



MUSIC OR LYRICS FIRST?

The age-old debate as to whether the music or the lyrics should be written first is best exemplified in Richard Rodgers. He worked first with Lorenz Hart and after Hart's death, with Oscar Hammerstein. 2nd.

“When working with Lorenz Hart, Rodgers usually wrote the music first, then collaborated with Hart on the lyrics. . . . With Hammerstein, however, the creative process worked the opposite way around. Hammerstein often labored over the lyrics for weeks. Rodgers then took the lyricist's carefully polished words and quickly produced the appropriate music to support the text.”¹

Here are the exceptions we know about for R&H, where Rodgers wrote then music first:

1. “Edelweiss” from *The Sound of Music*— Rodgers wrote the music while waiting for Oscar to get to the tryout in Boston²
2. “No Other Love” from *Me and Juliet* – was originally the symphonic “Beneath the Southern Cross” from *Victory at Sea*.³
3. “Oh What a Beautiful Mornin'” from *Oklahoma* [needs citation]
4. “Oklahoma” from *Oklahoma* [needs citation]
5. “You'll Never Walk Alone” from *Carousel* [needs citation]
6. “The Sound of Music” from *The Sound of Music* [needs citation]

¹ Encyclopedia.com, Rodgers and Hammerstein (retrieved August 17, 2024).

² Rodgers, Richard, *Musical Stages*, Random House, NY, 1975, p. 300.

³ Rodgers, Richard, *Musical Stages*, Random House, NY, 1975, p. 281.