

# COLE PORTER

b. June 9, 1891 – d. October 15, 1964

*“In olden days a glimpse of stocking  
was looked on as something shocking  
but now, God knows, anything goes.”*

Cole Porter grew up wealthy; his grandfather James Omar Cole was a prosperous coal and timber speculator. Porter began musical training during his early childhood. Despite his musical talents, however, Porter's grandfather envisioned an attorney's career for him and sent him to Yale University.

At Yale, Porter expanded his musical repertoire and composed 300 songs, including two football fight songs, “Yale Bulldog” and “Bingo Eli Yale,” which are still played today. After one year at Harvard Law School, Porter chose to follow his true passion and transferred to Harvard's School of Music.

Porter enjoyed brief success in 1915 with his first song in a Broadway musical. A year later, his first full production, “See America First,” closed after only two weeks. After several other failures, Porter moved to Paris. The songs he wrote there, including “You Don't Know Paree” and “I Love Paris,” reflected his affection for the city. In 1928, his first big hit, “Let's Do It, Let's Fall in Love,” appeared in the musical “Paris.”

Porter lived in an era of strict homosexuality taboos. Public knowledge of his sexuality, Porter feared, could compromise his success. Like many gay public figures, Porter married a woman for convenience. His wife, Linda Lee Thomas, may have been bisexual. The arrangement helped both Thomas and Porter. Thomas remained a socialite with a high-profile husband, while Porter hid his sexuality under the guise of marriage.

Porter had relationships with talented men, including Boston socialite Howard Sturgess, architect Ed Tauch, and choreographer Nelson Barclift, who inspired Porter's “You'd Be So Nice to Come Home to.”

A horse riding accident in 1937 badly crippled Porter's legs. His condition left him in constant pain and required more than 30 surgeries. He continued to write songs, though his prominence waned until 1948, when he wrote “Kiss Me, Kate,” one of his most famous works. The production earned the Tony Award for Best Musical, and Porter won the Tony for Best Composer and Lyricist.

His physical and emotional condition quickly deteriorated with the loss of his mother in 1952, his wife in 1954, and the amputation of his right leg in 1958. Porter never wrote again and remained in relative seclusion until his own death in 1964 at age 73.

**Cole Porter was one of the greatest composers and songwriters of the 20th century. His hits include “Night and Day,” “I Get a Kick Out of You” and “I've Got You Under My Skin.”**

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