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My Singing Teachers

Mel Tormé

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My Singing Teachers Mel Tormé
Mel Tormé is one of the world's great jazz vocalists, a veteran of radio, movies, television, recordings, night clubs, and concert halls. He is also a highly respected arranger and composer, the co-author of one of the enduring seasonal classics, "The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire)." And were that not enough, he is also an accomplished writer, having penned, among other books, a moving biography of his close friend, drummer Buddy Rich, *Traps, the Drum Wonder*; and an unblinking portrait of Judy Garland late in her career, *The Other Side of the Rainbow*. Now, in *My Singing Teachers*, Tormé sums up his vast experience in a tour of American music that is spiced with insightful commentary, vivid anecdotes, and Tormé's own take on the art of the song.
Here is a pantheon of popular music and jazz, a sweeping look at American song from the perspective of one of its great practitioners. Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday, Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire, Jerome Kern and Johnny Mercer, Ethel Waters and Nat "King" Cole, and many many more--all in one way or another helped Tormé shape his inimitable style. Tormé has drawn inspiration from virtually every corner of the entertainment world, so the book has an enormous range--covering jazz, big band singers (such as Helen Forrest or Bob Eberly), Hollywood musical singers (such as Judy Garland and Deanna Durbin), even cowboy singers (Gene Autry and Roy Rogers, among others), not to mention lyricists, composers, and arrangers. It brims with personal anecdotes and astute observations about the greats of American music, and reveals how they have influenced his craft. For instance, Tormé recounts how, at age five, he first saw Bessie Smith in a one-reeler "The St Louis Blues" and how she still influences his blues singing. He reveals how playing at the Paramount with Ella Fitzgerald converted him from bobby-sox music to jazz. And most surprisingly, he shows how listening to instrumentalists such as Ben Webster on tenor sax and Roy Eldridge on trumpet shaped his scat singing--even more than listening to the great scat singers. Tormé also pays homage to many lesser known figures, such as composer Harry Warren--whose songs include "I Only Have Eyes for You," "The More I See You," "We're in the Money," and "Down Argentine Way"--and singer Connee Boswell, who was an important model for Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, and Torme himself. Perhaps most important, Tormé concludes with a chapter that captures his thoughts on singing, a section that every singer will find invaluable.
American popular music has been graced with many talented men and women whose wit, intellect, ingenuity, and craftsmanship have made this music immortal. *My Music Teachers* pays homage to these remarkable people as it celebrates the glories of the American song. All fans of pop or jazz, and especially all fans of Mel Tormé, will find this book a treasure.

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