

## Richard Charles Rodgers 1902 - 1979



Richard was born in New York and appears to have arrived at the right place at the right time. The American music industry was buoyant and his parents, avid visitors to Broadway, made singing the latest songs by Victor Herbert and Jerome Kern a daily activity in the Rodgers household. Richard took to the piano at the age of three and by nine began to reveal the talent that made him a Broadway legend.

He produced his first song at fifteen and his prolific output of over nine hundred songs and forty-two musicals continue to influence musical theatre and popular music.

Early success came working with the lyricist Lorenz Hart (1895-1943). They met in 1918 while studying at Columbia University. Between 1919 and 1943 they produced numerous memorable songs and musicals including *The Girl Friend* (1926), *Babes in Arms* (1937) and *Pal Joey* (1940).

After Hart's death in 1943 Richard moved into a new partnership with Oscar Hammerstein II (1895-1960). Their first Broadway success, *Oklahoma*, was the beginning of a new era in musical theatre and included nine hit shows and two films. This new partnership collected thirty-four Tony Awards, fifteen Academy Awards, two Pulitzer Prizes, two Grammy Awards and an Emmy Award.

Richard's song writing began to change from simple and effective melodies in the standard format of verse and chorus to more lyrical and dramatic structures that enhanced the content of Oscar's plays. Lorenz always added his lyrics to Richard's music but Oscar insisted on producing his lyrics first. This formula turned vaudeville into musical plays.

Richard continued to work with a number of writers including Stephen Sondheim after Oscar's death in 1960. His final work with Martin Chamin, *I Remember Mama*, did not emulate the dream team of Rodgers and Hammerstein. Its brief run on Broadway is only recalled because the legend passed away soon after it closed in 1979.

Although Richard received numerous accolades during his lifetime it was the posthumous honour of renaming New York's 46th Street Theatre as the Richard Rodgers Theatre in 1990 that endorsed his outstanding contribution to musical theatre during the twentieth century.

# SAMPLES

RODGERS &  
HAMMERSTEIN  
PARTNERSHIP  
TIME LINE  
MUSICAL PLAYS

- 1943 Oklahoma!
  - 1945 Carousel
  - 1947 Allegro
  - 1949 South Pacific
  - 1951 The King and I
  - 1953 Me and Juliet
  - 1955 Pipe Dream
  - 1958 Flower Drum Song
  - 1959 Sound of Music
- MUSICAL MOVIES
- 1944 State Fair
  - 1957 Cinderella