

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

Presents

WHAT A LITTLE MOONLIGHT CAN DO

AS RECORDED BY PEGGY LEE

ARRANGED BY NELSON RIDDLE

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY ROB DUBOFF, DYLAN CANTERBURY, AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

FULL SCORE

FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

JLP-6425

WORDS AND MUSIC BY HARRY WOODS

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A NOT-FOR-PROFIT JAZZ RESEARCH ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PRESERVING AND PROMOTING AMERICA'S MUSICAL HERITAGE.



THE JAZZ LINES FOUNDATION INC.

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WHAT A LITTLE MOONLIGHT CAN DO (1958)

Peggy Lee Biography:

"Her wonderful talent should be studied by all vocalists; her regal presence is pure elegance and charm." – Frank Sinatra, 1994

"Music is my life's breath," proclaims the epitaph of Norma Deloris Egstrom, better known to the entertainment world by her professional name of Peggy Lee. 2020 marks the centennial anniversary of this extraordinary artist and her considerable contributions to the world of jazz and popular music.

Over her seven-decade career, Peggy Lee helped redefine what it meant to be a female singer, and her quietly captivating voice continues to resonate with audiences of all ages. Born in an era where women struggled for equality – a conversation that continues today – and carrying the burden of years of a traumatic childhood, she was a true pioneer and survivor to her core. What she accomplished as a woman, and as an artist, is nothing short of extraordinary. She was coined "the female Frank Sinatra" by Tony Bennett, and she considered it one of the highest compliments. But Lee did something few of her male counterparts ever attempted: she wrote songs. Her compositions and recordings – including *It's a Good Day, I Don't Know Enough about You*, and *I Love Being Here with You* – can be heard today in countless television shows and feature films, including *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, *The Good Place*, *The Beach Bum*, *Fear the Walking Dead*, *Feud: Bette and Joan*, and in commercials for Samsung, Applebee's and Tropicana.

Much like her friend Sinatra, she did things 'her way.' She not only wrote many of her own songs, but she was involved in every aspect of her performances, from producing to costume and lighting design. She was a creative powerhouse, directing her life and career on her own terms. She is often cited as an inspiration by strong contemporary female singers including Adele, Madonna, Billie Eilish, Diana Krall ("I love everything about her: her elegance, her wit"), and k.d. lang ("I view her as my finest teacher of vocals"). Jazz and pop music's royalty called her one of their own. "If I'm the Duke, man, Peggy Lee is the queen," decreed Duke Ellington, adding, "I consider her as great a musician as Frank Sinatra, who in that world is king." Sinatra offered his take on the matter: "Peg is just about the best friend a song ever had." Another royal dictum came courtesy of Count Basie ("...she's solid.").

Known for her subtlety, elegance, and alluring tone, Lee saw herself, first and foremost, as a communicator whose primary medium was music. Though she had the ability to belt out a tune, she preferred to deliver a lyric "softly, with feeling." She had a superior understanding of rhythm, a genius for interpretation and a unique ability to focus on the core essentials of any given song. "The eternal struggle of art is to leave out all but the essentials" became her professional motto of choice.

Norma Deloris Egstrom was born on May 26, 1920 in Jamestown, North Dakota, the sixth of seven children. She survived a brutal childhood. Her mother died when she was four years old and her father then married a woman who physically and emotionally abused Norma until she left home at the age of 17. Music was her escape from a grim reality. Norma began her professional career as an adolescent living in Wimbledon, ND, and traveling on weekends to nearby Valley City, where she made her debut on the radio. In 1937 she was invited to audition for WDAY in Fargo, the biggest radio station in North Dakota at the time. She was hired on the spot, but right before she went on the air, the programming director told her that 'Norma Egstrom' had to go and christened her with what would become her new professional name: Peggy Lee.

Nationwide popularity and chart-hitting success first came to her in 1941 after being hired as the singer with the Benny Goodman Orchestra. While working with Goodman, she met Dave Barbour, the band's guitarist and the man who would become her first husband and father to her daughter, Nicki. When Dave was fired from the band for "fraternizing with the girl singer," Lee gave notice and – looking forward to becoming a full-time wife and mother – announced that she was retiring. Peggy and Dave were married in 1943, and though the marriage only lasted eight years, she considered him to be the love of her life and greatest musical collaborator.

Lee's 'retirement' didn't last long either, and she found herself once again behind the microphone. She established her solo career by joining the then-emerging Capitol Records and ranks as the female act with the longest stay at that renowned label, her musical alma mater: 24 years. She also spent five very productive years at Decca Records in the 1950s, and recorded albums with several other major and independent labels starting in the mid-1970s. Throughout, Lee continued to work extensively on television, radio and in concert up until the mid 1990s.

Her vast and varied catalog of songs flourished from such longevity in the music business: she recorded more than 1,100 masters and over 50 original albums. Her total number of radio broadcast performances is over 800, and her television appearances surpass the 200-mark.

Best known for such songs as *Fever*, *Why Don't You Do Right*, *I'm a Woman* and *Is That All There Is?*, she amassed over 100 chart entries beginning with *I Got It Bad* (1941) and culminating, to date, with the posthumous hit *Similau* (2017). Among the myriad music honors bestowed upon Lee are 13 Grammy® Award nominations, a Grammy® win in 1969, and a Lifetime Achievement Award in 1995.

One of the foremothers of the singer-songwriter school, Lee ranks among the most successful female singer-songwriters in the annals of American popular music. She wrote over 200 songs – most often lyrics, but sometimes music as well, with a variety of collaborators, including Harold Arlen, Cy Coleman, Duke Ellington, Quincy Jones, Marian McPartland and Victor Young. Some of the artists who have covered Peggy Lee compositions are Tony Bennett, Nat King Cole, Natalie Cole, Bing Crosby, Doris Day, Ella Fitzgerald, Judy Garland, Diana Krall, Queen Latifah, Barry Manilow, Bette Midler, Janelle Monáe, Nina Simone, Regina Spektor and Sarah Vaughan.

Walt Disney took notice of Peggy's songwriting ability, and in 1953 he hired her to write all of the original lyrics for his classic animated film, *Lady and the Tramp*. Walt liked Lee's song demos so much, he asked her to voice four of the characters, and even named one after her.

Lady and the Tramp was not her only work in film. She appeared in several motion pictures, most notably at Warner Bros. in *The Jazz Singer* (1952), costarring Danny Thomas, and *Pete Kelly's Blues* (1955), which brought her an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress and the Audience Award for Most Promising Female Personality of 1955.

A perennial advocate of artists' rights, Peggy Lee was quietly standing for this cause as early as the 1940s. In solidarity with the American Federation Musicians' 1948 record ban, she was among the vocalists under contract who refused to do any recording activity for the entire year. More than just an advocate, Lee was an artist willing to stand up for her craft. Facing an industry ruled by conventional corporate (and, all too often, mostly male-oriented) thinking, Lee fought multiple battles on behalf of not only her artistic vision but also the rights of fellow artists. The most famous of Lee's legal cases was a lengthy court battle (1988-1992) regarding her work on *Lady and the Tramp*. This precedent-setting case pertaining to home video rights redefined how entertainment contracts are written.

In 1986, Peggy Lee became the first female recipient of the Songwriters Guild of America's Aggie and President Awards, the former honoring Lee for her composing skills, the latter for her support of young, emerging songwriters. ASCAP's Pied Piper Award followed in 1990, and her induction into the Songwriters' Hall of Fame came in 1999.

Lee stayed active as a concert performer until 1995, when she gave her final performances at Carnegie Hall and the Hollywood Bowl. In 1998 she suffered a stroke, and on January 21, 2002 she passed away at her home in Bel Air, California. In one of the many obituaries that celebrated her extraordinary musicianship, renowned jazz critic Nat Hentoff wrote a fitting epitaph: "Her main quality was a marvelous sense of subtlety. She never overpowered you. You could hear her voice after it stopped."

And 100 years after she was born, we're still hearing it.

Nelson Riddle Biography:

Nelson Riddle was one of the greatest arrangers in the history of American popular music. He worked with many of the major pop vocalists of his day, but it was his immortal work with Frank Sinatra, particularly on the singer's justly revered Capitol concept albums, that cemented Riddle's enduring legacy. He was a master of mood and subtlety, and an expert at drawing out a song's emotional subtext. He was highly versatile in terms of style, mood, and tempo, and packed his charts full of rhythmic and melodic variations and rich tonal colors that blended seamlessly behind the lead vocal line. He often wrote specifically for individual vocalists, keeping their strengths and limitations in mind and pushing them to deliver emotionally resonant performances. This is evidenced certainly in his work with Sinatra in the following quote from Charles Granata's book "Sessions with Sinatra,": "It quickly became apparent that Riddle, of all the arrangers the singer had worked with, complemented Sinatra's talents better than anyone else."

Born June 1, 1921, in Oradell, NJ, Nelson Smock Riddle studied piano as a child, later switching to trombone at the age of 14. After getting out of the service, he spent 1944-1945 as a trombonist with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra, also writing a couple of arrangements (*Laura* and *I Should Care*). By the end of 1946, with the help of good friend, Bob Bain, he secured a job arranging for Bob Crosby in Los Angeles. He then became a staff arranger at NBC Radio in 1947, and continued to study arranging and conducting with Mario Castelnuevo-Tedesco and Victor Young. Soon he was occasionally writing for Nat 'King' Cole, initially as a ghost arranger. However, the successes of his arrangements for *Mona Lisa* (1950), *Unforgettable* (1951), and *Too Young* (1951) set him on his way to doing most of Nat's music at Capitol Records. By this time, Nelson Riddle had become conductor of the orchestra and had his name printed on the record label. He was no longer an anonymous arranger.

When Frank Sinatra signed with Capitol Records in 1953, the label encouraged him to work with the up-and-coming Riddle, who was now Capitol's in-house arranger. Though he had helped Nat achieve his biggest hit, *Mona Lisa*, Sinatra was still reluctant. He soon recognized the freshness of Riddle's approach and eventually came to regard him as his most sympathetic collaborator. The first song they cut together was *I've Got the World on a String*. When Sinatra and Riddle began to record conceptually unified albums that created consistent moods, the results were some of the finest and most celebrated albums in the history of popular music. Riddle's work with Ella Fitzgerald on the *Gershwin Song Book* album set in 1959 was considered one of the most elegant and unique interpretations of a most amazing body of work.

His motion picture and television credits include *The Young at Heart*, *High Society*, *Pal Joey*, *Paint Your Wagon*, *The Tender Trap*, *Can-Can*, *Li'l Abner*, *A Hole in the Head*, *The Great Gatsby* (for which he received an Academy Award for musical adaptation), *The Untouchables*, *Naked City*, and *Route 66*, the first TV theme to become a chart-topper.

His recording career tapered off in the 1970s and early 1980s with the continuing growth of rock 'n' roll and electronic instruments. However, in 1983, he received a phone call from Linda Ronstadt asking him to write an arrangement for the old standard *I Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out to Dry*. His reply was that he would not consider writing a single arrangement, but rather a complete album. The first of his three-album collaboration with Ronstadt, *What's New*, went on to become enormously popular, selling over five million copies and spending 81 weeks on the Billboard pop charts.

Riddle's last performance was at South Street Seaport on September 13th, 1985. He died on October 6, 1985, surrounded by his six children.

The Music:

Peggy Lee's sultry vocals and Nelson Riddle's edgy, yet warm, arranging style were a perfect fit for one another. Their collaboration on *What a Little Moonlight Can Do* (from the 1958 Capitol album *Jump for Joy*) serves as a definitive sample of this, with voice and ensemble working in perfect concert throughout.

Notes to the Conductor:

Taken at a brisk tempo that is typical for this tune, the band roars to life right off the bat with a series of hard riffs that slowly taper off for Lee's arrival at measure 13. The primary riff from the introduction pops up behind the vocals several times, getting passed through the horn sections and varied just enough to avoid monotony. Although Lee is the star of the show, the ensemble is not just along for the ride; all backgrounds should be performed with verve and enthusiasm.

Lee steps back at measure 77 to allow the band to swing for half a chorus on their own. The saxes initially carry the melody atop the punchy brass, with the two sections reversing roles at measure 93. The build-up leading into measure 109 turns out to be a red herring, as the band suddenly recedes back behind Lee with some copied backgrounds from earlier. A repurposed version of the intro serves as a thrilling grand finale.

Thanks to an agreement with Peggy Lee Associates, LLC this publication was prepared from the original set of parts used for the 1958 recording session - this is not a transcription.

Acknowledgments:

Special thanks for Holly Foster Wells and Peggy Lee Associates, LLC for granting us permission to publish this arrangement.

Rob DuBoff

- October 2025

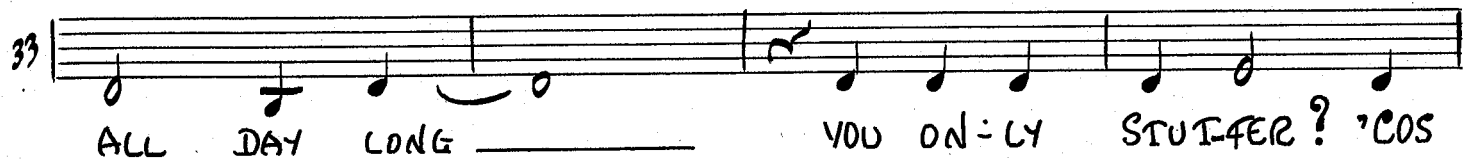
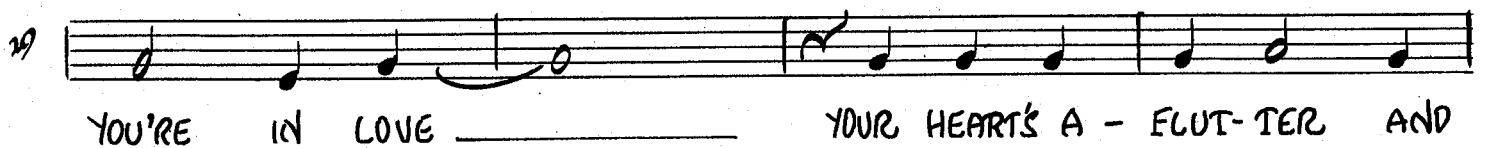
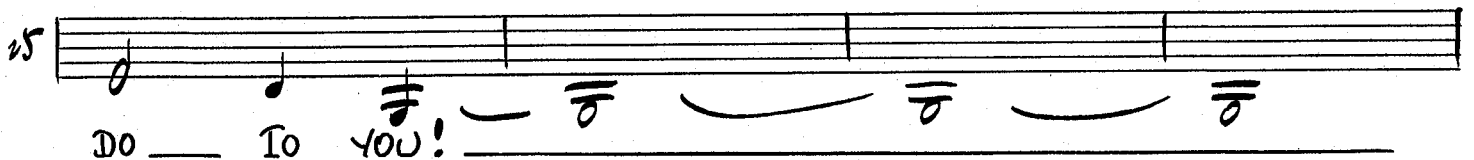
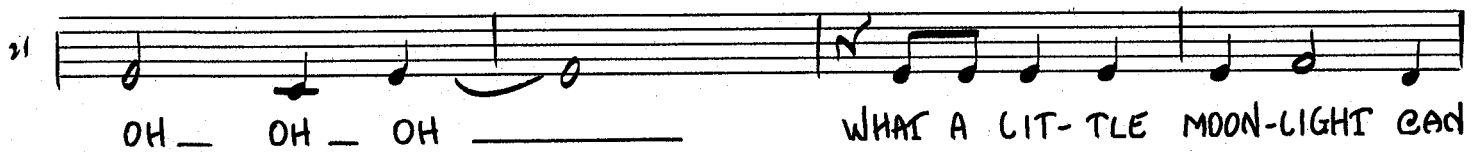
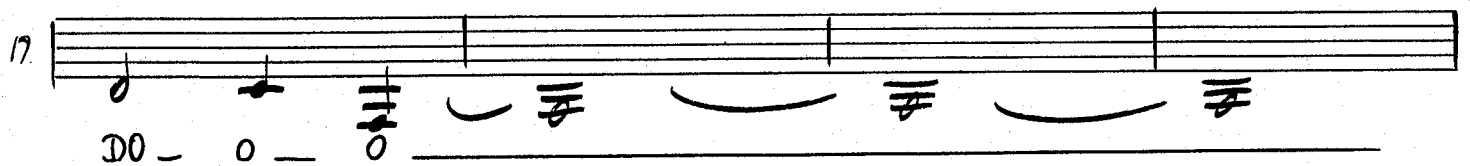
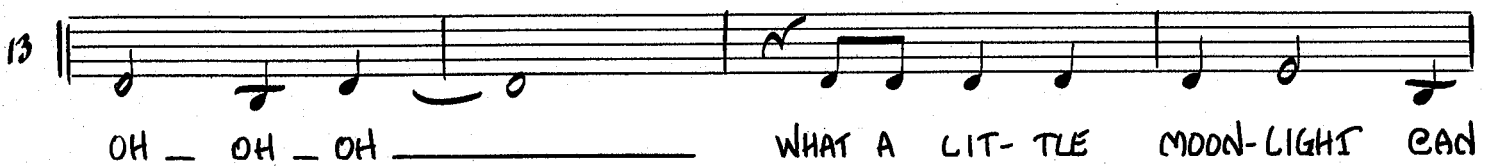
VOCAL

PEGGY LEE

PEGGY

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WHAT A LITTLE MOONLIGHT
CAN DO



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Above is the first page of the vocal part that was used by Peggy Lee for the 1958 recording session.

WHAT A LITTLE MOONLIGHT CAN DO

SCORE

AS RECORDED BY PEGGY LEE

WORDS AND MUSIC BY HARRY WOODS

ARRANGED BY NELSON RIDDLE

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY ROB DUBOFF, DYLAN CANTERBURY, AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

BRIGHT SWING $\text{♩} = 220$

Score for **WHAT A LITTLE MOONLIGHT CAN DO**, arranged by Nelson Riddle. The score is in 4/4 time, key of D major, and tempo is BRIGHT SWING $\text{♩} = 220$.

Instrumentation:

- Vocal
- Woodwind 1: Alto Sax.
- Woodwind 2: Alto Sax.
- Woodwind 3: Tenor Sax.
- Woodwind 4: Tenor Sax.
- Woodwind 5: Baritone Sax.
- Trumpet 1
- Trumpet 2
- Trumpet 3
- Trumpet 4
- Trombone 1
- Trombone 2
- Trombone 3
- Bass Trombone
- Violin 1 (3)
- Violin 2 (3)
- Violin 3 (3)
- Viola (2)
- Cello (2)
- Harp
- Guitar
- Piano
- Bass
- Vibraphone
- Drum Set

Chord Progression:

Measure 1: G^6 Dm^7 G^6 Dm^7 G^6 Dm^7 G^6 A^m^9/D G^m^9/D A^m^9/D G^m^9/D A^m^9/D

Lyrics:

What a little moonlight can do
What a little moonlight can do
What a little moonlight can do
What a little moonlight can do

