

Kay Swift, Composer, Dies at 95; Hits Included 'Can This Be Love?'

By **STEPHEN HOLDEN**

Kay Swift, who wrote the music for the popular standards "Can't We Be Friends?," "Fine and Dandy" and "Can This Be Love?," died yesterday at the Alzheimer's Resource Center in Southington, Conn. She was 95.

She died of Alzheimer's disease, which was diagnosed three years ago, said a granddaughter, Katharine Weber.

Two of her most famous songs were written for the 1930 hit musical "Fine and Dandy," which had lyrics by Paul James (the pen name of her husband, James Paul Warburg, a banker) and was the first Broadway show for which all the music was composed by a woman. "Can't We Be Friends?" was introduced in 1929 in the hit revue "The Little Show," where it was sung by Libby Holman to Clifton Webb.

Miss Swift was romantically involved with George Gershwin in the 1930's, and she and Warburg divorced in 1935. Years later, Miss Swift was an invaluable resource to Gershwin scholars because she could fill in gaps in manuscripts and remember how

Gershwin played his music.

Katharine Faulkner Swift was born on April 19, 1897, in New York City, where she grew up and studied piano, composition and orchestration. After playing in a classical trio, she was a rehearsal pianist for the 1927 show "A Connecticut Yankee." Two years later, she cracked Broadway as a composer with "Can't We Be Friends?" In 1930, "Fine and Dandy," opened on Broadway, where it ran for 236 performances.

When the choreographer George Balanchine came to the United States, Miss Swift wrote the music for his ballet "Alma Mater," a 1935 spoof of the Harvard-Yale football game. She was director of light music at the 1939 World's Fair, the same year she married Faye Hubbard, a rodeo cowboy. The marriage, which ended in 1947, was celebrated in her chatty 1943 memoir, "Who Could Ask for Anything More?," which was made into the movie "Never a Dull Moment," with Irene Dunne and Fred MacMurray.

A third marriage, to Hunter Gallo-



Lusha Nelson

Kay Swift in the 1930's.

way, a radio announcer, also ended in divorce.

Miss Swift also contributed songs to "The Garrick Gaieties" (1930) and wrote most of the score for "Paris '90," a one-woman revue for Cornelia Otis Skinner, in 1952. A song cycle for her grandchildren, "Reaching for the Brass Ring," was performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1953. She also wrote songs for Radio City Music Hall revues, pieces for three world's fair exhibitions and commemorations for several national organizations, including the Camp Fire Girls and the American Medical Association.

Miss Swift made her last public appearance in 1986 at Merkin Concert Hall in Manhattan.

She is survived by two daughters, April Gagliano of Rome and Andrea Kaufman of Los Angeles, and six grandchildren.

SWIFT—Kay. On January 28, in her 96th year, after a long absence caused by Alzheimer's Disease. She was a songwriter par excellence, a beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, and a wonderful friend to many. Contributions may be sent to: The Kay Swift Archive at the John Errick Jackson Music Library at Yale University, P.O. Box 5469, Yale Station, New Haven, Connecticut 06520-5469. A musical memorial will be planned.

SWIFT—Kay. We record with deep sorrow the death of our member Kay Swift on January 28 in NY.
Morton Gould, President
ASCAP