



# Dazzler: The Life and Times of Moss Hart

*Steven Bach*

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The first full-scale biography of the “Prince of Broadway,” the brilliant playwright and director Moss Hart. No one loomed larger in Broadway’s golden age. Hart’s memoir, *Act One*, which told of a youth lived in poverty and his early success on Broadway, became the most successful and most loved book ever published about the lure of the theater. But it ended at the beginning—when Hart was only twenty-five—and at times embroidered or skirted the facts. Now, at last, we have the full and far richer story.

Hart exemplified wit, urbanity, and grace. He knew everybody, from the Algonquin Round Table crowd to the Gershwins, Irving Berlin, Noël Coward, Cole Porter, and the Hollywood moguls. His passion for the theater gave wings to his long playwriting collaboration with George S. Kaufman; together they gave us such classic comedies as *You Can’t Take It With You* and *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. On his own Hart wrote the stunning *Lady in the Dark* and *Light Up the Sky*. His screenplays include *Gentleman’s Agreement*, *Hans Christian Andersen*, and the Judy Garland version of *A Star Is Born*. His career as a director was crowned by the creation of *My Fair Lady* and *Camelot*, his last two shows. They were still on Broadway when he died in 1961 at the age of fifty-seven.

But Hart’s life was not always golden, in spite of a Pulitzer Prize, Tony Awards, and Oscar nominations. His successes were shadowed by the unpredictable and often debilitating mood swings of manic depression. And he struggled with issues of sexual identity—documented here for the first time—finally marrying and fathering children in his forties.

**Dazzler** is the story of the seen and unseen struggles that beset Hart in a life crowded with friends, glamour, and achievements, a life that seemed to be one triumph and delight after another. But it was actually a life tormented in ways we didn’t know, and thus, heroic. It isn’t just that Hart rose from humble beginnings to fame and fortune. It’s that he rose above his private demons to achieve a kind of happiness that survives him still. He used to say, even in the face of failure, “Well, we aspired.” Aspiration was a key to his life, and the key to this superb biography.

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