

HAROLD PRINCE
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
RUTH MITCHELL
PRESENTS

Dean Jones
Barbara Barrie
George Coe
John Cunningham
Teri Ralston
Charles Kimbrough
Donna McKechnie
Charles Braswell
Susan Browning
Steve Elmore
Beth Howland
Pamela Myers
Merle Louise
AND
Elaine Stritch

COMPANY

A MUSICAL COMEDY

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
Stephen Sondheim

BOOK BY
George Furth

SETS & PROJECTIONS DESIGNED BY
Boris Aronson

COSTUMES BY
D. D. Ryan

LIGHTING BY
Robert Ornbo

MUSICAL DIRECTION BY
Harold Hastings

ORCHESTRATIONS BY
Jonathan Tunick

DANCE MUSIC ARRANGEMENTS BY
Wally Harper

ORIGINAL CAST ALBUM ON
Columbia Records

MUSIC PUBLISHER
Tommy Valando

MUSICAL NUMBERS STAGED BY
Michael Bennett

PRODUCTION DIRECTED BY
Harold Prince

ALVIN THEATRE

52nd Street, West of Broadway

7. Company (1970)

Book by George Furth

The Notion

A man with no emotional commitments reassesses his life on his thirty-fifth birthday by reviewing his relationships with his married acquaintances and his girlfriends. That is the entire plot.

General Comments

My taste for experiment in the commercial theater was formed early, when at the age of seventeen I was hired for twenty-five dollars a week (not a bad sum at a time when subway rides cost a nickel and orchestra seats cost \$4.40) to be Oscar's assistant on the third Rodgers and Hammerstein show, *Allegro*. After the successes of *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*, it was expected that they would deliver another homey, uplifting, straightforward piece of storytelling. But just as Hammerstein had confounded audiences with the novelty of *Oklahoma!*, so he did with *Allegro*, which for Broadway musicals was startlingly experimental in form and style. It chronicled on a bare stage the first forty years of a man's life, a Greek chorus taking the place of the conventional musical-comedy chorus, commenting on events and charting the hero's social and emotional life from his birth to his regeneration in middle age. Unfortunately, its stylistic boldness was more accomplished than its storytelling and it was both a critical and commercial failure, which made it an invaluable theater experience for me. I learned how the best intentions of gifted professionals can be blunted and blurred by egotism (Agnes de Mille, the director), intransigence (Rodgers) and the chasm between imagination and execution (Hammerstein). Cameron Mackintosh,

the astute producer of *Side by Side by Sondheim* (not to mention *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Les Misérables*), once said to me that I've spent my life trying to fix the second act of *Allegro*. The more I think about the shows I've worked on, which writing this retrospective has led me to do, the more I suspect he was right.

I had no idea *Company* would be so unsettling to public and critics alike, but then I've been similarly naïve about almost every musical I've been connected with. In each instance I've thought, "What am I worried about? It's got clear melodies, regular rhythms, drama, humor, nice orchestrations, good performers, colorful sets and costumes—what could possibly upset a lover of traditional musical comedy except for its mildly unconventional approach?" and in each instance I've been stunned by the polarized reactions of fervent admiration and ferocious rejection—not unlike the responses to *Allegro*.

Company derives from a group of eleven brief one-act plays written in the late 1960s by George Furth, an actor I'd worked with briefly (in *Hot Spot*, an ill-fated venture of 1963 to which I'd contributed a couple of songs) who had just started writing for the theater. Most of the plays concerned two people in a relationship (marriage, lovers, close friends) joined by an outsider (best friend, ex-lover, mere acquaintance) who serves as catalyst for the action. A production of seven of the plays had been scheduled and then canceled, and George asked me for advice on where to go with them next. I passed them on to Hal Prince, the best adviser I could think of. To our surprise he suggested they be turned into a musical. To George and me, the problem of merging unrelated scenes into a unified evening seemed an impossible one to solve (making the project irresistible) until we came up with the now obvious solution—to turn the different outsiders into a single person. We called him Robert, known to his friends also as Bob, Bobby, Robby and Rob-o, and soon the central theme of the evening emerged: the

challenge of maintaining relationships in a society becoming increasingly depersonalized.

The form which grew out of this notion* combined the constant changes of tone and style characteristic of revues with the cohesive narrative tension of the “integrated” musical. Revues, an outgrowth of vaudeville consisting of unconnected songs, dances and comedy sketches, had been a staple of Broadway since the turn of the century, and there had even been a few revues with “themes,” such as the Moss Hart/Irving Berlin *As Thousands Cheer*, in which each number and scene was related to contemporary headlines. Most other musicals, except for Hammerstein’s idiosyncratic *Show Boat*, sprinkled the songs, dances and sketches into a flimsy, lighthearted plot; these were called “book” musicals. With the success of *Oklahoma!* in 1943, however, the book musical became known as the “integrated” musical, a musical which didn’t merely contain songs but told a story *through* them. This form served as the dominant model for musical theater for decades and in its chronological linear state still exists, although it now has acquired, to use Lorenz Hart’s phrase, “the faint aroma of performing seals.” *Company* does have a story, the story of what happens inside Robert; it just doesn’t have a chronological linear plot. As far as I know, prior to *Company* there had never been a plotless musical which dealt with one set of characters from start to finish. In 1970, the contradictory aspect of the experiment (a story without a plot) was cause for both enthusiasm and dismay. Audiences kept waiting for something to happen, some incident that would lead to another that would lead to another, and were baffled when nothing did. Thus was born the “concept musical,” a meaningless umbrella term used to describe this new amalgam of old forms. Many shows before *Company* had “concepts,” but of different sorts: not only *As Thousands Cheer*, but also *Of Thee I Sing* (cartoon satire), *The Cradle Will Rock* (bare stage agitprop), *Love Life* (history as vaudeville), *West Side Story* (choreography as the chief means of narrative), *Cabaret* (night club interludes commenting on the plot), even *Oklahoma!* (dream ballets and an individualized chorus). *Company* confused the commentators, however, and they needed to come up with a convenient label for it.

The show takes place not over a period of time, but in an instant in Robert’s mind, perhaps on a psychiatrist’s couch, perhaps at the moment when he comes into his apartment on his thirty-fifth birthday. The framework is a surreal surprise party for him, which opens and closes each act.† The scenes which take place in between are all observations which he makes about his married friends, his girlfriends and himself. And because he is the cam-

era, as in Christopher Isherwood’s famous metaphor, Robert has often been accused by the show’s detractors of being a cipher, a void at the heart of the piece. This view was changed significantly with John Doyle’s remarkable production on Broadway in 2006. In his “concept” all of the characters played musical instruments, constituting the orchestra for the show—all, that is, except for Robert, who played only a brief kazoo solo until the end of the evening, when, accepting his vulnerability, he accompanied himself at a piano to sing “Being Alive,” his orchestral friends gradually joining in to support him.‡ The result was that perhaps for the first time in the history of the show the character moved the audience. In part, this was due to the charismatic performance of Raúl Esparza, who played Robert, but primarily it was due to Doyle’s theatrical metaphor. In Hal Prince’s elegant original production, the stage had been a metaphor for New York City, made spectacular by Boris Aronson’s chrome-and-Plexiglas set (complete with translucent elevator); in Sam Mendes’s more intimate 1996 London version, the stage had been a bare suggestion of Robert’s apartment, representing his internal emptiness. In both cases, the theatrical feeling was one of removal, accurate for the character but distancing for the audience, and the show was labeled “cold” even by its admirers; Robert, despite his ultimate song, never became sufficiently alive. “Cold” is an adjective that frequently crops up in complaint about the songs I’ve written, both individually and in bulk, and it all began with *Company*. *Company* was my first full immersion in evening-length irony—irony not merely employed as a tone for stray individual songs like “Gee, Officer Krupke” and Cora’s numbers in *Anyone Can Whistle*, but as the *modus operandi* of an entire score. *Company*, in fact, was the first Broadway musical whose defining quality was neither satire nor sentiment, but irony. It was an observational musical, told at a dry remove from beginning to end; in that sense, it was a descendant of *Allegro*, although *Allegro* had not a drop of irony in its heartfelt soul. Of course many plays, from Restoration comedy onward, have been purveyors of irony—Brecht built a body of work on it—and a number of musicals like *Cabaret* contained ironic moments, but *Company* was suffused with it. Most of the shows I did with Hal had this observational aspect to them, the exceptions being *Sweeney Todd* and, to a lesser extent, *A Little Night Music*, both of which, not without significance, had been suggestions of mine. The truth is that Hal was the ironist (witness *Evita* and *Lovemusik*, among others, both of which he encouraged and directed), and I the romantic (*Sunday in the Park with George* and *Passion*, for example), which is one of the reasons that our collaboration was so good. Nevertheless, “cold” has been

* Principle 1: Content Dictates Form.

† Or at least it did in the initial production. In subsequent ones, the party at the end of the first act was replaced by the song “Marry Me a Little.”

‡ A notion exactly like the idea Richard Rodgers rejected for “Do I Hear a Waltz?” although Doyle arrived at it entirely on his own.

the handy earmark for my work ever since, the ostentatious literacy of some of the lyrics only compounding the felony. Continued exposure to the songs over the years seems to have instituted a thaw, but whether that's merely wishful thinking on my part or not, *Company* is a show I'm extremely happy with. It influenced musicals, for good and ill, for years afterward and continues to do so. It made a lot of grown-ups who had disdained musicals take them seriously and it not incidentally gave me my first good notices.

Writing the score for *Company* presented the same difficulty as writing the score for *Forum* but for entirely different reasons. *Forum* required songs that were essentially nothing more than punctuation and didn't advance the plot; here there was no plot to advance. More difficult still, George Furth's dialogue was sharp, fast and witty but self-sufficient; it not only didn't lead naturally into song, it virtually precluded it. The only effective approach I could come up with was quasi-Brechtian: songs which either commented on the action, like "The Little Things You Do Together," or *were* the action, like "Barcelona,"—but never *part* of the action. They had to be the opposite of what Oscar had trained me to write, even though he himself had experimented with songs of that kind in (of course) *Allegro*. I decided to hold the score together through subject matter: all the songs would deal either with marriage in one sense or another, or with New York City.

That solution led to a bigger difficulty: I knew almost nothing about the primary subject. I had never married, or even been in a long-term relationship. Of course, I hadn't known anything about 1929 Brooklyn or New York street gangs or ancient Rome either, but in those other shows, I'd had scripts to guide me and plots to animate. Here was the unknown Kingdom of Marriage and I was stuck with making enough and varied comments on it to fill an evening, since there were neither stories to tell nor characters who needed fleshing out in song. How could I write about relationships (a buzzword in the sixties) without merely reiterating the received wisdom I'd gleaned from plays and movies and sitcoms? As in the case of *Saturday Night*, I relied on Faulkner's remark about experience, observation and imagination and decided to talk to someone with experience, since I felt I could supply the observation and imagination. I asked Mary Rodgers, a songwriter herself, to tell me what she knew about marriage. (I figured it was the least she could do after steering me into *Do I Hear a Waltz?*) She had recently begun her second attempt at it and she knew enough to know what she didn't know, which made her comments fresh, personal discoveries rather than predigested truisms. I took notes—literally—as we talked. For me it may have been secondhand experience, but it was experience nonetheless, and fulfilled Faulkner's dictum enough to give me the confidence to go ahead and write the score.

With George Furth, Harold Prince and Michael Bennett



ACT ONE

Robert, thirty-five years old and unmarried, enters his apartment and is confronted with a surprise birthday party given by his best friends, five married couples: Sarah and Harry, Peter and Susan, Jenny and David, Amy and Paul, Joanne and Larry. Strangely, they don't seem to know each other; the party has a dreamlike quality, a surreal hush. The seemingly breezy banter is slightly disjointed and detached, culminating in a toneless "Happy Birthday," after which the assemblage presents Robert with a cake, the candles of which he is unable to blow out. As everyone commiserates with him for not getting his wish, he demurs that it doesn't matter: he didn't make one. Their voices begin to hammer at him.

Company

JENNY
Bobby . . .

PETER
Bobby . . .

AMY
Bobby baby . . .

PAUL
Bobby bubí . . .

JOANNE
Robby . . .

SUSAN
Robert darling . . .

(Lines begin to overlap and continue to do so until Robert sings)

DAVID
Bobby, we've been trying to call you . . .

OTHERS
Bobby . . . Bobby . . . Bobby baby . . . Bobby bubí . . .

SARAH
Angel, I've got something to tell you . . .

OTHERS
Bob . . . Rob-o . . . Bobby, love . . . Bobby, honey . . .

AMY, PAUL
Bobby, we've been trying to reach you all day . . .

OTHERS
Bobby . . . Bobby . . . Bobby baby . . . Angel . . . Darling . . .

DAVID, JENNY
The kids were asking, Bobby . . .

OTHERS
Bobby . . . Robert . . . Robby . . . Bob-o . . .

LARRY, JOANNE
Bobby, there was something we wanted to say.

OTHERS
Bobby . . . Bobby bubí . . . Sweetheart . . . Sugar . . .

DAVID, JENNY
Your line was busy . . .

PETER
What have you been up to, kiddo?

AMY, PAUL
Bobby, Bobby, how have you been?

HARRY, SARAH
Fella . . . Sweetie . . . How have you been?

PETER, SUSAN
Bobby, Bobby, how have you been?

DAVID, JENNY, JOANNE, LARRY
Stop by on your way home . . .

AMY, PAUL
Seems like weeks since we talked to you . . .

HARRY, SARAH
Bobby, we've been thinking of you . . .

PETER, SUSAN
Bobby, we've been thinking of you . . .

DAVID, JENNY, JOANNE, LARRY
Drop by anytime . . .

AMY, PAUL
Bobby, there's a concert on Tuesday . . .

DAVID, JENNY
Hank and Mary get into town tomorrow . . .

PETER, SUSAN
How about some Scrabble on Sunday?

SARAH, HARRY
Why don't we all go to the beach—

JOANNE, LARRY
Bob, we're having people in Saturday night . . .

HARRY, SARAH
—next weekend?

OTHERS
Bobby . . . Bobby . . . Bobby baby . . .

DAVID, JENNY
Whatcha doing Thursday?

OTHERS
Bobby . . . Angel . . . Bobby bubí . . .

SARAH, HARRY
Time we got together, is Wednesday all right?

OTHERS
Bobby . . . Rob-o . . . Bobby, honey . . .

AMY, PAUL
Eight o'clock on Monday.

OTHERS
Robby darling . . . Bobby fella . . . Bobby baby . . .

ALL EXCEPT ROBERT
Bobby, come on over for dinner! We'll be so glad to see you!

Betty, ^{were} I've been trying to ^{at} reach you all day

Robert, where you been? Haven't seen you in weeks.

Robert! where have you been? I've been / weeks.

We want to see you

What's new? / Haven't talked to you /

Just called / Wanted to see what you /

What's new? / What you been up to?

How's things? /

We were worried / Haven't heard from you

Hank & Mary, Chuck & Helen, Bob & Jane are in town

Why don't I come over & cook you a ^{Stroganoff} meal

What's the need a barber for? I'll cut your hair

Listen, baby, you're taking me out

~~Betty... Betty... Betty, Betty...~~

~~(Betty...) Betty baby, listen, Betty~~ ^{you've been trying to reach you}

~~Betty, baby, angel, darling, sunshine, etc.~~

We haven't really talked in a while

Bobby, come on over for dinner!
Just be the three of us,
Only the three of us!
We loooooove you!

ROBERT
(To the audience)

Phone rings,
Door chimes,
In comes company!
No strings,
Good times,
Room hums, company!
Late nights,
Quick bites,
Party games,
Deep talks,
Long walks,
Telephone calls.
Thoughts shared,
Souls bared,
Private names,
All those
Photos
Up on the walls,
"With love . . ."

With love filling the days,
With love seventy ways,
"To Bobby with love"
From all those
Good and crazy people, my friends,
These good and crazy people, my
married friends!
And that's what it's all about, isn't it?
That's what it's really about,
Really about!

(His three girlfriends enter)

APRIL
Bobby . . .

KATHY
Bobby . . .

MARTA
Bobby baby . . .

PAUL
Bobby bubu . . .

JOANNE
Robby . . .

SUSAN
Robert darling . . .

SARAH
Angel, will you do me a favor?

(Lines begin to overlap, as before)

OTHERS
Bobby . . . Bobby . . .

ROBERT
Name it, Sarah.

OTHERS
Bobby baby . . . Bobby bubu . . .

PETER
Listen, pal, I'd like your opinion . . .

OTHERS
Bob . . . Rob-o . . .

ROBERT
Try me, Peter . . .

OTHERS
Bobby love . . . Bobby honey . . .

LARRY, AMY
Bobby, there's a problem, I need your
advice . . .

OTHERS
Bobby . . . Bobby . . . Bobby
baby . . . Angel . . . Darling . . .

APRIL, KATHY, MARTA
Just half an hour . . .

ROBERT
Amy, can I call you back tomorrow?

DAVID, JENNY
Honey, if you'd visit the kids once or
twice . . .

OTHERS
Bobby . . . Bobby . . . Bobby
bubu . . . Sweetheart . . . Sugar . . .

APRIL, KATHY, MARTA
What's happened to you?

ROBERT
Jenny, I could take them to the zoo on
Friday . . .

WIVES
Bobby . . . Bobby . . . Where have you
been?

HUSBANDS
Fella . . . kiddo . . . Where have you
been?

APRIL, KATHY, MARTA
Bobby . . . Bobby . . . How have you
been?

HARRY, SARAH, PETER, SUSAN
Stop by on your way home . . .

ROBERT
Susan, love, I'll make it after seven if
I can . . .

WIVES
Bobby, dear, I don't mean to pry . . .

HUSBANDS
Bobby, we've been thinking of you!

APRIL, KATHY, MARTA
Bobby, we've been thinking of you!

PAUL, AMY, JOANNE, LARRY,
DAVID, JENNY
Drop by anytime . . .

ROBERT
Sorry, Paul, I made a date with Larry
and Joanne . . .

WIVES
Bobby dear, it's none of my
business . . .

HUSBANDS
Lookit, pal, I have to work Thursday
evening . . .

WIVES
Darling, you've been looking
peculiar . . .

HUSBANDS
Bobby boy, you know how I hate the
opera . . .

WIVES
Funny thing, your name came up
only last night . . .

ROBERT
Harry . . . David . . . Kathy, I—

APRIL, KATHY, MARTA
I shouldn't say this, but—

(Robber:) ff

9

PHONE RINGS, DOOR CHIMES, IN COMES COM-PA-NY!

f *martellato*

NO STRINGS, GOOD TIMES,

ROOM HUMS, COM-PA-NY!

I been try- ing to call you

Bit-by Bit-by Bit-by, Bit-by, Bit-by, we been try- ing to reach you

Bit-by Ba-by, -Bit-by ba-by

Bit-by Bit-by Bit-by we have n't talked to you

Bit-by, we been try- ing to reach you all day

Bit-by ba-bi Bit-by ba-bi Bit-by we been try- ing to reach you

Rest-ent an- gel, Rest-ent an- gel

den-ling, I've been try- ing to reach you all week



ROBERT
April . . . Marta . . . Listen, people—

WIVES
Bobby, we've been worried, you sure
you're all right?

HUSBANDS
Bobby . . . Bobby . . . Bobby baby . . .

APRIL, KATHY, MARTA
Did I do something wrong?

HUSBANDS
Bobby bubu, Bobby fella, Bobby,
Bobby . . .

ALL EXCEPT ROBERT
Bobby, come on over for dinner!
We'll be so glad to see you!
Bobby, come on over for dinner!
Just be the three of us,
Only the three of us!
We looooooooooooooooooove you!

ALL
Phone rings,
Door chimes,
In comes company!
No strings,
Good times,
Just chums, company!
Late nights,
Quick bites,
Party games,
Deep talks,
Long walks,
Telephone calls,
Thoughts shared,
Souls bared,
Private names,
All those
Photos
Up on the walls,
"With love . . ."

With love filling the days,
With love seventy ways,
"To Bobby with love"
From all those (these)
Good and crazy people, my (your)
friends,
Those (These) good and crazy people,
my (your) married friends!

And that's what it's all about, isn't it?
That's what it's really about.

That's what it's really about,
Really about!

ALL EXCEPT ROBERT
Isn't it? Isn't it? Isn't it? Isn't it?

ROBERT
(Simultaneously, with the others)
You I love and you I love and you and
you I love
And you I love and you I love and
you and you I love, I love you!

ALL
Company! Company!
Company! Lots of company!
Years of company!
Love is company!
Company!

Here I was again, as with *Forum*, faced with the problem of writing an opening number which would not only set the theme and tone and introduce the characters but would also, with Hal's insistent urging, be called "Company"—not coincidentally, the title of the show. I knew it was an impossible word to rhyme without tortuous attempts like "bump a knee," which Lorenz Hart had already used and which, like any novelty rhyme, couldn't be used repeatedly and therefore was unworkable as part of a refrain. The solution was to rhyme as many words in the refrain as possible except for the title, and rhyme them as frequently as possible in order to reflect the repetitive quality of Robert's life.

Incidentally, "looooooooooooooooooove" was sung on one note, and held a lot longer than what it looks like on paper: forty seconds, to be exact. This was not for purposes of irony; it was the time Michael Bennett needed to choreograph the fourteen members of the cast from their scattered positions on a half-dozen stage levels into a climactic wedge downstage center in time for the second chorus. With Boris Aronson's help, I estimated how long it would take for the elevator to rise and fall and the actors to descend the staircases, and then had to find something for them to sing that would be

intelligible for forty seconds' worth of running down steep glassine steps, pushing through revolving doors and riding down in an elevator. "Love" conquered all, just as it's supposed to do.

Robert visits Harry and Sarah, a fondly competitive couple. Harry has discovered that Sarah has been taking karate lessons and challenges her to demonstrate her skills. She throws him to the ground. Joanne appears on a balcony, looks down at the scene and addresses us.

The Little Things You Do Together

JOANNE
It's the little things you do together,
Do together,
Do together,
That make perfect relationships.
The hobbies you pursue together,
Savings you accrue together,
Looks you misconstrue together
That make marriage a joy.
Mm-hm . . .

(Harry challenges Sarah again, but this time he blocks her)

JOANNE
It's the little things you share together,
Swear together,
Wear together,
That make perfect relationships,
The concerts you enjoy together,
Neighbors you annoy together,
Children you destroy together,
That keep marriage intact.

It's not so hard to be married
When two maneuver as one.
It's not so hard to be married,
And, Jesus Christ, is it fun.

It's sharing little winks together,
Drinks together,
Kinks together,
That makes marriage a joy.
It's bargains that you shop together,
Cigarettes you stop together,

Box Office for 'Company' Opens Monday at 10 A.M.

WE KNOW IT IS HIGHLY UNORTHODOX, BUT WITH THE THREATENED NEWSPAPER STRIKE HANGING OVER OUR HEADS, WE THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT THE SHOW WHICH OPENED IN BOSTON LAST TUESDAY NIGHT.



ALVIN THEATRE 252 West 52nd St. PL 7-8646

The Boston Globe Wednesday, March 25, 1970 YOU'RE IN BRILLIANT 'COMPANY'

By Kevin Kelly

"Brilliant just brilliant!" In the post-Broadway tryout at the Shubert, "Company" is danced brilliantly. And not only is it the most original musical I've seen in a very long time but, unless I miss my guess, it is destined to become a classic in the American musical theater. It is the finest kind of wit that it will arrive in New York to take this season for a matter! On his hard-headed, straightforward, uncompromising, triumphant class by itself. Framed in the simple and deceptive form of a review, difference, the musical is a cold, cynical analysis of love and a long long way from "I Do, I Do." Behind the analysis is an essential statement about life, about living, about existence, whether that existence is of another or in the company of another.

The writing is filled together by George Furth from a number of pieces, small scenes, slightly larger sections, from the lives of 6 married couples, year old bachelor who is best friend to all of them. What Mr. Furth has done with a concussing stare is to burn through the easy pleasures of marriage to show the world, the unsavory, the unlovely, the raw. He does it with a dramatic accuracy that chills to the bone and I can already imagine people complaining that "Company" is cold and stubborn. So it is. So, my friends, is life.

The evening's hero is Robert, who happens into his gleamy, Manhattan apartment where his friends have gathered to give him a surprise birthday party. The party spirals into an odyssey, Robert wanders from one couple to another, their closest friends and bright-eyed women with whom he shares a certain kind of freedom. He questions them about happiness and gets elliptical answers. He tries to help a Jewish friend almost abandoned at the altar by the girl who loves him, has lived with him for a number of years, but can't seem to overcome her fear of marriage. Robert has a few moments of his own, sleeps with a stewardess, finds a bearable comfort, then yearns for his freedom when she stays too long in his bed. He drinks with the wife of a friend and she proposition him, tomorrow at 2, when her husband's at the gym.

"Through it all, Mr. Furth gives it to us without blinking, with a subtle ironic humor, unrelentingly dramatic, excellent. His book has been fully echoed in a masterful score by Stephen Sondheim, and his music over nothing to anyone but himself. For once in a new musical there are no borrowed beats from the Beatles, no tricky fashionable synchronisms for the sake of fashion, nothing in the style of a perfectly imagined style book. Mr. Sondheim's lyrics are perfect.

Under the direction of Hal Prince, against Boris Aronson's stunning steel-and-glass New York set, with two working elevators and even the canon skyline in the distance, the evening is pitched toward an ensemble performance. This is like everything else, is so accurate. But then, Jones stands out, almost with defiance, as Robert, in the only case of selfish warmth of his own inside. Mr. Jones will hunt me for a long time with Mr. Sondheim's unforgettable "Happily Ever After" in which Robert's pleasures and pains are sorted and sized.

Elaine Stritch, hostility humming beneath the halo of her shining head, is the world's most perfect married bitch, and she couldn't be better. And she would melt in her mouth, Miss Stritch has a devastating "Drinking Song" that says more about contemporary urban society than most of the playwrights put together.

scated on a bench, innocently number called "Number Hundred People" that says more about married life than a City Hall full of policemen. And the rest of the cast, all of them, Barbara Barrie, Charles Kinnear, George Coe, Holt Howard, Steve Elmore, Charles Brannan, Dams Moore, Malcolm Stedman, Mo'Nique, and Susan Browning, the wonderful, wonderful way in which Michael Bennett's "Company" is a masterpiece of theater. And so, my friends, that's all. If you're married, if you're a loner and intelligent, I advise you not to be without it. Brilliant, just brilliant."

Clothing that you swap together
That make perfect relationships.
Uh-huh . . .
Mm-hm . . .

(Harry and Sarah are soon locked in combat on the floor. The other married couples enter)

ALL

It's not talk of God and the decade ahead that
Allows you to get through the worst.
It's "I do" and "You don't" and
"Nobody said that"
And "Who brought the subject up first?"*

* Here is the original quatrain:

*It's not the profound philosophic discussions
That get you through desperate nights.
It's not talk of God and the moon and the
Russians,
It's who gets to turn out the lights.*

There are times when you have to sacrifice smoothness for conversational energy. This was not one of them. I should have stuck to the original.

It's the little things,
The little little little little little things . . .

JENNY, DAVID, AMY, PAUL
The little ways you try together—

SUSAN, PETER, JOANNE,
LARRY
Cry together—

JENNY, DAVID, AMY, PAUL
Lie together—

GROUP
That make perfect relationships.

SUSAN, PETER, JOANNE,
LARRY
Becoming a cliché together—

JENNY, DAVID, AMY, PAUL
Growing old and gray together—

JOANNE
Withering away together—

GROUP
That makes marriage a joy.

MEN, JOANNE
It's not so hard to be married.

WOMEN
It's much the cleanest of crimes.†

MEN, JOANNE
It's not so hard to be married,

JOANNE
I've done it three or four times.

JENNY
It's people that you hate together,

PAUL, AMY
Bait together,

PETER, SUSAN
Date together,

† This line is a meaningless embarrassment, but "times" is a hard word to rhyme in this context, and I didn't have the strength to let go of the punch line which follows. It's a common trap for lyricists: if the setup line sounds forced, it announces a zinger to come, thereby weakening the surprise when it does.

GROUP

That make marriage a joy.

DAVID

It's things like using force together,

LARRY

Shouting till you're hoarse together,

JOANNE

Getting a divorce together,

GROUP

That make perfect relationships.

Uh-huh . . .

Kiss, kiss . . .

JOANNE

Mm-hm.

The glibness of this lyric, which is by turns amusing and irritating (at least to me), is partly due to its being a list song (see "Have an Egg Roll, Mr. Goldstone"), but also due to another, subtler problem. One-idea songs like Porter's "Let's Do It" are acceptable because they are playful and clever and not Making a Point. Here, making the point over and over with the same irony renders the lyric not only monotonous but condescending. I tried to keep the touch as light as possible by sprinkling the good lines far from each other ("Children you destroy together . . . Getting a divorce together . . . Withering away together . . ."), but the tight triple-rhyme scheme necessitated silliness and vague generalities, which draw attention to the lyricist rather than the lyrics, even when they make sense (do notions like "swear together" and "bait together" really mean anything?). The lyric succumbs to sophistry because substance is too often sacrificed for rhyme.

When I began to write the score for *Company*, I realized that it was going to require comment songs like the ones in *Forum*, songs which "savor the moment," in Burt Shevelove's phrase, songs in which one idea is stated repeatedly, with variations. Thus the tightly packed rhymes, to give it some aural interest. But whereas in the title

song of *Company* the tight rhymes serve to reflect the joyless repetitiveness of Robert's life, here the tone is one of easy sophistication, and more the sophistication of the lyricist than of the characters. "The Little Things" is a decent, pointed idea for a list song, but it illustrates another common snare for lyricists, the use of multiple rhymes to conceal poverty of thought—rhyming poison. Tight rhyme schemes may make for surface brilliance, but they can be as tiresome as they are elaborate.

Such observations about this perfectly respectable lyric may seem unduly harsh, but that's because it exemplifies some of the more obvious holes into which "sophisticated" lyrics can fall. Crowded and incessant rhyming is something I deplore in the work of others (Ira Gershwin, in particular), but something I'm not always able to avoid myself, I regret to say.

It would be nice to claim that the clinky xylophone-like accompaniment of "Little Things" is meant to reflect the brittle hollowness of Joanne and her fellow sophisticates, but in fact it's the result of where I wrote it: on the *Queen Mary* during my one transatlantic boat trip. I was en route to deliver the first few songs to Hal Prince, who was shooting a movie in Bavaria, and since ocean liners, like the plays and musicals I had grown up with, were on the way out, I decided to travel in the old glamorous fashion. The purser arranged for me to have a small salon room, complete with piano, so that I could work while I traveled, assuaging my guilt over such luxurious time-wasting. But the ship kept listing to starboard and I unwittingly kept sliding toward it on the piano bench, resulting in a preponderance of treble plinks. Thus is insightful art produced.

After the scene with Harry and Sarah, Robert asks Harry if he's sorry he got married. Two other husbands, Larry and David, join the answer.

Sorry-Grateful

HARRY

You're always sorry,
You're always grateful,
You're always wondering what might
have been.
Then she walks in.

And still you're sorry,
And still you're grateful,
And still you wonder and still you
doubt.
And she goes out.

Everything's different,
Nothing's changed,
Only maybe slightly
Rearranged.

You're sorry-grateful,
Regretful-happy.
Why look for answers where none
occur?
You always are what you always were,
Which has nothing to do with,
All to do with her.

DAVID

You're always sorry,
You're always grateful,
You hold her, thinking, "I'm not
alone."
You're still alone.

You don't live for her,
You do live with her,
You're scared she's starting to drift
away—
And scared she'll stay.

LARRY

Good things get better,
Bad get worse.
Wait—I think I meant that in reverse.

HARRY, DAVID, LARRY

You're sorry-grateful,
Regretful-happy,
Why look for answers where none
occur?
You'll always be what you always
were,
Which has nothing to do with,
All to do with her.

IRA GERSHWIN

Rhyming Poison

Effortfulness is the defining characteristic of Gershwin's lyrics. Unlike Hart, Gershwin is conscientiously meticulous in trying to play with language and be conversational at the same time, but unlike Berlin, Loesser and Fields, to name the best of that era's other conversational writers, he makes you feel the sweat. Hart's lyrics are sloppy but freewheeling, Gershwin's are clenched. He is often undone by his passion for rhyming, for which he sacrifices both ease and syntax. Harburg and he are habitual users (sometimes overusers) of closely knit rhyme schemes and unexpected manufactured rhymes such as the former's "Riddle / individ!" and the latter's "Free 'n' easy / Viennesy." Gershwin takes the same kind of verbal delight in the language that Harburg does, deploying puns, alliteration, even mild Harburg-like word morphs ("S Wonderful"), but his technique isn't good enough to hide the strenuousness of his applying it. As with Hart, you can almost always feel the straining for lapidary brilliance while you listen, especially when he crams the rhymes together, as in this, from the verse to "How Long Has This Been Going On?"

*'Neath the stars,
At bazaars,
Often I've had to caress men.
Five or ten
Dollars, then
I'd collect from all those yes-men.
Don't be sad;
I must add
That they meant no more than
Chessmen.*

In his insatiable need to rhyme, Gershwin surrenders sense (How often are charity bazaars conducted outdoors at night? Do women sell caresses—I thought they sold kisses, and why are the singer's customers "yes-men?"); stress ("Often I've had to caress men"); and syntax (by "Five or ten / Dollars, then / I'd collect . . ." he means "Then I'd collect five or ten dollars").

That last syntactical convolution comes under the heading of what might be called songwriters' syntax, the chief symptom of which is subject-object reversal (for example, "Into Heaven I'm hurled" from the song

above), a practice common in poetry, mostly pre-twentieth-century poetry, but one which both makes a contemporary conversational lyric sound anachronistic and draws attention to the lyricist. Gershwin, like Hart and Coward, frequently lapses into this convention. Harburg and Porter also use self-conscious technical formalities, but theirs are subsumed into individual styles (Harburg's being whimsy, Porter's being camp) and they rarely sacrifice gracefulness, as both Gershwin and Hart do. Only Dorothy Fields (and a bit later, Frank Loesser) was as good as Berlin in making technique unobtrusive. As I've said before, there is nothing wrong with being obtrusive: when Porter and Harburg are at their juggling best, who could ask for anything more (to quote one of Gershwin's own phrases? As long as the technique is worth displaying, ostentation is fine. Gershwin is in his element when he's writing satirical shows like *Of Thee I Sing*, where the push for far-out rhymes and wordplay is part of the fun. As with a "bad" (that is, forced) pun, the strain behind it invites you to deplore it, and therein lies its charm.

Away from his satirical bent, Gershwin shares with Fields a natural warmth and friendliness and, like her, he is at his best when he's not trying to show off, whereas Harburg and Porter are at their best when they're doing exactly that. The finest lyric Gershwin wrote, and I'm surprised that he's credited with it, is "Oh, Bess, Oh Where's My Bess?," one of the more thrilling songs in *Porgy and Bess*. Most of the lyrics for that show were the work of Heyward, who also wrote the libretto, but Gershwin wrote a few and collaborated with Heyward on two. As I noted earlier, Heyward's lyrics for *Porgy and Bess* are, as a set, the most beautiful and powerful in our musical-theater history. This is chiefly owing to the fact that although he was a poet rather than a lyricist, his verse was colloquial enough for the medium, and George Gershwin was a collaborator inventive enough to set what he wrote with minimum changes and maximum force. Heyward's lyrics—all of Act I and most of the rest—set a style that only

sparingly uses rhyme, as in "Summertime" and "My Man's Gone Now." The songs for *Porgy* which George wrote with Ira, however, were usually written music first and words second, which may account for lyrics like the over-rhymed "It Ain't Necessarily So." (Even if you accept the notion that Sportin' Life is a smooth-talker, the lyric is both too literate and too laborious.) But "Oh, Bess, Oh Where's My Bess?" is simple and impressive and moving.

A songwriter friend of mine who feels as I do about Ira Gershwin's work suggested to me a possible source for his obsession with rhyming. It's the kind of insight which smacks of ten-cent psychoanalysis but one I've come to believe is true: Ira was trying to match his brother's brilliance. It was a kind of competition, an attempt to invent and dazzle (verbally) in equal measure to his brother, not for public acclaim but for his own sense of self. Chronologically, he was the older brother, but my guess is that as a collaborator he felt like the younger. His work bespeaks a generous, warm and talented man, but his brother was a genius. There is no comparison, and he was trying to bridge the gap.

I recognize that this opinion, like my opinion of Hart, is a heresy—no two lyricists are worshipped more in the American pantheon than Gershwin and Hart—but the truth is that Gershwin is too often convoluted and Hart too often sloppy. In *Lyrics on Several Occasions*, Gershwin talks about his lyrics with an ease I miss in most of the examples. Here is one, though, which rides along with the effortless rhyming felicity he so relentlessly pursued. It's a stanza from "Let's Take a Walk Around the Block" in *Life Begins at 8:40*:

*You're just the companion
I want at Grand Canyon
For throwing old blades down the
rock.
Whatever we have'll
Go for travel—
Meantime, let's walk around the
block.*

Of course, he co-wrote it with E. Y. Harburg and it should have been *the* Grand Canyon, but still . . .

HARRY, LARRY
You'll always be what you always were,
Which has nothing to do with,
All to do with her.

HARRY
Nothing to do with,
All to do with her.

Robert visits David and Jenny. They smoke pot and talk about Robert's being single. He claims that he wants to get married, and that he's been dating three girls. The girls appear in limbo.

You Could Drive a Person Crazy

KATHY, MARTA, APRIL
Doo-doo-doo-doo,
Doo-doo-doo-doo,
Doo-doo-doo-doo doo-doo!

You could drive a person crazy,
You could drive a person mad.
Doo-doo-doo-doo-doo.
First you make a person hazy,
So a person could be had.
Doo-doo-doo-doo doo.

Then you leave a person dangling
sadly
Outside your door,
Which it only makes a person gladly
Want you even more.

I could understand a person
If he said to go away.
Doo-doo-doo-doo doo.
I could understand a person
If he happened to be gay.*

* The original quatrain:

*I could understand a person
If it's not a person's bag.
I could understand a person
If a person was a fag.*

In 1970, the word "fag" was only faintly demeaning, perfectly appropriate for the girls' annoyance without being offensive to the audience. By 1995, when the show was first revived on Broadway, it sounded not only offensive but old-fashioned, so I changed it.

Doo-doo-doo-doo doo.
Boo-boo-boo-boo.

But worse 'n that,
A person that
Titillates a person and then leaves her
flat
Is crazy,
He's a troubled person,
He's a truly crazy person
Himself!

KATHY
When a person's personality is personable,
He shouldn't oughta sit like a lump.
It's harder than a matador coercin' a bull
To try to get you off of your rump.
So single and attentive and attractive
a man
Is everything a person could wish,
But turning off a person is the act of
a man
Who likes to pull the hooks out of
fish.

KATHY, MARTA, APRIL
Knock, knock, is anybody there?
Knock, knock, it really isn't fair.
Knock, knock, I'm working all my
charms.
Knock, knock, a zombie's in my arms.

All that sweet affection,
What is wrong?
Where's the loose connection?
How long, oh Lord, how long?
Bobby baby, Bobby bubu, Bobby,

You could drive a person buggy,
You could blow a person's cool.
Doo-doo-doo-doo doo.
Like you make a person feel all huggy
While you make her feel a fool.
Doo-doo-doo-doo doo.

When a person says that you've
upset her,
That's when you're good:
You impersonate a person better
Than a zombie should.

I could understand a person
If he wasn't good in bed.
Doo-doo-doo-doo doo.

I could understand a person
If he actually was dead.
Doo-doo-doo-doo.

Exclusive you,
Elusive you,
Will any person ever get the juice of
you?

You're crazy,
You're a lovely person,
You're a moving, deeply maladjusted,
Never to be trusted
Crazy person
Yourself!

(Spoken)

Bobby is my hobby and I'm giving
it up!

A further word about trick rhymes (see *Do I Hear a Waltz?*) like "Coercin' a bull / Personable": Trick rhymes invest the character who sings them with a certain amount of wit, the amount depending on the frequency of the rhymes (for example, The Major General in *The Pirates of Penzance*). Also, as I pointed out before, they draw attention to their author; if they're not written with ease and grace, they drip with the lyricist's sweat. In this case I was imitating a verbally playful style—the lighthearted Andrews Sisters patter songs of the 1940s—to contrast with the acidity of what was being sung. I never would have had Kathy sing the line as an extension of her own dialogue.

Robert leaves. The five couples appear and pepper him with invitations.

Have I Got a Girl for You

JENNY
Bobby . . .

PETER
Bobby . . .

AMY
Bobby Baby . . .

PAUL
Bobby Bubi . . .

ALL BUT ROBERT
Robby . . .

SUSAN
Robert, darling . . .

ALL BUT ROBERT
Bobby, we've been trying to reach
you . . .

SARAH
Angel, I've got something to tell
you . . .

AMY & PAUL
Bobby, it's important or I wouldn't
call . . .

ALL BUT ROBERT
Whatcha doing Thursday?

SARAH & HARRY
Bobby, look, I know how you hate it,
and all . . .

ALL BUT ROBERT
But this is something special!
Bobby, come on over for dinner,
There's someone we want you to
meet.
Bobby, come on over for dinner!

HUSBANDS
This girl from the office—

WIVES
My niece from Ohio—
It'll just be the four of us—
You'll looooooooooooooooooove her!

*(The wives leave. The husbands corner
Robert)*

LARRY
Have I got a girl for you? Wait till you
meet her!
Have I got a girl for you, boy?
Hoo, boy!
Dumb—and with a weakness for
Sazerac slings:
You give her even the fruit and she
swings.

The kind of girl you can't send
through the mails—
Call me tomorrow, I want the details!

PETER
Have I got a chick for you? Wait till
you meet her!
Have I got a chick for you, boy?
Hoo, boy!
Smart! She's into all those exotic
mystiques:
The Kama Sutra and Chinese tech-
niques—
I hear she knows more than seventy-
five—
Call me tomorrow if you're still alive!

*Originally, Larry had the last word here
and a section ensued in which the wives
had their say, as follows:*

LARRY
Dumb—and with a weakness for
Sazerac slings:
You give her even the fruit and she
swings.
But if the thing that you want is
restraint,
I'll take her out, pal,
And you can sit here with Old Paint.

(Jenny appears)

ROBERT
Your hairdo looks great.

JENNY
Thank you, Bobby.

DAVID
Your hairdo looks great.

JENNY
Well, it should—it's a wig.

(Sarah appears)

ROBERT
You're losing some weight.

SARAH
Thank you, Robert.

HARRY
You're losing some weight.

SARAH
And I look like a pig.

(Amy appears)

ROBERT
That bracelet's a smash.

AMY
Thank you, Bobby.

PAUL
That bracelet's a smash.

AMY
It's not bad for a fake.

(Joanne appears)

ROBERT
That dress has panache.

JOANNE
Thank you, Robby.

LARRY
That dress has panache.

JOANNE
Jesus, give me a break.

HUSBANDS
Whaddaya like, you like laughter
filling your days,
Somebody on your side ever more?
Whaddaya like, you like constant
showers of praise?
Then whaddaya wanna get married
for?

Look what you got now, an army of
wives.
Flirt with them and nobody will
snitch.
You're in their heads, buddy, we're in
their lives.
Listen, you fortunate son of a bitch—

(The wives take over)

SARAH
Have I got a girl for you? Wait till you
meet her!
Have I got a girl for you, Bob?
Ooh, Bob!
Chic! I never saw so much chic in
my vie.

I must admit that she's terribly me.
However, somehow she's terribly
you . . .
Yes, dear, I know, but a *young* forty-
two.

WIVES
(Overlapping)

Have I got a girl for you? Wait till you
meet her!
Have I got a girl for you, Bob?
Ooh, Bob!

JOANNE

Perf! You've never seen so much perf
in one broad!
You'll have to curb yourself not to
applaud.
And all she wants is a man who's a
man.
Tall, blonde and rich and her name is
Joanne.

*The section was cut primarily for reasons
of length, but also because it made the
wives bitches and the husbands chumps, a
danger in a show where the women are
drawn more incisively than the men. In
its final incarnation, the song picked up
as follows:*

HUSBANDS

Have I got a girl for you? Wait till you
meet her!
Have I got a girl for you, boy?
Hoo, boy!
Boy, to be in your shoes what I
wouldn't give—
I mean the freedom to go out and
live!
And as for settling down and all
that—
Marriage may be where it's been,
But it's not where it's at.

Whaddaya like, you like coming
home to a kiss?
Somebody with a smile at the door?
Whaddaya like, you like indescrib-
able bliss?
Then whaddaya wanna get married
for?

Whaddaya like, you like an excursion
to Rome,
Suddenly taking off to explore?

Whaddaya like, you like having meals
cooked at home?
Then whaddaya wanna get married
for?
Whaddaya wanna get married
for? . . .

Robert is left alone to ponder this.

Someone Is Waiting

ROBERT

Someone is waiting,
Cool as Sarah,
Easy and loving as Susan—
Jenny.
Someone is waiting,
Warm as Susan,
Frantic and touching as Amy—
Joanne.

Would I know her even if I met her?
Have I missed her? Did I let her go?
A Susan sort of Sarah,
A Jennyish Joanne—
Wait for me, I'm ready now,
I'll find you if I can!

Someone will hold me,
Soft as Jenny,
Skinny and blue-eyed as Amy—
Susan.
Someone will wake me,
Sweet as Amy,
Tender and foolish as Sarah,
Joanne.

Did I know her? Have I waited too
long?
Maybe so, but maybe so has she,
My blue-eyed Sarah
Warm Joanne
Sweet Jenny
Loving Susan
Crazy Amy,
Wait for me,
I'll hurry.
Wait for me.
Hurry.
Wait for me . . .
Hurry . . .
Wait . . .

*Robert sits on a park bench with April,
an airline stewardess. After she leaves,
Marta comments from the sidelines.*

Another Hundred People

MARTA

Another hundred people just got off
of the train
And came up through the ground
While another hundred people just
got off of the bus
And are looking around
At another hundred people who got
off of the plane
And are looking at us
Who got off of the train
And the plane and the bus
Maybe yesterday.

It's a city of strangers:
Some come to work, some to play.
A city of strangers:
Some come to stare, some to stay.
And every day
The ones who stay

Can find each other in the crowded
streets
And the guarded parks,
By the rusty fountains and the dusty
trees
With the battered barks.
And they walk together past the
poster walls
With the crude remarks,

And they meet at parties through the
friends of friends
Who they never know.
Will you pick me up, or do I meet
you there,
Or shall we let it go?
Did you get my message, 'cause I
looked in vain?
Can we see each other Tuesday if it
doesn't rain?
Look, I'll call you in the morning
Or my service will explain . . .

And another hundred people just got
off of the train.

(April is replaced by Kathy, who tells Robert that she's leaving New York to get married. Marta comments again.)

MARTA

It's a city of strangers—
Some come to work, some to play.
A city of strangers—
Some come to stare, some to stay.
And every day
Some go away . . .

Or they find each other in the
crowded streets
And the guarded parks,
By the rusty fountains and the dusty
trees
With the battered barks.
And they walk together past the
poster walls
With the crude remarks,

And they meet at parties through the
friends of friends
Who they never know.
Will you pick me up, or do I meet
you there,
Or shall we let it go?
Did you get my message, 'cause I
looked in vain?
Can we see each other Tuesday if it
doesn't rain?
Look, I'll call you in the morning
Or my service will explain . . .

And another hundred people just got
off of the train.
And another hundred people just got
off of the train.
And another hundred people just got
off of the train.
And another hundred people just got
off of the train.
And another hundred people just got
off of the train.

George Furth wrote Marta as a feisty, outspoken, quintessentially New York Jewish girl, not, one would think, a hard part to cast on Broadway. Like Kathy, she had no solo song; among Robert's girlfriends only April had her own musical moment, and even that was part of a duet. After auditioning a dozen fine unexciting possibilities, we

were suddenly confronted by a recently graduated twenty-one-year-old Cincinnati Conservatory student with no stage experience named Pamela Myers, who strode in purposefully, belted out "Shy" from *Once Upon a Mattress* and broke us up laughing, then followed it with "Little Green Apples" and broke us up crying. We knew we had a "discovery" on our hands. The only problem was that she was blond, Midwestern, looked like a 4-H poster girl and was about as Jewish as the squeaky-clean MGM ingenue June Allyson, whom she distantly resembled. We held a brief but intense conference about her inappropriateness for the role. There ensued a version of that glamorous moment which I had seen in so many Hollywood movies about show business (most famously *42nd Street*), the moment I had hoped I would some day be part of, when the director picks an understudy or someone out of the chorus, the songwriters write her a great song and she becomes a star overnight. As it happened in our low-budget version, Hal turned to George and said, "Think you can rewrite Marta for this girl?" to which George eagerly nodded; Hal then swiveled to me and barked, "Can you write a song for her, kid? Give her a real spot?" I could feel the cameras turning on me as I barked back, "Of course!"

The result was "Another Hundred People," a song Marta sang in the second act. It was the only song in the score not directly concerned with interpersonal relationships and the above explains why: it was written for a performer instead of a character—which makes me no less pleased with it as a song. During rehearsals it clearly threatened to stop the show and indeed at the first preview on a Saturday night in Boston did exactly that. But the preview was also more than three hours long and we were scheduled to open to the press Tuesday, so on Sunday we cut over twenty minutes, most of them in the second act—including, reluctantly but ruthlessly, "Another Hundred People." On Monday morning, with the cast assem-

bled in the front rows of the theater, Hal outlined the changes we'd be making over the next two days. When he finished and there was a break before the rehearsal began, I went to where Pam was sitting on the aisle in the fifth row. To my surprise she was neither tearful nor ostentatiously stoic; she was in fact so centered that I felt any condolences on my part would be condescending. Wanting to say *something*, however, I blurted melodramatically, still in my movie mode, "I'll have that song back in by tomorrow night!" Stuck in my fantasy, I returned to my hotel room, that mythical place where all shows get rewritten and magically transformed from flops into hits, and tried to figure out a way to reinstate the song with a minimum of change in the staging and lighting so that I could sell it to Hal and Michael, since they had only a few hours of rehearsal in which to rework things. The solution turned out to be simple: I combined the three separate girlfriends' scenes in the first act into one scene by having them all take place on the same park bench, and divided the song into three sections, using it to string the scenes together. Pressed as they were for time, Hal and Michael accepted the notion and the song went back into the show Tuesday night, just in time for the critics. My fantasy became reality: Even the critics who disliked the show loved Pam. It was a triumph of her attitude as much as her talent, exactly the way I had hoped: Ruby Keeler in *42nd Street*, with variations.

Robert is in Amy's kitchen. It is the morning of her wedding day, and Robert is best man. Amy has finally consented to marry Paul, with whom she has been living for two years, but she is terrified of marriage, and imagines the forthcoming ceremony.



Beth Howland as Amy with Dean Jones as Robert

Getting Married Today

CHURCH LADY
(As a choir hums)

Bless this day, pinnacle of life,
Husband joined to wife.
The heart leaps up to behold
This golden day.

PAUL
(To Amy)

Today is for Amy.
Amy, I give you the rest of my life,
To cherish and to keep you,
To honor you forever.
Today is for Amy,
My happily
Soon-to-be
Wife.

AMY
(To the audience)

Pardon me, is everybody there?
Because if everybody's there,
I want to thank you all for coming to
the wedding.

I'd appreciate your going even more,
I mean, you must have lots of better
things to do,
And not a word of it to Paul.
Remember Paul? You know, the man
I'm gonna marry,
But I'm not, because I wouldn't ruin
Anyone as wonderful as he is—

But I thank you all
For the gifts and the flowers.
Thank you all,
Now it's back to the showers.
Don't tell Paul,
But I'm not getting married today.

CHURCH LADY
Bless this day, tragedy of life,
Husband yoked to wife.
The heart sinks down and feels dead
This dreadful day.

AMY
Listen, everybody,
Look, I don't know what you're
waiting for.
A wedding, what's a wedding?
It's a prehistoric ritual

Where everybody promises fidelity
forever,
Which is maybe the most horrifying
word I've ever heard,
And which is followed by a
honeymoon
Where suddenly he'll realize
He's saddled with a nut
And want to kill me, which he
should.

So listen,
Thanks a bunch,
But I'm not getting married.
Go have lunch,
'Cause I'm not getting married.
You've been grand,
But I'm not getting married.
Don't just stand
There, I'm not getting married!
And don't tell Paul,
But I'm not getting married today.

Go!
Can't you go?
Why is no-
Body listening?

rev. 4/4/70

AMY (second verse - to replace "Tacky little chapel...")

LISTEN EVERYBODY, LOOK, I
DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE WAITING FOR - A
WEDDING, WHAT'S A WEDDING? IT'S A
PREHISTORIC RITUAL WHERE
EVERYBODY PROMISES ~~KIDELITY~~ FI-
DELITY FOREVER WHICH IS
MAYBE THE MOST HORRIFYING
WORD I EVER HEARD AND WHICH IS
FOLLOWED BY A HONEYMOON WHERE
SUDDENLY HE'LL REALIZE HE'S
SADDLED WITH A NUT AND WANNA
KILL ME AND HE SHOULD, SO WOULD YOU
CLEAR THE HALL.....

LISTEN, EVERYBODY, I'M A-
FRAID YOU DIDN'T HEAR, OR DO YOU
WANT TO SEE A CRAZY LADY
FALL APART IN FRONT OF YOU, IT
ISN'T ONLY PAUL WHO ^{WILL} BE
RUINING HIS LIFE, YOU KNOW, WE 'LL
BOTH OF US ~~ARE~~ LOSING OUR ~~IDENTITIES~~ I-
DENTITIES, I TELEPHONED MY
ANALYST ABOUT IT AND HE ^{ON}
SAID TO SEE HIM MONDAY BUT ~~BY~~ ^{BY}
MONDAY I'LL BE FLOATING IN THE
HUDSON WITH THE ^{OTHER} GARBAGE, ~~LOOKIT~~ (I'M
I'M NOT WELL, ^{*} ~~JUST~~

^I
Telephoned my analyst at
Bout it he said to see him
Monday and I told him that by

listen, I don't think you under-
stood, I mean it isn't only
Paul who may be ruining his
life or no we both may well be

~~Don't you see the danger will be~~
losing our identities I

Telephoned my analyst but
he was with a patient so he
really couldn't talk to me he
said he'd see me Monday but by
Monday I'll be floating in the
kitchen with the garbage and
(Pollution that's another reason)

I'm not well, so I'm not getting married
You've been sweet, but
Thanks a heap, but
Get some sleep, 'cause

okay
or do you

Want to see a crazy lady
Feel apart in front of you, it
isn't only Paul who may be
ruining his life you know, we
both'll be destroying our
identities

~~everybody~~
listen to me people, I don't
understand you see
Think you got the point
It's not only Paul who may be
ruining his ^{future} life I mean the
danger that we both may well be

listen, everybody, I'm a -
I said you didn't hear, ^{I mean} you see it
isn't only Paul who may be
ruining his life

I telephoned my
Analyst about it but he said
To see him ^{and} could go on Monday
if you ~~could~~ ^{would}

hi hi

Monday I'll be floating in the
kitchen with the garbage and
pollution ~~at~~ ^{and} ~~see~~ ^{that's}

Goodbye!
Go and cry
At another person's wake.
If you're quick,
For a kick
You could pick
Up a christening,
But please,
On my knees,
There's a human life at stake!

Listen, everybody, I'm afraid you
didn't hear,
Or do you want to see a crazy lady
Fall apart in front of you?
It isn't only Paul who may be ruining
his life, you know,
We'll both of us be losing our
identities—
I telephoned my analyst about it
And he said to see him Monday,
But by Monday I'll be floating
In the Hudson with the other
garbage.

I'm not well,
So I'm not getting married.
You've been swell,
But I'm not getting married.
Clear the hall,
'Cause I'm not getting married.
Thank you all,
But I'm not getting married.
And don't tell Paul,
But I'm not getting married today!

CHURCH LADY
Bless this bride, totally insane,
Slipping down the drain,
And bless this day in our hearts,
As it starts to rain.

PAUL	AMY
Today is for Amy.	Go, can't you go?
Amy,	Look, you know
I give you	I adore you all,
The rest of my life,	But why
To cherish	Watch me die
	Like Eliza on the
	ice?
And to keep	Look, perhaps
You,	I'll collapse
	In the apse
To honor you	Right before you
	all,
Forever,	So take
	Back the cake,

Today is for Amy,	Burn the shoes and boil the rice!
My happily	Look, I didn't want to have to tell you, But I may be coming down with hepatitis And I think I'm gonna faint, So if you wanna see me faint, I'll do it happily, But wouldn't it be funnier
Soon-to-be Wife,	To go and watch a funeral? So thank you for the
My adorable	Twenty-seven dinner plates and Thirty-seven butter knives and Forty-seven paper weights and Fifty-seven candle holders—
Wife!	

PAUL
One more thing—

AMY
I am not getting married!

CHURCH LADY, GUESTS
Amen.

PAUL
—Softly said:

AMY
But I'm not getting married!

CHURCH LADY, GUESTS
Amen.

PAUL
With this ring—

AMY
Still I'm not getting married!

CHURCH LADY, GUESTS
Amen.

PAUL
—I thee wed.

AMY
See, I'm not getting married!

CHURCH LADY, GUESTS
Amen.

PAUL	AMY
Let us pray,	Let us pray
And we are	That I'm not
Getting married	Getting
today.	married today!

OTHERS
Amen!

I wrote this song just before the show began its tryout in Boston and never had a chance to polish it properly. The patter sections may seem difficult to sing in one breath as they ought to be sung, but in fact they're calculated to alternate vowel and consonant sounds in such a way as to make them easy for the tongue, teeth and breath to articulate, at least until the end of the second section, when "which he should" muddles the fluency. Worse yet is the final section, as in "... he said to see him Monday, / But by Monday I'll be floating / In the Hudson with the other garbage," with its glued-together "m" sounds and its collision of "I'll," "be" and "floating," all of which require completely different mouth formations. In the best rapid patter songs, the faster you sing, the easier it is—you need less breath and the words flow trippingly off the tongue.

Another point worth making: I mentioned earlier that there were sometimes reasons not to rhyme. This is one of them. If I had rhymed the lines in the patter, it would have implied an organized control of Amy's thought processes, when in fact disorder is the essence of hysteria. Simply avoiding rhymes, however, would not have been a satisfying solution; to give unrhymed lines full value (that is, to

make them interesting and funny) you have to keep the sounds of the accented words as different from each other as possible. Also, a completely unrhymed song would have been monotonous and shapeless, which is why Amy suddenly starts to rhyme with a vengeance in short, sharp, machine-gun rapidity, bespeaking another kind of dementia.

It was for these reasons that I replaced the original song, which in rehearsal sounded over-rhymed and annoyingly staccato. Here it is (show-business argot keeps popping up in the lyric because in the first version of the scene much was made of Amy's being a TV actress):

The Wedding Is Off (cut)

AMY

(After the first Choir section)

The music is swelling,
The guests are inside,
The parents are kvelling,
And look at the bride:
Beautiful gown, even at retail—
Lamp the veil, folks, notice the coif.
And another fabulous detail:
The wedding is off!*

(After the next Choir section)

The choir is singing,
The preacher's been paid,
The bells go on ringing—
I hope it's a raid.
Staggering gifts, dazzling flowers,
Picturewise, the show is a boff—
Thanks a heap, now back to the
showers,
The wedding is off!

* "Off" is always a dangerous word to rhyme because, like a number of other words, its pronunciation depends on regional idiosyncrasy. New Yorkers would rhyme it with "cough" whereas Bostonians would rhyme it with "doff." I tried to have it both ways in this lyric because I liked the tone of "coif" so much. And there aren't many useful rhymes for "off," anyhow.

Hey, chaps,
You can clear the apse.
And you on the keys,
Please
Play "Taps."
Be nice,
Kindly strike the rice.
I'm cutting the act, anklng the pact,
Chickening out, and as a matter of
fact—

CHOIR

Bless this day,
Pinnacle of life—

AMY

I know it's been rough, gang,
To come all this way.
Can't thank you enough, gang—
I wish I could stay.
Gotta cut out, due at the shrinker,
Plus I have this terrible cough—
Futurewise, the show is a stinker—

(Another Choir section, after which Amy becomes completely hysterical)

Look, who's the musician?
Is this an audition?
No, something is odd—
Will those who hear me, nod?
Look, I really don't mind it,
But who is behind it,
The Marquis de Sade?
(I'm only kidding, God!)

Look, if you enjoy public disaster,
If you like to snicker and scoff,
You can be sick forty times faster:
Go to a funeral, a funeral's groovy,
Sit through an Antonioni movie,
Look into *National Geographic*,
Watch a pedestrian killed in traffic,
But, sorry, folks—
This wedding is off!

(The last note she sings ascends until it culminates in a scream)

In the original production in 1970, Act One ended with Amy going off to marry Paul and Robert back at his surreal party, once again being presented with a birthday cake. In the current version, Robert is left alone onstage and sings:

Marry Me a Little

ROBERT

Marry me a little,
Love me just enough.
Cry, but not too often,
Play, but not too rough.
Keep a tender distance,
So we'll both be free.
That's the way it ought to be.
I'm ready!

Marry me a little,
Do it with a will.
Make a few demands
I'm able to fulfill.
Want me more than others,
Not exclusively.
That's the way it ought to be.
I'm ready!
I'm ready now!

You can be my best friend.
I can be your right arm.
We'll go through a fight or two.
No harm, no harm.
We'll look not too deep,
We'll go not too far.
We won't have to give up a thing,
We'll stay who we are.
Right?
Okay, then,
I'm ready!
I'm ready now!

Amy,
Marry me a little,
Love me just enough.
Warm and sweet and easy,
Just the simple stuff.
Keep a tender distance
So we'll both be free.
That's the way it ought to be.
I'm ready!

Marry me a little,
Body, heart and soul.
Passionate as hell,
But always in control.
Want me first and foremost,
Keep me company.
That's the way it ought to be.
I'm ready!
I'm ready now!

Oh, how gently we'll talk,
 Oh, how softly we'll tread.
 All the stings, the ugly things
 We'll keep unsaid.
 We'll build a cocoon
 Of love and respect.
 You promise whatever you like,
 I'll never collect.
 Right?
 Okay, then,
 I'm ready!
 I'm ready now!
 Someone,
 I'm ready!

“Marry Me a Little” was intended to be Robert’s proposal to Amy after she decides (temporarily) not to marry Paul. I was halfway through writing it when I realized I’d run into a problem that often arises in playwriting: the character who knows too much too soon. When I write a song, I try to become the character—or more accurately, I try to be the actor who has to play the character. A good actor will not let you know where a scene is going while he’s playing it; he may foreshadow it but he won’t give away the rest of its development or his “journey” (the grandiose word so favored by actors) in order to leave himself someplace emotionally to go during the course of the play. Similarly, if you’re writing a song to be sung in the first act, even though you know the character will kill himself at the end of the second, it is a dramatic mistake to write a lyric which conveys that knowledge. Although I understood this principle from having worked with professional playwrights like Arthur and Burt and Larry and George, I was halfway through “Marry Me a Little” before I recognized that if Robert could articulate such thoughts aloud to someone he cared for, he would indeed have nowhere to go for the rest of the show; he would have completed his “journey.” I therefore abandoned it. After the show opened, I finished the song as a favor to a friend, and in the 1995 Roundabout Theater production, at the suggestion of its director Scott Ellis, we tried it out at the

end of Act One, where, because Amy has turned Bobby down, it works well as an internal monologue of despair and self-deceptive determination. It has remained there ever since.

ACT TWO

Robert is back at his birthday party, surrounded once more by his married friends.

Side by Side by Side

ROBERT

Isn't it warm,
 Isn't it rosy,
 Side by side by side?
 Ports in a storm,
 Comfy and cozy,
 Side by side by side.

Everything shines.
 How sweet—

ROBERT, JENNY, DAVID
 Side by side—

ROBERT

By side.
 Parallel lines
 Who meet—

AMY, PAUL, PETER, SUSAN,
 SARAH, HARRY, DAVID, JENNY
 Love him,
 Can't get enough of him.

ROBERT

Everyone winks,
 Nobody's nosy,
 Side by side by side.
 You bring the drinks
 And I'll bring the posy—

ROBERT, LARRY, JOANNE
 Side by side—

ROBERT

By side.

One is lonely and two is boring,
 Think what you can keep ignoring,
 Side by side by side.

COUPLES

Never a bother,
 Seven times a godfather.

ROBERT, AMY, PAUL

Year after year,
 Older and older . . .

ALL

Sharing a tear,
 Lending a shoulder . . .

ROBERT, PETER, SUSAN,
 SARAH, HARRY

Ain't we got fun?
 No strain . . .

COUPLES

Permanent sun,
 No rain.
 We're so crazy,
 He's so sane.

Friendship forbids
 Anything bitter . . .
 Being the kids
 As well as the sitter . . .

ROBERT

One's impossible, two is dreary,
 Three is company, safe and cheery,

ALL (EXCEPT ROBERT AND
 SARAH)

Side—
 By side—
 By side—

ROBERT

Here is the church,
 Here is the steeple.
 Open the doors and
 See all the crazy married people!

(The following verses are broken up with dance breaks, parades, a tug-of-war and other choreographic punctuations)

COUPLES

What would we do without you?
 How would we ever get through?
 Who would I complain to for hours?

Poor Baby

Who'd bring me the flowers
When I have the flu?
Who'd finish yesterday's stew?
Who'd take the kids to the zoo?

Who is so dear
And who is so deep,
And who would keep her/him
occupied

When I want to sleep?
How would we ever get through?
What would we do without you?

What would we do without you?
How would we ever get through?
Should there be a marital squabble,
Available Bob'll
Be there with the glue.
Who could we open up to,
Secrets we keep from guess-who?

Who is so safe and who is so sound?
You never need an analyst with Bobby
around.
How could we ever get through?
What would we do without you?

What would we do without you?
How would we ever get through?
Who sends anniversary wishes?
Who helps with the dishes
And never says boo?
Who changes subjects on cue?
Who cheers us up when we're blue?

Who is a flirt but never a threat,
Reminds us of our birthdays which
we always forget?
How would we ever get through?
What would we do without you?

COUPLES

What would we do without you?

(Like a broken record)

How would we ever get—
How would we ever get—
How would we ever get—
How would we ever get—through?
What would we do without you?

ROBERT

Just what you usually do!

COUPLES

Right!
You who sit with us,

You who share with us,
You who fit with us,
You who bear with us,
You who, you-who, you-hoo,
You-hoo, you-hoo—!

ROBERT

Okay, now everybody—!

ALL

Isn't it warm, isn't it rosy,
Side by side . . .

*(Harry does a brief dance break,
answered by Sarah)*

Ports in a storm, comfy and cozy,
Side by side . . .

*(Paul does a brief dance break,
answered by Amy)*

Everything shines, how sweet,
Side by side . . .

*(Larry does a brief dance break,
answered by Joanne)*

Parallel lines who meet,
Side by side.

*(Robert does a brief dance break,
answered by total silence. He stands
stunned as the others look at him;
after a brief pause, they continue
singing vigorously.)*

Year after year, older and older,
Side by side.
Sharing a tear and lending a shoulder,
Side by side.

Two's impossible, two is gloomy,
Give another number to me—
Side by side by side by side
By side by side by side
By side by side by side
By side by side
By side!

*Robert brings April, a stewardess, to his
apartment. As he makes love to her, the
wives speculate about him.*

Darling—

SARAH

Yes?

HARRY

Robert—

SARAH

What?

HARRY

I worry—

SARAH

Why?

HARRY

He's all alone.

SARAH

(Harry grunts)

There's no one—

HARRY

Where?

SARAH

In his life.

HARRY

Oh.

SARAH

Robert ought to have a woman.

Poor baby, all alone,
Evening after evening by the tele-
phone—
We're the only tenderness he's ever
known.
Poor baby . . .

JENNY

David—

DAVID

Yes?

JENNY

Bobby—

What? DAVID SARAH JENNY JOANNE
 Face it. Why her? You know, —Goliath . . .
 Better, no one . . . No one—

I worry. JENNY ALL THE WOMEN
 —Wants you to be happy Poor baby,
 More than I do. All alone.
 No one, but— Throw a lonely dog a bone,
 It's still a bone.

Why? DAVID SARAH, JENNY
 Isn't she a little bit, well— We're the only tenderness
 You know, He's ever known.
 Face it. Poor baby . . .

It's such a waste. JENNY
 (David grunts)

There's no one. SUSAN
 (overlapping)
 You know no one

Where? DAVID
 Wants you to be happy
 More than I do.

In his life. JENNY AMY, JOANNE
 (overlapping)
 You know no one

Oh. DAVID
 Wants you to be happy
 More than I do,
 No one, but—

Bobby ought to have a woman. JENNY ALL WOMEN
 Isn't she a little bit, well—

Poor baby, sitting there, (Overlapping)
 Staring at the walls and playing SARAH
 solitaire, Dumb? Where is she from?
 Making conversation with the empty air— AMY
 Poor baby . . . Tacky? Neurotic? She seems so
 dead . . .

(They address Robert, who continues making love to April)

Robert . . . SARAH SUSAN
 Vulgar? Aggressive? Peculiar?

Bobby . . . JENNY
 Old? And cheap and—

Robert, angel . . . SARAH JOANNE
 Tall? She's tall enough to be your
 mother—

Bobby, honey . . . JENNY SARAH
 She's very weird . . .

You know no one SARAH
 Wants you to be happy JENNY
 More than I do, Gross and—

No one, SUSAN
 But isn't she a little bit, well, Depressing and—

You know . . . ? AMY
 And immature . . .

In the morning, April gets out of bed to put on her uniform and leave.

Barcelona

ROBERT
 Where you going?

APRIL
 Barcelona.

ROBERT
 Oh . . .

APRIL
 Don't get up.

ROBERT
 Do you have to?

APRIL
 Yes, I have to.

ROBERT
 Oh . . .

APRIL
 Don't get up.
 Now you're angry.

ROBERT
 No, I'm not.

APRIL
 Yes, you are.

ROBERT
 No, I'm not.
 Put your things down.

DONMAR
WAREHOUSE

BY THOMAS NEALE

£1.20

A MUSICAL

COMEDY

*Donmar Warehouse Production
(London, 1995)*

*Broadway revival
(2006)*

COMEDY

A MUSICAL COMEDY

APRIL
See, you're angry.

ROBERT
No, I'm not.

APRIL
Yes, you are.

ROBERT
No, I'm not.
Put your wings down
And stay.

APRIL
I'm leaving.

ROBERT
Why?

APRIL
To go to—

ROBERT
Stay.

APRIL
I have to—

BOTH
Fly—

ROBERT
I know—

BOTH
—To Barcelona.

ROBERT
Look, you're a very special girl,
Not just overnight.
No, you're a very special girl,
And not because you're bright—

(Quickly)

Not just because you're bright.
You're just a very special girl, June!

APRIL
April . . .

ROBERT
April . . .

APRIL
Thank you.

ROBERT
Whatcha thinking?

APRIL
Barcelona.

ROBERT
Oh . . .

APRIL
Flight Eighteen.

ROBERT
Stay a minute.

APRIL
I would like to.

ROBERT
So—?

APRIL
Don't be mean.

ROBERT
Stay a minute.

APRIL
No, I can't.

ROBERT
Yes, you can.

APRIL
No, I can't.

ROBERT
Where you going?

APRIL
Barcelona.

ROBERT
So you said.

APRIL
And Madrid.

ROBERT
Bon voyage.

APRIL
On a Boeing.

ROBERT
Good night.

APRIL
You're angry.

ROBERT
No.

APRIL
I've got to—

ROBERT
Right.

APRIL
—Report to—

ROBERT
Go.

APRIL
That's not to
Say,
That if I had my way . . .

Oh well, I guess—okay.

ROBERT
What?

APRIL
I'll stay.

ROBERT
But . . .

(To himself, as she gets back into bed)

Oh, God.

Robert is in a night club with Joanne, who is moderately drunk. She looks around witheringly at the other women in the room, then proposes a toast.

The Ladies Who Lunch

JOANNE
Here's to the ladies who lunch—
Everybody laugh—
Lounging in their caftans and
planning a brunch
On their own behalf.

Off to the gym,
Then to a fitting,
Claiming they're fat,

Here's to the ladies who lunch -
Everybody laugh
Sitting in their taffeta gowns, planning lunch
On their own behalf.

Here's to the ^{ladies who lunch} girls who have lunch

Everybody laugh

Posing in their taffeta gowns, the whole bunch

For a photograph
On ^{their own} some charity's behalf

Here's to the girls who have lunch
^{Everybody}
Aren't they a laugh?

Sitting in their taffeta gowns planning
lunch

They're looking grim

Fresh from the gym

Losing their fat

Doing their bit

Having a fit

Choosing a hat.

Does anyone still wear a hat?

I'll drink to that.

Chatting with the staff

Off to the gym

Fallen to a fitting

^{Thinking} Claiming they're fat

And looking grim

'Cause they've been sitting

Choosing a hat.

Does anyone still wear a hat?

I'll drink to that.

Here's to the girls who stay smart

Aren't they a gas

Running to their classes in optical art

Praying it'll pass

Another long ^{exhausting} and perfect day

Another thousand dollars

A machine ^{perhaps} a play

Perhaps ^{Aologist} a piece of Mahler's.

I'll drink to that.

And one for Mahler

And looking grim
'Cause they've been sitting
Choosing a hat.

Does anyone still wear a hat?

I'll drink to that.

(Drinks)

Here's to the girls who stay smart—
Aren't they a gas?
Rushing to their classes in optical art,
Wishing it would pass.

Another long exhausting day,
Another thousand dollars,
A matinee, a Pinter play,
Perhaps a piece of Mahler's—
I'll drink to that.

(Drinks)

And one for Mahler.

(Drinks again)

Here's to the girls who play wife—
Aren't they too much?
Keeping house, but clutching a copy
of *Life*
Just to keep in touch.

The ones who follow the rules
And meet themselves at the schools,
Too busy to know that they're fools—
Aren't they a gem?
I'll drink to them.
Let's all drink to them!

(Drinks)

And here's to the girls who just
watch—
Aren't they the best?
When they get depressed, it's a bottle
of Scotch,
Plus a little jest.

Another chance to disapprove,
Another brilliant zinger,
Another reason not to move,
Another vodka stinger—
Aaaaahhhhhh—

(A scream which degenerates into:)

I'll drink to that.

(Drinks)

So here's to the girls on the go—
Everybody tries.
Look into their eyes
And you'll see what they know:
Everybody dies.

A toast to that invincible bunch,
The dinosaurs surviving the crunch—
Let's hear it for the ladies who lunch!
Everybody rise! Rise!
Rise! Rise! Rise! Rise! Rise! Rise! Rise!

The character of Joanne was not only written for Elaine Stritch, it was based on her, or at least on her acerbic delivery of self-assessment, as exemplified by a moment George Furth had shared with her: they had entered a bar at two in the morning and Elaine, well-oiled, had murmured to the bartender in passing, "Just give me a bottle of vodka and a floor plan." It was my third attempt to write for a specific personality playing a specific character (cf. *Cypsy* and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*). The song fit her perfectly, the only problem occurring when, in all innocence, she asked me what kind of pastry "a piece of Mahler's" referred to—she figured it had to be some sort of *schnecken*.

Privately, I had hoped that the number would be such a showstopper in Elaine's hands that the audience would actually get up on the "Rise!" repetitions and give her a standing ovation. It was a showstopper all right, but not quite that big. My hope was probably a holdover from my Hollywood fantasies in which on opening nights black-tied men and bejeweled women stood up at anything—much as they do nowadays, where standing ovations are a foregone conclusion, it being necessary for audiences to remind themselves that they've had a live experience by participating in it.

Disillusioned about what he thinks he's learned from observing his married friends in action, Robert sings bitterly. Urged on by their voices, what starts as a

complaint becomes a prayer. The spoken interjections are written by George Furth.

Being Alive

ROBERT

Someone to hold you too close,
Someone to hurt you too deep,
Someone to sit in your chair,
To ruin your sleep . . .

PAUL

That's true, but there's more than that.

SARAH

Is that all you think there is to it?

HARRY

You've got so many reasons for not being with someone, but Robert, you haven't got one good reason for being alone.

LARRY

Come on. You're on to something, Bobby. You're on to something.

ROBERT

Someone to need you too much,
Someone to know you too well,
Someone to pull you up short
To put you through hell . . .

JOANNE

You're not a kid anymore, Robert. I don't think you'll ever be a kid again, kiddo.

PETER

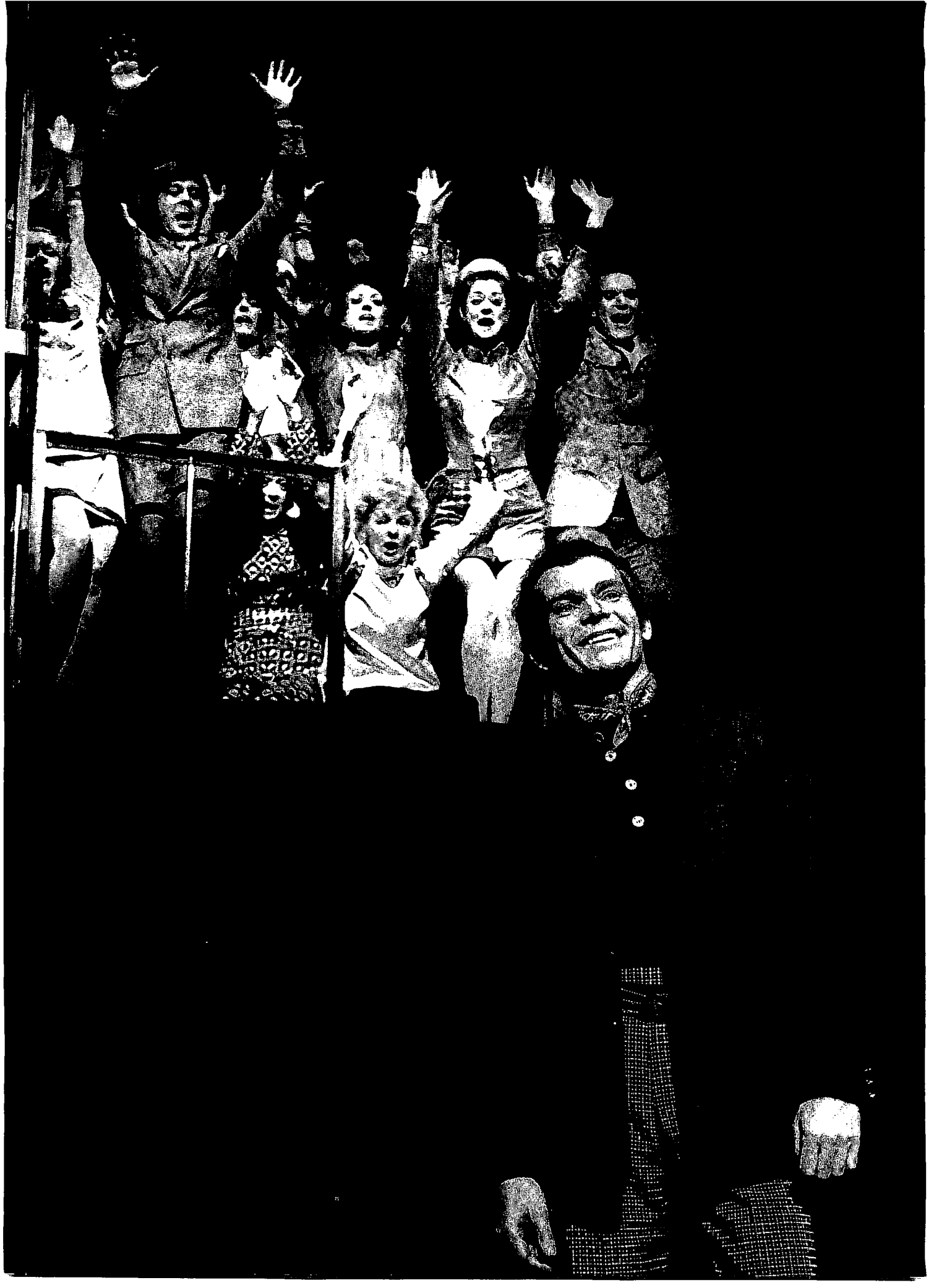
Hey, buddy. Don't be afraid it won't be perfect . . . the only thing to be afraid of really is that it won't be!

JENNY

Don't stop now! Keep going!

ROBERT

Someone you have to let in,
Someone whose feelings you spare,
Someone who, like it or not,
Will want you to share
A little a lot . . .



SUSAN
And what does all that mean?

LARRY
Robert, how do you know so much about it when you've never been there?

HARRY
It's all much better living it than looking at it, Robert.

PETER
Add 'em up, Bobby. Add 'em up.

ROBERT
Someone to crowd you with love,
Someone to force you to care,
Someone to make you come through,
Who'll always be there,
As frightened as you
Of being alive,
Being alive, being alive, being alive.

AMY
Blow out your candles, Robert, and make a wish. *Want* something. *Want* something!

ROBERT
Somebody hold me too close,
Somebody hurt me too deep,
Somebody sit in my chair
And ruin my sleep
And make me aware
Of being alive, being alive.

Somebody need me too much,
Somebody know me too well,
Somebody pull me up short
And put me through hell
And give me support
For being alive.
Make me alive,
Make me alive.

Make me confused,
Mock me with praise,
Let me be used,
Vary my days.
But alone is alone, not alive.

Somebody crowd me with love,
Somebody force me to care,
Somebody let me come through,
I'll always be there
As frightened as you,

To help us survive
Being alive, being alive,
Being alive!

"Being Alive" was not the first song intended for Robert's climactic musical statement, it was the third. In an earlier version of the show, Amy reneges on her promise to marry Paul at the end of Act One, and Robert proposes to her near the end of Act Two. In that version Kathy, the girl most suited to him, has just told him she's leaving New York to get married and Robert, in his unrecognized despair, convinces himself that Amy is the girl for him. Singing, he wanders through all the rooms of his married friends, reflecting on the knowledge of married life he has accumulated throughout the evening, and ends up in Amy's kitchen, ready to propose to her. This is what he sings as he goes:

Multitudes of Amys

(cut)

ROBERT
Multitudes of Amys
Crowd the streets below;
Avenues of Amys,
Officefuls of Amys,
Everywhere I go.
Wonder what it means—
Ho-ho, I wonder what it means:
I see them waiting for the lights,
Running for the bus,
Milling in the stores,
And hailing cabs
And disappearing through revolving doors.

Multitudes of Amys
Everywhere I look,
Sentences of Amys,
Paragraphs of Amys
Filling every book.
Wonder if it means I've gone to pieces.
Every other word I speak is something she says.

Walls hang with pictures of Amys,
Galaxies of Amys dot the night skies.
Girls pass and look at me with Amy's eyes.

I've seen an audience of Amys
Watch a cast of Amys act in a play.
Seems there are more of her every day.

What can it mean?
What can it mean?

I've caught a stadium of Amys
Standing up to cheer,
Choruses of Amys,
Symphonies of Amys
Ringing in my ear.
I know what it means—
Hey, Amy, I know what it means!
Oh, wow!
I'm ready, I'm ready, I'm ready
Now!

All that it takes is two, Amy,
Me, Amy,
You, Amy . . .
I know what it means—
Hey, Amy, I know what it means!
I'm ready, I'm ready, I'll say it:
Marry me now!

I'm sorry to say that this song never got as far as rehearsal. It's one of my favorites, but when we subsequently decided that Amy should indeed marry Paul at the end of Act One and that the Act Two scene should be cut, "Multitudes of Amys" was clearly no longer appropriate. I decided to write another kind of song for Robert instead, a hard-driving waltz, a defiant summary of what he thinks he's learned from the evening's experiences.

Happily Ever After

(cut)

ROBERT
Someone to hold you too close,
Someone to hurt you too deep,
Someone to love you too hard,
Happily ever after.

Someone to need you too much,
Someone to read you too well,
Someone to bleed you of all
The things you don't want to tell—
That's happily ever after,
Ever, ever, ever after
In Hell.

Somebody always there
Sitting in the chair
Where you want to sit—
Always, always.
Somebody always there
Wanting you to share
Just a little bit—
Always, always.

Then see the pretty girls
Smiling everywhere
From the ads and the TV set,
And why should you sweat?
What do you get?
One day of grateful for six of regret

With someone to hold you too close,
Someone to hurt you too deep,
Someone to bore you to death,
Happily ever after.

Someone you have to know well,
Someone you have to show how,
Someone you have to allow
The things you'd never allow—
That's happily ever after,
Ever, ever, ever after
Till now.

So quick,
Get a little car,
Take a little drive,
Make a little love,
See a little flick,
Do a little work,
Take a little walk,
Watch a little TV

And click!
Make a little love,
Do a little work,
Get a little drunk.
You've got one little trip,
Seventy years, spread it around!

Take your pick:
Buy a little here,
Spend a little there,
Smoke a little pot
For a little kick,
Waste a little time,
Make a little love,
Show a little feeling,
But why
Should you try?
Why not, sure, feel a little lonely
But fly,
Why not fly

With no one to hold you too close,
No one to hurt you too deep,
No one to love you too hard
Happily ever after?

No one you have to know well,
No one you have to show how,
No one you have to allow
The things you'd never allow—
That's happily ever after.
Ever, ever, ever after
For now!

Ever, ever after,
Ever, ever, ever, ever after,
Ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever
after . . .

This was the song we opened with in Boston. Its bleak message was not the end of the show, however; it was followed by an epilogue in Central Park,

where Robert has gone in despair instead of showing up at his birthday party. Here he meets a group of thirteen entirely different people, singly and in couples (played by the same members of the company we've seen all evening). Determined to take a step forward, he finally makes a gesture of open and needful connection to one of them, a distracted and lonely young woman. The scene was cut because the show was running much too long, and after it was gone, "Happily Ever After" seemed too much of a "downer," as Hal persistently called it. He fervently urged me to write an "up" song to replace it, but I argued that a sudden positive song, one without irony, would be unearned and pandering, not to mention monotonous, since there would be only one thing to say: namely, marriage is wonderful. Michael Bennett came up with the idea of using the same technique of interlaced spoken voices from Robert's friends that we had used in "Side by Side by Side," helping him to break through his moment of crisis. That suggested to me a song which could progress from complaint to prayer. Thus, "Being Alive."

Chekhov wrote, "If you're afraid of loneliness, don't marry." Luckily, I didn't come across that quote till long after *Company* had been produced. Chekhov said in seven words what it took George and me two years and two and a half hours to say less profoundly. If I'd read that sentence, I'm not sure we would have dared to write the show, and we might have been denied the exhilarating experience of exploring what he said for ourselves.

"The Little Things You Do Together"

