

# The Per Niente

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Harry Warren was born Salvatore Guaragna, to Italian immigrant parents, Antonio and Rachel Deluca Guaragna in Brooklyn, New York on December 24, 1893, the eleventh of twelve children. His father, a boot-maker, legally changed the family name to Warren when he was a child. Warren showed an early interest in music, but his parents could not afford lessons.

Though he went without formal training, he taught himself to play his father's accordion, sang in the church choir, and, by the age of 14, had also begun to earn money as a drummer. He dropped out of high school to play drums in a band led by his godfather, Pasquale Pucci, in the Keene and Shippey traveling carnival.

Back in Brooklyn, he taught himself to play piano and worked as a fruit seller and as a stagehand at local theaters before finding employment at the Vitagraph Motion Picture Studios, where he did everything from acting and assistant directing to piano playing; he also worked as a pianist in

cafés and silent-movie houses.

After serving in the US Navy in World War I, Warren began writing songs. His first effort, "I Learned to Love You When I Learned My A-B-C's," one of the rare compositions for which he wrote both music and lyrics, was never published, but it got him a job as staff pianist and song plunger for the music publishing house of Stark and Cowan. Warren's first published song was "Rose of the Rio Grande," written in 1922 with Edgar Leslie and Ross Gorman. This began Warren's collaboration throughout his career with numerous lyricists.

Some of his other notable songs from the 1920s are "I Love My Baby (My Baby Loves Me)" and "Where Do You Worka John?" Warren wrote songs for several Broadway shows in the early 1930s, including *Crazy Quilt* ("I Found a Million Dollar Baby in a Five-and-Ten Cent Store") and *The Laugh Parade* ("You're My Everything").

Between 1929 and 1933 he wrote songs for a few minor movies, but made Hollywood his permanent home in 1933 when he was hired to work with Al Dubin on Warner Brothers' 42nd Street. This movie introduced the songs "Shuffle Off to Buffalo" and "You're Getting To Be a Habit With Me." During the rest of the decade, Warren wrote some 20 musicals with Dubin, which include the songs "We're in the Money," "I Only Have Eyes for You," "Lullaby of Broadway" (his first Oscar winner, from *Gold Diggers of 1935*), "Lulu's Back in Town," and "September in

the Rain." He also wrote some movie songs with Johnny Mercer during the 1930s, most notably "Jeepers Creepers" and "You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby."

Warren went to 20th Century Fox in the early 1940s, and teamed with Mack Gordon. Some of their best-known songs are "Chattanooga Choo Choo," "Serenade in Blue," "I Had the Craziest Dream," "There Will Never Be Another You," "You'll Never Know" (his second Oscar winner, from *Hello, Frisco, Hello*), and "The More I See You."

From 1945-1952, he worked at MGM, and won his third Oscar, in partnership with Johnny Mercer, for "On the Atchison, Topeka and the Sante Fe," from *The Harvey Girls*. Other songs Warren wrote during this period are "This Heart of Mine" and "Friendly Star." Warren moved to Paramount in the 1950s, where he wrote his last big pop hit, "That's Amore." Through the later 1950s, he mainly wrote scores for dramatic movies such as *An Affair to Remember* and *Separate Tables*.

On his 80th birthday, he was elected into the Songwriters Hall of Fame. Warren died in Los Angeles, California on September 22, 1981.

**From THE GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK:  
"Composer Harry Warren had more hit songs than any other songwriter of the 20th century."**

Source: Encyclopedia of Composers and Songwriters