Leave me*

- 1955 (Love is) The Tender Trap (music by Jimmy Van Heusen) introduced by Frank Sinatra in the film *The Tender Trap*
- 1956 Written on the Wind (music by Victor Young) and sung by The Four Aces in the film *Written on the Wind*
- 1958 To Love and Be Loved (music by Jimmy Van Heusen) introduced by Frank Sinatra in the film *Some Came Running*
- 1959 The Best of Everything (music by Alfred Newman) introduced by Johnny Mathis in the film *The Best of Everything*
- 1960 The Second Time Around (music by Jimmy Van Heusen) introduced by Bing Crosby in the film *High Time*
- 1961 Pocketful of Miracles (music by Jimmy Van Heusen) introduced by Frank Sinatra in the film *Pocketful of Miracles*
- 1964 Where Love has Gone (music by Jimmy Van Heusen) introduced by Jack Jones in the film *Where Love has Gone*
- 1964 My Kind of Town (music by Jimmy Van Heusen) introduced by Frank Sinatra in the film *Robin and the Seven Hoods*
- 1967 Thoroughly Modern Millie (music by Jimmy Van Heusen) introduced by Julie Andrews in the film *Thoroughly Modern Millie*
- 1968 Star (music by Jimmy Van Heusen) introduced by Julie Andrews in the film *Star*
- 1973 All That Love Went To Waste (music by George Barrie) introduced by Madeline Bell in the film *A Touch of Class*
- 1974 Now That We're In Love (music by George Barrie) introduced by Steve Lawrence in the film *Whiffs*

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