

Tribute to Richard Rodgers - What I'll Sing

For our monthly theme concerts at the Piedmont Center for the Arts (PCA) which are dedicated to the preservation of the classic jazz (and pop) trio of piano, bass, and drums, I have been singing some of the tunes as appropriate. The lyrics to these tunes were by famous lyricists, and the songs have been sung by many singers. Regardless, I have found some of the lyrics to be offensive, ridiculous, or silly, so I have changed them.

For our Tribute to Richard Rodgers in August, I will sing the lyrics to the other Rodgers and Hart songs on the program as written but had to modify the lyrics of **four** of them to sing them. I have donated these changed and more sensible lyrics to the PCA along with all performing rights accruing to them.

Bill Jackman, July 2026

Note: This document is posted in the Music section at <https://jackmanstatistics.com/commentary.html>

I changed the lyrics to

- "My Funny Valentine" (1937)
- "Dancing on the Ceiling" (1930)
- "Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered" (1941)
- "My Romance" (1935)

Changes to the lyrics of "My Funny Valentine" were presented in a separate, earlier writeup but have been included for completeness in this document of all the revisions to lyrics for the Tribute to Richard Rodgers.

Changes to Lyrics of "My Funny Valentine"

"My Funny Valentine" is a show tune from the 1937 Rodgers and Hart coming of age musical *Babes in Arms* in which it was introduced by teenaged star Mitzi Green. The song became a popular jazz standard, appearing on over 1300 albums performed by over 600 artists. One of them was Chet Baker, for whom it became his signature song. In 2015 the Gerry Mulligan quartet's 1953 version of the song (featuring Chet Baker) was inducted into the Library of Congress's National Recording Registry for its "cultural, artistic and/or historical significance to American society and the nation's audio legacy"

Lyricist Lorenz Milton Hart

Lorenz Milton Hart was an American lyricist and half of the Broadway songwriting team Rodgers and Hart. Some of his more famous lyrics include "Blue Moon"; "The Lady Is a Tramp"; "Manhattan"; "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered"; and "My Funny Valentine". Rodgers and Hart wrote the music and lyrics for 26 Broadway musicals during a partnership of more than 20 years that ended shortly before Hart's early death (at age 48).

"My Funny Valentine" (1937)

Music by Richards Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart

My funny Valentine

Sweet comic Valentine

You make me smile with my heart

Your looks are laughable

Unphotographable

Yet you're my favourite work of art

Is your figure less than Greek?

Is your mouth a little weak

When you open it to speak?

Are you smart?

But don't change a hair for me

Not if you care for me

Stay little Valentine stay

Each day is Valentine's day

Items Changed

1. "Your looks are laughable

Unphotographable"

These two lines are very insulting. They remind me of the insults kids used to say at my elementary school in the 1950s, often directed at girls, for example,

You're so ugly you'd break the camera.

2. "Is your figure less than Greek?"

We know people of Greek ancestry, but their figures don't seem so special.

Moreover, we go to the annual Greek festival in the Oakland hills once a year where we see lots of Greeks, but their figures seem ordinary.

Why did Hart write "Is your figure less than Greek?"

Answer: Hart strived for rhyme schemes, both internal to a line and at the end of the line. He used "Greek" because it rhymes with "weak" and "speak." He should have searched more for a better word that rhymes with "weak" and "speak."

Is your figure less than Greek?

Is your mouth a little weak

When you open it to speak?

3. But don't change a hair for me

Not if you care for me

This is a very arrogant statement, telling someone how they can fix or not fix their hair, for example, parting on the side rather than in the middle. If she changes her part from the middle to the side, Hart suggests that “she doesn’t care for you. “

Please see my revised lyrics below. Some of the changes have one syllable more than Hart’s lyrics but still fit the meter. Changes are highlighted in red.

"My Funny Valentine" (1937)

Music by Richards Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart

Lyrics revised by Bill Jackman

My funny Valentine

Sweet comic Valentine

You make me smile with my heart

Your looks are **ordinary**,

Not so extraordinary

Yet you're my favourite work of art

Is your figure **not so sleek**?

Is your mouth a little weak

When you open it to speak?

Are you smart?

But don't change **your** hair for me,

Just because you care for me

Stay little Valentine stay

Each day is Valentine's day

Changes to Lyrics of “Dancing on the Ceiling”

"Dancing on the Ceiling" is a 1930 popular song composed by Richard Rodgers, with lyrics by Lorenz Hart for the 1930 London musical *Ever Green*. It was also featured in the film of *Evergreen* (1934). The song has been popular with jazz-oriented artists. The vocal group the Hi-Lo's recorded an innovative version of it that continues to be popular.

"Dancing on the Ceiling" (1930)

Music by Richards Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart

She dances overhead

On the ceiling near my bed,

In my sight,

Through the night.

I try to hide in vain

Underneath my counterpane;

There's my love

Up above!

I whisper, "Go away, my lover,

It's not fair,"

But I'm so grateful to discover

She's still there.

I love my ceiling more

Since it is a dancing floor

Just for my love.

Items Changed

I hear the song "Dancing on the Ceiling" frequently on jazz stations, especially the vocal rendition by the Hi-Lo's. I usually read when I listen to music, so don't pay close attention to the lyrics. I thought the Hi-Lo's were singing about a window "pane" like a skylight in the ceiling. In fact, they were singing about a counterpane, "Underneath my counterpane."

When I researched the word "counterpane," I found that it is an obsolete word (last recorded around the late 1600s) that means a bedspread. The word "counterpane" originates from the Old French contrepoinete, which itself is a corruption of the Medieval Latin culcita puncta, meaning "stitched quilt". This Latin term combines culcita (quilt, mattress) and puncta (stitched, pricked). The word evolved further in French, and through an association with the word "pane" (meaning cloth or a section of cloth), the spelling was altered to "counterpane".

Why did Lorenz Hart use the obsolete word “counterpane” to mean bedspread when most people don’t know what counterpane means?

Answer: Hart strived for rhyme schemes, both internal to a line and at the end of the line. He used “counterpane” because it rhymes with “hide in vain.” He should have searched more for a different word that rhymes but which was understood by people of his time and beyond.

Please see my revised lyrics below. My changes have the same number of syllables as Hart’s lyrics and fit the meter. Changes are highlighted in red.

“Dancing on the Ceiling” (1930)

Music by Richards Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart

Lyrics revised by Bill Jackman

She dances overhead

On the ceiling near my bed,

In my sight,

Through the night.

I try to hide in **bed**

Underneath my **thick bedspread**;

There's my love

Up above!

I whisper, "Go away, my lover,

It's not fair,"

But I'm so grateful to discover

She's still there.

I love my ceiling more

Since it is a dancing floor

Just for my love.

Changes to Lyrics of "Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered"

"**Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered**" is a 1941 popular song composed by Richard Rodgers, with lyrics by Lorenz Hart for the 1940 musical "Pal Joey" in which the song was sung by a woman (Vivienne Segal) to a man. However, the song has since been done by many male singers such as Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett as a song sung by a man to a woman by changing "she" to "he" and "her" to "him. These pronouns all have one syllable, so the gender changes fit the meter.

(The 1940 stage musical "Pal Joey" was made into the 1957 film "Pal Joey" starring Frank Sinatra, Kim Novak, and Rita Hayworth.)

"Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered" (1941)

Music by Richards Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart

I'm wild again, beguiled again,

A simpering, whimpering child again,

Bewitched, bothered, and bewildered am I.

Couldn't sleep, and wouldn't sleep,
When love came and told me I shouldn't sleep,
Bewitched, bothered, and bewildered am I.

Lost my heart, but what of it?
She is cold, I agree,
She can laugh, but I love it,
Although the laugh's on me.

I'll sing to her, each spring to her,
And long for the day when I'll cling to her,
Bewitched, bothered and bewildered am I.

Items Changed

The second to the last line of the song is

“And long for the day when I'll **cling** to her,”

The verb “to cling” is inappropriate for a song about relationships or romances between adults.

The word "cling" means to hold fast or adhere closely to something, as if by gripping or sticking. It can also refer to the act of remaining in contact or resisting separation. For example, one might cling to a rope to avoid falling or cling to a loved one for emotional support.

(The principal parts of the verb "to cling" are: cling (present), clung (past), and clung (past participle). The -ing form is clinging.)

Appropriate uses of the verb “to cling”:

- The child clung to her mother's side.
- The children clung to each other in the dark".
- He clung to his friends for support
- The kitten clung to the narrow branch.

However, most of us do not want a relationship with someone who “long[s] for the day when I'll **cling** to [you],”

Why did Lorenz Hart inappropriately use the line “And long for the day when I'll **cling** to her” when referring to an adult relationship?

Answer: Hart strived for rhyme schemes, both internal to a line and at the end of the line. He used “cling” because it rhymes with “sing” and “spring” in the previous phrases. He should have searched more for a different word that rhymes but which is appropriate for adult relationships.

Please see my revised lyrics below. My changes obviate the verb to “cling,” maintain the “ing” rhyme pattern, and fit the meter exactly. Changes are highlighted in red.

"Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered" (1941)

Music by Richards Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart

Lyrics revised by Bill Jackman

I'm wild again, beguiled again,
A simpering, whimpering child again,
Bewitched, bothered, and bewildered am I.

Couldn't sleep, and wouldn't sleep,
When love came and told me I shouldn't sleep,
Bewitched, bothered, and bewildered am I.

Lost my heart, but what of it?
She is cold, I agree,
She can laugh, but I love it,
Although the laugh's on me.

I'll bring to her, each spring to her,
A new special song that I'll sing to her,
Bewitched, bothered and bewildered am I.

Changes to Lyrics of “My Romance”

"My Romance" (1935) is a popular jazz standard written by Richard Rodgers (music) and Lorenz Hart (lyrics). It was first introduced in the 1935 musical *Jumbo*. The song has been covered by numerous artists and remains a popular choice for jazz musicians and singers. The song was featured on a 1990 Carly Simon album titled "My Romance".

"My Romance" (1935), from *Jumbo*

Music by Richards Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart

My romance doesn't have to have a moon in the sky,
my romance doesn't need a blue lagoon standing by;
no month of May, no twinkling stars,
No hideaway, no soft guitars.

My romance doesn't need a castle rising in Spain,
nor a dance to a constantly surprising refrain.
Wide awake, I can make my most fantastic dreams come true;
my romance doesn't need a thing but you.

Items Changed

I changed some words in “My Romance” not because they are offensive as in the case of “My Funny Valentine”, nor because they are ridiculous as in the case of “Fools Rush In” (see writeup for Tribute to Harry Warren in July in the Music section at <https://jackmanstatistics.com/commentary.html>), but because the words are silly or odd.

1. “my romance doesn't need a blue lagoon **standing by”**

It is silly to say that a blue lagoon was “standing by.” We say, for example, that an ambulance was standing by in case of serious injuries but not that a blue lagoon is “standing by.”

Why did Hart write “a lagoon **standing by**?”

Answer: Hart strived for rhyme schemes, both internal to a line and at the end of the line. He used “a lagoon standing by” because it rhymes with “have a moon in the sky” at the end of the first line and fits the meter, i.e., six syllables. Hart should have searched more for a better phrase that rhymes with “have a moon in the sky.” It is o.k. to also end the second line with “sky” if it fits.

2. “My romance doesn't need a castle **rising** in Spain”

It sounds silly to say that a castle is “rising.” We say, for example, that a new building under construction is “rising” in downtown Oakland. The castles in Spain were built hundreds or thousands of years ago. They are not rising anymore. It appears that Hart was referring to a tall castle that towers high over Spain.

3. “nor a dance to a constantly surprising refrain”

“a constantly surprising refrain” is a mouthful but is not correct. In concert settings where the audience is attentively listening to the music, musicians may strive for surprises in their music, and listeners may notice them. In dance clubs, however, attendees are heavily focused on their dancing and don’t notice “surprises” in the music. So, musicians just lay down a strong dance beat that excites people to get up and dance and keep dancing. Also, Hart wrote “a dance,” but dancers don’t just dance one dance.

Please see my revised lyrics below. The word “always” has one syllable less than “constantly” so the first syllable of “always” is sung as a melisma on two notes to fit the meter. Changes are highlighted in red.

"My Romance" (1935), from *Jumbo*

Music by Richards Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart

Lyrics revised by Bill Jackman

My romance doesn't have to have a moon in the sky,
my romance doesn't need a blue lagoon **neath that sky**;
no month of May, no twinkling stars,
No hideaway, no soft guitars.

My romance doesn't need a castle **high over** Spain,
nor **to dance to an always exciting** refrain.

Wide awake, I can make my most fantastic dreams come true;
my romance doesn't need a thing but you.

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