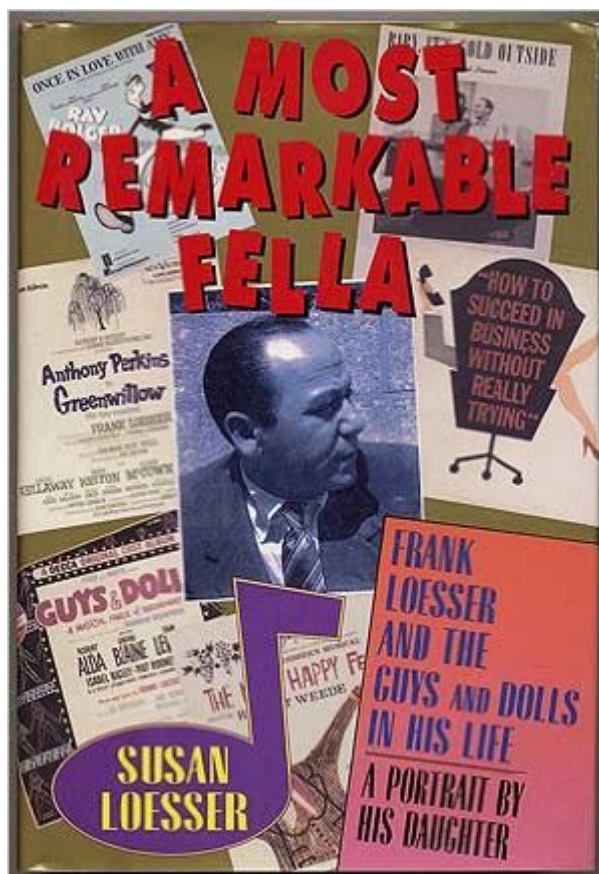


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A Most Remarkable Fella: Frank Loesser And The Guys And Dolls In His Life. A Portrait By His Daughter



Synopsis

The daughter of the composer chronicles his life, discussing his Broadway hits, his fiery temper, and his personal life. 25,000 first printing.

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Customer Reviews

This book shines from the Broadway History bookshelf. What appears as a modest portrait of Frank Loesser by his daughter, turns out to be a delightful history of Broadway. The beautifully researched stories of his productions are priceless. The lyrics, which lavishly illustrate Loesser's wonderful use of the language, are perfectly scattered throughout. The stories of the man himself, the era in which he worked, and the people who were part of his creative world, reveal the complexities and changing scene of Broadway production. Driven and demanding, he alienated Sinatra and slapped a leading lady; yet he meticulously crafted legendary shows like *Guys and Dolls*, and *Most Happy Fella*. Susan Loesser brings great warmth, an enormous amount of research and, obviously, a first-person sensibility to the story of this brilliant, funny, difficult, irascible, demanding, creative, and driven man. Frank Loesser told his casts "Loud is Better". This book is not loud, but it is wonderful.

I highly recommend this well written, thoughtful, highly personal biography by Frank Loesser's daughter. If at all possible it is a good idea, I feel, to be playing through the "Frank Loesser Songbook" on your piano during the period you are reading this biography, as the combination of playing Frank Loesser's music on the piano in conjunction with reading his daughter's explanations of how the music came to be, is powerful to say the least. I had not realized until I read this book

how important Frank Loesser is to Broadway. I now understand that Loesser is up there with Rogers/Hammerstein and Sondheim. Frank Loesser was larger than life. In my opinion we all owe a debt of gratitude to his daughter for writing a book about him that will live on to be the definitive, and only, book about this important man's amazing, interesting life.

Susan Loesser's biography of her father, Frank, does what it set out to do: Tell us about the man behind the songs. Unfortunately, that man wasn't as appealing as his music. I was disappointed to find out how Mr. Loesser treated his family and those he worked with. It seems that those who are most talented are often prima donnas personally, and Frank Loesser certainly fit that mold. His violent temper, condescending attitudes toward those who didn't meet his standards, and complete failure as a father comprised the dark side of Mr. Loesser. And that sailor's tongue! Hats off to the author for not glossing over these facts. She's frank (no pun intended) in expressing her disappointment with certain traits of her father. However, there was a very bright side to Frank Loesser, and the book focuses primarily on this side of his life. His astounding command of the language in his lyrics and his entertaining personal letters highlight the brilliant talents that made him the household name he is. Of particular note are the details surrounding his vision of such shows as *Guys and Dolls*, and his various friendships (with people such as John Steinbeck) and his conflicts (his disagreements with Frank Sinatra were entertaining to read). It's also fun to hear the fascinating personal anecdotes shared by Susan Loesser. Early on, I found myself bored with the details of the Loesser family, but soon warmed up to the book, enjoying it greatly. Frank gave us some wonderful lyrics and music, and despite his personal shortcomings, his story is, as the title says, remarkable.

What do writers of today have in common with this popular 20th century composer and lyricist? Not much except perhaps passion. I picked up *A Most Remarkable Fella* because I'm drafting a book about my father, and I wanted to see if I could steal a few writing tricks. However, before I could focus on Susan's writing style, she'd swept me up into the portrait she created of her father. It's a lively portrait, studded with lyrics from Frank's many songs, including his classic *Guys and Dolls* with its familiar tune, "Luck Be a Lady Tonight." Susan captured Frank's astonishing gift of language. As I writer, I felt stunned by his apparent ease of composition, how rhymed and scanned language seemed to pour out of his mind, how he easily he invented lyrics and tunes like "Baby, It's Cold Outside" or "Heart and Soul." Susan also catches her father's personality, his passion for partying, his sense of humor, and the nasty bite of his angry words. We quickly learn what a high-energy man

Frank was - and how swift his temper. And I did pick up a few writing tips from Susan as I watched the way she skillfully splices her own life into his: her difficult childhood, her mother's alcoholism, her parents' divorce. At last, though, we get to the end of the book, the part I always despise about biographies, where the person predictably dies. As I dropped *A Most Remarkable Fella* to the floor beside other finished volumes, I felt chagrin at the shortness of human life, even lives as remarkable as Frank's.

This book is written by Frank's daughter. Not only is it great background on the life and times of Broadway's heyday, but Susan Loesser is a very good writer. It was a surprise how she wove her childhood and awe at her famous father into the fabric of this chronicle. It is a page turner. If you love Broadway, don't miss this book.

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