



Contact Information

Jimmy McHugh Music
9229 Sunset Blvd. Suite 503
Los Angeles, CA 90069

(310) 271-1967 *fax* (310) 858-0523

www.jimmymchughmusic.com

MySpace

www.myspace.com/jimmymchugh

Facebook

www.facebook.com/pages/Jimmy-McHugh/203195520719

Twitter

twitter.com/jmchughmusic

I. JIMMY MCHUGH: A BIOGRAPHY

The story of Jimmy McHugh began in Boston on July 10, 1894, when he was one of seven children born to a working class Irish Catholic family. His father was a plumber and his mother a semi-professional pianist, who encouraged his love for music and gave him his first piano lessons. Inspired to pursue his career in music, McHugh's first job in show business came as an office boy at the Boston Opera House. He was soon promoted to rehearsal pianist. Declining a scholarship to the New England Conservatory of Music, he turned from classical to pop music and talked his way into a job as a junior song plugger in the Boston office of Irving Berlin Music Publishing.

McHugh knew that his best hope for getting his own songs published lay in New York. So in 1921, he moved to Manhattan and landed a job at the prestigious Mills Music Company. He worked as a song plugger by day and a songwriter by night. Before long, he'd been hired as a house composer at Harlem's legendary Cotton Club, which throughout the Roaring Twenties showcased the best black performers in the country, including Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Louis Armstrong among them. Spending the next eight years in that creative hotbed, McHugh contributed to nine different Cotton Club revues, writing such hits as **"When My Sugar Walks Down the Street"**, **"I Can't Believe That You're In Love with Me"** and **"The Lonesomest Girl in Town"**.

During that time, McHugh met Dorothy Fields, a twenty-two-year-old school-teacher who also wrote song lyrics. At a time when few female songwriters received much encouragement, McHugh teamed with Fields, and the new collaborators penned such classics as **"I Can't Give You Anything But Love"**, **"I Must Have that Man"**, **"Diga Diga Doo"** and **"Doin' the New Low Down"**, all featured in the smash Broadway show Lew Leslie's Blackbirds of 1928. They also enjoyed success with promoter Leslie's 1930 extravaganza, International Revue, to which they contributed the classics **"On the Sunny Side of the Street"** and **"Exactly Like You"**.



I.

But the stock market crash of 1929 wiped out McHugh's investments, and at the turn of the decade he was forced to move to a modest one-room apartment. He ran into George Gershwin on the street one day, and explained to his fellow composer that he'd fallen on hard times. When Gershwin asked if there was anything he could do to help, McHugh demurred, before jokingly adding, "I could use a piano." A few days later, a custom-made gray upright piano arrived at his apartment, courtesy of Gershwin. McHugh immediately used the piano to write "**I'm in the Mood for Love**", one of the biggest hits of his career. He kept the piano for the rest of his life, and it now sits in the Sunset Strip offices of McHugh Music.

In the 1930s, McHugh and Fields accepted a contract from MGM, and began to write music for films. Though they continued to write songs (including the hit "**Don't Blame Me**") for stage shows and nightclub revues, McHugh spent most of his time working in Hollywood, supplying songs for a series of dramas, comedies and the occasional musical. (When Fields opted to move back to the East Coast and focus on theatrical songs, McHugh collaborated with lyricists that included Harold Adamson, Johnny Mercer and Frank Loesser.) Among his songs were "**I Feel a Song Coming On**", sung by Alice Faye in *Every Night at Eight*; "**I've Got My Fingers Crossed**", a showcase for jazz titan Fats Waller in *King of Burlesque*; and "**I Couldn't Sleep a Wink Last Night**", which was written for and sung by Frank Sinatra in his first major film role, *Higher and Higher*. That song also earned McHugh one of his five Academy Awards.

When World War II broke out, McHugh accepted a government commission to write patriotic songs. His first, "**Comin' In on a Wing and a Prayer**", spent twenty-one weeks on the acclaimed radio program *Your Hit Parade*; the second, "**Say a Prayer for the Boys Over There**", won an Oscar nomination after Deanna Durbin sang it in the wartime drama *Hers to Hold*. McHugh donated his royalties from the two songs to war relief agencies, and also wrote songs that were used in war bonds drives in 1944 and 1945. After McHugh hosted a series of bond rallies, including one in Beverly Hills that raised a record \$28 million in a single night, President Harry Truman awarded him the Presidential Citation of Merit.



I.

While he continued to write songs for films (as well as seeing his earlier hits re-used in movies like *Follow the Boys* and *Stormy Weather*), McHugh also created his own nightclub act in the early 1950s. In the show, he played piano, while eight “singing starlets” performed his songs. He made his nightclub debut headlining at the Sands in Las Vegas, the town that had become the place to go for performers. For the next decade, he made guest appearances with his friends Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Dinah Shore and Tony Bennett, among others. He performed on television in programs devoted entirely to his songs. And he played nearly every major club and many concert halls across the country, including New York’s Copacabana, the Flamingo in Las Vegas, Ciro’s and the Cocoanut Grove in Los Angeles, and the world-famous Hollywood Bowl. In 1951, he also performed at a Royal Command Performance in London, where Queen Elizabeth told him, “Mr. McHugh, you seem to have written all my favorite songs.”

While continuing his multifaceted career, McHugh was also a driving force in the founding of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), and a two-term president of the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce, serving the town where he was such a staple that he was often described as the “unofficial mayor of Beverly Hills.” McHugh remained a charming man-about-town, frequently accompanied by close friends like Hollywood columnist Louella Parsons, and his old Cotton Club cohort Louis Armstrong – who, McHugh liked to say, “put the beat in ‘**On the Sunny Side of the Street.**’”

McHugh was also an active participant in charitable work, a devoted art collector, and a civic-minded citizen who, at the request of President Dwight Eisenhower, wrote the official theme song for Radio Free Europe, “**Crusade for Freedom**”. He wrote the official Massachusetts theme song, as well as **The First Lady Waltz**, a song for Jacqueline Kennedy that was performed at a White House dinner.

Jimmy McHugh died peacefully in his sleep at his Beverly Hills home in 1969. He was survived by a son, three grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.



II. CAN'T GET OUT OF THIS MOOD: THE JIMMY MCHUGH CATALOG LIVES ON

The 1979 Tony-winning Broadway musical *Sugar Babies* was written around the McHugh catalog from his days at the Cotton Club. The show, starring Ann Miller and Mickey Rooney, was the first musical to be constructed around the catalog of a single songwriter. It ran for more than three years at the Mark Hellinger Theater, and launched many national and international touring companies.

More than twenty years later, in 2005, another hit musical opened featuring McHugh's songs. *Jersey Boys*, the Tony-winning story of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, includes both "**I Can't Give You Anything But Love**" and "**I'm in the Mood for Love**". Half a dozen productions currently play around the world, including one in Las Vegas, where the show has been shortened to ninety minutes but McHugh's songs remain intact.

In recent years, his songs have been recorded by a wide variety of performers. Jazz trumpeter and composer Terence Blanchard teamed with four of the top female jazz vocalists – Diana Krall, Jane Monheit, Dianne Reeves and Cassandra Wilson – for the Sony Classical album *Let's Get Lost: The Songs of Jimmy McHugh*. Coming from a completely different arena, Rod Stewart covered McHugh on his *Great American Songbook* album and tour. Other recordings came from Queen Latifah, Barbra Streisand, Smokey Robinson, Steve Tyrell, John Pizzarelli, Tony Bennett and k.d. lang, and even talk show host Regis Philbin, who included two McHugh songs on his 2004 album *When You're Smiling*.

At the movies, McHugh's songs have continue to show up in such films as *Something's Gotta Give*, *Mona Lisa Smile* and *Hollywoodland*. On television, McHugh has surfaced recently in some unusual places: his song "**A Lovely Way to Spend an Evening**" is included in director Martin Scorsese's PBS documentary about Bob Dylan, *No Direction Home*. And during Super Bowl XLII in February 2008, Victoria's Secret debuted a seductive advertisement set to "**I'm in the Mood for Love**"; *Adweek* magazine named it the best commercial of the telecast.



II.

The McHugh family continues to own and personally manage the Jimmy McHugh catalog. McHugh Music keeps an extensive, exhaustive archive of McHugh recordings, documents and memorabilia, which is open to professional researchers. McHugh Music also works actively with disc jockeys, music supervisors and performers to keep his music alive. *I Feel a Song Coming On: The Life of Jimmy McHugh*, a biography of McHugh drawing on this archival material and written by BBC Radio presenter and London Times jazz critic Alyn Shipton, will be published in September 2009 by the University of Illinois Press.

In January 2007, Michael Feinstein presented a tribute to McHugh at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. The star-studded evening featured Feinstein performing alongside the likes of Blanchard, Amanda McBroom and Freda Payne – plus film, television and Broadway star John Lithgow leading everyone in a performance of “**On the Sunny Side of the Street**”. Afterwards, the Tony and Emmy-winning actor summed up the continuing appeal of Jimmy McHugh: “His songs,” said Lithgow, “are a DNA of our lives.”



III. CLASSIC SONGS / MODERN SOUNDS

It would be impossible to list all of the artists who have recorded music from the Jimmy McHugh Songbook over the past eight decades. These are just a few of the exceptional vocalists and instrumentalists who have recorded the music of Jimmy McHugh.

Tony Bennett & k.d. lang

Rod Stewart

Jersey Boys (Tony-winning Broadway Musical)

Diana Krall

Queen Latifah

Steve Tyrell

Jamiroquai

Keely Smith

Michael Feinstein

Terence Blanchard

Jane Monheit

Dianne Reeves

Cassandra Morgan

Charlie Watts of the Rolling Stones

B.B. King

Smokey Robinson

Barbara Streisand

Wesla Whitfield

Judy Garland

Frank Sinatra

Dean Martin

Ella Fitzgerald

Bobby Darin

John Lithgow

Mickey Rooney, Ann Miller and the cast of Tony-Winner ‘Sugar Babies’



IV. AN APPRECIATION BY MICHAEL FEINSTEIN

Jimmy McHugh is a composer whose songs I have sung extensively through the years yet is not as well known by name as many other songwriters of his time. His versatility, originality, and melodic inspiration distinguished him among a very illustrious group of colleagues. Why? Because Jimmy was a man who was able to adapt and sustain his career over a fifty-year period, with a seemingly endless spring of melodic inspirations. Starting after World War 1 with patriotic songs like **“My Dream of the Big Parade”** and **“Hinky Dinky Parlay Vous”**, and sailing into the sixties with luscious ballads like **“Warm and Willing”**, he created songs that are assured immortality in the twenty-first century.

It is only time that determines what will truly last. Take for example, **“I Can’t Give You Anything But Love”**, a song that had a rather inauspicious beginning. Originally created for a show called “Delmar’s Revels,” the producer ejected the song after opening night, yet Jimmy and lyric writer Dorothy Fields had great faith in it. One year later it was placed in the musical revue “Blackbirds of 1928” and was to achieve a long unmatched run of 518 performances, quickly becoming one of the season’s smash hits. It turned Jimmy McHugh into one of America’s most celebrated songwriters,

McHugh was born in Boston July 10, 1894, and had an early interest in music instilled by his mother. He always projected an air of self-confidence that later manifested in a remarkable ability to promote himself and his work, but in his early years helped him to land a job working for the Irving Berlin Music Company in Boston. Shortly thereafter, he moved to New York and began working for the Mills Music Company. After heading the professional office to exploit the music of others, he finally became a full-time composer. It was during this period that he discovered his first long-time collaborator, Dorothy Fields, when she wandered in to the Mills professional office looking for a job. It is to McHugh’s great credit that he looked past the fact that Dorothy was a woman (trying to work in a male-dominated business), and recognized her extraordinary talent. She became the most successful female songwriter of the twentieth century and, with McHugh, created such hits as **“Don’t Blame Me”**, **“On The Sunny Side Of The Street”**, **“Exactly Like You”**, **“I’m In the Mood For Love”**, and **“I Feel A Song Coming On”**.



IV.

Most of McHugh's output consisted of writing songs for musical revues and Hollywood musicals. He first went to Hollywood in 1931 and created dozens of songs for early MGM photoplays and short subjects.

Even though he did return to Broadway in 1934, the rest of the 1930s were spent writing film songs for RKO, Paramount, 20th Century Fox, and Universal, for whom he created the musical fanfare that started every picture. McHugh's principal collaborator in the latter part of the thirties was Harold Adamson, and they busily fashioned an array of hits such as **"Where Are You"** (written for Gertrude Niesen) and **"You're A Sweetheart"** (written for Alice Faye).

McHugh's other principal lyric collaborators included Frank Loesser, Johnny Mercer, and Al Dubin, all with whom he worked throughout the 1940s. Again, motion pictures dominated McHugh's output, but he did also find time to score three Broadway musicals: "Keep Off The Grass" (1941), "Star and Garter" (1942), and "As The Girls Go" (1949). Song hits included **"A Lovely Way To Spend An Evening"** (written for Frank Sinatra), **"South American Way"** (written for Carmen Miranda), and **"It's A Most Unusual Day"** (written for Jane Powell), among a great many more. McHugh's keen ability to tailor material for a plot situation, star, or other more arcane producer's requirement kept him busier in the 1940s than he had been in the previous decade.

With the eventual descent of musical films in the 1950s, Jimmy created several concert presentations of his songs. The first touring revue was called "Jimmy McHugh and His Singing Starlets" and was a smash success, playing Las Vegas, Reno, New York, Hollywood, San Francisco, and points beyond. He also appeared frequently on television with Eddie Fisher, Gordon MacRae, Perry Como, Patti Page, and Tony Bennett, among others. In 1956, he returned to Broadway for the last time with "Strip for Action" and continued to compose for films, writing several beautiful songs with Livingston and Evans.



IV.

Up until his death in 1969, McHugh was a very visible presence in Hollywood and New York — often receiving honors and awards as well as attending every major Hollywood event with his steady date, Louella Parsons.

The evidence that he continued to compose unabated was dramatically demonstrated the first time I went to visit the Jimmy McHugh office. His longtime assistant, Lucille Meyers, showed me stacks of hundreds of manuscripts containing treasures of wonderful melodies patiently waiting for a little love, attention, and a lyric. Even though we've had one major posthumous McHugh musical (the delightful "**Sugar Babies**"), there is clearly the possibility of another one with new songs that could easily enlarge the list of Jimmy's standards, thus affording me the pleasure of writing another introduction!



V. TIMELESS MUSIC

I'm In The Mood For Love

On The Sunny Side Of The Street

I Can't Give You Anything But Love Baby

Exactly Like You

Don't Blame Me

I Feel A Song Comin' On

It's a Most Unusual Day

Let's Get Lost

A Lovely Way To Spend An Evening

I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me

South American Way

Comin' In On A Wing And A Prayer

Can't Get Out Of This Mood

Diga Diga Doo

Where Are You?

I Couldn't Sleep A Wink Last Night

When My Sugar Walks Down The Street



ALYN SHIPTON : ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alyn Shipton started his interest in music when he was still a toddler, picking out tunes on the piano that he had heard in his father's record collection. Everything from Mozart to Earl Hines, and from Gigli or Caruso to Fats Waller or Billy Eckstine was absorbed at an early age. From his teenage years he has been writing about music, firstly for Sir Robert Mayer's concert organization, "Youth and Music," then for periodicals such as "Music in Education" and "Musical Times," and more recently such august British publications as "The Guardian" newspaper and "Gramophone." He has been a jazz critic for "The Times" in London since 1995, and also writes for "Jazzwise" magazine and "Piano".

After winning a scholarship to read English at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford University, Alyn Shipton became a publisher. Initially editing teenage fiction and modern language books, he took over the management of Grove's Dictionaries of Music in 1981, seeing into print The New Grove Dictionaries of Instruments, American Music and Jazz – and for the latter he was also consultant editor.

In the late 1980s, Alyn founded a series of musicians' oral histories, in due course setting up his own imprint, Bayou Press, to publish the lives of such significant American instrumentalists as Barney Bigard, Buck Clayton, Buddy Collette, Bud Freeman, Andy Kirk, Rex Stewart and Teddy Wilson. He personally edited the memoirs of Danny Barker, Doc Cheatham, and George Shearing.

Alyn's first biography, a life of Fats Waller, appeared in 1988, and he has since published books on Bud Powell, Dizzy Gillespie (winner of the 1999 ARSC Award for research in jazz), and the British trumpeter Ian Carr. His multi award-winning New History of Jazz appeared in 2001 with an enlarged second edition in 2007.

Alyn has broadcast about music on BBC Radio since 1989, covering subjects as diverse as John Cage, pop record producer Richard Perry, bell ringing, Henry Purcell, European Gipsies, and jazz. As a producer he has made programmes with John Dankworth and Cleo Laine, classical guitarist John Williams, and saxophonist/rapper Soweto Kinch. For six years from 1998 his "Jazzmatazz" series on BBC World service was heard by over 100 million listeners worldwide, and he currently presents the weekly "Jazz Library" for BBC Radio 3, a guide to a basic jazz collection. In his spare time, Alyn continues to play the double bass, having worked with many American jazz musicians on tour in Britain and also in classical orchestras. He divides his time between Oxford, UK, and rural France.

ALYN SHIPTON : AN APPRECIATION OF JIMMY McHUGH

In 2003, at short notice I found myself interviewing Jimmy McHugh III, about his grandfather, the songwriter, for BBC Radio. After the microphones were turned off, we found ourselves still talking animatedly several hours later, sharing a delight in bringing alive a world that took in the Cotton Club, early Hollywood musicals, Broadway shows and the creation of a repertoire that I knew and loved. Before long, the idea had coalesced in our minds that there ought to be a full-scale biography of this most fascinating of songwriters, and that somehow or other, I was the one to write it.

It wasn't long before Jim had coaxed me out to Los Angeles to see for myself the formidable archive that the McHughes had preserved. In several visits to the archive, I managed to read a vast amount of material, and constantly found myself silently thanking McHugh himself for being such a squirrel and hoarding so many documents.

The diversity of McHugh's life, his breadth of interest and his achievements in so many fields from ragtime to rock'n'roll, from the Broadway stage to Hollywood, and from Harlem to Paris and London became truly fascinating for me. Moreover because he grew and changed as a person, and the focus of his interests altered over time, although he may have denied us more musical hits or indeed a full-length book musical of lasting reputation, his continuing achievements in every stage of his life were remarkable.

As I went on writing the book, unearthing more fascinating detail at every turn, it seemed to me that in many ways McHugh was unique. A man who rubbed shoulders with Caruso, went song plugging for Irving Berlin and ended up penning hits for Fats Domino and Pat Boone could truly be said to be a one man history of 20th century popular music. I do hope that readers will share my fascination in this most energetic and wide-ranging of song composers.