

“CHILDREN AND ART”:
STEPHEN SONDHEIM’S INFLUENCE
ON THE CURRENT PROLIFIC GENERATION
OF BROADWAY COMPOSER/LYRICISTS

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ABSTRACT

Children and Art:
Stephen Sondheim's Influence
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The work produced by American musical theatre composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim over his six-decade career is praised for its emotional nuance and probing universal questions. These characteristics can be traced through specific features shared by all of his works: the choosing of specific, usually obscure content, and then approaching the content from both an emotional and intellectual lens molding the form to the content, making each show unique to that particular subject. These same traits are present in the work of certain contemporary composer/lyricists, and analysis of their work demonstrates the extent of Sondheim's influence on musical theatre as an evolving art form. While there are others who could be included in this list, the work of Andrew Lippa, Jason Robert Brown, and Lin-Manuel Miranda demonstrate most powerfully the extent of Sondheim's influence. Each has publicly identified Sondheim as an artistic influence, but that influence goes beyond friendship and support to the deeper

foundations of their work, including a meticulous and intellectual approach to lyrics that not only advance the plot through song, but also develop the characters, bringing a deeper level to the emotional arc of the musical. Through the work of this next generation of composer/lyricists, we see how Sondheim has created a lasting contribution to American Musical Theatre.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Art isn't easy.

Every minor detail is a major decision,

have to keep things in scale,

Have to hold to your vision.”

(“Putting it Together” *Sunday in the Park with George*)

Sometime in 2015, I came across an article that has since become the catalyst for this dissertation. The story goes that when Broadway composer/lyricist Jason Robert Brown was in his early twenties, he met Broadway legend Stephen Sondheim and screwed up the entire interaction. Brown starts the story in this dramatic fashion:

OK, here goes. It's 1993. I'm 23 years old. All I dream about is writing for the musical theatre. I have been dreaming of it for 10 years, nonstop, and it is because of the work of Stephen Sondheim. Had it not been for *Sweeney Todd* and *Sunday in the Park with George*, I would have probably joined a rock band and tried to be Billy Joel. But once I heard what could be done, what enormous musical and emotional potential could be unleashed, I knew I had to write musicals. To say I'm a Sondheim Worshiper is to understate the case considerably — I owe my ambition and my dreams to him. Without his example, I wouldn't even know who to become.

So the story begins with Brown's friend (who remains nameless) writing Sondheim about being an aspiring composer and thus finagled an invitation for the friend and Brown to attend Sondheim's latest show (which goes unmentioned but I can only imagine it was an early preview of *Passion* based on the dates.) After the show Sondheim invited the pair to dinner where they both, having not really liked the show, said nothing of the performance they had just seen. Finally, Sondheim had to ask THEM if they liked it and they gave some lame reply in response. The next day, aware of his snafu, Brown called Sondheim to apologize which he described as "not a fun phone call." Brown says of this flubbed evening:

It had never occurred to me that Steve invited us to see his show because he wanted our approval. I couldn't have understood that at 23 years old. If I had, I would have just told Stephen Sondheim how lucky I felt that I lived in a world that had been changed by his art. It's an ugly story, yes, but I tell it here because, in spite of its humiliations and horrors, that evening of dreadful mistakes gave me one more reason to be thankful for Stephen Sondheim: I could have spent an entire life worshiping at his altar and never understanding that such great art as he creates can only be borne of deep vulnerability. I have allowed myself to feel and embrace my own vulnerability ever since. The village is safe again. The sun has risen. Our heroes go into the new world, bloodied, changed forever. End of story. (Brown "How I Insulted Sondheim (and the Wisdom Received Thereby)")

Ultimately, the article was a cautionary tale on proper post-show etiquette, but for me, it sparked the question: Is Stephen Sondheim responsible for the way the prolific generation of Broadway composer/lyricists create musical theatre, and of course, I am arguing yes. And thus, a dissertation was conceived.

Stephen Sondheim is a renowned American Musical Theatre composer/lyricist whose career has spanned over six decades. He is known for certain identifiable markers that have become his legacy. These markers, as I have identified and will trace are: first, how Sondheim chooses obscure subjects to write about and plunges into the emotional life of those subjects; second, how he is meticulous with his choice of words, rhyme, rhythm and language; and lastly how he works to a higher standard with an almost compulsive work ethic when others might, and do, leave things as “perfectly fine” or “just good enough.” I hone in on these markers, arguing that these particular traits are directly attributed to Sondheim’s style and thus have been transferred to the style of the contemporary composer/lyricist I discuss.

This dissertation examines Stephen Sondheim’s influence on the current prolific generation of Broadway composers/lyricists; namely Andrew Lippa, Jason Robert Brown and Lin-Manuel Miranda. While there are others, I focus on these composer/lyricists because they each have publicly attributed Sondheim as being an influence on them as artists and I see a strong and ever-present influence of Sondheim in their work. I aim to prove that their work is shaped by the foundation Sondheim has laid—meticulous and intellectual approach to lyrics that not only advance the plot through song, but develop the characters, to bring a deeper level to the emotional arc of the musical, thereby creating a lasting contribution to American Musical Theatre.

The Dissertation Outline

In this dissertation, I will demonstrate how certain traits are specifically attributed to the Broadway composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim, and how those markers are seen in the works of the next generation of prolific Broadway composer/lyricists, specifically Andrew Lippa, Jason Robert Brown and Lin-Manuel Miranda. In each chapter, I trace the influence of Sondheim on three main categories: Subject, Form and Techniques. By identifying the Sondheim style in the next generation's work, we can see how it becomes part of the fabric of musical theatre, as an art form, moving forward.

Subject

Subject is critical to a Sondheim musical because it is the catalyst for delving into deep emotional and intellectual issues, causing the audience to feel, think and examine larger questions. In this dissertation I examine the through line of obscure subjects in Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George*, Lippa's *The Wild Party*, Brown's *The Last 5 Years* and Miranda's *Hamilton*. I also discuss how the Sondheim style applies the same treatment of the subject, through the emotional and intellectual lens, to more traditional musicals in Sondheim's *Into The Woods*, Lippa's *Big Fish*, Brown's *The Bridges of Madison County* and touch on Miranda's *In the Heights*. Demonstrated in these musicals, we experience for the first time in musical theatre history obscure topics being unpacked from an emotional point of view.

Lippa suggests that each of Sondheim's songs are like one-act plays, which "spin out" and emotionally grab you because of subject choice and "the depths he [Sondheim] goes" (Lippa). Meaning that the subjects Sondheim chooses for his works are deeply

layered. In my interview, Lippa spoke about his own writing process, addressing and supporting my previous claim that his writing process is “craft and structure, knowledge and form, and all of the chemistry,” However he does address this unnamed thing that is art—when something clicks “some of it is ineffable. It is what words are pleasing to me, words that painted a picture that looked good that felt goodIt’s always in the service of character or story or feeling of some feeling. I would say I’m in the feeling business not the thinking business. But it takes a lot of thought to create feeling” (Lippa). It is a juxtaposition between thinking and feeling, and I even suggest that perhaps it is an emotional hybrid of intellectualism that what is pulled out from the chosen subject. Lippa continues to address the emotional connection when he says: “what we’re doing is fake. The notion of somebody reciting words that they didn’t write that seems like they came up with them is fake. And it’s fake that people sing to express their feelings. . . And so through that falseness you have to find the best image you can, the best original idea. Not even original but the most honest idea” (Lippa). How do you get fake people, singing someone else’s words to be emotionally driven? Taking a cue from Sondheim, you do just what Lippa has laid out starting with the “best original idea” and then make it “honest,” which is when the emotional journey can take place.

Broadway composer/lyricist Adam Guettel discusses Sondheim’s treatment of subject matter when he says: “for Steve to be inspired by the idea of turning it [Pacific Overtures] into a show and then to devise the show in such a way that it’s not just entertaining and cogent and also really deeply moving and compelling is, it raised the bar I think for all of us” (Guettel). Sondheim’s influence on other writers to handle their subject matter in-kind is not that easily transferable. In fact, Guettel goes on to say that

Sondheim's influence of choosing material that is off-center is not fully understood by some writers:

Because a lot of people think that if they choose some unlikely subject, that they're automatically hip and sophisticated and talented and they actually have to pull it off and tell it well and move us and get us involved in the characters, and allow us to project ourselves onto what's going on, so that we can really engage, so that contract between the audience member and the show or the character is in place. (Guettel)

This begins with nontraditional subject matter and is seen in the big questions the show forces the audience to examine. It does not let the audience off the hook for a fluffy experience of spectacle, but because of Sondheim, the post-Sondheim musical, as created by the likes of Lippa, Brown and Miranda, forces the audience to be engaged emotionally and intellectually.

Form

Another trait Sondheim has cultivated is the ability to transfer his style to the piece, not the piece to his style. Meaning, instead of having a Sondheim kind of show and it taking the same form with various subjects, the subject prescribes the form. Guettel blames artists for only taking "half a cue from Sondheim" and accuses them of not being able to "engage us or move us, how to create a specific language for the piece so that is a good bridge for the next ... Steve always sounds like himself, but like any really good writer, he tailors his scores to the subject matter" (Guettel). Not only does Sondheim write about such seemingly obscure concepts but he also attributes a distinct style to

each. While Claude-Michael Schonberg and Alain Boublil write tremendous musicals, they all sound like Schonberg and Boublil from *Miss Saigon* to *Les Miserables* to *The Pirate Queen*. Sondheim has the ability to sound like himself while having each musical in their very unique voice and style. In each chapter, I demonstrate how Lippa, Brown and Miranda do this same treatment to their subjects, giving them each a unique form.

Iconic Broadway actor and director Lonny Price speaks to this when he writes Obviously his [Sondheim's] work is eclectic in the best sense of that word—romantic, political, it's all over the map. What is extraordinary is that he has been able to write in so many different styles; that the man who wrote *Pacific Overtures* also wrote *A Little Night Music* shows undeniable range, and unlike anyone who has ever written for the form. (Price email)

There are many layers at work here; Sondheim is able to still sound like Sondheim, while writing in vastly different genres and having them sound like completely different entities. If these levels were not enough, he then writes these musical stories from the emotional perspective. Price continues to explain that in a Sondheim show:

If he [Sondheim] wanted to have written “Oh What a Beautiful Morning” it would probably sound like “Oh what a beautiful morning ... but I think the rain may be coming soon, what am I going to do? I don't have an umbrella.” I know that's glib, but the idea is that feelings and emotions are complex, and before him I think musical dramatists were satisfied with songs having a limited and uncomplicated emotional statement. (Price email)

As described, Sondheim's work is about unearthing each nuance. As Price illustrates, it is more than just being emotional or writing about one emotion. It is layer upon layer in an already multilayered system.

Technique

This section varies a bit from composer to composer all while still connecting to Sondheim and the Sondheim style of musical theatre. While there are evident through lines, one technique that is a thread through all of them however is their mastery with lyrics. Sondheim grapples with every word, and as illustrated above, may have several reasons for choosing said word. He is able to capture a slow unraveling such as in “Losing My Mind” (Appendix A) from *Follies*: “I dim the lights/ And think about you/ Spend sleepless nights/ To think about you/ You said you loved me/ Or were you just being kind/ Or am I losing my mind?” The song is in a way very simple but illustrates the nagging, consuming, obsessive nature of love, or unrequited love or unmatched love. Even small words that would be typically thrown away are calculated to carry meaning. Both the first and second phrase are “think about you” but the first one is “and” and the second one is “to.” They could have easily been switched, that would have meant “dimming the lights” to think about you not the “and” which indicates “while thinking about you.” They could have both been “to”: “I dim the lights to...” and “Spend sleepless nights to.” Or they could have both been “and” meaning something entirely different. I demonstrate these tiny details to show how they are significant and purposeful in Sondheim's work. In the chapter there are many more instances where Sondheim himself discusses his process and how his word choices serve his material. Choosing the

exact and correct word for each moment is something that Sondheim proves time and time again important and vital to his work.

The Missing Information

While developing the outline for this dissertation, it became apparently clear that Sondheim's influence is so vast, I needed to narrow down the scope; therefore, I narrowed down to people who are prolific and who wrote both the music and the lyrics themselves. There are many people who are also following in Sondheim's path, however they only do one -compose or just write the lyrics. One of the narrowing qualifiers was that they do both. It is interesting that none of the prolific composer/lyricists are women; this should be noted and hopefully the community will become more diverse. The three composers I picked were chosen because of their prolific involvement in the musical theatre community at the moment and the fact that they were the names that kept emerging in my research. However, there are several people that it would be inaccurate to not include. Because of this, I have included them here and discuss their place in this conversation.

Adam Guettel

Whenever I discuss my project with anyone in the musical theatre community, they immediately refer to Adam Guettel as their idea of a newer composer/lyricist that is the most connected and apparently influenced by Sondheim. Guettel was extremely generous and invited me to meet him and talk about the project at his home in Vermont.

As the dissertation progressed, while Guettel embodies all of Sondheim's traits, he does not fall into the "prolific" category, though he is very diligently working on new projects. He has had some success, most notably *The Light in the Piazza*, for which he won the 2005 Tony Award for "best original score" but he has not had a work on Broadway Since.

Just as Sondheim grew up in the company of Oscar Hammerstein, Adam Guettel, grandson of Richard Rodgers and son of Mary Rodgers, grew up in the company of Sondheim. In James Lapine's documentary *Six by Sondheim*, Sondheim says that if Hammerstein had been a different profession, Sondheim would have followed suit—growing up in this family, Guettel would have had such an influence, least of which was Sondheim himself. In direct response to how Sondheim has influenced him, Guettel says that being mentioned with the likes of Sondheim is an "honor" and that "there's no one I admire more." He continues to discuss how much he admires Sondheim's work and that he also loves him as an individual and values him as a teacher who is honest and "doesn't pull any punches." Most interesting is when Guettel reflects on his own writing in relation to being "in a world that is towered over by Steve Sondheim, I took a very different approach to lyric writing. Because I don't have the facility that I would need to even compete with the kind of lyrics that he is capable of writing" (Guettel). I do think that Guettel is being modest. His work is grand and extraordinary. While we have not seen much from him in a commercial sense, he surely is doing the family proud. As of this dissertation, Guettel is working on a new musical called *Millions* that is sure to be another hit and wrote the music to the new Broadway adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

William Finn

Broadway has shaped my life and has been a force in my identity since I was a young child. Besides Sondheim, one of my major influences is William Finn who wrote such Broadway shows as *Falsettos*, *A New Brain* and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. His work is quirky, smart, extremely funny and cuts to the emotional core of a story to rival any Sondheim show. So why did I not include him? Finn too was gracious enough to grant me an interview and while he is certainly prolific and still writing shows that are being produced, he is not of the same “younger” generation as the artists I chose. When I spoke to Finn, he said that his generation is missing because of the AIDS epidemic. The Broadway community lost so many artists and Finn is all too aware of his career in relation to that. Like Sondheim, Finn has a very particular sound and style. When asked about this, without mentioning anything about Sondheim, I could never have anticipated his answer. He said “of course Sondheim was so present and smothering a presence . . . what I did, how I was helpful is I showed how not to write Sondheim songs . . . Because everyone else was doing it, and there was no other, you know . . . I just found his voice so persuasive that finding another voice was kind of my biggest job” (Finn). This was astonishing to me. Clearly, Sondheim was such an influence that Finn shaped his own career in opposition to find his own voice. And he did find his own voice and his own style of musical theatre. Finn is highly regarded as both an artist and furthermore, he teaches at the NYU Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program.

Stephen Schwartz

Like William Finn, Stephen Schwartz wrote part of the soundtrack to my life with shows like *Pippin*, *Godspell* and *Wicked*. While he also has said that he is influenced by Sondheim, which I mention in later chapters, Schwartz has a much simpler style. Simple is not a substitute for stupid but his shows are just not as complex. The main reason I did not include him is because, like Finn, he does not quite fit in with this generation of composer/lyricists even though his work is so important to the musical canon.

David Yazbek

There are reasons for not including all of the other composers mentioned above, but Yazbek, who wrote such shows as *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* and the current Broadway hit *The Band's Visit*, was just not on the radar when this dissertation had begun and thus did not meet the prolific criteria then, though he does now. His treatment of the subject matter is certainly obscure and told through an emotionally and intellectual lens; by looking at his body of work he certainly tailors the form to the content and his lyrics are clever and succinct. All I can say is that Yazbek has added a lot to the musical theatre catalogue and continues to do so in his quirky and inventive way.

Conclusion

Joseph Aragon calls this era in musical theatre “Post-Sondheim.” He claims the likes of “Adam Guettel” as a “post-Sondheim composer,” meaning “that history has been chopped in half and forever altered by the vision and work of a singular person. Sondheim represents a great shift in the way musical theatre is used to tell stories. He certainly wasn’t alone in bringing about this revolution, but he’s the poster boy for it and with good reason.” Not only do I agree with Aragon but I identify those reasons as being how he explores often obscure subject through an emotional and intellectual lens, how he reinvents the form for each show to suit the subject and through various techniques that make up the Sondheim style. Through these traits, composer/lyricists today are influenced to write a new kind of “post-Sondheim” theatre. Aragon paints the picture of how this new era manifests itself “in which the spirit of innovation flourishes and where the heightened reality of musical theatre is tapped and experimented with in new ways” (Aragon 21). Composer/lyricists, and for the purposes of this paper, specifically Andrew Lippa, Jason Robert Brown and Lin- Manuel Miranda carry the torch of this post-Sondheim era and are carrying on the tradition set forth by the master.

CHAPTER TWO: STEPHEN SONDHEIM

“Anything you do
Let it come from you
Then it will be new
Give us more to see”

Sunday in the Park with George

Introduction

"Let's start at the very beginning" ("Do-Re-Mi" *The Sound of Music*)

Stephen Sondheim is a theatrical force, as a composer/lyricist, who has been monumental in shaping musical theatre on Broadway as we know it today. While Sondheim's mastery is vast, there are three main traits that have been passed down to the current generation of Broadway composer/lyricists. These traits are his choice of content, along with the emotional and intellectual depth he gives the subject; the various and distinct forms he uses to best suit his content; his meticulous approach to lyrics that not only support the emotional depth of his characters but also provide insight into the complexity of his subject matter. Through these characteristics, we can identify the influence of Sondheim on contemporary composer-lyricists on a new generation of composer/lyricists.

In this chapter, I will identify these specific traits through an examination of two of Sondheim's musicals: *Sunday in the Park with George* and *Into The Woods*. I will go through each show, unpacking the particular subject of the musical, how the form is

sculpted to fit that particular piece and serves the subject, and lastly the techniques used to produce that form. These examples demonstrate how Sondheim creates a non-traditional format for musical theatre, one that is both emotionally engaging and intellectually challenging.

The Road to Sondheim

"How did you get there from here, Mr Shepard" ("The Hills of Tomorrow/ Merrily We Roll Along/ Rich and Happy" *Merrily We Roll Along*)

Sondheim's upbringing was rocky to say the least, but he found a mentor in his neighbor and family friend Oscar Hammerstein II, the famed lyricist of the duo of Rodgers and Hammerstein who wrote such musicals as *Oklahoma*, *The King and I* and *The Sound of Music*. While Hammerstein provided guidance and support, surprisingly, Sondheim did not take practical artistic cues from this father figure. What Hammerstein did teach Sondheim though, was about finding his own voice. Sondheim recalls a time when he was first writing and brought some of his more flowery lyrics to Hammerstein to review. Hammerstein retorted, "'That's not what you feel. Don't write what I feel. Write what you feel.' Oh! It had never occurred to me to write what I felt. And Oscar was the one who taught everyone to do that. Write what you feel" (Qtd. in Miranda 5).

Writing in the style of Hammerstein did not work for Sondheim because it was not organically Sondheim. Moreover, perhaps Hammerstein's approach was too much of a broad stroke to really delve into the emotional lives of the characters in his shows.

Sondheim explains, “the truth is that in Hammerstein’s shows, for all their revolutionary impact, the characters are not much more than collections of characteristics—verbal ties and quirks, like Southern accents or bad grammar, which individualize a character only the way a black hat signifies a villain” (Sondheim XIX). By contrast, Sondheim’s voice dives into the emotions of the character and brings that emotional life to the surface.

Sondheim elaborates on his comment by claiming that though Hammerstein (and his generation) developed the modern musical, it was he and his peers who modernized it with the emotional backbone and storytelling we associate with musical theatre today. Sondheim continues to explain that in terms of musicality, the “old fashioned” shows were replaced by “rock-pop sensibilities” (Sondheim 57), a box that he certainly does not fit into either. As a matter of fact, he acknowledges this gap by saying “‘Rock didn’t affect me because the overlap was when shows were still popular so I could afford to ignore it. It was not part of my generation; it was the generation 10 years under me. To be 24 in 1954 as opposed to being in your teens is all the difference. I knew where I was and what I wanted to do” (Qtd. in Rich 26). Having come of age just before this phenomenon, Sondheim carved a singular path for himself, and as Lisa Martland argues, “Since the golden age of ‘American Musical Theatre,’ the mid-20th century, no one has left their mark on the genre like Stephen Sondheim” (Martland 8). Sondheim’s career spans sixty plus years, and he does not seem to be stopping anytime soon; he is still creating musicals in his voice, in a genre he was instrumental in shaping.

While Frank Rich agrees with Martland’s sentiment that no one has left their mark in recent years like Sondheim, he furthers the conversation by claiming that being the greatest is “a somewhat empty distinction. Sondheim may be the last major creator of

Broadway musicals, period, still actively devoted to the trade. He may have even outlived the genre itself” (Rich 22). Here I have to partially disagree because there are plenty of viable artists contributing to new musical theatre; however, I do agree with Rich’s claim that it seems that the sentiments and ideals that Sondheim upholds are vanishing. I believe that one of the main causes of this is the financial need, or desire, producers and composers feel to pander to audiences. Rich points out that between 1982 and 1997, *Cats* played at the Winter Garden, the same theatre where Sondheim’s career began with *West Side Story* (Rich 22). Sondheim unpacked this issue further when he explained to Rich that,

You have two kinds of shows on Broadway – Revivals and the same kind of musicals over and over again all spectacles,’ says Sondheim ‘You get your tickets for the *Lion King* a year in advance and essentially a family comes as if to a picnic, and they pass on to their children the idea that that’s what the theatre is – a spectacular musical you must see once a year, a stage version of a movie. It has nothing to do with theatre at all. It has to do with seeing what is familiar. We live in a recycled culture (Qtd. in Rich 22).

In a commercially-driven market, musicals that provide both familiarity and escapism, seem to fare better than those that would challenge audiences, perhaps even make them uncomfortable.

In fact, by the 1980’s, Sondheim almost packed it in. Frank Rich attributes this to rock [music], rising costs and what [Sondheim] sees as dumbing down were endangering his [Sondheim’s] Broadway . . . ‘What’s happened to the theatre,’

[Sondheim] says 'is one thing that does depress me a lot because it is such a large part of my life. You'd go and see other shows that would stimulate you, that would make you want to write. Now it makes you not want to write because you think the audience isn't there anymore. The audience that is there is not an audience who would either like or respond to the kind of stuff I write except with, if anything, kind of detached bemusement instead of getting involved.' (Qtd. in Rich 26)

Broadway has evolved since the eighties. It has been cleaned up and become more of a tourist destination and outing with tickets skyrocketed in the hundreds of dollars per seat.

Sondheim's style of musical theatre is not a typical recipe for Broadway success in recent years. As Broadway audiences have shifted, wanting more visual spectacle for their buck and comprised mostly of tourists, Sondheim has not always been commercially viable. Sadly, Smith comments that

For all the recognition accorded his [Sondheim's] brilliance – a Pulitzer Prize for *Sunday in the Park with George*, still more Tony awards for *Sweeney Todd*, *Into The Woods* and *Passion* – conventional wisdom for three decades had it that Sondheim's lyrics were too intellectual, his music too difficult, his characters too unpleasant, his world view too cynical for his work to attract broad popular audience. (Smith)

Stephen Schwartz, composer/lyricist and famed musical theatre icon in his own right for such shows as *Godspell*, *Pippin* and *Wicked*, also comments on this perception stating, "I never understood the rap, very common in those years, that Sondheim's music

wasn't tuneful enough; It was always after seeing a Sondheim show that I was most driven to go to the piano and try to pick out some song that I had lodged in my head" (Schwartz 33). While both critical and popular perception has shifted a bit regarding Sondheim's shows, Sondheim himself is correct in saying that the majority of audiences simply want to be entertained. He does not fault them though, claiming that "You don't go by yourself at 10 years old—you're taken. Children don't acquire the taste anymore because it's too expensive, while movies and TV are shoved in their face from the beginning. I don't think the theatre will die per se, but it's never going to be what it was. You can't bring books back. It's gone. It's a tourist attraction" (Qtd. in Rich 31). Whether the audiences are tourist or local, by the time they schlep to the theatre and pay for dinner and the exorbitant ticket prices, they may prefer to smile and feel warm and uplifted rather than to cry and examine their own lives critically. Although not always commercially successful, Sondheim has nonetheless received praise from theatre critics and from fellow artists (and discerning musical theatre fans). Despite audiences wanting theatre to be an outing for entertainment, rather than introspection, Sondheim has solidified his place in musical theatre. As Frank Rich writes "This writer's talent [(Sondheim)] hasn't let up in the 30 years that separate *Saturday Night* and *Sunday in the Park with George* – it's just grown too fast for Broadway to keep up with him" (Rich "Sondheim Says Goodbye to Broadway – For Now"). It has been another thirty years since Rich wrote that article. Sondheim has achieved much success and added several more classics to the Broadway canon. Lin-Manuel Miranda calls Sondheim "musical theatre's greatest lyricist, full stop. The days of competition with other musical theatre songwriters are done: We now talk about his work the way we talk about Shakespeare or

Dickens or Picasso—a master of his form, both invisible within his work and everywhere at once” (Miranda 1). So, what makes Sondheim distinctive when viewed in comparison to other composers-lyricists?

Comically, Sondheim claims to not be bothered by his reputation saying, “it’s so much better to be disliked than ignored” (Qtd. in Rich 29). If Sondheim is faulted for being too intellectual ... too difficult ... too unpleasant ... too cynical, what if those very qualities in fact make him the great musical theatre exemplar he is? Stephen Sondheim is the father of the modern musical because of the traits that are attributed to his school of art. While one might accuse him of being “too,” I would argue that being “too” of any of those things is what makes him great.

Though “greatness” is a totally subjective term, Sondheim has his own take on what makes this ineffable concept. He writes:

There are three principles for a lyric writer to follow, all of them familiar truisms. . . . I have not always been skilled or diligent enough to follow them as faithfully as I would like, but they underlie everything I’ve ever written. In no particular order, and to be written in stone:

Less Is More

Content Dictates Form

God Is in the Details

all in the service of

Clarity

without which nothing else matters. (Sondheim XV)

This mantra should be pinned to every locker, backpack and bathroom mirror. It could say that there are three principles for a poet to follow, or a florist, or a fashion designer. These are powerful words for anyone trying to do something great. In an interview with Frank Rich, Sondheim discussed this tension between what some/we/I think of as greatness and some/they think of with disdain. He says,

The kind of writing that I do in the musical theatre, for which I'm both praised and condemned has to do with it individuality, I think. It has to do with the fact that it's not like others. I started to become aware of it with *Company*, which is where I got to start my own voice loud and clear. And the anger and condemnation and snottiness and sneering that I got with *Company* quite startled me. Because I'd been dismissed before, which is not the same thing. When you make somebody hate you without intending to make them hate you, it's a different feeling. (Qtd. in Rich 29)

How did Sondheim go from being hated to exalted? For one, his work does reach a certain audience, demonstrated by the influence he has on the subsequent generations of musical theatre composers, creators and fans. Another reason could be that perhaps the shows debuted at the wrong time, and shifting perspectives help one to process the art differently. Perhaps the world just was not ready. Or perhaps it is that the shows were flushed out in their first life on Broadway and the kinks were fixed for the second time around. It is a much different experience to discover a show for the first time than to revisit it with a revival.

Though Smith outlined staunch criticism of Sondheim, he goes on to explain that revivals of Sondheim's work have helped to change that critical and negative option. This idea is supported by Rick Pender: "*Follies* at Broadway's Marquis Theatre joined the million-dollar club at the end of September 2011, grossing \$1,122,778 million in the week of September 25th. This was also the highest gross for any Broadway musical production featuring both music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim ... Eluded the original production in 1971, which ran for 522 performances" (Pender 7). The success of the revival points to the truth that Sondheim spoke of--audiences want something familiar and are willing to shell out hundreds of dollars for *SpongeBob* tickets. Shows like *Hamilton* and *Dear Evan Hansen* were unknown and came to success in a different way. In the same way as Sondheim started doing in 1984 with *Sunday in the Park with George* and every one of his new musicals since, *Hamilton* and *Dear Evan Hansen* workshopped, debuted and sold out off Broadway, giving permission for people to think they were good and therefore a commodity they wanted to get their hands on. Now that Sondheim has solidified his place as musical theatre royalty, there is that same stamp--this is a Sondheim show, so it must be good. How have times changed.

1984, A Pivotal Year for Sondheim Artistically

1984 was a pivotal year for Sondheim. Two decades had passed since the success of the Broadway shows *Gypsy* and *West Side Story* and he had had a string of hits and misses culminating with *Merrily We Roll Along*, which was his most autobiographical musical to date--and his biggest flop. The consequences of *Merrily We Roll Along* were

devastating for Sondheim. The show only ran for sixteen performances and he took the hit on his ego and emotions. In *Art Isn't Easy*, Joanne Gordon comments on how the failure of *Merrily We Roll Along* took a toll on Sondheim emotionally: "After the cavalier dismissal of *Merrily We Roll Along*, it would have been understandable if Sondheim had simply thrown up his hands and turned his back on unpredictable Broadway forever" (Gordon 262). Sondheim was "depressed and pessimistic" (Zadan 295) says Criag Zadan in *Sondheim & Co.* Zadan emphasizes the depression, explaining that Sondheim was so distraught during this time he claimed he would give up writing musicals and pursue writing mystery novels. Zadan quotes Sondheim who remarked about this time period: "I just didn't feel like going back to work . . . It was so discouraging because I felt the hatred on Broadway that was directed at Hal and me. I really don't like that whole aspect of show business and wish it could go away" (Zadan 295). Critics bite deep and Sondheim was tired of the rejection which he saw as "hatred." Artists produce art because they have to. Sondheim produced what he knew and wished that is where the process ends, not the scathing reviews, gossip and pandering. The emotional rollercoaster caused Sondheim to give up, even if just for a moment, causing him to make drastic changes in his working style.

Between the 1960s and the 1980s, Sondheim's work appears to negotiate a balance between artistically fulfilling endeavors and creating musicals that were projected to be box office wins. 1984's *Sunday in the Park with George* was the show that changed how Sondheim approached writing a musical.

Current scholarship on *Sunday in the Park with George* is primarily concerned with the fact that it is one of many Sondheim shows that was not well received by audiences and critics alike. Such scholarship does not recognize the musical's unique place in Sondheim's body of work. In contrast, I suggest *Sunday in the Park with George* was a turning point in Sondheim's career because it is the first musical not written for the Broadway stage, thereby allowing him to write without the pressures of making the box office numbers. Since Sondheim was not pandering to common audience sensibility, *Sunday in the Park with George* is the ultimate example of his cerebral style, and ultimately solidified his reputation as being too intellectual for common audiences but carving out a space for a new type of musical.

Since the demands of Broadway were overwhelming Sondheim, the Off-Broadway arena was a much better fit. Frank Rich furthers this claim and he adds that

by choosing to develop *Sunday in the Park* on a low-budget, low pressure basis at one of Off Broadway's most imaginative non-profit theatres, Mr. Sondheim is reordering his priorities- he is opting for creative freedom (from both money men and critics) over the hit-or-miss psychosis of show business . . . he may have finally found a way to gain full control over his own work. (Rich "Sondheim Says Goodbye to Broadway – For Now")

It may seem odd to think of a highly regarded Broadway composer not having full control over his own work; however, writing to please audiences while writing with the goal to make money was holding Sondheim back. Off Broadway was able to alleviate many of these pressures.

Sunday in the Park with George did not receive high marks when it transferred to Broadway because audiences did not get it. *Newsweek*'s Jack Kroll wrote, "To say that this show breaks new ground is not enough: it also breaks new sky, new water, new flesh and new spirit" (Qtd.in Leonard 8). Perhaps if the audiences were more knowledgeable about the topic, they would have been more excited by the material. But in 2016 a revival was mounted starring Jake Gyllenhall. Originally set as an all-star cast and a weekend of performances, it was so warmly received it went on to a limited run on Broadway.

For the most part, Sondheim's shows have had little commercial success, but like *Sunday in the Park with George* they have fared much better in revivals and are frequently produced on Broadway, professional and amateur stages. Now, Sondheim is certainly respected by the Broadway community for his contributions and known today as a musical theatre icon.

Sunday in the Park with George

"Artists are bizarre ... fixed ... cold"

("Sunday in the Park with George" *Sunday in the Park with George*)

Sunday in the Park with George was a personally intimate venture for Sondheim who emphasized, "I suppose if there is one [musical] that is closest to my heart it'd probably be *Sunday in the Park with George* because of the ambitiousness of what it's trying to say" (Sondheim *Six by Sondheim*). "Opening Doors" from *Merrily We Roll*

Along may be Sondheim's most (self-admitted) autobiographical song, but *Sunday in the Park with George*, is his most direct response to the artist struggle.

Obscure Subject

How did a painting become the subject of a musical? Again, this is part of Sondheim's genius, making connections and exploring relationships. Once Sondheim and James Lapine decided they wanted to write together, they began to brainstorm about a topic for a show. Every book about *Sunday in the Park with George* tells the same story about how Sondheim and Lapine came up with the concept of using Georges Seurat's painting, "Un dimanche après-midi à l'Ile de la Grande Jatte" as the subject for the musical. While discussing ideas for shows, they began to consider the relationships of people in paintings and discussed using a painting with many people in it. They were especially interested in how those people interacted with each other within the context of the chosen painting. This brought them to Seurat's *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. Sondheim and Lapine found it most interesting that the figures seemingly did not look at each other. They began to invent relationships between the people in the painting, and the characters for *Sunday in the Park with George* were born. Since there is not much known about Seurat's life (in essence, we know Georges Seurat was a French painter with an affinity for science who died of pneumonia at 31), Sondheim and Lapine were free to use their imaginations in the creation of the musical.

Sunday in the Park with George is just an example of what Mark Eden Horowitz, in his article "Sondheim won't leave us alone: His music provides the soundtrack of our minds" calls "the real lesson of Sondheim." He goes on to affirm that

You can musicalize anything that excites you. It can be the history of the westernization of Japan; the story of a barber bent on cannibalistic revenge; imagining the results of the actions taken in several classic fairy tales, bringing a painter and his paintings to life; a carnival in purgatory peopled with presidential Assassins; or a more traditional operetta where man loses woman, gets girl, loses girl, girl gets man's son, woman gets man, and they all live (except grandmother) reasonably happily under a half-lit night. The point is to be true to your characters, true to your story, let content dictate form (Horowitz 10).

Horowitz hits the nail on the head when he says "let content dictate form" because that is precisely what Sondheim does in all of his pieces. Since the subject in *Sunday in the Park with George* is a painting, the form, in the most literal sense, is art.

Sondheim Molds the Form to Each Subject

Interestingly, you would undeniably know a Sondheim show if you saw one and yet there is not a "type" of show that makes up the genre because each is so unique to its subject. *Sunday in the Park with George* is no exception. The main theme deals with the artist struggle—to get something right artistically. The struggle to find your place as an artist in society and what that means in terms of relationships and the sacrifices one

makes for the art. In act one we see this theme play through the main character of George. Sondheim writes the song “Finishing the Hat” (Appendix B) as the definitive song of this very struggle. He begins the song laying out the conflict “Yes, she looks for me, good/ Let her look for me to tell me why she left me/ As I always knew she would. I had thought she understood/ They have never understood and no reason that they should/ But if anybody could.” George’s mistress Dot, who is pregnant with his baby, is leaving for America with Louie the baker who has promised to take care of her. In this song, and this moment in the song, George sets up that she, of all people, would have understood that the art comes first. He is clearly hurt but is too shut off to say the words to her and is in this constant pull between “finishing the hat” and being in a relationship with Dot as he sings, “How you watch the rest of the world from a window while you finish the hat.” A few lines later he even admits that life is passing him by “And how you’re always turning back too late from the grass or the stick or the dog or the light/ How the kind of woman willing to wait/ not the kind that you want to find waiting/ to return you to the night.” He pushes this point further when he sings “And when the woman that you wanted goes/ You can say to yourself, well, I give what I give/ But the woman who won’t wait for you knows/ That however you live/ There’s a part of you always standing by/ Mapping out the sky/ Finishing a hat,/ Starting on a hat/ Finishing a hat,/ Look I made a hat/ Where there never was a hat.” The song ends with so much to unpack. George is resolved that anyone who is worth her weight will realize that she will have to share them. Poignantly, George illustrated that it is not about this hat but there will always be a hat, in some form of beginning, ending or somewhere in-between. Ultimately, the push- pull ends with one of the most iconic lyrics in Sondheim’s repertoire: “Look I made a hat/ Where there

never was a hat.” The push-pull of the external versus artistic life ends when he has the epiphany that he made art where there never was art and in that very moment, that is complete.

The form of the artist conflict is one that Sondheim carries into the second act when George’s grandson, also George, is trying to make his way in the nineteen eighties and struggles with the same core issues. This is seen in the song “Putting it Together” (Appendix C), which begins with all of the “observers” commenting on the art and how they do not entirely get it, which is the Act One George’s main point, “they,” meaning the people on the outside, do not get it, thus making the artist an outsider ultimately. The song continues with Act Two George’s push/pull “Say cheese, George/ And put them at their ease, George/ You’re up on the trapeze, George/ Machines don’t grow on trees, George/ Start putting it together.” This Act Two George needs to put himself out there in a more public way to gain the approval (and ultimately the funding) for his art. Though we see this in Act One with the more established Jules, Act Two George shows us this dance instead of how we see it internally from Act One George. Act Two George sings about this when he says, “Every time I start to feel defensive/ I remember lasers are expensive/ what’s a little cocktail conversation/ If it’s going to get you your foundation/ Leading to a prominent commission/ and an exhibition in addition.” Each George’s struggle to be accepted for who he is as man and artists is demonstrated through these two songs. The second song “Putting it Together” (Appendix C) sums it up perfectly with the words that run throughout “art isn’t easy.” It certainly is not and Sondheim uses the very art and artist’s struggle to demonstrate that in the most visceral way.

The Techniques Sondheim Uses to Create the Form in his Style

As demonstrated above, it is through the lyrics that the form unfolds.

Interestingly, being so mindful of word choice can cause frustration and Sondheim is not immune to such dilemmas. He talks about this when he describes what it is like when you know there is a better word, but you just cannot figure it out. He says there is only one thing to do and that is to abandon the issue. He goes on to demonstrate that each time he hears such a phrase that he let go, one that he could not get just right, he calls it "the wince of shame." One example he gives is from the song "Move On" (Appendix D) from *Sunday in the Park with George*:

In the case of "Move On," the word "usually," in the phrase "They usually do," was and is *bête noire*. The word I mean, the word I want to use, is "eventually," but what do I do about that extra first syllable? The musical pattern has been set by the matching phrase 'The choosing was not' in the preceding equivalent stanza. I could have matched the opening stanza phrase (You've Gone), but that would have given me only one syllable to make my point. Nor did I want to break the pattern in a small fussy way—there's nothing wrong with breaking a pattern in a big way because in effect it makes a new pattern, but to add one stingy eighth-note upbeat is to draw attention to the inconsistency. This can be appropriate thing to do when you want to draw attention for a thought, as with the extra note at the end of 'I thought you'd want I want' in *Send in the Clowns* but is otherwise a clumsiness. I'd have settled for 'inevitably,' but it has two syllables too many. (Sondheim 55)

There are a couple of important takeaways from this passage. One, it illustrates so perfectly the kind of detail and energy Sondheim actually puts into his word choice, which I will examine in the next section. The second is how easy it is to think it does not matter which exact word you use. Honestly, I cannot even think of the song "Move On" (Appendix D) without feeling extremely emotional—it is the master at work, showing the precise ability to get to the heart of a character by choosing the correct words. So much so, that the two characters singing to each other never actually meet in the story of the show—George's grandson from Act Two and Dot from Act One (though the two never meet in real or fictional life). This is to illustrate that it is more about the core of the human experience we are examining through story, and yet, to Sondheim, one extra syllable, one eighth note is enough to "settle" for a word. That is meticulous word choice!

In *Sunday in the Park with George*, Sondheim discusses how he used more of "rhythm and language than rhyme. When I speak of heightened language, I refer to the latent poetry in the line like 'he could look forever' and formality of 'Will she be in the bed when the hat and the grass and parasol have finally found their way?'" (Sondheim 17). In context of the show *Sunday in the Park with George*, this scene brings me to tears, two characters speaking different love languages that Sondheim masterfully captures in his words. When Dot sings "he could look forever" in the song "Color and Light," (Appendix E,) you feel the longing, the waiting, the distance, the length of that look and that forever. When George coldly claims "will she be in the bed when the hat and grass and parasol have finally found their way," it breaks your heart for that is his version of longing, waiting, distance.

Through words, Sondheim develops an emotional language for each character in each show, which is specific to that character. He emphasizes that finding the correct word is a difficult task, one that even he, himself is not able to accomplish one hundred percent of the time. It is in the attention to detail that the whole process is elevated and the standard is set.

Another technique Sondheim uses that is specific to *Sunday in the Park with George* is to mirror Seurat's painting style in the musical choices for the show. Georges Seurat is credited with being the father of pointillism—a style of painting where dots or lines or fragments of color are used to create an image. The eye blends these colors and not the paintbrush. Seurat's interests in color and light mostly stems from “Chevreul's observations on complementary and contrasting colours” but also on “the behavior of the human eye and its response to light of particular wave lengths” (Leighton and Thomas 42). When light and dark colors are placed next to each other, the light becomes lighter and the dark becomes darker than if they had been displayed on their own. This practice is also effective in regard to complementary colors. Seurat would have been familiar with other impressionist painters, such as Monet and Renoir, who used this same principle; however, unlike those painters, Seurat made the use of color and light the focus of his artistic ventures. He was also interested in additive and subtractive mixing and the use of complementary pairings. Additive mixing is when you mix two colors together producing a lighter color closer to white once mixed. Subtractive color mixing is when a color is apparent when absorbing (or subtracting) all of the light allowing only that color to show. Complementary colors are any two colors that are opposite such as red and green; when put together, it makes the red seem redder and the green seem greener in opposition.

Seurat's passion for art combined with his passion for science make him unique because he combined these techniques in addition to working out how color appeared to the eye and how using the "dots" or pointillism would affect appearances.

It is important to understand Seurat's color theory because it points to the background for much of Sondheim's writing in *Sunday in the Park with George*. Sondheim comments on how he used Seurat's style in the documentary *Sunday in the Park with ... Stephen*, he explains that Seurat only used eleven colors plus white, only mixing colors directly adjacent on the color wheel. This attention to detail and the effort to parallel the musical writing process in *Sunday in the Park with George* with Seurat's painting style is exactly demonstrated the highest of standards to get something the exact way you want it. Sondheim says of Seurat's style and decision to limit his work to twelve colors, "I thought, well this is an interesting coincidence because there are twelve notes in the scale. And I thought maybe I should assign a color to each note.... but I did make use of it in that painting theme" (Sondheim *Sunday in the Park with ... Stephen*). In the documentary, Sondheim demonstrates on the piano how the sounds would be too dissonant and limited to make the whole score only adjacent notes, but he did try to use this when applicable as seen in the last few chords of Act I, before the final chord of harmony when everyone is frozen and in position.

Sondheim dedicates an entire song to the color and light theory. "Color and Light" (Appendix E) is a staccato song mirroring Seurat's pointillism painting technique. Sondheim explains why he chose to make the song like this:

One of the things I wanted to see was how the brush strokes were applied because I have a theme in the show in which Seurat paints and applies the dots. While he is doing it his mistress is applying makeup, powder first. And so she powders and she's powdering dum bum bum bum bum bum and then you switch over to him. And he's going dum bum bum bum bum bum. And in fact, the dots are not really dots, they're really small swirls of color. And I'm afraid what I've done is totally unrealistic. I think the way he painted was (*making little c shapes*) like that. But for rhythm purposes I have him going like that (*making small fast dots*).

Though this sort of nuance is exciting for the Sondheim aficionado, it demonstrates how much of the work goes unnoticed by the audience. As Sondheim so appropriately says "God is in the details"! Perhaps if the critics and audience understood the lengths Sondheim went in order to mirror Seurat's style, it would have been more appreciated.

Into The Woods

"Careful before you say "listen to me," children will listen"

(*"Children Will Listen" Into The Woods*)

In sharp contrast to *Sunday in the Park with George*, Sondheim's 1986 musical *Into The Woods* is seen as one if not the most accessible musical of Sondheim's because of the subject matter. It is set as a fairytale amongst fairytales. The show opens with a tableau of three stories on stage: Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, and a made up story of the

Baker and the Baker's Wife. These stories are all intertwined by book writer and collaborator James Lapine and Sondheim involving Rapunzel and the Witch, Little Red Riding Hood, a pair of princes, Jack's giant, all seeking their "wish" in the woods. The Baker and his wife are what binds the stories together to undo a curse set upon their family by the Witch who caught the Baker's father stealing magic beans from her garden. If they can get four ingredients, she will grant them a child; these ingredients are: the cow as white as milk (Jack and the beanstalk), the cape as red as blood (Little Red Riding Hood), the hair as yellow as corn (Rapunzel), and the slipper as pure as gold (Cinderella). Though at first glance the subject might seem traditional for a musical theatre piece, Sondheim's approach is anything but a storybook ending.

A More Traditional Subject Handled in Untraditional Ways

When you think of fairytales, you think of morals, romance, intrigue and perhaps a good villain or two. *Into The Woods* has all of these components. However, this is a Sondheim musical after all and all preconceived notions in *Into The Woods* are turned on their heads and deconstructed. This deconstruction happens on both a macro and a micro level. Act One follows the traditional structure of a fairy tale: characters set off on a journey to achieve a goal (marry a prince, find an item, etc.); however, rather than simply end happily ever after, once in the woods, the characters all undergo a transformation in which they question their choices and what they've desire. This reckoning is best demonstrated in four of the main character's discovery songs. This is first seen when Little Red sings "I know things now" (Appendix F). We all know the story of Little Red

Riding Hood; however, after being rescued from the wolf's stomach, she comes out a changed and different girl. She sings of how the events unfolded. She knew not to stray from the path, as her mother warned her, but the wolf was too tempting, and she got in trouble. The lesson for her was "take extra care with strangers/ even flowers have their dangers/ and though scary is exciting/ nice is different than good." Wise words from a little girl who had to learn the hard way. The wolf tempted her with flowers, which from an imagery standpoint are supposed to be pleasant, but in this case, not when they steer you off the path. She also sings that scary is exciting, especially when you get your first taste of freedom and breaking the rules. Lastly, "nice is different than good," a lesson learned too late by anyone who has been swindled by someone who was "so nice." Sondheim ends the song by having Little Red return to her boastful nature singing: "isn't it nice to know a lot" and then admit that if she knew so much, she would not be in this predicament in the first place "and a little bit not."

The next time we see this transformation is when the not so bright Jack comes back from chopping down the beanstalk that lead to the giant's castle and sings "Giants in the Sky" (Appendix G). He has a similar path of self-discovery, and one of his last realizations is the most poignant for me: "And you think of all of the things you've seen/ And you wish that you could live in between/ And you're back again only different than before/ after the sky." Jack has had a very plain, sheltered, poor life living with his mother and cow. This is such a huge moment in his life and while he recognizes that he cannot live in the land of the giants, it was glorious. He wishes for some middle ground that has both of his worlds in it.

We see this kind of deconstruction of each of the fairytales when Cinderella sings “On the Steps of the Palace” (Appendix H) or when The Baker’s Wife sings “Moments in the Woods” (Appendix I). While the subject of fairytales is a vehicle, the real subject of the piece is the unpacking of the lessons learned along the way.

Non-traditional Form for a Traditional Story

As outlined above, the subject of *Into The Woods* is fairytales and the lessons gleaned through the trials of each tale. Sondheim uses overlapping in the show to demonstrate the interwoven nature of the stories. The show begins with the three main tales, but right from the first “I Wish,” the lyrics overlap. This form is seen again to mark each midnight, weaving lessons like “the slotted spoon can’t hold much soup” at the beginning and “the slotted spoon can catch the potato” at the end of the show. Each character brings their piece to the puzzle as each midnight is unfolded in the same way. The overlapping form is continued to gleefully end Act One with the song “Ever After.” There is much repetition and echoing of words and images to emphasize the paths each of the stories took, building up to get to the cast singing in unison “You go Into The Woods where nothing’s clear/ where witches, ghosts and wolves appear.” Now singing as one the song ends with a “happy ever after!” Act Two begins with a similar overlapping form signing about how happy everyone is; however that quickly unravels to display each of the happy endings as not as blissful as the characters are letting on. The “Into The Woods” theme begins again but instead of the song ending in a unified chorus, it trails off with each character heading off again in their own directions:

JACK Into The Woods/To slay the giant!

BAKER'S WIFE Into The Woods/ To shield the child...

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD To flee the winds...

BAKER To find a future...

BAKER'S WIFE To shield...

JACK To slay...

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD To flee...

BAKER To find...

CINDERELLA To fix...

BAKER'S WIFE To hide...

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD To move...

JACK To battle...

CINDERELLA To see what the trouble is...

The form is seen again in the blame argument of “Your Fault” and lastly in the finale when they come out of the emotional song “Children Will Listen” to sign the final “Into The Woods.” This time, instead of it ending with “Happy ever after,” Sondheim includes one more “I wish” to demonstrate that the “wishes,” our wants and desires, ultimately our stories are never finite.

Techniques to Enhance the Form

While reading Sondheim’s “Look, I Made a Hat,” I stumbled across a section that exemplifies Sondheim’s use of lyrics to support the individual lives of each character, in

this case it is Jack the one from beanstalk fame, and he is selling his beloved cow. He sings:

I guess this is goodbye, old pal

You've been a perfect friend.

I hate to see us part, old pal.

Someday I'll buy you back.

I'll see you soon again,

I hope that when I do,

It won't be on a plate.

Sondheim says of this passage,

This is the only song I've ever written that has no rhyme at all. It's so brief that it hardly qualifies as a song, but its continuation of the fragmentary approach that I had developed with Lapine for the 'Day Off' sequence in *Sunday In The Park with George*. It seemed fitting that innocent, empty headed Jack be so dimwitted that he couldn't even rhyme. But it's not so easy to make no rhymes work when the music rhymes—that is, when the music has square and matching rhythms, as this ditty deliberately does. Just as the vowel sounds must match exactly in a good rhyme, so must they bear no resemblance to each other in non- rhyming pattern.” (Sondheim 66)

This sort of technique brings to life a character like Jack because it limits his lexicon demonstrating his lack of smarts and sophistication. This is contrasted with “Giants in the Sky” (Appendix G), discussed in the previous section. Once Jack has some experience, he has so many more intellectual tools he can use, and Sondheim writes lyrics that help the audience realize that. Jack finishes the “Giants in the Sky” with a whole list of adjectives: “There are big tall terrible awesome scary wonderful Giants in the sky!” Because of his adventure, Jack has changed, and Sondheim shows that change clearly through the words he has Jack speak, which are more precise, eloquent and expansive – a far cry from his goodbye to his cow.

Conclusion

"The roads you never take go through rocky ground, don't they?

The choices that you make aren't all that grim.

The worlds you never see still will be around, won't they!

The Ben I'll never be, who remembers him?"

(“The Road You Didn’t Take” *Follies*)

Growing up with Hammerstein as a father figure, Sondheim was propelled at an early age to find his own voice. Though he had ups and downs professionally, he has come to be the master of what a modern musical can be. The Sondheim style has specific markers that demonstrate this nuanced form of writing for the theatre. First it is in the content he chooses to write about, usually obscure as seen in such shows as *Sunday in the Park with*

George and even when more traditional, as in *Into The Woods*, the Sondheim style both hones in on the emotional life of the characters and raises probing questions about the subject matter. The second marker of this kind of musical is in the treatment of the form. Each show has its own style and organization that makes it unique to that particular story. Lastly, there are specific techniques like meticulous word choice that are used in each musical to serve the form. In the subsequent chapters, these traits will be followed within the musicals of Broadway's contemporary composer/lyricists who are writing in the Sondheim style continuing on the traditions of this sort of musical theatre.

Sondheim is the father of musical theatre writers and though he continues to create, he is nearing the end of his life as I write this in 2018. Though he has passed on knowledge and training to those learning from him, he wishes to do so because, as he says, "In my case, writing lyrics for theatre is such a craft and I would like to pass my knowledge of it on, just as Oscar passed his on to me" (Sondheim XXII). He is the master of this craft because of each of these virtues outlining a standard that becomes his legacy.

In his advanced years, the weight of living up to his own legacy is ever present. He goes as far to say that it "frightens" him because "people are expecting so much. That slows me down. I say, don't think about it. I never used to. I used to just write and hope that people would like it. Now I'm aware of people" (Qtd. in Rich 32). If you look back on history, many icons do not achieve that status until either after they are gone or after they have stopped producing work. Sondheim is still writing, though ever more self-conscious.

Though he may not be as ambitious as he once was, Sondheim is extremely self-aware, knowing that he is a father, or at this point grandfather in an ever evolving form.

I certainly feel out of the mainstream because what's happened in musicals is corporate and cookie-cutter stuff. And if I'm out of fashion, I'm out of fashion. Being a maverick isn't just about being different. It's about having our vision of the way a show might be. I mean, doing *Pacific Overtures* is not being in anybody's fashion. It's not being out of fashion, either. It's called *Pacific Overtures*. (Qtd. in Rich 32)

If the Sondheim virtues are upheld, a musical does not have to fit into a current trend or fashion; rather, the story and the emotional lives of the characters he is evoking through song are universal and thus timeless.

It seems appropriate to end with a quote by Mark Eden Horowitz:

They used to say of Irving Berlin that he provided the soundtrack of people's lives, writing the songs that people met to, danced their first dance to, got married to, celebrated anniversaries and holidays to. Well, to those of us lucky enough to know Sondheim's work, he provides the soundtrack in our minds—The harmonies that express our truest feelings and the words to our innermost thoughts.” (Eden 9)

Sondheim has created the standard and now, it is up to the next generation of composer lyricists to live his legacy and by carrying on the lessons, continue the art form known as musical theatre.

CHAPTER THREE: ANDREW LIPPA

“What’s next is all that you need to begin”

“What’s Next” *Big Fish*

or

“Let others make that decision, they usually do”

“Move On” *Sunday in the Park with George*

Introduction

Andrew Lippa’s songs, as well as the shows he chooses to participate in, are passionate, driving, sexy, inspiring and emotionally complex, terms that are also used to describe the work of Stephen Sondheim who is one of Lippa’s major influences. In this chapter I will briefly introduce Lippa and his body of work and then discuss two of his musicals, *The Wild Party* and *Big Fish*, to show the ways Lippa continues the tradition demonstrated by Sondheim through the subjects he chooses and how he approaches those subjects through an emotional and intellectual lens, the forms the subjects take to make the musicals, and lastly the techniques Lippa uses to produce these forms. While Lippa brings his own unique gifts to the work, he also falls squarely into the Sondheim tradition.

Lippa was born in Leeds, England and grew up in Michigan. He first encountered a Stephen Sondheim musical during high school and in a 2011 article for *The Sondheim Review*, Lippa recounts this experience. He begins by explaining how he was asked to

write a song for Sondheim's eightieth birthday and how he searched for something to write:

Was there a show that particularly inspired me? Was there a conversation that I'd had with Steve in the past that moved me? Had I read or heard something he wrote or said that made me want to sing about it? Before I said yes to Todd I had to be sure I knew what to write. After all, I was going to be onstage with Bobby Lopez and Duncan Sheik and Lin-Manuel Miranda and Tom Kitt and other equally wonderful writers. Those guys are incredible. Was I up to the task? . . .

Then it hit me. (Lippa)

Lippa continues to unfold a memory on a fateful afternoon "1981. Suburban Detroit. Passover." The story begins at an older friend's house while they were listening to the record of the Sondheim musical *Sweeney Todd*: "Marshall Levin/ Marshall Levin/ It was Sondheim and you/ And of course it would be good/ Because he too was a Jew/ Side by side we spent the afternoon/ With Marshall and Sweeney/ Both singing like angels above/ Was I in love?" Riddled with Sondheim puns like "side by side," which refers to a song from Sondheim's *Company* and was subsequently the title for a Broadway revue of Sondheim songs, *Side by Side by Sondheim*, and a parody on the bridge of the opening number of *Sweeney Todd*, Lippa continues the story. Once he left that afternoon and time passed, and the two boys never spoke again. However, the impact of that day is what made the impression:

Marshall Levin/ Marshall Levin/ Oh, I didn't know then/

It was you revealed my future/ Though another guy's pen/

It was clever/ It was gory/ It was telling my story/

In beautiful music and verse/ And though it sounds predictable/

Or too much to believe/

My heart and I / Fell out of love with Marshall/

And fell in love with Steve. (Lippa)

Lippa had the rare opportunity to perform the song as planned at Sondheim's eightieth birthday. He said the audience loved it and called the experience "deeply gratifying" because "in a way, it felt to me like they were applauding Steve AND me—as if we'd actually collaborated on this song in some way." In my interview with Lippa, he explains that the "collaboration did not end that night." He said that because he quotes *Sweeney Todd* so much in the song, he asked Sondheim if he could publish it but wanted to make Sondheim fifty percent owner of the song. Sondheim said yes and they are now published together, "which is like the closest I'll ever get to writing a song with Stephen Sondheim" (Lippa). However, like the other composers in this dissertation, Lippa does have a relationship with Sondheim, so in addition to drawing inspiration from him, he has a sort of mentorship that is very uncommon with one's inspirational figures. While the song is quite tongue in cheek, this last verse is quite poignant; Lippa had discovered Sondheim and would forever be changed by his influences.

With his new-found appreciation for Sondheim, Lippa graduated high school and went to study vocal performance at the University of Michigan where he received tremendous accolades. Musical Theatre composing was far from his mind; in fact, he

initially planned to be a pop singer (Lippa), but before the end of his first year he went in a new direction when his childhood friend Jeffrey Seller suggested that he write a musical. Jeffrey Seller and Andrew Lippa grew up together and are great friends to this day and Seller is now a successful Broadway producer of musicals including *Rent*, *Avenue Q* and *Hamilton*.

As he did in college, Lippa shared his music with Seller who encouraged him to keep going: “All it takes is a couple [of] people that you respect and one person sometimes” Lippa said, adding that the same thing had happened when he was developing *John & Jen*. Sondheim attended a reading and gave Lippa his thoughts via a telephone conversation. Lippa recalls this exchange saying “I don’t remember anything specific he said other than it was very encouraging” adding, “You know, and that’s all you ever need in life is somebody to say keep going” (Lippa). The encouragement from Sondheim to “keep going” has been an arc in Lippa’s career. Lippa declares, “I’m not the first to say it; its undeniable he’s [Sondheim] the greatest theatre lyricist to ever live” (Lippa). When you admire someone to this great extent, it is only natural to try to emulate them. The emulation became a part of the fabric of Lippa’s style and solidified his spot in the Sondheim School.

Body of Work

For his first musical theatre composing venture, Lippa wrote the music and Seller wrote the words for a forty-five-minute piece, which prompted his professors to say he had a gift (Lippa). He went on to pursue a degree in music education because “I was good

with kids, it seemed like a viable thing you could do instead of waiting tables when you got to New York” (Lippa). After graduating college, Lippa moved to New York and taught music for four years while attending the BMI workshop where he blossomed as a composer. The BMI Lehman Musical Theatre Workshop is a free workshop for the development of musical theatre writers. It is highly competitive and extremely prestigious. Between 1987 and 1995 he wrote music for several shows, including the “cult classic” *john and jen* in 1995.

Every show for which Andrew Lippa has written music and lyrics has been commercially successful. In addition to major commercial productions, they have all been licensed, meaning they are able to be rented by regional and community theatres, which enables a life beyond the initial creation. These shows are (in chronological order): *The Wild Party* (2000), *The Addams Family* (2010), *Big Fish* (2013), *I am Harvey Milk* (2013), as well as other titles for which he did not write both music and lyrics or that have not had a commercial production yet. Additional works he was involved with include *john and jen* and *A Little Princess*, for which he wrote the music; *Jerry Christmas*, *Asphalt Beach*, *The Man in the Ceiling*, and *I am Anne Hutchinson*, for which he wrote music and lyrics; and *You’re a Good Man Charlie Brown*, for which he wrote additional music and lyrics.

The Wild Party

Following in Sondheim’s footsteps, Lippa sought out a subject matter he could really sink his teeth and delve into the emotional depth of the characters. His first

venture was the adaptation of the 1928 poem “The Wild Party” by Joseph Moncure March about one party, one night in the nineteen twenties and the degradation of the evening. This is a dark, gritty, sexy story that does not lend itself to traditional Broadway sentiments of tap dancing in top hat and tails. Lippa had a very specific story outline already predesignated from the poem, and that is what he had to work with, or at least wanted to stick to, therefore he was able to hone his Sondheim skill of pulling out the emotional themes of the piece and focusing on the emotionally driven characters.

Early in his career, Lippa had a growing desire to write his own lyrics. One of Sondheim’s techniques that serve his pieces are his treatment of lyrics and Lippa wanted to control not only how his songs sounded musically but sounded in the most precise sense—saying exactly what he meant to say—Lippa wanted to write his own lyrics. He said he didn’t know many people in the business and couldn’t find someone to collaborate with, so one day he was in a book store and found the poem “The Wild Party” and said, “Oh, I’ve got to, this is something I want to do” (Lippa). Lippa said that it was going to be his *Cats* (which is an adaptation of T. S. Eliot’s “Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats” by Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber). Lippa set out to write music for the poem to act as lyrics.

Though Lippa knew how to tap into the emotional driven characters of his chosen subject, it was not until he started writing his own lyrics that he really became the composer we know him as today. He was able to make the transition from composer to composer/lyricist because of encouragement he got from Seller and Sondheim, he had the confidence to try out writing his own lyrics for his compositions.

Subject

While I never was able to see the original production of Andrew Lippa's *The Wild Party*, I knew the music well and loved it for its sexy, funny, raw electricity. However, for the most part, the critics did not seem to feel the same way. One critic from *Theatre Journal* states:

Yet the sense of a party was never fully realized...Through maudlin ballads . . . These characters were shallowly sketched into melodramatic figures, with Queenie the fallen woman terrorized by the vicious Burrs ... these images of the fallen woman (blonde, of course) whose redemption we witness as she rose above her situation and regained her purity imposed as morality upon the narrative that was predictable and unsatisfying ... neither employed the possibilities of musical theatre to produce new or alternative understanding of March's poem. (Vogel)

While Vogel's critique is a valid criticism, I disagree with his main point that there was nothing "new or alternative," because the musical was created to musicalize already formed characters. Vincentelli's review echoes my sentiment when he says "the show boasts a stridently pulsating score—an inspired melding of Elmer Bernstein's jazzy-noir soundtracks and Kander and Ebb's brassy cynicism" (Vincentelli). "Maudlin ballads" (Vogel) or a "pulsating score" (Vincentelli)? These examples illustrate the critical reception at the time the show was produced at The Manhattan Theatre Club.

Unfortunately, shows are dependent on good reviews and *The Wild Party* did not transfer to Broadway or have another New York City commercial revival until Encores! mounted a production in the summer of 2015.

For the 2015 revival of *Wild Party* at New York City Center, Lippa was able to continue to explore deeper nuances of the characters and had the opportunity to make changes. One of his major changes was in his approach to the main character, Queenie, whom Ben Brantley describes in the new version as a “more explicit portrayal of Queenie as a vulnerable woman trapped in an abusive relationship . . . she came to realize she must take responsibility for her own life” (Ibid.) Lippa comments on this as well, as he depicts the connection between artist and art and his creative process:

I think the ending is more powerful the way we did it at Encores!, and I’m hoping to include that in the licensable version of the show—this new song I wrote called “A Happy Ending.” That song was one of the big things, for me 15 years later . . . I was different; you learn a lot in 15 years. If you’re lucky and you’re paying attention, you hope that you grow and change and learn and try to get better—not only getting better as a writer, I’m talking about getting better as a human being. So, when I get to the end of this story, and I see what happened to this woman, the original ending has an impact, but as a 50 year old, I see what happens to this young woman, and I see it differently now. I’m happy that she makes a choice not to take the easy way—that she recognizes that she has to take some responsibility for her life and for her actions. I really was very excited by the new ending of the show. (Gioia)

Lippa is at a completely different place in life reexamining *The Wild Party*: “Now I’m a calmer and happier person, and I can let my art be my art. My art doesn’t have to speak on my behalf or solve any problems for me. So in approaching *The Wild Party* I’m much,

much happier to contemplate making the changes” (Qtd. in Weinstock). The subject matter might be the same, but the approach is different because Lippa is at a different point in his life. Because of his shifted perspective, he is able to unearth the emotional through line of the show in a deeper, more honest way bringing it back to the Sondheim trait of how one deals with the subject in the first place, emotionally and intellectually. Lippa also follows Sondheim’s example by revising in context and considering the work to be an ever evolving and fluid process depending on perspective and context at any given time.

Form

As Lippa began to musicalize the poem, he found it was not as accessible as he wanted because none of the people in the book were written in the first person. He found himself stuck wanting to write “I feel this” or “I want this,” “so I started writing lyrics because I had nobody to work with” (Lippa). “I hardly knew anyone in the theatre in those days so necessity was the mother of invention. It was like the movie *Castaway*. I had a coconut and a palm frond and I was gonna make a television out of it, you know?” (Qtd. in Weinstock). Lippa was fueled with the example by Sondheim to seek out the most exact word choice and thus wrote his own lyrics for the musical.

Because the musical takes place over one night, it is the perfect scenario to delve into the characters. The show can be described as extremely dark, sexy, intense. These themes are overarching and penetrate the core of the musical. However, staying true to Lippa’s intent to musicalize the character in the first person, it is interesting to examine

the comedy in the piece which serves to enhance the emotional variety but adds to the dimension of the characters and moments as a whole. The first song that exemplifies this is “An Old Fashioned Love Story” (Appendix J). One clever aspect about this song is it starts in the same vein as the rest of the show—alluring, dark, sexy: “At the bar there's a girl in the shadow/ Sitting still like a nun unknown/ Though an attic full of strangers/ May hold many hidden dangers/ There's a quality I like - She's alone.” The second verse is the same, lascivious in nature, though you do not yet know that it is lascivious or why until the chorus: “I need a good-natured, old-fashioned/ Lesbian love story/ The kind of tale my mama used to tell./ Where the girls were so sweet/ And the music would swell/ And in the end the queen would send the men off to hell.” Lippa continues Madeline’s “I want” story by having her come on sexually to various women at the party. The chorus catches you off guard and provides laughs which is a reaction the audience does not get to experience often in the piece.

The second time the audience gets this comic relief is when Mae and Eddie sing “Two of a Kind” (Appendix K). They are an unlikely pair with Mae being a little squeaky thing and Eddie a big oaf. Lippa musicalizes this in a witty and comical list song of their differences:

EDDIE: It's hard to describe my feelings/ But I'll try.

MAE: He's gonna try.

EDDIE: It's hard to express my wonder!

MAE: He's wondering: "Why?"

EDDIE: She's really so wonderful, so --

MAE: Short?

EDDIE: No - petite./ Yet so complete.

This exchange shows the endearing nature of the relationship. While Madeline's comedic song tapped into the audience's funny bone, Mae and Eddie's song also is funny but is also endearing, witty and sweet. These too are different emotional tools brought out by Lippa to contrast the brooding of the rest of the piece. His ability to have so many different types of songs to highlight each character broadens the emotional lens of the form while keeping to the form's formula of how the characters introduce themselves and demonstrate what they want, just as we saw Sondheim do with *Into The Woods*.

Technique

As mentioned previously, Lippa was able to revisit *The Wild Party* for the City Center revival, and it is interesting to examine his choice of lyrics as he made his revisions. Perhaps it was the permission from Sondheim to reexamine, enhanced by his matured sense of self confidence that enabled Lippa to make the changes and look for the most precise words to convey exactly what he meant. We see the most profound of these changes in the last song of the show. The original final song was titled "How did it come to this," which talks about an inevitability: "Time goes by/ Plans grow stale/ People die/ And parties fail/ How did we come to this?" This original version of Queenie is stuck in her circumstance, lamenting on how things got so bad. The new version of the song puts Queenie in the driver's seat and comments on that. She admits that she was stuck: "I never told myself the truth/ The truth about the life I'm leading/ And the time I've wasted

here/ I think I've always been afraid/ Afraid to fail afraid to lose," and explains why she stayed "in place" anyway, because "I found a man who told me lies/ Who made me think that he could love me/ He could give me more than fear/ But all he did was hold me back/ And make me disappear." Then she adds that although she no longer needs to be stuck and she is still a victim of circumstance, she is making a choice:

Not a happy ending/ How I wish that I could love/ Now I wish that I could love/
but now a bullet and a gun made a decision I could never/ both set me free and
ruin me/ and all my choices now reduced to either running in the dark/ or lying
with every word/ I've heard of women who speak out/ I've heard of women who
fight back/ Who think that running sets them free/ Well here's the moment I can
ask/ What kind of woman should I be (Lippa, *The Wild Party*)

The new lyrics demonstrate a woman who is admitting things out loud and facing her demons: "all he did was hold me back and make me disappear" she says. Lippa could have written, "all he did was hold me back and so I disappear," but specific word choice like "make me" emphasizes how helpless Queenie felt. He then continues repeating the word "woman," and ending the song with "I've heard of women who speak out . . . who fight back . . . what kind of woman should I be." This is powerful and repeating the word "woman" adds to the weight of what is expected of her. The word "should" stands out as well. He is not saying "what kind of woman am I" or "will I be" but the "should" implies so many complexities about being a woman and what is expected.

Because of the modified word choice, this is a far more complex soliloquy than the "my life stinks but guess that is the way things are." Without Sondheim's influence,

perhaps there would not have been a cause to delve deeper, and find different ways to say the exact words he wants Queenie to speak with the weight of the emotional undercurrent of what the words imply.

Another technique Lippa uses in the same way as Sondheim is the willingness to go back to his work and reexamine it. In the summer of 2015, *The Wild Party* was one of the musicals to be presented at New York City Center as a part of their annual Encores! Off-Center Series, which revives for one weekend shows that may not otherwise get a chance to be done again--usually with big name stars as a staged reading, sometimes with scripts in hand and minimal costumes and sets. Encores! Off-Center is a series cultivated by its artistic director, Tony Award winning composer Jeanine Tesori to revive 3 off Broadway shows in the same manner as Encores!, with staged readings. Encores! Off-Center is usually done in the summertime. Because of the influence demonstrated by Sondheim's rewrites for the *Into The Woods* film the summer before, Lippa went out of his comfort zone to do the same for *The Wild Party*. "That is what Stephen Sondheim has taught me among many other things," Lippa explains. "We can still go back to these pieces, we own them and they're ours, and we can make them better" (Qtd. in Clement). The inspiration to work to a higher standard did not that end there, Lippa wrote to Sondheim who provided actual support, which must have been inspiring, especially given his comments (quoted earlier) about the importance of encouragement. He says,

Yes, I've taken a page out of Stephen Sondheim's playbook. I even sent Steve an email saying, "There's so much to celebrate in that film, but I celebrated the fact that you're still willing to look at your pieces and rewrite them." I mean, he's

willing to do productions with six musicians; he's willing to do actor-musician versions of his shows; he's an artist who wants to keep testing the limits of his art and explore how his work lives in different environments.

One of the things I admire about Sondheim, is that he does not accept his work as final. It is ever evolving and experimental. What was considered working to his highest standard at one point in the process is able to be reexamined in the next. Lippa really followed this concept when he explained to Sondheim how this affected him: "I told him, 'Before I saw the 'Into The Woods' film, I was planning on doing some rewriting of *The Wild Party*, and after seeing the 'Into The Woods' film, I'm planning on doing a lot.'" And he's so lovely and kind to me—he wrote back right away and said, "Thank you, and I hope the rewrites are going well." That's the writer's life, man" (Qtd. in Weinstock). Not only did Lippa take tangible lessons from the master, he was able to be supported by Sondheim in the process.

The Sondheim musical that inspired Lippa's rewrites was the 1987 musical *Into The Woods* which is seen as one if not the most accessible musical of Sondheim's because of the subject matter. It is set as a fairytale amongst fairytales. Lippa remarks on the success of the piece in a similar fashion:

And frankly I don't understand at all why *Into The Woods* was a hit movie, because that score is really complex and dense. And yet like the best complex and dense scores, like *West Side Story*, another show he had a hand in, there was an effervescence and effortlessness to it. There's a sense of inevitability that runs

through the music in *Into The Woods* despite its complexities. And because of that, it's emotionally accessible (Lippa).

The emotional reach in *Into The Woods* is inescapable. To validate that Sondheim's skill is even more honored in mainstream culture, movie stars Emily Blunt who plays the Baker's Wife in the film talks about being in a musical and attributes being able to master the form to Sondheim's work: "The great thing about Stephen Sondheim's music is that it is an actor's kind of musical: The songs are almost like monologues, and there's a complexity to it—an emotional complexity" (Qtd. in Dembin 15). If Sondheim is now on the artist-genius pedestal and the work is so outstanding why the need to make any revisions? Sondheim does not sit on his laurels, and as previously stated, demands striving for one's best. Lippa followed suit.

The revisions for the reworked Encores! Off-Center production of *The Wild Party* were more critically applauded than the original. Ben Brantley, renowned theatre critic from the *New York Times* said, "You could even say that *The Wild Party*, which once seemed sweaty without ever feeling warm, has taken on some heat and, more important, a heart . . . And he's rearranged and added songs to clarify the show's central love-and-hate story." While Brantley clearly was praising the show he continued with the hesitation "Yet the show . . . still feels strangely static . . . We are told early on that something really bad is going to happen. But since the level of combustibility remains the same for most of the show, all the dark foreshadowing gets lost in the pervading shadows. And the plot's climatic act of violence could just as easily occur at any point" (Ibid.). As I said of the criticism of the original version of the musical, Lippa was adapting an already existing

story, not creating his own. Lippa remarks that the version at Encores! is the closest to being the vision he had which he attributes a lot to casting and the production done in this particular way with this particular creative team. He responds to the criticism of the show being cold saying that:

It's always been a dark and cold piece. That's what it's based on. The source material is dark and cold. And the characters are hard to like. The trouble for me has always been I love these characters. I think if I love them, I think I wrote passionate things for them to say. And some people get it and some people don't. And I have learned now in the twenty years [of] *Wild Party's* existence, almost twenty years, I have learned that it doesn't really matter. (Lippa)

Did Sondheim tell Lippa to revise? No. Did he prescribe some kind of formula for the revisions? No. That is the exact manifestation of his impact. Sondheim holds a standard that influences people to dig deeper, do better and hold themselves to a higher standard.

It is unclear if Sondheim felt pressure to defend his choices or was genuinely feeling misrepresented, but regardless the changes for the film were the inspiration for the changes in the 2015 Encores! Off-Center production of Lippa's *The Wild Party* and these changes made for a richer, more emotionally depicted, tighter show.

Big Fish

While *The Wild Party* is an obscure subject for a show, Lippa has also written shows with more traditional subjects such as *The Addams Family* based on the 1938

cartoons and 1960's sitcom, and the musical *Big Fish* based on the 1998 novel and 2003 films. While these are quite standard pieces in terms of accessibility, Lippa approaches them with the same emotional and intellectual level he did with *The Wild Party*. In fact, most of the music and lyrics might appear more pedestrian at first glance, but in this section, I will demonstrate the same drive, emotional nuance and character driven complexity that is associated with the Sondheim style musical that Lippa brings to life.

Subject

Big Fish is a family musical with a ton of heart about a man named Edward Bloom and his propensity for telling grand stories about his life growing up in Alabama. The show goes back and forth to various time periods in Edward's life and his relationships with his family: beloved wife Sandra, son Will and Will's pregnant wife Josephine. A trait of Sondheim's that Lippa is able to capture with great finesse, as seen in *The Wild Party* and *Big Fish*, is making each character's moment interesting, exciting and specific to their own entity. Just like *The Wild Party* and similar to several Sondheim shows like *A Little Night Music* and *Follies*, without being skilled at this, it could become shallow repetition as each character is introduced to the story. What Sondheim is known for in these shows is how each moment has its own life, and *Big Fish* mirrors this technique.

The first song "Be the Hero" (Appendix L) introduces us to Edward, young Will and the cast of characters we will get to meet and ultimately become attached to as the show continues. First we meet The Witch: "What if I said/ I met a witch/ When I was

very young/ What if I said/ She showed me how I die/ Powerless in the face of it/
 Terrified in the wood/ That was where my life was/ Changed for good.” The audience does not know it yet, but this is exactly what happens. Lippa’s choice of the word “powerless” is important because it sets up the great power of the witch and is speaking to a deeper message that we are powerless to our fate, that the witch shows Edward in their interaction. He continues to then introduce the giant (whom we learn later is named Karl): “What if I said/ I met a giant,/ Wasting in a cave/ What if I claimed I rose/ To be far braver/ Than the brave/ All my life of stories, son/ And every one is true/ So believe me/ As I’m telling you.” One of the ingenious parts of this song is that Edward is almost taunting the idea that this is all fabricated. “What if I told you this” and then “this” and then “this,” each story more wild than the next and he knows it and yet he believes it all to be true. As a matter of fact, Lin-Manuel Miranda uses this same theme when he ends *Hamilton* with “who lives who dies who tells your story.” It is the stories that make up who we are, and in *Big Fish*, Edward shapes his life by these stories and like he says “Be the hero of each story/ You derive/ Then forever you’re/ The story who’ll survive.”

Form

Once the characters of *The Witch*, Karl the Giant, Amos and Sandra are introduced, Lippa is able to pull out the punches with emotional and intellectual impact. Something I find specific to Lippa shows is his ability to write inspiring anthems. These are not without the Sondheim value of getting to the emotional core, but are vibrant, powerful and inspiring. One moment that demonstrates this form well is in the song

“Fight the Dragons” (Appendix M). Edward is singing to Young Will about why he is the way he is: “I’ve never been a man who lived an office life/ I’ve never been a man behind a desk/ I’ve always been a man who said that staying still was playing dead/ The kind who’s looking forward to the challenges ahead/ People say that’s irresponsible/ People tell me stay at home/ But I’m not made for things/ Like mowin’ lawns or apron strings/ I’m my best when not at rest/ So I fight the dragons/ And I storm the castles/ And I win a battle or two/ And comes the day its time/ I’m packing up and I am bringing/ All my stories home to you.” Edward has a certain way of thinking, that a stay at home life is boring and instead, he wants adventure. This song certainly illustrates that, however, it is most effective in the last line: “And we fight the dragons/ And we storm the castles/ And I do the best that I can/ But everybody knows / That’s how the story goes/ To turn each boy into a bigger man/ So I’ll fight the dragons/ Til you can.” The conflict between Edward and Will is throughout the musical. Will never thinks that his father’s shenanigans are worthwhile and that the very stories that Edward treasures, true or not, are the reason he was not around to be the kind of father that Will wished he was. The last line in this song is so poignant because it emphasizes the fact that Edward is doing everything for his son and to make a better life for his son. Edward will fight the dragons until Will can.

Finally, Will is on board at the last song with Edward: “What’s Next” (Appendix N). While Edward is in his last moments in his hospital bed, he asks Will to tell him the story of what is to come. Will explains that he does not know this part and Edward pleads for Will to tell him anyway. Magically Will improvises and takes Edward on his final journey, out of the hospital and back to the river where all of his adventures began. Lippa

beautifully brings the show full circle and mirrors the form at the begging with all of the characters coming joining the story: “And who do we see at the river to greet you?/ Ev'ryone there at the river to meet you./ Ev'ryone you ever knew, ever spoke of/ waiting for you to arrive./ Now can you see Karl/ by the tree in the distance?/ Amos arrives with his usual flair./ Zacky and Don,/ gathered 'round, cheering on./ Yes, even the witch is there./ She is there!” This second is especially emotional because all of the stories are together come to life, but it proves that Will has been paying attention all along and will carry these stories on. From this moment, until the last of the show, Lippa is able to tap into universal emotions that surround the end of one’s life, losing a loved one and what one leaves behind.

Techniques

Much like Sondheim does in “Move on” (Appendix D) from *Sunday in the Park with Gorge*, the lyrics in the last song Edward sings, “How it Ends” (Appendix O) are raw, clear and vivid. Edward is letting go and leaving everyone, his stories and his life behind. Will has done his best to tell him how it ends and now Edward sings of his life and all he leaves behind: “I know I wasn't perfect,/ I know my life was small,/ I know that I pretended that I knew it all./ But when you tell my story,/ And I hope somebody does,/ Remember me as something bigger than I was.” This small passage is packed with so much. Finally Edward is admitting that he did not do everything right. He always tried to fix things and make them magical; he is admitting here for the first time that it was all “pretend” and bravado. He is also addressing his legacy, hoping that his story gets told

“bigger than it was.” This is relatable on so many levels. We all want to be remembered fondly, but Edward wants to be “big,” “bigger than I was.” This is a lot like George in *Sunday in the Park with George* and Lippa is able to capture the precise sentiment of the moment.

Though my examples thus far have been moving, a lot of *Big Fish* is very funny. Lippa is able to work in both worlds, deeply emotional while working in humor, sarcasm and wit. This technique is very similar to how Sondheim approaches *Into The Woods*. It is in this multi-level emotional context that a higher standard is achieved. In *Into The Woods* you can see it in one-liners like when the Step Family sings

STEPMOTHER: When going to hide, know how to get there.

CINDERELLA’S FATHER: And how to get back.

FLORINDA, LUCIND: And eat first.

Or when the Princes sing:

CINDERELLA’S PRINCE: yes, but even one prick- it’s my thing about
blood.

RAPUNZEL’S PRINCE: Well, it’s sick!

CINDERELLA’S PRINCE: It’s no sicker/ Than your thing with dwarfs.

RAPUNZEL’S PRINCE: Dwarves

CINDERELLA’S PRINCE: Dwarfs...

RAPUNZEL'S PRINCE: Dwarves are very upsetting.

The comedy relief and the range of emotion help the audiences to gain a deeper and wider range of experiences.

The comedy in *Big Fish* follows this technique. In "Closer to Her" (Appendix P), Edward joins the Calloway Circus just to find out more about his yet-to-be wife Sandra Templeton. Amon Calloway, the head of the circus, promises to give Edward information in exchange for him working at the circus. The song itself is humorous, but one especially funny and clever line is midway through the song when Edward sings:

CIRCUS FOLK: Closer to her/ You're one step closer to her

EDWARD BLOOM: I'm not afraid to stoop/ To scooping poop because

CIRCUS FOLK: He'll stoop for poop!

Poop is always funny, but it is because of the clever way Lippa uses the phrasing and rhyming that makes it worth noting and thus elevates the musical as a whole.

Conclusion

I think most important to Sondheim's legacy is that Sondheim "kept redefining what a theatre song could do" (Lippa). Before Rodgers and Hammerstein, a theatre song could simply entertain. Rodgers and Hammerstein enabled a theatre song to evoke genuine emotional and propel the plot. Sondheim paved the way for a theatre song as indefinable. He is not the first to employ any of the specific tools but as a collective it is

because of him that William Finn can have a stream of consciousness song and Brown can have sweeping violins and Miranda can have an entire show of rap and hip hop. As demonstrated in this chapter, it is because of the path that Sondheim paved that Lippa is able to write the kind of multi-dimensional musicals he writes. Lippa continues to exclaim: “Musically, I think his [Sondheim] music is more interesting than most anybody’s music ever. By interesting I mean that as the highest compliment. It’s music that you can’t get all at once. It’s like the greatest of possible music. You have to listen to multiple times. It keeps uncovering things about itself” (Lippa). Because of Sondheim’s leadership and example, Lippa was able to continue to “uncover” things about his own work. Keeping things as they were would be simple, especially if you were pleased with the original results. Sondheim teaches to not accept that and continuing to evolve as an artist means knowing that reexamination provides fresh perspective and permission for revision.

Lippa declares that he could not do what he does “if Stephen Sondheim didn’t exist” (Lippa). Though this is a major claim, it is indicative to how influential Sondheim is. To Lippa, Sondheim has been “kind and supportive and responsive” but there is a universal impact as well. . Lippa points out that if you look on any list of best musicals of a certain time or genre “Steve Sondheim has written the majority of them.” He makes the claim that there are other major influences “it’s not only Steve, Schwartz is one of them, Kander and Ebb, there are other people whose work has been influential whose work I also quote. It is a collective” (Lippa). However, Lippa always comes back to Sondheim, “he is what being a great artist all is about.” Ultimately, Lippa is a product of that day in Marshall Levin’s bedroom. Sondheim was the spark, lit a fire in Lippa, who is

also predisposed to do great things. As Lipa will be the influence of many songwriters to come, he says the same of Sondheim: “Steve has been that kind of hero to me. He’s a hero to me” (Lipa).

CHAPTER FOUR: JASON ROBERT BROWN

“The art of making art- is putting it together”

(“Putting it Together,” *Sunday in the Park with George*)

or

“We all have a little more homework to do”

(“A Little More Homework,” 13)

Introduction

While Stephen Sondheim has the reputation for being cold and intellectual, Broadway composer/lyricist Jason Robert Brown has a reputation for being aloof and kind of a jerk: ““He was sort of an arrogant, angry young man, supposedly—but not ever to me,” says accomplished playwright, Alfred Uhry, who wrote the book for Brown’s musical *Parade*. “I saw it happen, but just not ever with me” (Qtd. in Pincus-Roth) he adds. Arielle Tepper, who produced Brown’s *The Last Five Years* responded similarly to observations about his character, saying, “I’ve heard the stories, but for whatever reason, that wasn’t the case on our show” (Qtd. in Pincus-Roth). My own experience of Brown has been nothing but gracious. As a matter of fact, my first interaction with him was beyond kind. Brown does monthly concerts at SubCulture, an intimate performance venue in downtown New York City. About three years ago, just at the beginning of my dissertation process, this particular night of Brown’s concert was sold out. I tweeted him (he did not know who I was then) and said I hoped it was a great night and I look forward to seeing the next one. He promptly replied with “Eh, come on down, we can fit ya in!” I

answered right away, “like jump in the shower and drive in from New Jersey right now?” (There was less than an hour before the show). He replied “Sure, come on!” To me, he has been nothing but warm and encouraging. When asked about this reputation, Brown, at thirty-six years old (now he is forty-eight), looks back on his younger self and explains that “Up until I was, say, 30 years old, I was a very angry guy,” adding “It got me off on the wrong foot with a lot of people in New York.” (Qtd. in Pincus-Roth). Brown is not the angry man of his youth but rather embodies the characteristics that Sondheim has demonstrated to be necessary for successful musical theatre, which, as Sondheim put it are, “Less Is More. Content Dictates Form. God Is in the Details. All in the service of clarity—without which nothing else matters” (Sondheim XV). This similarity is not surprising given that, as Brown explains, “Steve [Sondheim] has most influenced me—the dedication to craft, to technique, and to fulfilling his own artistic ambition” (Brown “Hello”). Just as Sondheim has left a distinctive mark on American musical theatre, Brown has laid his own path on Broadway, perhaps imitating some aspects of Sondheim’s personality in addition to key features of his craft.

Brown was born and raised right outside of New York City in Spring Valley, New York and began writing music at age seven or eight. He says, “from the outset my work always tended toward the dramatic” (Qtd. in Sod). He explains that his path to musical theatre “was a decision I made long before I knew I was making decisions,” describing listening to and singing along with musicals when he was young, significantly listing one of them as *West Side Story*, whose lyrics are by Sondheim. As he puts it, “being a songwriter was never really a ‘decision,’ it was just something I did – I guess at some

point I decided to do it for a living, but by then I'd been writing for so long that it hardly seemed like a strange choice" (Brown, "Ask Jrb: An Email Interview").

In his 2015 concert, "Jason Robert Brown in Concert" which aired on PBS, Brown elaborates on how he was trained by Sondheim: "when I say training, I didn't really work with Steve Sondheim, but I was trained by him in that I studied those pieces so intensely that I feel like I sort of spent my time with him" (Brown PBS Specials). It is no coincidence that Lippa, Miranda, and Brown all claim that *Sweeney Todd* was a formative Sondheim musical for them. Brown goes as far to affirm this by demonstrating how specifically *Sweeney Todd* has influenced his work in his musical *Parade*: "When I was writing those crowd scenes (and there are many of them in *Parade*), I was very conscious of how Sondheim used the ensemble in "God that's Good" at the beginning of Act II of *Sweeney Todd*. If you look through the score of that number, you'll see that for all the chaos that seems to be happening, there are several stories being very clearly told." This is something that Sondheim does well and often as seen in the opening number of *Company* and "A Weekend in the Country" from *A Little Night Music* for example. Brown goes on to explain that the chaos in the scene is for emphasis and that

It doesn't really matter if the audience gets all of it, but it certainly helps the actors if they have something specific to play, rather than "Merry Villager Eating Pie Made from Humans." So whenever I had to write those big crowd scenes, I used that number as a model; at the very least, I always aim to give the actors something they can hang on to. (Brown "June '07")

This homage is significant because it demonstrates that not only does Brown have an in-depth working knowledge of Sondheim's shows and formal techniques but that he is skillful enough himself to model his own work within that same form, and furthermore, do it successfully. That is truly the student learning from the master.

Ten years ago, perhaps when Brown, now forty-seven, turned a corner professionally feeling more secure as a songwriter, he completed the circle regarding how his early interaction with Sondheim impacted him. This early contact when Brown flubbed and did not mention his feelings of the show Sondheim had invited him to, nor did Brown congratulate Sondheim. Speaking of that first meeting, Brown comments:

It had never occurred to me that Steve invited us to see his show because he wanted our approval. I couldn't have understood that at 23 years old. If I had, I would have just told Stephen Sondheim how lucky I felt that I lived in a world that had been changed by his art. It's an ugly story, yes, but I tell it here because, in spite of its humiliations and horrors, that evening of dreadful mistakes gave me one more reason to be thankful for Stephen Sondheim: I could have spent an entire life worshiping at his altar and never understanding that such great art as he creates can only be borne of deep vulnerability. I have allowed myself to feel and embrace my own vulnerability ever since. The village is safe again. The sun has risen. Our heroes go into the new world, bloodied, changed forever. End of story. (Brown "How I Insulted Sondheim (and the Wisdom Received Thereby)")

While there are many takeaways from this story about etiquette and grace, it also points to the man Brown has become today and how he grew up professionally with his father figure, Sondheim, on his proverbial shoulder.

Body of Work

While Stephen Sondheim is now revered by many critics, theatre artists, and fans, his shows did not start off as a commercial success. In fact shows like *Anyone Can Whistle* ran for only nine performances, *Merrily We Roll along* ran for 16 performances and even his most accessible show *Into The Woods* ran for just under two years. The same can be said for Brown's musicals. Although, of the four musicals he has premiered on Broadway, two (*Parade* and *The Bridges of Madison County*) have won Tony awards for "best original score;" however, *The Bridges of Madison County* only ran for 100 performances and *Parade* for 85. (Brown's longest running show, *13*, had 105 performances and *Honeymoon in Vegas* had 93). Writing from thestage.co.uk, Mark Shenton notes that Brown's musicals have "collectedly run for a total of 383 performances, or less than a year. It's safe to say he is no Andrew Lloyd Webber, commercially speaking" (thestage.co.uk online). But, Shenton continues "in the narrow confines of the musical theatre and cabaret world coterie, [he is] one of the most highly regarded of all contemporary theatre composers, whose work is heard more often in auditions and at musical theatre colleges than just about any other living composers this side of Stephen Sondheim" (Shenton thestage.co.uk online). It is humorous that Brown is

almost put down as not being like Andrew Lloyd Webber, when Webber makes the very kind of theatre Brown detests.

Brown admits that it does not matter how well he writes or how much passion he has, it becomes a frustrating venture because of the money: “it costs a lot of money to do a musical correctly, and the compromises you have to make to get that money are endless and exhausting and soul-killing” (Qtd. in Acito). Brown discusses how hard it is in the face of today’s economics to hold true to his values: “I can’t go nuts worrying if people will like it and spend \$120 for it, which is the ticket price of a Broadway show. If I spent my time wondering whether what I was doing is worth \$120 every night – I mean, really, I wouldn’t write anything. So I can be proud of my work, and I try not to spend my time wallowing in self-pity that I didn’t write *Hairspray* or *Tanz der Vampire*”(Qtd. in Rühmeier). When asked about the validity of a show based on the show’s commercial success, Brown emphasizes that the money is not the point:

Honestly, seriously and truly, this is what I think: I’m really fucking tired of people assessing a show’s value based on how long it runs. *The Scottsboro Boys* had a beautiful production with a stellar cast in a Broadway theatre, and some people loved it and some people didn’t ... I don’t know why every musical should have to compete with *Hairspray* or *The Producers*. Some shows are designed to do nothing more than entertain and amuse, and some shows challenge the audience in very different ways.

There is great value and entertainment in musicals that are meant to entertain like *Hairspray* and *The Producers*, which were both box office hits and more traditional,

splashy Broadway musicals. That kind of happy escapism is quite enjoyable. It is also not the kind of musical theatre Brown writes, such as the aforementioned *The Scottsboro Boys*. The 2010 musical with book by David Thompson, music by John Kander, lyrics by Fred Ebb is a show based on the Scottsboro Boys' trial. The show was controversial because it took this very somber and intense subject matter and presented it as a minstrel show, highlighting the juxtaposition between form and content. Brown and Sondheim likewise prefer to write a show where the audience is challenged. Brown continues to draw parallels to risky shows like *Next to Normal* (which explores mental illness). He claims that audiences

might well encourage musical theatre writers to explore much more difficult and emotionally challenging subjects, but it does not augur an era where those shows will be financially successful. A show like *Next To Normal*, or *The Scottsboro Boys* or *Parade*, is always going to be a tough sell in a commercial environment, just like *Schindler's List* is harder to sell than *Pirates of the Caribbean*. If you loved *The Scottsboro Boys*, then celebrate it, revel in it, and share your love for it, but most of all, be grateful for it.

To Brown, art for the sake of the art is the point. Everyone needs to make a living, but there is something bigger at stake, which is the power of storytelling through musical theatre. He gets frustrated at theatre fans when they

salivate over the grosses in *Variety* or debate the precise number of a show's weekly nut – all that shit seems to trivialize the theatre and turn it into one more stupid commodity. I got into it because theatre moves me and inspires me in ways

that no other art form can. Having now written several shows that were total flops in New York, I think that whether a show runs for a long time or makes any money seems like a ridiculous way to judge its success. (Brown "Ask Jrb: Holiday 2010 Edition")

While, like Sondheim's, Brown's shows may not be commercially successful, Brown has solidified a place as one of the most respected and prolific Broadway composer/lyricists today.

Like Sondheim, Brown has chosen material that is off the beaten path, often criticizing the commercial theatre that populates Broadway today, which might have less emotionally driven stories. In an interview with Ralf Rühmeier, he adds "The Broadway that I thought I was going into, that I grew up knowing and loving, was much more quirky and individualistic and sort of charming and weird. There isn't much room for that anymore" (Qtd. in Rühmeier). Perhaps this is due to ticket prices, people want bang, which they equal spectacle for their buck. Also, audiences do not want to spend money on something they do not know about. They do know about *SpongeBob*, they do not know about *Come from Away* or *Once on This Island* no matter how good they may be. Brown continues to comment that, because of needing to be commercially viable, "you have to sort of swing with a very large baseball bat at this point. And that's not always so much fun for me. When a Broadway musical is great, when it is done well, then it's the most wonderful thing in the world. That's what most makes me tick. But I find that there are very few shows that really do that now" (Qtd.in Rühmeier). It must be very frustrating to write with commercial viability sitting on your shoulders. I would guess the options

are to pander to that, and make a lot of money, or write what you do and hope that it is good enough to transcend that pressure in their own way. Like Sondheim, Brown's musicals do. While they are not box office hits, Brown's shows hold true to the ideals of Sondheim to write for the character, be exact in your work, and hold yourself to an impeccable standard, not settling until the work is complete.

In the documentary "Six by Sondheim" (Lapine), Sondheim describes how he writes alone, and away from the piano so he doesn't rely on comfortable chords. He also discusses the need for the songs to be character driven, which is different than many other musical theatre composers who write pop songs for a particular mood or theme in a show. Brown echoes this idea by saying "characters need to have a reason to sing. Singing is a big emotional and physical commitment for an actor to make, and so the story has to justify something that crazy happening. There must be passion, there must be energy and movement, and there has to be enough variety in those moments to keep the songs from all sounding the same" (Qtd. in Acito).

In the March 2, 2017 episode of "Theater Talk," Claude-Michel Schonberg and Alain Boublil, the French composer/lyricist team who are responsible for such mega-musical hits as *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon*, and *The Pirate Queen*, explain how they got into writing for the theatre; that after they saw Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Jesus Christ Superstar*, they knew they could write pop songs for the theatre. While several of their shows are huge successes, they are in the genre of mega musical, helmed by Lloyd Webber, and almost the antithesis of what the Sondheim school does. In fact, Brown "banned" composer/lyricist Frank Wildhorn material from a previous masterclass. Frank

Wildhorn is a prolific composer/lyricist who wrote such musicals as *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, and *Dracula*. When asked why, Brown explains

Ha! It's not just Frank Wildhorn songs, there's a whole range of contemporary musical theatre material I won't work on. It's nothing personal against Mr. Wildhorn, he's just a convenient example because he's very successful and kind of ubiquitous, which I also hope means he isn't that offended that I don't want to work on his stuff. (I suspect the feeling's mutual, by the way.) (Brown)

This is not saying that Wildhorn or the likes do not write emotional songs; I would say many of his shows seem to be full of feeling. They are not, however character driven, generally speaking. Looking at "Someone Like You" (Appendix Q) from *Jekyll and Hyde* for example: "I peer through windows,/ Watch life go by,/ Dream of tomorrow,/ And wondered why/ The past was holding me,/ Keeping life at bay,/ I wandered lost in yesterday,/ Wanting to fly/But scared to try." While these are lovely lyrics, they are not painting a scene or telling a story the way Brown does. Sitting at a concert of Brown's, I am not sure you can find a lovely lyric. There are lyrics that are heartbreaking, exhilarating, sexy, electrifying ... all penetrative ... none simply lovely. He continues to support this idea that a song should be more than lovely or whatever feeling it is about.

It should get a character from one place to another place emotionally. The character crosses over a barrier. I find that a lot of contemporary pop musical work is much more related to pop songs, which put a character emotionally in one place and explore that place emotionally but don't travel anywhere, don't take any journey. Frank Wildhorn, who was a pop songwriter, comes very much from that

tradition. That's what he obviously wants to do. So, for example, someone is angry, then the song is an "angry song." I find that really hard to act . . . because there's not much there to act except that "I am in a place and I am feeling a thing." But how long can you say that? (Qtd. in Rühmeier)

Since Brown is writing for an emotional arc, his process begins emotionally rather than musically, even though his music is incredibly complex. He sees the song, as well as the show, as an entire entity before he even begins writing and explains the responsibility composers have to that entity: "A composer's job is to know where the boulder's going to land before he or she tips it down the mountain" (Brown "What I think about writing music for the theater" online). It is significant, of course, that in the same quote Brown likens himself to Sondheim for being chosen in abundance for material for actors to perform, mostly because, I suspect, it is material that actors connect to. Any one of his musicals could be referenced to illustrate how poignant his words and music is. For example, in *13*, (*13* is the 2008 Broadway Musical about thirteen year olds navigating school and friendships, centered around the main character\ Evan's Bar Mitzvah), the character of Patrice is betrayed by her new friend Evan and sings: "If someone moves in 'round the corner/ And you want to show him you care/ So you give him all your last month of vacation/ And all of the time you can spare/ But then, on the first day of classes/He acts like you're not even there,/ Then he doesn't know'/ He doesn't know!/He'll never know what it means/To be a friend" ("What It Means To Be A Friend" *13*) (Appendix R). These lyrics not only tap into the character, the moment, the arc, but also hit a nerve for anyone who has been in middle school and knows that feeling of someone being friends with you outside of school and then not talking to you in the

hallways. In *Bridges of Madison County*, *The Last 5 Years*, *Parade*, *Songs for a New World* nearly every song has this same impact, each from the perspective of its own character.

When asked about the cumbersome task of writing both music and lyrics, Brown says there are benefits to wearing both hats such as he can "shape lyrics around musical phrases, or adapt musical phrases to fit lyrics. Writing both allows me a huge degree of push-and-pull, and I think that helps to make my songs sound 'lived in'" (Qtd.in Acito). Most of the other musicals on Broadway in the current and recent seasons are written by a team; in contrast, Brown, like Sondheim, confirms that writing solo is a lonely venture: "it's really hard, and it's really lonely. And I can get really hung up on a word, a note, a phrase, and not have anyone to pull me up out of the muck" (Qtd. in Acito). That is the job and Brown learned from Sondheim. Finding the most exact and correct word for a moment is the difference between an entertaining show and the kinds of shows that Sondheim has taught Brown to write, first by choosing subjects with emotionally driven characters and then, giving those characters the most precise words you can.

It is this attention to detail, and musicalizing the voice of each character that makes the "Sondheim School" of composer/lyricists a grouping. Each man seems to be writing to serve story, to serve the emotion—thus becoming the next generation to follow in Sondheim's footsteps to create this unique genre of musical theatre. "If you're going to play that first note, you have to be aware of the consequences. Anyone can play a single note on the piano accidentally, but a composer makes the decision to play it, and takes responsibility for everything that comes afterward. It's not difficult, but it's incredibly

dangerous” (Brown “What I Think About Writing Music for the Theater”). When Brown is asked “What is the first thing you have to do in order to write original music for a play,” he doesn’t respond about writing a pop song that fits the theme, he says, “so much about writing music is intuitive for me;” for Brown it is a feeling, tapping into the characters and the emotions of the piece. This is not to say that the music does not matter; in fact, he goes on to say that “the most fun for me of any process is always getting the musicians together ... it’s all worth it for the chance to make music with musicians I love and respect” (Qtd. in Sod). The way Brown ploughs ahead is to stay passionate and focused. He writes what he does because of the pull to do so and the gifts he has.

I’m a musical composer because it’s the only thing I know how to do. That’s not true – I know how to do a lot of things. But a theatre composer is the thing that I do that’s special. What I do as a composer I don’t think anyone else does the same way. And I’m very glad about that. And in spite of how frustrating the job sometimes is and in spite of how weird my career is, I feel an obligation to that gift. It’s not always a picnic, it’s hard work. But when I look at my work on stage, I think, “No one else could have done that.” It is important to me that I did it and it is important that I keep doing it because nobody else can do it. I don’t care whether anybody is more successful. When I sit in an audience and watch my stuff I think, right, that’s what I’m destined to do. That’s me.

(Qtd. in Rühmeier).

Interestingly, no one asks a professional baseball player “what makes you play baseball professionally,” like doing it as a hobby would be enough. For Brown, being a music theatre creator, as he is, is his not only his aptitude, but his passion.

The Last 5 Years

Subject

The Last 5 Years has had tremendous success as a musical, with a major motion picture having been released in 2014. Notably, however, this musical has never had a run on Broadway, only off Broadway, in addition to many productions both amateur and professional around the world. *The Last 5 Years* is most demonstrative of Brown’s ability to explore the emotional lives of the characters in the way it handles both form and content. It follows Cathy and Jamie through their relationship, with a massive twist. Cathy starts at the end of the relationship and Jamie starts at the beginning, so you feel empathy and distain for them both at various times throughout the show. This show is semi-autobiographical from Brown’s first marriage and demonstrates how we view our world through our own perspectives. It is an interesting subject because, though it is a love story, it is not boy meets girl. It is at the emotional core and raw from the very beginning when we see Cathy and hear her first song. “Jamie is over and Jamie is gone/ Jamie’s decided it’s time to move on/ Jamie has new dreams he’s building upon/ and I’m still hurting” (“Still Hurting” *The Last 5 Years*) (Appendix S). These first few lines set up the dramatic tension. Cathy feels like she did not get to participate at all in this decision

or the demise of the relationship. This song is the anthem of anyone who has been broken up with and is universal in its message; at the same time, it is so direct and raw, that it may feel uncomfortable for the audience. For Brown to begin the show with this kind of pain and connection, he is engaging the audience in the way that Sondheim has taught him to do.

Form

The form of *The Last 5 years* I find quite clever. It takes a cue from Sondheim's *Merrily We Roll Along* that goes backwards in time, but *The Last 5 Years* takes that concept one step further and has Cathy's story line going backwards but Jamie's story line going forward. So, the audience seems the same time frame juxtaposed against each other and how the relationship looks different through the different lenses. The whole show is done with two people, Cathy and Jamie, singing solos until the final song when Cathy is at the beginning of the relationship and Jamie is at the end; both are devastating because you know the arc, now in both directions and it is heartbreaking:

JAMIE You never noticed how the wind had changed

CATHERINE Goodbye until tomorrow!

JAMIE I didn't see a way we both could win

CATHERINE Goodbye until I'm done thanking God/ For I have been

waiting/ I have been waiting for you/ I have been waiting!

JAMIE Goodbye, Cathy

CATHERINE I have been waiting for you

JAMIE Goodbye

CATHERINE I will keep waiting /I will be waiting for you/Just close the gate/ I'll
stand and wait/ Jamie ...

BOTH Goodbye

(“Goodbye Until Tomorrow/I Could Never Rescue You”- *The Last 5 Years*)

Noted, this is also the only time in the show both characters sing together, just heartbreaking. This is the difference between a pop song like "Someone Like You" (Appendix Q) and "Goodbye Until Tomorrow/ I Could Never Rescue You" (Appendix T). If it were a pop song, we wouldn't have gotten past the first line "you never noticed how the wind had changed." That would be what the whole song is about-- maybe a bridge and chorus. Brown's songs chisel at you, not only did you ignore what was happening in the relationship, but then I didn't see how we could get out of it. What makes it heartbreaking is that since it is done in the format of Jamie going forward through the story and Cathy going backward, she is at the beginning of the relationship feeling all of the hope and excitement of that nascent love. As an audience member, not only are you devastated Jamie is ending the relationship, but one is also feeling for Cathy who is just starting the relationship. This dual awareness creates an emotional tension for the audience.

Of course, Brown is not the first to make someone feel through song, but it is the commitment to the character driven material that makes him counted in the Sondheim school. Brown feels that he's part of an important but increasingly marginalized tradition. The kind of musical theatre than Brown has learned from Sondheim is one that takes audiences on an emotional journey. He continues to examine this responsibility of guiding the audiences through their feelings:

I take very seriously that there is this thing called the lyric musical theatre and it's a place where songs explore the characters and define the territory and there's a sort of musical integrity that's attached to it. Everything is of a piece and there for a reason. I don't think most musicals trade in that anymore-- and that's fine, most musicals make a lot more money than I do, so that's quite all right. But I never wanted to write *Mamma Mia!* or *The Book Of Mormon*.--they're not my thing, I don't care about them. What I do is very different. (Qtd. in thestage.uk.co)

The appeal of *Hairspray* or *Book of Mormon* is that “real” characters are on display for our entertainment. But Brown, like Sondheim, seeks to elevate the emotional connection, through the discipline as Brown calls it, or the details as Sondheim does.

Techniques

One of the things that makes Sondheim so masterful, as previously discussed, is his ability to make each show stand on its own. I will take that one step further and suggest he writes his characters with their own voices, all while keeping in the Sondheim

style. Brown does this too, as seen with the overconfident Jamie and the self-conscious Cathy. Looking at Jamie for instance, in songs like “Shiksa Goddess” (Appendix U), which is the first time we are introduced to him in the show. First, this song is juxtaposed against the painful “Still Hurting” (Appendix S) that Cathy has just sung, as discussed above. The audience is slammed with immense hurt, sadness, and anger only to be jolted back to reality with charming and confident Jamie:

I'm breaking my mother's heart

The longer I stand looking at you

The more I hear it splinter and crack

From ninety miles away

I'm breaking my mother's heart

The JCC of Spring Valley is shaking

And crumbling to the ground

And my grandfather's rolling

Rolling in his grave

(“Shiksa Goddess” *The Last 5 Years*)

Jamie is on the prowl and his specific voice is full of wit. Another attribute that Brown gives Jamie is a Jewish undertone that you see in this song as well as in “The Schmuel Song.” You see this kind of specificity in every one of Sondheim’s shows making the characters distinctive to the point where you could pick out when it is Mrs. Lovett from *Sweeney Todd* versus Little Red from *Into The Woods* versus Fosca from *Passion*. They are all written with their individual voice, which is the same in Brown’s shows. Jamie

from *The Last 5 Years* is discernible from Archie in *13* from Bud in *The Bridges of Madison County*. You would never hear Bud singing about Jewish references or Jamie, who is supposed to be this professional writer and intellectual use simple, one syllable words like Bud. By giving each character its own distinct voice, it is a technique that serves the pieces in becoming more nuanced and getting to that specific emotionally place Sondheim and thus Brown achieve.

Bridges of Madison County

Subject

The Bridges of Madison County is also a seemingly traditional story, adapted from the novel and film by the same name. Not surprisingly though, Brown does not treat the subject with a traditional lens. As a matter of fact, he carves out an emotional life for the characters in such a specific way, even characters who might not seem important are unearthed. Carolyn, the daughter, is one of the potential throw-away characters. For a brief moment in the song “Home Before You Know It” (Appendix V), however, we get a real sense of who she is, what she is feeling, and how the world around her reacts to her and she to it:

CAROLYN Why do you have to sound like him?

Why do you have to say what he says?

You don't care about the farm.

FRANCESCA Carolyn. This could be your college education right here.

CAROLYN You should have made him stay in Italy

Then I could be Italian

And you could be happy

And I wouldn't have to marry a farmer.

FRANCESCA You don't have to marry a farmer.

CAROLYN Nobody asks me what I want!

BUD Carolyn!

CAROLYN Ti amo, mama. Coming!

The only thing Carolyn knows is life on the farm. But through her Italian mother, she understands that there is more to her life than raising steer and being a farmer's wife. Painfully, Carolyn notes that had Francesca stayed in Italy, she would have been happy, at least that is what Carolyn imagines, also insinuating that Francesca is unhappy. Lastly, I would like to point out that Carolyn has more Italian in her than she thinks. She is acting like a typical American teenager until it is time to leave when she says "Ti amo, mama" and not "I love you, mom." This Italian influence has not escaped her and clearly shapes who she becomes later in the show. Much like Sondheim's approach to *Into The Woods*, it is in the emotional lives of the characters that drives the story, and the plot is just the catalyst to get us there.

Form

The form for *The Bridges of Madison County* is pretty traditional as well, which only adds to the intensity of Francesca and Robert's relationship. Because Brown starts with the pair, it really emphasizes the span of the three days, which feel long enough to get swept up in passion and short enough to be fleeting. There is a refrain that the two sing when they are at the peak of being swept away, "You and I/ Are just one second./ Spinning by/ In one split-second./ You and I/ Have just one second/ And a million miles to go." ("One Second and a Million Miles" *The Bridges of Madison County*) (Appendix W). This musical moment speaks to the form compressing the action into . . . three days. Much like Sondheim's *Follies* that takes place in only one night and all that unfolds, it is a vehicle to get to the heart of the relationships. Witnessing the unravelling of the relationships in the short time span raises the stakes. The audience knows the time is ticking and the end is ultimately coming. That elevates the emotions and contributes to a feeling of suspense and investment in what is going to happen.

The same refrain, "just one second" appears again at the end of the show when Francesca speaks to the choices she made. She sings about how if just one thing were different, the experience would never have happened in the song "Always Better." At the end of the show, the form returns to the traditional linear method of storytelling, though never without the emotional life being at the center. Time passes and the plot is revealed that Francesca chose her family. We see that Bud has died and the children have grown up. Right before we hear the "Just One Second" theme, Francesca sums up her experience by singing: "I could have never known/ That love like this existed,/ But then

you kissed me/ And you left and then I knew,/ But what is true/ Is that we loved,/ And that I loved,/ And that I love,/ And I will always love/ And love/ Is always better”

(“Always Better” *The Bridges of Madison County*). The repetition of the word *love* is so important and says so much. She first sings that she never knew that “love like this existed” and that was the love for Robert and the love with Robert. She also had the love for her children and her family and the life that she worked so hard to build. She chose one love over the other but resolves that it was not really a choice since the love was already there. As Sondheim says in *Sunday in the Park with George* “the choice may have been mistaken/ The choosing was not”; Francesca chose love above all.

Technique

Being a superb lyric writer is one of Brown’s great skills. In “The Sondheim Review” Joseph Aragon supports this when he writes: “There are songwriters who can skillfully preserve the conversational style and make their songs still sound like songs rather than recitative. Jason Robert Brown can do it (most likely the man who made the style popular, inspiring dozens of copycats)” (Aragon 22). Brown so skillfully is able to make his lyrics say and do the exact thing he means them to. This is not in lieu of his compositional proficiency; he is superior in that respect also, but his lyrics combined with his music make him so masterful. This is particularly demonstrated in “To Build a Home” (Appendix X) from *The Bridges of Madison County* where the main character

Francesca sweeps you into her world of her Italian homeland and the Iowa she has made her home:

I learn to speak, I learn to sew,
 I learn to let the longing go,
 The tractor wheel, a food of snow,
 I build myself a home.
 I change my words, I change my name,
 The fields go dry, the horse goes lame,
 The county fair, the football game,
 For eighteen years,
 It stays the same,
 For eighteen years,
 I'm proud I came
 And built myself a home.

(“To Build a Home” *The Bridges of Madison County* Brown)

While I was studying *The Bridges of Madison County*, I heard parallels in the way Francesca’s American husband “Bud” is saying goodbye to her in the song “Home Before You Know it” (Appendix V).

You know there's room for you to come.
 Although, I take it back, there's not.
 We got the cow, we got the kids,

And then the tent, which I forgot.

We better get out on the road

Before the trailer gets too hot.

This short sample is enough to demonstrate the simpleness of Bud. He isn't flowery with imagery like Francesca. The words are short and the music is staccato. It is mostly one syllable words, at the most two, and is without emotion or sentiment. Just like Jack saying goodbye to his cow. In both of the above examples, this means picking words, but also paying attention to the length of the word, the rhymes, the alliteration and most of all the meaning.

Conclusion

Brown and Sondheim's relationship, both metaphorically and personally, came a long way from the fumble when Brown was twenty-three. So much so, that in 2015, Brown was tasked with presenting Sondheim with the Master Storyteller Award. In his speech, Brown pinpoints the thing that makes Sondheim, just that, a master—discipline: “because the discipline of the storytelling is so important to him that even in this thing which is supposed to be an ordinary pop song, he's paying attention to the second measure of every A so that it is always telling a different part of the story (that's bad ass)” (Brown). Different than Brown's criticism of Wildhorn, or likeminded composers who write pop music for musicals, he points out that Sondheim is still paying attention to the story, which is of utmost importance at all times. He continues to say

There's a lot about discipline. And discipline was very attractive to me as a young writer because what you hear in pop songs is not discipline for the most part. If you look now on Broadway, discipline is also not particularly popular. That's a really depressing and kind of exhausting point for me to have taken in and it took me a long time to really that it in the way it is now true. But the sort of harmonic work that's in that song, you cannot hear in any Broadway show currently running, not a single one. The reason is, nobody really is taking the kind of care and paying the kind of attention to the discipline of how to craft a theatrical moment musically and it's really hard but it's really gratifying.

Brown is exactly right when he talks about meaning taking care and paying attention.

Brown is affirming that working in the style of Sondheim and creating pieces in his image are universally more gratifying: "not just to me but also to them and ultimately to you. It takes an investment." It takes an audience that is willing to participate. Not to just sit back and be entertained by spectacle. (As will be discussed in the next chapter, Miranda is helping to shift that expectation for audiences.) Brown continues to delve deeper in the writing process; discipline is not enough:

The important thing about it is that discipline alone does not make soul. Equally important however, is that soul alone does not make art. You need more than just sort of a big bleeding heart to create something good. We all feel things. Feeling things is not hard, but you have to have the discipline to define it, to describe it, to capture it, and to inspire it. (Brown)

This echoes precisely what the markers of Sondheim are. To define it is the chosen subject and the emotional and intellectual approach to that subject. To describe it, to capture it is setting this subject to music with the most carefully chosen language possible-- meticulous word choice. Lastly, to inspire it through discipline and soul, to which Brown says:

The combination of discipline and soul, that is mastery. When we talk about masters, we talk about people who can combine all of those elements into one thing. There is a consistency, a discipline and a mastery at work in that score that was a massive inspiration to me when I started writing seriously. And the continuation of that kind of discipline when added to the kind of joy he clearly felt in writing *Merrily We Roll Along* was everything I wanted to be as a writer.

(Brown)

In this speech, Brown demonstrates musically the intricacies of Sondheim's lyrical and thematic choices. With each example, it hones back to the one idea of discipline, which is the word Brown uses to describe the ineffable influences of Sondheim on his school. What makes Brown (or Lipa or Miranda) unique is he writes in the Sondheim style, holding up the "teachings" and lessons taught and demonstrated by the master.

CHAPTER FIVE: LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA

“Boom-crunch” (“Last Midnight” *Into The Woods*)

or

“Click-boom” (“The Room Where it Happens” *Hamilton*)

Introduction

If the current prolific generation of Broadway composer/lyricist "boys" are a family, and Sondheim is the "papa," then Lin-Manuel Miranda is the exuberant little brother who knocks it out of the park! Though he sticks to the Sondheim family values, there is a shift in his work that makes him commercially viable, or at least commercially viable ... so far. So far, meaning he has had only two shows on Broadway as the sole composer/lyricist, but he has had roles as composer and/or lyricist for other Broadway shows as well. While he might not be prolific on Broadway, he is prolific in the arts world in general having written music for films including Disney's "Moana" and starring in the upcoming "Mary Poppins" film. The Broadway shows where he served as composer/lyricist were hits; if you can call *Hamilton* a hit. *Hamilton* is more of a cultural phenomenon, the likes of *Star Wars* or *Harry Potter*. Also, to point out, he didn't just write the music and lyrics to *In the Heights* and *Hamilton*; he conceived the projects and starred in the shows. Both of these pieces are a reflection of his identity—as a New Yorker, a Latino, and a product of his generation.

Miranda is about a decade younger than the "older brothers," Andrew Lippa and Jason Robert Brown. He was born in the northern Manhattan neighborhood that he musicalized in *In The Heights*, attended what Michael Paulson from *The New York Times*

describes as “a public school for gifted children on the Upper East Side,” and has been described as “an exuberant fanboy who happily tweets mash-ups of lyrics from Drake and ‘The Little Mermaid,’ knowing that almost no one will get the joke” (Paulson 2). But what Paulson fails to point out is that that Miranda is successful because there are droves of fans who do indeed get the joke. And that is why Miranda is such a sensation. In this chapter, there will be several occasions where the press has linked Miranda to Sondheim. I will demonstrate that these links are especially seen in Miranda’s exemplary lyrical wordsmithing; the masterful way he breathes life into subjects that may be written off as material for musical theatre; and how he is taking and then expanding lessons learned from Sondheim to a new, heightened level.

What is it about Miranda, the “prodigal son,” that makes him so hot right now? Why did he become a smash hit with *Hamilton* and Brown did not with *The Bridges of Madison County* or Lippa with *Big Fish*? I believe it is all about timing and audience. In this Kardashian filled, pop culture-centric world we live in—as I have identified—Miranda uses hip-hop and rap to re-ignite an American art form, the art form being Broadway musical theatre.

Miranda grew up in New York City with all of the exposure and influence that comes along with that. He had the great fortune to actually meet Sondheim in high school where he boasts, “I actually have a signed poster by Steve of my production of *West Side Story* from high school” (Qtd. in Weimer 18). Little did young Lin-Manuel Miranda know, he would be working with Sondheim a little over a decade after this initial meeting.

Though Miranda was exposed to Broadway growing up, it wasn't until 1997, on his seventeenth birthday, when Miranda saw *Rent* on Broadway that he thought "Oh, I can do that. You are allowed to write musicals about now" (Qtd. in Mead 10). Interestingly, he became excited about being the historical story teller through one of his classes in college. In *Rolling Stone*, Simon Vozick-Levinson tells us that Miranda said, "I grew up pretty Catholic, and the Bible was just a thing that existed," but once he discovered that Jesus didn't write down the history he "was like, 'Oh, shit!' That was the first time the notion of history as being up for grabs, and the teller being just as important as the subject, really occurred to me" (Vozick-Levinson 12-13). Now, like a Sondheim musical, which is defined by its obscure subject told through an emotional and intellectual lens, there is a Lin-Manuel Miranda musical, which not only achieves these goals, but also uses innovative forms to bring to light hot button issues about race and how we as a nation deal with that topic.

Body of Work

Miranda was compelled to write shows for himself and other minorities because felt a gaping hole in the "business" and felt the urgency to correct it; "When I get called in for stuff for Hollywood, I get to be the best friend of the Caucasian lead," he says. "If I want to play the main guy, I have found, I have to write it. John Leguizamo, a Latino actor and comedian, would tell you the same thing" (Qtd. in Mead 13). Miranda wanted to play "the main guy" and has carved a place for himself and, clearly, he was not alone in feeling a missing opportunity for people like him as seen in the reception to this almost

new kind of theatre. In response to an interview asking if there was a place for him on Broadway, he responded:

No, not at all. *In the Heights*, I think, comes out of that. It came out of a fear of, 'I don't dance well enough to play "Bernardo" [in *West Side Story*] or "Paul" in *A Chorus Line*, and that's it.'" If you're a Puerto Rican man, that's what you got, because *Zoot Suit* doesn't get done enough. It's a great show, but it doesn't get produced a lot. My senior year in high school, Paul Simon's *Capeman* came out. The failure of that show really broke my heart. Not only because I'm a huge fan of Paul Simon and Marc Anthony and Rubén Blades, but on a selfish level: "There's another show with roles for Latino actors that's not going to get done. (Vozick-Levinson)

In the 2016-2017 Broadway season, many shows such as *Groundhog Day*, *The Great Comet of 1812* and even the upcoming *Frozen* have what we would have consider to be "non- traditional casting." I guess that is the point that it is now simply "casting."

Miranda continues to discuss how *In the Heights* was his way of carving a place for himself and he applauds his own efforts saying,

I'm so happy that it's made a professional life for so many Latino actors. I had an actor come up to me once at a studio, and he said, "I've played "Kevin" twice and "Piragua Guy" three times in different regional productions all over the country." He has a living because *Heights* is getting done. So I'm enormously gratified by that. And in a lot of ways *Hamilton* doubles down on the themes of *Heights* in terms of immigrants, in terms of our country figuring out what it is – and

hopefully creating these roles so that actors of color have a track that they can aim for.” (Qtd. in Vozick-Levinson 10-11)

While *In the Heights* opens up the struggles of what it means to be a minority growing up in Washington Heights at the top of Manhattan, it is a traditional musical story about hopes and dreams and love and families. Miranda used the sound of the neighborhood he grew up in to tell the story of that neighborhood. *In the Heights* certainly embodies Sondheim’s style: it takes an unlikely subject, the lives of the residents of the Heights; it applies a particular form suited to tell that story, the infusion of hip hop and Latino music, and delivers a show that is emotionally and intellectually engaging. However, for the remainder of this chapter I have chosen to focus on *Hamilton* since that show is much more revolutionary in working within Sondheim’s style while continuing to push the boundaries of both content and form.

Miranda is so iconic for bringing musical theatre into pop culture that in 2009, then president and first lady Barack and Michelle Obama asked him to present at an evening to highlight "the American experience" (Mead 1). Note, they did not ask Lippa or Brown or even Sondheim, who himself was a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom under President Obama. They chose Miranda, who, instead of performing a selection from his Broadway hit *In the Heights*, significant for highlighting the Latino-American experience in New York City, Miranda wrote and thus performed the opening to what we now know as *Hamilton*. In response to the newly written piece, President Obama was enthusiastic, stating: "It’s really good!" "Sometimes it takes a while until people know something is good. Here, people know" (Qtd. in Miranda 244). Soon after the White House snippet, Miranda completed *Hamilton* and was eager to put it on its feet.

Around this same time, producer Jeffrey Seller and his team "arranged to visit the three Off-Broadway theatres that seemed like the most promising places to prepare the show for a Broadway run. The "college tour" as they called it, led to a unanimous favorite. "I want to go to the Public," said Jeffrey. "We're gonna do *A Chorus Line*: It's a new musical, nobody knows anything about it, nobody cares about it—yet" (McCarter, Miranda 102). Not only did he emphasize that "nobody knows anything about it" but more importantly, "nobody cares." This is significant, because it points to the trait from Sondheim lineage of the chosen subject matter and how it is up to these certain individuals, Miranda in this case, to make some "dead white guys" transform into something that has since taken America by storm. Now, not only does everyone know about *Hamilton*, everyone cares ... a lot.

2009 was a big year for Miranda. Not only did *Hamilton* have its debut beginnings at the Whitehouse, but famed theatre legend, producer and director Arthur Laurents invited Miranda to translate the 2009 English/Spanish bilingual Broadway revival of *West Side Story*, a show that Steven Sondheim originally wrote the lyrics to. Miranda explains: "(LMM) so [Laurents] laid out the story and what he wanted to do and where he wanted the Spanish, and he said, "Do you think you could translate it?" And I said, "Sir, I think I was born to translate it" (Qtd. in Weimer 18). Sondheim was convinced that Miranda was the correct choice for the collaboration and appreciated Miranda's respect for the art form's history: "A lot of contemporary songwriters for the theatre are not the least bit interested in what went before. But Lin knows where musical theatre comes from, and he cares about where it comes from" (Mead). Miranda brought the first few songs from *Hamilton* to Sondheim a few years ago. "I was knocked out—I

thought it was wonderful,” Sondheim said (Mead 6). To get such praise from the master is validating. Most of what makes Miranda’s work a “knock out” as Sondheim calls it, is because of the traits that are a reflection of Sondheim’s influence on Miranda’s writing style. First, the subjects that Miranda chooses and then the treatment of those subjects in an emotional and intellectual way. This is especially in Miranda’s work with *Hamilton*, because on paper, as Seller pointed out, nobody cared. It was Miranda’s deft skill that made *Hamilton* so relatable and caused audiences to become so emotionally invested. The second trait is the treatment of the lyrics themselves. Miranda understands the importance and power of the words and how he uses them, like Sondheim, a pastiche of one or more various styles. Lastly, Miranda utilizes a distinctive form to best address his content matter. Like Sondheim, and like discussed in the previous chapters with Lippa and Brown, Miranda is able to give specific voices to each of his character to set the emotional tone and through line of the piece. Through these traits established by Steven Sondheim, Lin-Manuel Miranda demonstrates how he has learned from the Sondheim rulebook and has, as the papa exclaimed, “knocked” it out of the park.

Hamilton

Subject

Stephen Sondheim is known for his musicals being centered on emotional themes, and the subject is simply catalyst to examine them. While *Into The Woods* is about fairytales, it is just the framework. *Into The Woods* is about life lessons and how things are not how they appear. With *Hamilton*, Miranda uses the biography of a Founding

Father to keep large social issues such as slavery and the use of guns in the conversation. When asked what he thinks of slavery and racism being downplayed in standard history curriculum, he replies, "Well, listen. You can massage it all you want – it was fucking there! With slavery, we make sure it's the third line of this show. I think the two original sins of our country are slavery – which took a Civil War 100 years later to expunge, and the effects of which are still keenly felt today – and then I don't think it's lost on contemporary audiences that guns are responsible for all of the deaths in our show, except for Washington's, which happens offstage" (Qtd. in Vozick-Levinson 13-14). Sadly, these themes, the legacy of slavery and the proliferation of gun violence, are not diminishing with time.

Because history is a reflection of our own society, it is exciting to bring this art form to children who might not otherwise have access to Broadway. This musical is empowering a new generation of musical theatre performers to have ownership to an art form they might have thought wasn't for them. "What will it mean when thousands of students step into these roles at age 15 or 18 or 20—roles that have changed the lives of the original cast members, who encountered them at a significantly later age? Leslie [Odom, Jr.] says that playing a Founding Father has made him feel newly invested in the country's origins, something that always seemed remote from his life as a black man in America" (McCarter, Miranda 160). *Hamilton* is able to make these kind of connections, through art, to history and self-identity:

It means that whatever impact the show might have on Broadway, and however long it might run, the biggest impact won't be in New York: It'll be in high school and college rehearsal rooms across America, where boys learn to carry themselves

with the nobility of George Washington, girls learn to think and rap fast enough to rip through “Satisfied,” and kids of either gender (Lin isn’t doctrinaire) summon the conviction of John Laurens, the freedom-fighting abolitionist, who sings,
 “Tomorrow there’ll be more of us,” (Qtd. in McCarter, Miranda 160)

While Sondheim’s impact was taking a musical and making you think and feel because of the way it opened up the emotional lives of the characters, Miranda does that and infuses it with his own lens. Not only does he get at the emotional lives of characters that have been in our history books, he also opens up all of the social, historical, and racial implications that their lives evoke and thus comments on our society as a whole. In other words, Miranda uses the lens of musical theatre to make audiences think and feel about history with a contemporary awareness. Hamilton’s reflection, right before he gets shot in “The World Was Wide Enough” (Appendix Y), is a clear demonstration of Miranda’s abilities:

Legacy. What is a legacy?
 It’s planting seeds in a garden you never get to see.
 I wrote some notes at the beginning of a song someone will sing for me.
 America, you great unfinished symphony,
 You sent for me.
 You let me make a difference.
 A place where even orphan immigrants can
 leave their fingerprints and rise up.
 I’m running out of time, I’m running and my time’s up.
 Wise up. Eyes up. I catch a glimpse on the other side.

Laurens leads a soldiers' chorus on the other side.

My son is on the other side.

He's with my mother on the other side.

Washington is watching from the other side.

Teach me how to say goodbye.

Rise up, rise up, rise up

Eliza

My love, take your time.

I'll see you on the other side. ("The World Was Wide Enough" *Hamilton*).

This moment is so poignant for all of the reasons mentioned above. First, it is exploring the last moments of Hamilton alive from an emotional lens, making the audience feel and think about this founding father they might have not otherwise known about in a sympathetic way. Hamilton becomes a fully-fleshed out individual who expresses his love, his fears, his hopes. Miranda evokes such emotion when he talks about those on the other side and then turns our attention to Eliza, instructing her to live her life and take her time. At the same time, Miranda universalizes the subject by proposing what we all leave behind, "planting seeds in a garden you never get to see," knowing you do good in the world and lay the foundation for those after you to grow. The moment Miranda transcends Sondheim's teachings is when he expands the focus to talk about America and the implications in Hamilton's life and thus all of our lives- the "great unfinished symphony," which we feel now more than ever in our dissonant state. Harmony can be created, Miranda suggests, by embracing rather than vilifying the immigrant (just as Hamilton, who went on to co-author *The Federalist Papers* hailed from the Caribbean).

While this is just an example, as I will discuss below, Miranda is able to explore the story of Alexander Hamilton and the starting of a new nation to follow Sondheim's model and expands that to explore the issues that caused us as a nation to "rise up" then and still "rise up" now. While Sondheim demonstrated that a musical could examine psychological terrain, such as an individual's inability to commit to relationships in *Company*, here Miranda examine both the psyche of the individual (Hamilton) and that of the nation.

Form

Though Miranda has established his unique brand of the self-made musical, he has not lost the ideals of Sondheim. The subject matters Miranda writes about are as obscure as ever, just not obscure to/for him. One of his costars in the original Broadway company of *Hamilton*, Daveed Diggs, says of Miranda: "Lin exists at the intersection of a bunch of worlds that don't often intersect. He happens to be a devoted fan of rap music, he happens to be a really talented rapper and freestyler, and he also grew up engaged in musical theatre. Everything that comes out seems so authentic" (Qtd. in Mead 7). That authenticity is part of the appeal. Miranda is America and his musicals are American. They are a hybrid, of all that was and all of what is to put on display all that it means to be an American. Musical theatre is an American art form and thus, by using hip-hop, jazz, swing, pop, all of these musical styles, it infuses the piece with questions and comments about what it means to be an American. The form for the piece takes its shape through exploring these styles to bring it to a cohesive yet juxtaposed unity that is seen in every aspect of the show. One foot in the old and one foot in the new.

The contemporary references in *Hamilton* are on each page offering different paths to access the same story: "I'm always attracted to storytelling, whether it's Biggie's "Warning" or Jay Z's "Friend or Foe" or [Gilbert and Sullivan's] "I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General." It's all the same thing" (Qtd. in Vozick-Levinson 9). That is Miranda's contribution. He has opened musical theatre up for understanding because of his unique way of storytelling. "He recognized early that hip-hop and show tunes, even with their different sounds and audiences, share an emphasis on storytelling—both musical styles are animated by lyrics that advance narrative" (Paulson 2). What is so important about Paulson's observation is the understanding of the lyrics advancing the narrative. Though the form is hip-hop and rap, it is still telling a story through music to evoke emotion.

"Here's the thing that I've observed about Lin Miranda," said Oskar Eustis . . .

He deeply loves musical theatre and Broadway, and has since he was a child, and he deeply loves hip-hop and pop music as a whole, and has since he was a child."

He added, "His ability to work in both of those forms is inseparable from the fact that he loves both forms — he's not being a tourist when he visits one or the other, but he's deeply embedded in both of them. (Qtd. in Paulson 1-2)

This duality thus is what makes Miranda so masterful at his craft. He pulls from both of his loves, not to reach a wider audience, he happens to touch all types of people and that unique set of talents that Miranda possesses created this phenomenon.

Through his unique blending of forms, Miranda creates a play that works on multiple layers simultaneously. For instance, alluding to both musical theatre and hip-hop history at various points in the show. At one point in *Hamilton*, three of the characters say

"showtime." Ok ... not seemingly significant. However, Miranda explains that "showtime," is "an homage to the amazing subway break-dancers of NYC circa present day, who start their shows this way" (McCarter, Miranda 24). At the same time, Miranda demonstrates his roots in musical theatre in *Hamilton* when "Aaron Burr advises Hamilton and other would-be revolutionaries to temper their `outrage with a line lifted from "South Pacific": "I'm with you but the situation is fraught / You've got to be carefully taught." Once again, Miranda is paying homage to what came before and taking it to the next level by commenting on the prejudice that is relevant to the not yet Americans during the revolutionary war, and the minority actors today who are portraying them. Miranda continues to delve into the layers by saying, "That's our little Rodgers-and-Hammerstein-racism quote" suggesting that what was relevant for the so called Grandpa Hammerstein (if Sondheim is the father) is still an issue Miranda is highlighting through art today. Next, Miranda not only references Gilbert and Sullivan, but makes what he considers a better rhyme: "The model of a modern major general / the venerated Virginian veteran whose men are all / Lining up, to put me on a pedestal." Miranda comments on his improvements to the *Pirates of Penzance* lyric when he says: "I always felt like 'mineral' wasn't the best possible rhyme" (Qtd. in Mead 7). Through such wordplay, Miranda is acknowledging his predecessors while also alerting audiences to the fact that he is trying to innovate the modern musical.

As already noted above, Sondheim acknowledges the connections between his work and theatrical values and Miranda. Having similar capabilities to pull from the vast musical theatre lexicon, Sondheim "aligned it [*Hamilton*] with the opening number of *The Music Man*, "Rock Island," from *The Music Man*, done in spoken rhythm among

traveling salesmen on a train to the rhythm of the train's motion, which Sondheim called "one of the most brilliant numbers ever written" (Qtd. in Rosen). The comparison to *The Music Man* illustrates one of the things Sondheim likes about Miranda: "he's [Miranda] got one foot in the past. He knows theatre. He respects and understands the value of good rhyming, without which the lines tend to flatten out. Jokes don't land the way they should. Even emotional lines don't land the way they should" (Qtd. in Rosen). This particular statement is also relevant because it emphasizes that Sondheim works to an emotional theme and sees this echoed in Miranda's work. He continues to point out that "Rhyme does something to the listener's perception that is very important, and Lin-Manuel recognizes that, which gives the "Hamilton" score a great deal more heft than it might otherwise have. Most lyrics are by their very nature banal — it's the way they're expressed that makes them soar." I think what Sondheim is really pointing at is that these distinctions are the difference between a radio song and a piece of theatre. Because Miranda uses the traditions of musical theatre, the rap becomes more than just an album but a live, theatrical story telling device.

Sondheim continues to discuss the relevance of *Hamilton* when he says:

"Hamilton" is a breakthrough, but it doesn't exactly introduce a new era. Nothing introduces an era. What it does is empower people to think differently. There's always got to be an innovator, somebody who experiments first with new forms. The minute something is a success, everybody imitates it. It's what happened with *Oklahoma*; everybody immediately started to write bad Western musicals. *Hair* also had that effect. But eventually people stop imitating and the form matures. *Hair*

allowed young writers to say, “Hey, let’s use rock as a way of telling a story.” Now they’ll say, “Let’s use rap as a way of telling a story.” So we’ll certainly see more rap musicals (Qtd. in New York Times- T Magazine).

Using rap to tell the story is simply one of the ways Miranda pins old against new, modern versus traditional. He is able to reach audiences, speaking in a modern language to tell old history a new way.

As referenced in the introduction, *Hamilton* began its life at The Public Theater. The buzz about *Hamilton* was immediate, after the YouTube videos of Miranda performing the opening number surfaced. Those surrounding the creation were ignited by the power and the revolutionary concept. And none as much as the artistic director “Oskar Eustis, who marks his ten-year anniversary as the artistic director of the Public with this production, says that *Hamilton* is the most exciting new work he has been involved with in years—perhaps since Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*, which he commissioned, and directed in its premier production, in 1992” (Mead). Eustis continues to praise Miranda’s work on *Hamilton* and even makes comparisons to Shakespeare:

What Lin is doing is taking the vernacular of the streets and elevating it to verse. That is what hip-hop is, and that is what iambic pentameter was. Lin is telling the story of the founding of his country in such a way as to make everyone present feel they have a stake in their country. In heightened verse form, Shakespeare told England’s national story to the audience at the Globe, and helped make England England—helped give it its self-consciousness. That is exactly what Lin is doing with *Hamilton*. By telling the story of the founding of the country through the

eyes of a bastard, immigrant orphan, told entirely by people of color, he is saying, 'This is our country. We get to lay claim to it.' (Qtd. in Mead 4).

Just as Shakespeare used verse and masterful wordplay to investigate his national history (e.g. *Henry V*), Miranda uses a popular lyrical form of his day to scrutinize American identity formation. Furthermore, by using hip-hop, a musical genre created by and reflecting urban black culture, Miranda is acknowledging and celebrating the very "American" who has been disenfranchised within the national story. The form Miranda uses, cast entirely made up of people of color, using a musical style that is not our white fathers' music, all point to who we are as Americans and what it means to be an American today.

Technique

In 2016, Miranda released a large book of his annotated lyrics called "Hamilton: The Revolution." In this two hundred and eighty-eight-page book, filled with beautiful pictures and sketches from the original Broadway production, Miranda comments on his thoughts, feelings, inspirations. Each nuance adds to the layers of deliberate word choice and meticulous lyrics. This is another attribute of Miranda's work that follows Sondheim's tradition who also released volumes of his annotated lyrics in 2010 and 2011 titled "Finishing the Hat: Collected Lyrics (1954-1981) with Attendant Comments, Principles, Heresies, Grudges, Whines and Anecdotes" and "Look, I Made a Hat: Collected Lyrics (1981-2011) with Attendant Comments, Amplifications, Dogmas, Harangues, Digressions, Anecdotes and Miscellany" respectively. When Sondheim read Miranda's lyrics, he observed that "they seemed so fresh and meticulous and theatrical"

(Qtd. in Mead 6). Sondheim saw in Miranda the very traits of his own meticulous word choice mirrored back at him. Miranda continues to demonstrate the demands of not only literally working with Sondheim, but trying to work up to Sondheim's standard: (LMM) I think I'm one of the few people who's actually had a lot of input from Steve in terms of translating them, so my challenge was to make it rhyme in all the places we expect it to as English-speaking listeners, but also have it work on its own terms in Spanish. To that end, I worked on "I Feel Pretty," "A Boy Like That," "I Have a Love" and the Shark's section of the quintet, which is particularly difficult because you're rhyming English with Spanish" (Qtd. In Weimer) Miranda's struggle to find the precise words with the precise number of syllables and rhymes is impressive. Miranda could have found the lyrics that were "just good enough" but they had to be correct. He continues to demonstrate how he worked it out "First of all, there's no two-syllable Spanish word for "tonight," so that went out the window, and it also starts to sound crazy if you've got them not singing "tonight" since "tonight" is what brings every part of the quintet together. So after realizing that the Sharks are still going to sing "tonight," it's about finding a word in Spanish that rhymes with "day" ["The Jets are gonna have their day/Tonight"], finding a word in Spanish that rhymes with "size" [We're gonna cut 'em down to size/Tonight"], and not only finding that word but also making sure the Sharks are singing something that isn't absolute nonsense (Qtd. in Weimer 19). Others might have let good enough work, when you are taught by the master and then working with the master, modifying the master's lyrics, it is essential to do what Miranda has done; making sure every word is correct and in its place. I can imagine Sondheim would have had the same attention to detail when he wrote such tricky lyrics in "The Day Off" from *Sunday in the Park with*

George. Sondheim mirrors his lyrics earlier in the show and had to choose lyrics that evoke the same imagery, sound and placement—while now referring to a dog instead of the model “Dot.” The original lyrics were: “If my legs were longer./ If my bust was smaller./ If my hands were graceful./ If my waist was thinner./ If my hips were flatter./ If my voice was warm./ If I could concentrate.” The second set of lyrics is: If the head was smaller.../If the tail were longer.../If he faced the water.../If the paws were hidden.../If the neck was darker.../If the back was curved.../More like the parasol...” Sondheim leads by example, always fine tuning until the exact image is evoked and furthermore, brings the second set of lyrics back to the first pairing the imagery of the dog to Dot’s parasol that he works on and hands her in the painting. This full circle nuance is much like Miranda’s comment about the word “Tonight” in *West Side Story*. It is such an important word in the song and what brings it all together, it was necessary to find the correct word to make it complete.

Because of their collaboration with *West Side Story*, Miranda developed a relationship with Sondheim calling him “The God MC Sondheezy,” honoring Sondheim with a hip-hop title being an ultimate compliment from Miranda. Though Sondheim is not a rap or hip-hop aficionado, nor does any evidence even point to him being a real fan, he did incorporate rap for “The Witch” to sing in *Into The Woods*. With Sondheim’s expertise and experience in incorporating rap into musical theatre, he offered Miranda advice after he heard some of *Hamilton*. Sondheim advised Miranda with: “The only caution I can raise is monotony of rhythmic and verbal attack over the evening—and, occasionally, over the song” (Qtd. in McCarter, Miranda 174). Varying the style and

themes is part of what makes *Hamilton* so interesting and clearly a lesson Miranda took to heart.

Throughout his annotations to the Hamilton lyrics, Miranda is able to point out how the different values such set out by Sondheim are manifested, in addition to how Sondheim's actual works influenced the creation of various songs. Meticulous word choice is a value of Sondheim's, as I have been discussing, and Miranda demonstrates his process of the importance of finding the exact lyrics for the moment. In a conversation during the song "A Winter's Ball" (Appendix Z), between "Burr" and "Hamilton," Miranda dissects how and why he chose the way he did:

"Burr: A winter's ball

And the Schuyler sisters are the envy of all.

Yo, if you could marry a sister, you're rich, son.

Hamilton: Is it a question or if, Burr, or which one?"

Here's an example of internal assonance strengthening a punchline: We've got the rhyme at the end—"rich, son" with "which one"—but you're scarcely aware of the agreement between "sister" and "if, Burr" in the middle of the sentence.

(McCarter, Miranda 70)

This attention to detail might go unnoticed by the audience but is the very nuance that raises Miranda to a standard worthy of being the next generation of a Sondheim style lyricist.

In the book of annotated lyrics, co-author Jeremy McCarter recounts how Miranda was always striving and generating new ideas to enhance each nuance:

Howell Binkley needed to see him [Miranda] standing up there to adjust a lighting look. As Lin waited, he got an idea: a more compelling way for Burr to introduce Hamilton's pamphlet about John Adams. Lin called to Leslie, who was standing in his own pool of light downstage right, and proposed the new line. Leslie tried it a couple of times and liked it. Lac popped his head out of the orchestra pit, and Lin explained it again. Lac liked it too. The change was formally incorporated just as Howell finished his cue. "Lin, you can relax," somebody shouted from the audience. "No," he said, "I can't" (McCarter, Miranda 263).

This example captures Miranda's process, always moving, always thinking and always making things better.

Conclusion

Lin-Manuel Miranda is the youngest of the "brothers" and, as in all good stories, is the most motivated to find his own way. Since he has been on the Broadway map for less than a decade, he has solidified a position in Broadway history and therefore made a niche for himself, thus creating a new kind of Broadway that represents the America of today. He refers to himself and his composer friends as "unicorns" implying that they each bring their unique brand of Broadway to the table: "I couldn't possibly write *Next to Normal*, but God, I can weep and watch '*Next to Normal*' five times" (Qtd. in Paulson 4). Miranda even sources material from his "older brothers" when composing. While working on the song "Nobody Needs to Know" from *Hamilton*, he was inspired by Jason Robert Brown and wanted to use the material: "So imagine you're me, and you get to the end of this song. And you know that there's a really timeless song about the guilt of

infidelity in the musical theatre canon: “Nobody Needs to Know,” by Jason Robert Brown, from his brilliant show *The Last 5 Years*. And you realize that “know” is a *great* twist/ending to a song about not saying “no.” What do you do? You do what I did: frantically call JRB and ask his permission to quote his work" (McCarter, Miranda 179). After all, brothers are there for each other!

Comically, there is another nod to *Merrily We Roll Along* in which the agent character sings: “There's not a tune you can hum. There's not a tune you go bum-bum-bum-di-dum. You need a tune you can bum-bum-bum-di-dum? —Give me a melody” (*Merrily We Roll Along*). This antiquated but common thought that you need to send the audiences out “humming” has been a major criticism of Sondheim, but it does not always jive with writing to the highest potential and emotional authenticity. Rosen points out that in regards to leaving the audience humming: *Hamilton* does that, but it also sends you out thinking — stewing over questions about the country’s past and future; about the way we sort historical players into winners and losers, heroes and villains, martyrs and murderers; about the gray area where fact grades into myth” (Rosen 3). This is the power of what Miranda has created. He has caused audiences, who traditionally want to sit back and be entertained, to lean in and grapple with the very ideas Miranda spells out in his musical “who lives, who dies, who tells your story” (*Hamilton*), leaving one to question “what should that story be”? Whenever I hear that Sondheim’s music is not “hummable” I laugh because it is—once you know it. That is the same with Miranda. Now we can all sing “Send in the Clowns” from Sondheim’s *A Little Night Music* and “The Schuyler Sisters” from Miranda’s *Hamilton*.

In his impactful but short time writing Broadway musicals, Miranda has brought the art form of Broadway musical theatre to the pop-culture-centered public, making it both accessible of content and viewing. Though he is immensely innovative, he has deep roots in the past, as Sondheim remarks: "The lyrical density and storytelling ingenuity I heard on my headphones seemed closer to the verbal energy of the great plays of the past than almost anything I saw onstage" (McCarter, Miranda 10). It is clear that Sondheim truly supports Miranda's efforts. It is through the standards set by Sondheim, that Miranda crafts his work: beginning with the subjects he chooses and how he writes from an emotional lens, then the meticulousness he approaches the words to fill these subjects, and lastly his ability to play with form to uniquely convey his content to his audiences. It will be hard to top *Hamilton*, only time will tell what "little brother" will do next.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

“All I'll ever be I owe you,

If there's anything to be.

Being sure enough of you

Makes me sure enough of me.”

(“With So Little to Be Sure Of” *Anyone Can Whistle*)

In the finale to Stephen Sondheim’s musical *Into The Woods*, he writes “Into The Woods, but mind the past. Into The Woods, but mind the future.” While this lyric was written for a cautionary fairy tale, it also exemplifies the process of passing along the style of an art from generation to generation, to “mind the past ... but mind the future”; this is Sondheim’s legacy. Stephen Sondheim, through his writing style and practices, shaped a particular way of writing musicals which have influenced the next generation. Through the specific markers of how he chooses subjects and unearths the emotional lives of the characters, as well as the form he molds specific to the subject and the techniques used to make up that form, we can trace these influences in the work of today’s prolific Broadway song writers.

Like the lyric above, these writers, specifically Andrew Lippa, Jason Robert Brown and Lin-Manuel Miranda will carry Sondheim’s influence into the future of Broadway as we know it while contributing their own voices to the canon. These artists

were chosen as the ones who will carry on the traditions of Sondheim for several reasons. One, because like Sondheim, they write both the music and the lyrics; most others producing work that gets to Broadway today are a part of a team. Second, because they all embody in their work the style of Sondheim following his treatment of subject and form. Third, because they have self-identified as being influenced by Sondheim. Together, these composer/lyricists make a school of artists that all follow Sondheim's style.

Legacies

As musical theatre evolves, it is up to the next generation of composer/lyricists to carry on Sondheim's legacy. Looking into the future, each has begun to define his own legacy adding his unique voice to the Sondheim style. Lippa, Brown and Miranda will further the art form in their own way which I have outlined below.

Andrew Lippa

Lippa is now at a place in his career where he is not submitting or auditioning for jobs. Lippa also points out, Sondheim never had a hit like Lin-Manuel Miranda's: "well, few people do or *A Chorus Line*. No, few people do first of all, and that doesn't make the others any less talented" (Lippa). Having permission to write without pressure is a major influence of Sondheim, and one never knows where the hits will surface or for what reason. Lippa discussed Miranda's *Hamilton*, which Lippa said has "found the right place

and the right time in its moment right now.” He continues with all of the pieces you have to invent for a show to “work just the right way.” He acknowledges that while *The Wild Party* is not a mass market musical, it has reached a sort of “cult status.” He continues to say “Like what an amazing thing that if I live long enough, again like Steve who has seen all of these major revivals in the past twenty years of all of his work from the seventies, sixties, seventies, early eighties, to see all that work done again in new ways that tells you that there’s something there” (Lippa). And if you think about it, main stream audiences can sing a verse or two from *Annie* or *Fiddler on the Roof* or even quote the phrase “please sir can I have some more” from *Oliver*, I do not think main stream audiences can quote *The Wild Party* but not any less than can they quote from any Sondheim song from *Sweeney Todd* or *Sunday in the Park with George*. However, shows like these challenge the audience to think, ask questions and feel. *Sweeney Todd* positions a murderer as the protagonist and *Sunday in the Park with George* deals with big questions about who we are as artists in connection to our relationships. Much in the same vein, *The Wild Party* is asking equally big questions such as why do we stay in abusive relationships and what we deserve from each other in said relationships.

Since *The Wild Party*, Lippa has written several shows that have each been produced in major productions. He wrote *The Addams Family* which he says is the most produced musical by amateur productions. He musicalized the novel *Big Fish* which was a colossal undertaking. He said the show took nine years from the idea to debuting on Broadway and he was immensely proud of the production: “We did the first performance, the audience roared, and there was one Jew in the back of the audience crying his head off—it was me, because I was so relieved that we had gotten it right” (Qtd. in Douglass

17). He also said the show only ran for three months. “Do I know why it didn’t reach its audience? It would have been great to have got critical support. And we didn’t get enough. But that still might not have mattered. Jason Robert Brown’s *The Bridges of Madison County* got quite a lot of critical support, but it has closed. Why? I don’t know. I don’t understand market forces—that’s not my job” (Lippa). Though he may move on from shows, he also gets to revisit them like he did for the Encores! Off-Center production of *The Wild Party*. Lippa also has a working relationship with his latest show *I Am Harvey Milk*, which he was commissioned to write by the Gay Men’s Chorus of San Francisco. Lippa says the show “is a gay bar mitzvah of sorts, a reminder that I belong to something big and beautiful and complicated and vulnerable. I hope *I Am Harvey Milk* reminds each audience member that they too belong to something bigger than themselves” (Lippa). Being a part of the larger conversation is a great result of good art and gives you the access to reach masses. Through his long standing relationship with Tony Award winner Kristin Chenoweth (who Lippa wrote “My New Philosophy” for the revival of *You’re a Good Man Charlie Brown*, a role for which she won the Tony Award—they have remained close ever since), Lippa wrote a song for her character in the Disney Channel’s 2015 hit summer movie *Descendants*.

I asked Lippa what are the standards he is setting for the next generation, what will be his influence. He quickly defends himself: “I can’t set any standard. All I want to do is write things that are good.” He continues to discuss that writing for passion and the sake of the art is what he feels is important right now and at this point in his career; he does not have to take jobs he does not want to. He is the president of the Dramatist Guild Fund, a resource to dramatists and non-profit theatres for more than fifty years, providing

aid and offering educational programs to countless individuals; runs a monthly song writers group; and teaches in a songwriting program every summer at Northwestern University. His advice to young writers is “stop judging yourself, stop beating yourself up, just go write, once you write one thing write the next thing, don’t wait around for that one thing to happen. Just do the next one and keep nurturing them all.” All good advice for aspiring song writers and actually applicable for any venture, advice that Sondheim seems to also give in *Sunday in the Park with George* in the song “Move On” (Appendix D). Lippa continues to work in the Sondheim style bringing more emotionally and intellectually nuanced musical theatre to Broadway.

Jason Robert Brown

Those who inspire us provide the catalyst for that inspiration to be manifested in something tangible, in this case a musical. However, it has to be more than that. Sondheim’s work is so deeply woven in the foundation of who Brown is as an artist that he seems to be carrying on the traditions set forth by the master. Brown does not have delusions of grandeur, thinking on the surface, the shows are easily comparable:

As disparate as *Sweeney Todd* and *Honeymoon in Vegas* might be, they come from the same understanding of what the lyric musical theatre can do, where the songs illuminate the story and need to happen. It’s easy to see how you get from *Sweeney Todd* to *Parade*, but I’m interested in

drawing the clear line between *A Little Night Music* and *Honeymoon in Vegas* too.

(Qtd. in thestage.co.uk)

If the conception and execution have the same backbone, the dedication to the “lyric musical” as Brown describes it, then the shows each have this sort of integrity whether it is a boy navigating through his Bar Mitzvah years as in *13* or a man grappling with a life that’s lost as in *Sweeney Todd*.

It is too soon to say what Brown’s ultimate contribution to Broadway will be as a collective. So far though, he has proven to carry on the ideals laid out by Sondheim of exploring subjects from an emotional and intellectual lens and creating a nuanced form that is structured to fit the content while always striving for accuracy through discipline. This freedom to move away from the traditional Broadway formula could be attributed to maturity, but also points to Brown having achieved a certain level of acclaim and therefore the confidence and security to experiment more (Brown). Just as Sondheim has a very specific sound, so does Brown. His music cuts right to your soul, whether breaking your heart or lifting your spirits, all the while it is still serving the individual story. The connectivity of his work is what is appealing to actors and audiences alike:

There are theatre people who get what I’m doing and what tradition I’m working in. I’m very grateful to them—they’re my people, who understand why I work the way I do. There are now two or three generations of them, I can now see how you can get to be Stephen Sondheim who at 85 now has multiple generations of

people who have understood the work he was doing. He was never going to be Mr. Popular like Andrew Lloyd Webber- but it wasn't about that. If you're lucky enough to get old in this business, there's a critical mass that attaches itself to you and suddenly Disney is making a movie out of your show. (Brown)

Sondheim carved a path that composer/lyricists like Brown have followed and thus are leaving a path behind them to continue passing down the lessons taught by the master Sondheim for the next generation to infuse in their version of what a Broadway music is and can be.

Lin-Manuel Miranda

While Miranda is not even yet forty, it is hard to guestimate his trajectory or impact on future generation of Broadway enthusiasts. What does seem clear however is his impact in several areas: outreach, exposure and accessibility. As mentioned at the end of the last section, *Hamilton* ends asking the question "who lives, who dies, who tells your story." Miranda comments on this being the legacy of the piece:

Once I wrote this passage, I knew it would be the key to the whole musical. In the words of Tupac, "This be the realest sh*t I ever wrote." We strut and fret our hour upon the stage, and how that reverberates is entirely out of our control and entirely in the hands of those who survive us. It's the fundamental truth all our characters (and all of us) share.

(Miranda 120)

Miranda understands the universality of his piece, and the impact that has on audiences; iconically, audiences are massive with extraordinarily high demand, sold out shows for months on end, and successful sold out touring companies in process. He wrote the score for Disney's *Moana*, is starring in the *Mary Poppins* sequel *Mary Poppins Returns* and has his hands in numerous projects from theatre to television to movies. Miranda has become a household name and a pop-culture phenomenon.

Miranda is changing the conversation about representation and what it means for musical theatre to be an American art and thus represented by Americans. Miranda understands his position as story teller as well as mentor. It will be interesting to follow his path and the projects he chooses. In his own words, he affirms this. Though written about the impact of *Hamilton*, it certainly applies to Miranda's legacy as a whole: "That's the real power of a legacy: We tell stories of people who are gone because like any powerful stories, they have the potential to inspire, and to change the world" (Miranda 277).

Discoveries

Many musical theatre writers today do not write in Sondheim's style because they do not simply have the skill; they write to appease the current audiences who are looking for a spectacle worthy of the high ticket prices or they have less complex, more pop way of writing for the theatre. While Sondheim, Lippa, Brown and Miranda certainly have their standard, there are others who are successful. In Jason Robert Brown's chapter, he discusses composers like Frank Wildhorn who write this sort of pop musical. I had the

opportunity to meet and talk with Janet Dacal who starred in one of Wildhorn's musicals *Wonderland* as "Alice" the main character of the show. She had something very enlightening to say which was there is room for all of it. She continues that "certain things are going to resonate with people- there's no right or wrong . . . there are different levels . . . Stephen Sondheim is deep and complex, also not for everyone. Every voice should have a place" (Dacal). It may seem obvious now, but when she said this to me it was transformative. I spent so long mono-focused on the Sondheim way of writing for the theatre, and that being the correct way. While it certainly is a way, and one that I admire, resonate with and enjoy very much, it is not the only way and because of Dacal I can say, that is okay.

The Sondheim school criticizes audiences for being lazy. Guettel explains this when he says "I think his [Sondheim's] work is challenging in the best sense of the word. Though for me, I have always found it enormously audience-friendly. If people don't "get it," forgive me, but I think it is due to their lack of sophistication and their expectation of a certain kind of theatre that requires less of them" (Guettel). Guettel is not wrong, however I think it might miss the point. There is room for all kinds of theatre. One might be fun, energetic with fantastic performances like *SpongeBob* and some might be the kind of show you can't get through without sobbing like *Big Fish*. What this illustrates is that the Sondheim school makes musical theatre as a genre more diverse and I will even suggest elevates it to a higher level, more multi-layered art form.

Conclusion

Sondheim is undeniably the master that has had a career of many highs and low, ultimately standing the test of time and creating a legacy. Broadway composer Tom Kitt reminds us why it is important to carry on this legacy:

Learn from the masters. Sondheim often talks about his mentors and their influence on his writing. I am always mystified by those who speak as if the history and traditions in musical theatre don't matter and/or have little effect on their work. I strongly believe there is always something to glean from those who came before, some piece of knowledge or a way of looking at things that is yet undiscovered . . . It's not simply about appreciation, it is about expanding my horizons as an artist. (Kitt 24-25)

Like Kitt, the men discussed in this dissertation: Andrew Lippa, Jason Robert Brown and Lin-Manuel Miranda have taken the Sondheim style of writing musical theatre and infused this style with their own voice to continue the legacy.

What Stephen Sondheim has done for musical theatre is added another category to the art form a nuance in a sub-genre of musical theatre, which is an art form that is only a little over a century old. Because of Sondheim, and thus the writers that follow in his wake, a deeper, more complex and emotionally intellectual musical theatre lives on.

APPENDIX A

“Losing my mind” from *Follies*

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

The sun comes up,
I think about you.
The coffee cup,
I think about you.
I want you so,
It's like I'm losing my mind.
The morning ends,
I think about you.
I talk to friends,
I think about you.
And do they know?
It's like I'm losing my mind.
All afternoon,
Doing every little chore,
The thought of you stays bright.
Sometimes I stand
In the middle of the floor,
Not going left,
Not going right.
I dim the lights
And think about you,
Spend sleepless nights
To think about you.
You said you loved me,
Or were you just being kind?
Or am I losing my mind?
I want you so,
It's like I'm losing my mind.
Does no one know?
It's like I'm losing my mind.
All afternoon,
Doing every little chore,
The thought of you stays bright.
Sometimes I stand
In the middle of the floor,
Not going left,
Not going right

I dim the lights
And think about you,
Spend sleepless nights
To think about you.
You said you loved me,
Or were you just being kind!
Or am I losing my mind?

APPENDIX B

“Finishing the Hat” from *Sunday in the Park with George*

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

Mademoiselles...
You end me, pal...
Second bottle...
Ah, she looks for me...
Bonnet flapping...
Yapping...
Ruff!...
Chicken...
Pastry...
Yes, she looks for me-good.
Let her look for me to tell me why she left me-
As I always knew she would.
I had thought she understood.
They have never understood,
And no reason that they should.
But if anybody could...
Finishing the hat,
How you have to finish the hat.
How you watch the rest of the world
From a window
While you finish the hat.

Mapping out a sky.
What you feel like, planning a sky.
What you feel when voices that come
Through the window
Go
Until they distance and die,
Until there's nothing but sky
And how you're always turning back too late
From the grass or the stick
Or the dog or the light,
How the kind of woman willing to wait's
Not the kind that you want to find waiting
To return you to the night,
Dizzy from the height,
Coming from the hat,
Studying the hat,
Entering the world of the hat

Reaching through the world of the hat
Like a window,
Back to this one from that.

Studying a face,
Stepping back to look at a face
Leaves a little space in the way like a window,
But to see-
It's the only way to see.

And when the woman that you wanted goes,
You can say to yourself, "Well, I give what I give."
But the women who won't wait for you knows
That, however you live,
There's a part of you always standing by,
Mapping out the sky,
Finishing a hat...
Starting on a hat..
Finishing a hat...
Look, I made a hat...
Where there never was a hat

APPENDIX C

“Chromolume #7 / Putting It Together” from *Sunday in the Park with George*
Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

HARRIET	I mean, I don't understand completely-
BILLY	I'm not surprised.
HARRIET	But he combines all these different trends.
BILLY	I'm not surprised.
HARRIET	You can't divide art today Into categories neatly
BILLY	Oh
HARRIET	What matters is the means, not the ends
BILLY	I'm not surprised
BOTH	That is the state of the art, my dear, That is the state of the art.
GREENBURG	It's not enough knowing good from rotten
REDMOND	You're telling me-
GREENBURG	When something new pops up every day
REDMOND	You're telling me-
GREENBURG	It's only new, though, for now-
REDMOND	Nouveau
GREENBURG	But yesterday's forgotten
REDMOND	And tomorrow is already as pass?
GREENBURG	There's no surprise

BOTH That is the state of the art, my friend,
That is the state of the art

BETTY He's an original

ALEX Was

NAOMI I like the images

ALEX Some

BETTY Come on
You had your moment,
Now it's George's turn-

ALEX, BETTY, NAOMI
It's George's turn?
I wasn't talking turns,
Don't you think he's original?
Well, yes...
I'm talking art.
You're talking crap.
But is it really new?
Well, no...
His own collaborator-!
It's more than novelty.
Well, yes...
It's all promotion, but then-
It's just impersonal, but-
That is the state of the art,
Isn't it? Well...

BILLY Art isn't easy-

HARRIET Even when you've amassed it-

BETTY Fighting for prizes-

GREENBURG No one can be an oracle

REDMOND Art isn't easy

ALEX Suddenly-
You're past it

NAOMI All compromises-

HARRIET And then when it's allegorical-

GEORGE Art isn't easy-

ALL Any way you look at it.

GEORGE All right, George
As long as it's your night, George...
You know what's in the room, George.
Another Chromolume, George.
It's time to get to work...

GREENBURG George, I want you to meet one of our board members.
This is Harriet Pawling.

HARRIET What a pleasure.
And this is my friend, Billy Webster.

BILLY How do you do.

GREENBURG Well, I'll just leave you three to chat.

GEORGE Say "cheese," George,
And put them at their ease George.
You're up on the trapeze, George.
Machines don't grow on trees, George.
Start putting it together...

HARRIET This is the third piece of yours I've seen.
They are getting so large!

GEORGE Art isn't easy-
Even when You're hot.

BILLY Are these inventions of yours one of a kind?

GEORGE Advancing art is easy-
Yes.
Financing it is not.
A vision's just a vision
If it's only in your heed.

Drink by drink
 Fixing and perfecting the design.
 Adding just a dab of politician
 Lining up the funds but in addition
 Lining up a prominent commission,
 Otherwise your perfect composition
 Isn't going to get much exhibition.
 Art isn't easy.
 Every minor detail
 Is a major decision,
 Have to keep things in scale,
 Have to hold to your vision-
 Every time I start to feel defensive,
 I remember lasers are expensive.
 What's a little cocktail conversation
 If it gets the funds for your foundation,
 Leading to a prominent commission,
 And an exhibition in addition?

ALL Art isn't easy-

ALEX/BETTY Trying to make connections-

ALL Who understands it-?

HARRIET/BILLY Difficult to evaluate-

ALL Art isn't easy-

GREENBURG/REDMOND
 Trying to form collections-

ALL Always in transit-

NAOMI And then when you have to collaborate!

ALL Art isn't easy,
 Any way you look at it...

RANDOLPH George, hello. Lee Randolph. I handle the public relations for the
 museum.
 There's a lot of opportunity for some nice press here...

GEORGE Dot by dot,
 Building up the image.

Shot by shot,
 Keeping at a distance doesn't pay.
 Still, if you remember your objective,
 Not give all your privacy away,
 A little bit of hype can be effective,
 Long as you can keep it in perspective.
 After all, without some recognition
 No one's going to give you a commission.
 Art isn't easy.
 Overnight you're a trend,
 You're the right combination-
 Then the trend's at an end,
 You're suddenly last year's sensation.
 If you feel a sense of coalition,
 Then you never really stand alone.
 If you want your work to reach fruition,
 What you need's a link with your tradition,
 And of course a prominent commission,
 Plus a little formal recognition,
 So that you can go on exhibit-
 So that your work can go on exhibition-

BLAIR	There's the man of the hour.
GEORGE	Blair! Hello. I read your piece on Neo-Expressionism-
BLAIR	Good for you.
GEORGE	Well, what did you think?
BLAIR	George. Chromolume number 7?
GEORGE	Be nice, George...
BLAIR	I was hoping it would be a series of three - four at the most.
GEORGE	You have to pay a price, George... They like to give advice, George Don't think about it twice George... I disagree
BLAIR	I have touted your work from the beginning, you know that. You were really on to something with these light machine-once.

Now they're just becoming more
and more about less and less.
Now don't get me wrong. You're a talented guy.
But I think you are capable of far more.
Not that you couldn't succeed by
doing Chromolume after Chromolume - but there are new
discoveries to be made, George.

GEORGE

Be new, George.
They tell you till they're blue, George:
You're new or else you're through, George,
And even if it's true, George-
You do what you can do...
Bit by bit,
Putting it together.
Piece by piece.
Working out the vision night and day.
All it takes is time and perseverance,
With a little luck along the way,
Putting in a personal appearance,
Gathering supporters and adherents...

HARRIET

But he combines all these different trends...

GEORGE

Mapping out the right configuration,
Starting with a suitable foundation...

BETTY

He's an original...

ALEX

Was...

GEORGE

Lining up a prominent commission-
And an exhibition in addition-
Here a little dab of politician-

There a little touch of publication-
Till you have a balanced composition-
Everything depends on preparation-
Even if you do have the suspicion
That it's taking all your concentration-

BETTY/ALEX

I like those images.
Some
They're just his personal response.
To what?

The painting!
 Bullshit. Anyway, the painting's
 overrated...
 Overrated? It's a masterpiece!
 A masterpiece? Historically
 important maybe-
 Oh, now you're judging Seurat,
 are you?
 All it is is pleasant, just like
 George's work:
 It's just your jealousy of
 George's work:
 No nuance, no response, no relevance-
 There's nuance, and there's response,
 there's relevance-
 There's not much point in arguing.
 Besides, it's all promotion, but then-
 There's not much point in arguing.
 You say it's all promotion, but then-

GREENBURG It's only new, though. for now,
 And yesterday's forgotten.
 Today it's all a matter of promotion,
 But then-

REDMOND Nouveau.
 And yesterday's forgotten.
 Today it's all a matter of promotion,
 But then-

HARRIET You can't divide art today.
 Go with it.
 What will they think of next?

BILLY I'm not surprised.
 What will they think of next?

OTHERS Most art today
 Is a matter of promotion, but then-

ALL That is the state of the art,
 And art isn't easy...
 And that
 Is the state
 Of the Art!

GEORGE

The art of making art
Is putting it together-
Bit by bit-
Link by link-
Drink by drink-
Mink by mink-
And that
Is the state
Of the
Art!

APPENDIX D

“Move On” from *Sunday in the Park with George*

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

DOT Are you working on something new?

GEORGE No

DOT That is not like you, George

GEORGE I've nothing to say

DOT You have many things

GEORGE Well, nothing that's not been said

DOT Said by you, though. George

GEORGE I do not know where to go

DOT And nor did I

GEORGE I want to make things that count,
Things that will be new...

DOT I did what I had to do...

GEORGE What am I to do?

DOT Move on...

Stop worrying where you're going-
Move on
If you can know where you're going
You've gone
Just keep moving on

I chose, and my world was shaken-
So what?
The choice may have been mistaken,
The choosing was not
You have to move on

Look at what you want,

Not at where you are,
 Not at what you'll be-
 Look at all the things you've done for me

Opened up my eyes,
 Taught me how to see,
 Notice every tree-

GEORGE Notice every tree...

DOT Understand the light-

GEORGE Understand the light...

DOT Concentrate on now-

GEORGE I want to move on
 I want to explore the light
 I want to know how to get through,
 Through to something new,
 Something of my own-

BOTH Move on
 Move on

DOT Stop worrying it your vision
 Is new
 Let others make that decision-
 They usually do
 You keep moving on

GEORGE Something in the light,
 Something in the sky,
 In the grass,
 Up behind the trees...
 Things I hadn't looked at
 Till now
 Flower in your hat.
 And your smile
 And the color of your hair.

DOT Look at what you've done,
 Then at what you want,
 Not at where you are,
 What you'll be
 Look at all the things
 You gave to me
 Let me give to you

Something in return
I would be so pleased...

GEORGE And the way you catch the light
 And the care
 And the feeling
 And the life
 Moving on

DOT We've always belonged
 Together!

BOTH We will always belong
 Together!

DOT Just keep moving on
 Anything you do
 Let it come from you
 Then it will be new
 Give us more to see...

APPENDIX E

“Color and Light” from *Sunday in the Park with George*

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

GEORGE Order.
 Design.
 Composition.
 Tone.
 Form.
 Symmetry.
 Balance.

 More red...
 And a little more red...
 Blue blue blue blue
 Blue blue blue blue
 Even even...
 Good...
 Bumbum bum bumbumbum
 Bumbum bum...
 More red...
 More blue...
 More beer...
 More light!
 Color and light.
 There's only color and light.
 Yellow and white.
 Just blue and yellow and white.
 Look at the air, miss-
 See whet I mean?
 No, look over there, miss-
 That's done with green...
 Conjoined with orange...

DOT Nothing seems to fit me right. The less I wear, the more comfortable I
 feel.
 More rouge...
 George is very special. Maybe I'm just not special enough for him.
 If my legs were longer.
 If my bust was smaller.
 If my hands were graceful.
 If my waist was thinner.
 If my hips were flatter.

If my voice was warm.
If I could concentrate-

I'd be in the Follies.
I'd be in a cabaret.
Gentlemen in tall silk hats
And linen spats
Would wait with flowers.
I could make them wait for hours.
Giddy young aristocrats
With fancy flats
Would drink my health,
And I would be as
Hard as nails...
And they'd only want me more...

If I was a folly girl.
Nah, I wouldn't like it much.
Married men and stupid boys
And too much smoke and all that noise
And all that color and light...

GEORGE Aren't you proper today, miss?
Your parasol so properly cocked, your bustle so perfectly upright.
And you sir. Your hat so black. So black to you, perhaps.
So red to me.

DOT None of the others worked at night...

GEORGE So composed for a Sunday.

DOT How do you work without the right
White
Light? How do you fathom George?

GEORGE Red red red red
Red red orange
Red red orange
Orange pick up blue
Pick up red
Pick up orange
From the blue-green blue-green
Blue-green circle
On the violet diagonal
Di-ag-ag-ag-ag-ag-o-nal-nal
Yellow comma yellow comma

Numnum num numnumnum
 Numnum num...
 Blue blue blue blue
 Blue still sitting
 Red that perfume
 Blue all night
 Blue-green the window shut
 Dut dut dut
 Dot Dot sitting
 Dot Dot waiting
 Dot Dot getting fat fat fat
 More yellow
 Dot Dot waiting to go
 Out out out
 No no no George
 Finish the hat finish the hat
 Have to finish the hat first
 Hat hat hat hat
 Hot hot hot it's hot in here...
 Sunday!
 Color and light!

DOT But how George looks. He could look forever.
 GEORGE There's only color and light.
 DOT As if he sees you and he doesn't all at once.
 GEORGE Purple and white...
 DOT What is he thinking when he looks like that?
 GEORGE And red and purple and white.
 DOT What does he see? Sometimes, not even blinking.
 GEORGE Look at this glade, girls, your cool blue spot.
 DOT His eyes. So dark and shiny.
 GEORGE No, stay in the shade, girls. It's getting hot...
 DOT Some think cold and black.
 GEORGE It's getting orange...
 DOT But it's warm inside his eyes...
 GEORGE Hotter...

DOT And it's soft inside his eyes...
 And he burns you with his eyes...

GEORGE Look at her looking.

DOT And you're studied like the light.

GEORGE Forever with that mirror. What does she see?

DOT And you look inside the eyes.

GEORGE The pink lips, the red cheeks...

DOT And you catch him here and there.

GEORGE The wide eyes. Studying the round face, the tiny pout...

DOT But he's never really there.

GEORGE Seeing all the parts and none of the whole.

DOT You want him even more.

GEORGE But the way she catches light...

DOT And you drown inside his eyes...

GEORGE And the color of her hair...

GEORGE/ DOT I could look at her/him forever.

APPENDIX F

"I Know Things Now" from *Into The Woods*

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

Mother said,
"Straight ahead,"
Not to delay
or be misled.
I should have heeded
Her advice...
But he seemed so nice.

And he showed me things
Many beautiful things,
That I hadn't thought to explore.
They were off my path,
So I never had dared.
I had been so careful,
I never had cared.
And he made me feel excited-
Well, excited and scared.

When he said, "Come in!"
With that sickening grin,
How could I know what was in store?
Once his teeth were bared,
Though, I really got scared-
Well, excited and scared-
But he drew me close
And he swallowed me down,
Down a dark slimy path
Where lie secrets that I never want to know,
And when everything familiar
Seemed to disappear forever,
At the end of the path
Was Granny once again.

So we wait in the dark
Until someone sets us free,
And we're brought into the light,
And we're back at the start.

And I know things now,

Many valuable things,
That I hadn't known before:
Do not put your faith
In a cape and a hood,
They will not protect you
The way that they should.
And take extra care with strangers,
Even flowers have their dangers.
And though scary is exciting,
Nice is different than good.

Now I know:
Don't be scared.
Granny is right,
Just be prepared.

Isn't it nice to know a lot!
And a little bit not...

APPENDIX G

“Giants in the Sky” from *Into The Woods*

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

There are Giants in the sky!
There are big tall terrible Giants
in the sky!

When you're way up high
And you look below
At the world you left
And the things you know,
Little more than a glance
Is enough to show
You just how small you are.

When you're way up high
And you're own your own
In a world like none
That you've ever known,
Where the sky is lead
And the earth is stone,

You're free, to do
Whatever pleases you,
Exploring things you'd never dare
'Cause you don't care,
When suddenly there's

A big tall terrible Giant at the door,
A big tall terrible lady Giant
sweeping the floor.
And she gives you food
And she gives you rest
And she draws you close
To her Giant breast,
And you know things now
that you never knew before,
Not till the sky.

Only just when you've made
A friend and all,
And you know she's big

But you don't feel small,
Someone bigger than her
Comes along the hall
To swallow you for lunch.

And your heart is lead
And your stomach stone
And you're really scared
Being all alone...

And it's then that you miss
All the things you've known
And the world you've left
And the little you own-

The fun is done.
You steal what you can and run.
And you scramble down
And you look below,
And the world you know
Begins to grow:

The roof, the house, and your Mother at the door.
The roof, the house and the world you never thought to explore.
And you think of all of the things you've seen,
And you wish that you could live in between,
And you're back again,
Only different than before,
After the sky.

There are Giants in the sky!
There are big tall terrible awesome scary wonderful
Giants in the sky!

APPENDIX H

“On the Steps of the Palace” from *Into The Woods*

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

He's a very smart Prince,
He's a Prince who prepares.
Knowing this time I'd run from him,
He spread pitch on the stairs.
I was caught unawares.
And I thought: well, he cares-
This is more than just malice.
Better stop and take stock
While you're standing here stuck
On the steps of the palace.

You think, what do you want?
You think, make a decision.
Why not stay and be caught?
You think, well, it's a thought,
What would be his response?
But then what if he knew
Who you were when you know
That you're not what he thinks
That he wants?

And then what if you are?
What a Prince would envision?
Although how can you know
Who you are till you know
What you want, which you don't?
So then which do you pick:
Where you're safe, out of sight,
And yourself, but where everything's wrong?
Or where everything's right
And you know that you'll never belong?

And whichever you pick,
Do it quick,
'Cause you're starting to stick
To the steps of the palace.

It's your first big decision,
The choice isn't easy to make.

To arrive at a ball
Is exciting and all-
Once you're there, though, it's scary.
And it's fun to deceive
When you know you can leave,
But you have to be wary.
There's a lot that's at stake,
But you've stalled long enough,
'Cause you're still standing stuck
In the stuff on the steps...

Better run along home
And avoid the collision.
Even though they don't care,
You'll be better off there
Where there's nothing to choose,
So there's nothing to lose.
So you pry up your shoes.
Then from out of the blue,
And without any guide,
You know what your decision is,
Which is not to decide.
You'll leave him a clue:
For example, a shoe.
And then see what he'll do.

Now it's he and not you
Who is stuck with a shoe,
In a stew, in the goo,
And you've learned something, too,
Something you never knew,
On the steps of the palace.

APPENDIX I

“Moments in the Woods” from *Into The Woods*

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

What was that?

Was that me?

Was that him?

Did a Prince really kiss me?

And kiss me?

And kiss me?

And did I kiss him back?

Was it wrong?

Am I mad?

Is that all?

Does he miss me?

Was he suddenly

Getting bored with me?

Wake up! Stop dreaming.

Stop prancing about the woods.

It's not befitting.

What is it about the woods?

Back to life, back to sense,

Back to child, back to husband,

You can't live in the woods.

There are vows, there are ties,

There are needs, there are standards,

There are shouldn'ts and shoulds.

Why not both instead?

There's the answer, if you're clever:

have a child for warmth,

And a Baker for bread,

And a Prince for whatever-

Never!

It's these woods.

Face the facts, find the boy,

Join the group, stop the Giant-

Just get out of these woods.

Was that him? yes it was.
Was that me? No it wasn't,
Just a trick of the woods.

Just a moment,
One peculiar passing moment...
Must it all be either less or more,
Either plain or grand?
Is it always "or"?
Is it never "and"?
That's what woods are for:
For those moments in the woods...

Oh, if life were made of moments,
Even now and then a bad one-!
But if life were only moments,
Then you'd never know you had one.

First a Witch, then a child,
Then a Prince, then a moment-
Who can live in the woods?
And to get what you wish,
Only just for a moment-
These are dangerous woods...

Let the moment go...
Don't forget it for a moment, though.
Just remembering you've had and "and",
When you're back to "or",
Makes the "or" mean more
Than it did before.
Now I understand-

And it's time to leave the woods.

APPENDIX J

“An Old Fashioned Love Story” from *The Wild Party*

Music and Lyrics by Andrew Lippa

At the bar there's a girl in the shadow
Sitting still like a nun unknown.
Though an attic full of strangers
May hold many hidden dangers
There's a quality I like -
She's alone.

So I pause
And I wink
And I shudder
Just to bring her attention in line
While her pastures may be greener
I can tell by her demeanor
She's mine!

That's fine:
I need a good-natured, old-fashioned
Lesbian love story
The kind of tale my mama used to tell.
Where the girls were so sweet
And the music would swell
And in the end the queen would send the men off to hell.

What is that mild-mannered, old-fashioned
Lesbian love story
Where people knew exactly who they were?
I want the story of yore
That they don't sing anymore
To an old-fashioned dyke like her.

See that girl on the bed, how she wants me.
She's a bee I could free from the hive.
I would never dare deceive her
She's a very clever beaver
With a quality I like -
She's alive.

So I pause
And I twitch

In the silence
 While I pray that she'll play out this hand.
 But I feel my intuition
 Saying "Notice her position" -
 Start the band!

She's clearly manned.

I planned a well-rendered, one-gendered
 Lesbian love story
 With good old-fashioned sex in every line
 Where girls with tattoos would whimper and whine
 "While on all fours, you show me yours
 And I'll show you mine."

I miss that soft-hearted, old-fashioned
 Lesbian love story
 Where women wrestle bears and passersby.
 The kind of story so good
 That they won't tell in my 'hood
 To an old-fashioned dyke like -

I'm gorgeous
 I'm single
 I'm bustin' with laughs
 So why
 Can't I
 Be just in two short paragraphs of a
 You betcha, damn funny
 Lesbian love story
 The kind of yarn that turns a girl to mush.
 Choose from hundreds of blondes
 But when shove comes push
 I understand a bird in hand's worth two in the bush.
 Sweet Jesus!

Let's hear that old-fashioned
 Lesbian love story
 Where girls are girls
 And boys stay out to sea.
 I'll write a new one and then
 I'll make them tell it again
 To an old-fashioned dyke
 Like me!

APPENDIX K

“Two of a Kind” from *The Wild Party*

Music and Lyrics by Andrew Lippa

EDDIE It's hard to describe my feelings
 But I'll try.

MAE He's gonna try.

EDDIE It's hard to express my wonder!

MAE He's wondering: "Why?"

EDDIE She's really so wonderful, so –

MAE Short?

EDDIE No – petite. Yet so complete.

MAE Now ain't he sweet?

EDDIE We're two of a kind
 A perfect pair
 A knockout in the ring

MAE We're two of a kind
 Why should we care
 If we don't own a thing?

EDDIE She's a one-two punch

MAE He's a catered lunch

EDDIE She's a melon on the rind

MAE He's one of the good guys

BOTH And we're two of a kind

MAE Show 'em your muscles

EDDIE Nah.

MAE Show 'em your muscles!

EDDIE Huh!

MAE Oooh!
 It's hard to express how happy
 I feel inside

EDDIE She feels inside!

MAE But he'll be my sugar pappy -
Sweetheart?

EDDIE My buttered bride!

MAE He's really so wonderful, so –

EDDIE Brute?

MAE No - astute.
He makes me toot.

EDDIE If that ain't cute:

BOTH We're two of a kind
A perfect match
A couple through and through
We're two of a kind

EDDIE The catcher

MAE The catch

BOTH A fairy tale come true.

MAE He's a motor car

EDDIE She's an oyster bar

MAE Just the way that God designed

EDDIE She's two feet below me

MAE But we're two of a kind

BOTH Why look for substitutions
You'll never fine?
We're happy together
Being just two of a kind

EDDIE One –

MAE Two –

BOTH I love you

APPENDIX L

“Be the Hero” from *Big Fish*

Music and Lyrics by Andrew Lippa

EDWARD BLOOM What if I told you
 You could change the world
 With just one thought
 What if I told you
 You could be a king
 Anything you desire, boy
 Anything on a plate
 All within your power to create

I know somewhere in the darkness
There's a story meant for me
Where I'll always know exactly what to say
I know somewhere some surprising ending
Waits for me to tell it my own way

Be the hero of your story, if you can
Be the champion in the fight-
Not just the man
Don't depend on other people
To put paper next to pen
Be the hero of your story, boy, and then
You can rise to be the hero once again

Now the best part of an adventure is the people you meet.

What if I said
I met a witch
When I was very young
What if I said
She showed me how I die
Powerless in the face of it
Terrified in the wood
That was where my life was
Changed for good

Hey!

What if I said
I met a giant,

Wasting in a cave
 What if I claimed I rose
 To be far braver
 Than the brave
 All my life of stories, son
 And every one is true
 So believe me
 As I'm telling you

To be the hero of your story
 While you may
 Be the guy who gets the girl
 And saves the day
 You don't need
 A book of Greeks
 To teach you how
 To stay alive
 Be the hero of each story
 You derive
 Then forever you're
 The story who'll survive

Every tale that you invent
 Can be a life
 That you make real
 Where each character
 You meet
 Becomes your friend
 You don't need to be
 A novelist
 To make believe what's
 Waiting 'round the bend

COMPANY Be the hero of your story
 'Til it's done
 Why go promenade when you
 Were born to run

EDWARD BLOOM If you understand
 This premise
 You will never be alone

COMPANY You can conquer
 Every challenge

You can face each
Stepping stone
Be the hero of your story

EDWARD BLOOM What if I swore
I saw a mermaid swimming
In the mist
What if I told you
She would be the first girl
That I kissed
Out there in the water
Filled with eagerness and fear
Here is what she whispered
In my ear:

COMPANY Be the hero of your story
Be the hero of your story
Be the hero of your story

EDWARD BLOOM Now listen, son: Now one day I met this fisherman, see'

FISHERMAN Oh you gotta help me! If I don't catch a fish, my family's gonna starve!

EDWARD BLOOM The fish are sleepin'! You gotta get 'em movin'. Try the Alabama Stomp!

Works every time!

Something about this rythym really gets their fins movin'. Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime. Teach a man the Alabama Stomp, you feed his soul!

I know somewhere in the future
There's adventure waits for me
Filled with mystery and people
I can love
I know out there
On the road of life
I'll live the story I've been
Dreaming of

APPENDIX M

“Fight the Dragons” from *Big Fish*

Music and Lyrics by Andrew Lippa

I’ve never been a man who lived an office life
I’ve never been a man behind a desk
I’ve always been a man who said that staying still was playing dead
The kind who’s looking forward to the challenges ahead

People say that’s irresponsible
People tell me stay at home
But I’m not made for things
Like mowin’ lawns or apron strings
I’m my best when not at rest

So I fight the dragons
And I storm the castles
And I win a battle or two
And comes the day its time
I’m packing up and I am bringing
All my stories home to you

All I can see is miles ahead with miles to go
All I can feel is wind and sun and sky
Stop for a coffee make a friend
And pray the day will never end
Because there’s one more adventure
Waiting ‘round another bend

Where I fight the dragons
And I storm the castles
And I win a battle or two
But then a feeling comes
Like fifty thousand drums all banging
Bring my stories home to you

And I wonder as a wander
On this road from door to door
Exactly where you think of where I’ve been
Do you know I joined a circus
Met a mermaid, fought a war
Did you know I think of you through thick and thin
Because even though I’m making deals

And bringing people joy
I'm usually only thinking of my boy

Out there on the road I pray
You'll come to me one day
And say'
Let's fight the dragons
And then storm the castles
Til we win what needs to be won
So when I'm old and tired
You'll do the job required
You'll be there
Telling stories to your son

And we fight the dragons
And we storm the castles
And I do the best that I can
But everybody knows
That's how the story goes
To turn each boy into a bigger man

So I'll fight the dragons
Til you can

APPENDIX N

“What’s Next” from *Big Fish*

Music and Lyrics by Andrew Lippa

WILL First things first: We're in this prison cell.
 Have to find a way to break out,
 find another place to stake out.
 Look around. Be sure we aren't seen.
 Slowly check the door before we're spotted.
 Were we spotted?
 I know you've been a secret double agent,
 but we can turn the page into another kind of tale.
 Let's go. The door is just our first opponent,
 so step out of your state of shock,
 we only need to pick this lock.

EDWARD No need!

WILL "What's next?" is all anyone needs to begin.
 "What's next?" has been a friend to you.
 What's next to do?
 One word and then suddenly one more again.
 Just like a pen writing a perfect tale.

 Out the door, and pray the coast is clear.
 Noses to the ground before we're spotted.
 We were spotted!
 So now, we face the ultimate decision:
 Relinquish our control as we surrender up the fight.
 Or else, we say hello to the collision,
 just do our job and do it well.

EDWARD Or better yet: Let's run like hell!

WILL What's next?" is all anyone needs to begin.
 "What's next?" has been a friend to you.
 What's next to do?
 One word and then suddenly one more again.
 Just like that pen writing a perfect tale.

EDWARD Will, look! My old Chevy!

WILL Edward Bloom,

how did you swim through danger in the world?
 What was in the heart that beats inside you?
 Were you simply wetter than the ordinary av'rage man
 or was it just your fins and scales to guide you to...

What's Next?

EDWARD We start the car.

WILL What's next?

EDWARD We hit the road.

WILL What's next?

EDWARD We find the river.

WILL What's next?

EDWARD I-I don't know!

WILL What's next?

EDWARD I don't know!

WILL And who do we see at the river to greet you?
 Ev'ryone there at the river to meet you.
 Ev'ryone you ever knew, ever spoke of
 waiting for you to arrive.

Now can you see Karl
 by the tree in the distance?
 Amos arrives with his usual flair.
 Zacky and Don,
 gathered 'round, cheering on.
 Yes, even the witch is there.
 She is there!

ENSEMBLE Edward Bloom
 we've come to say goodbye,
 come to tell you why we've always loved you,
 yes we love you.
 You.....

WILL What's next?" is all anyone needs to begin.
 "What's next?" has been a friend to you.
 What's next to do?
 Only one dad only inspiring one son.
 Edward, you're done
 writing your perfect tale.
 Telling the perfect tale.

WILL AND ENSEMBLE
 It was a perfect tale.

APPENDIX O

“How it Ends” from *Big Fish*

Music and Lyrics by Andrew Lippa

I've seen this all before
When I was just a child.
I met a witch who took a bow and showed me how it ended.
We stood here on the shore.
The air was sweet and mild,
With disbelief implausibly suspended.
And in my child's imagination, I remember you;
Though, I didn't know if we were foes or friends.
But now you're standing here,
I see the vision coming clear.
I know exactly how this ends.

It ends with you
It ends with me
It ends the way a story's ending is supposed to be
A bit insane,
A touch of pain,
Adeptly told,
Yet uncontrolled,
It ends with faith
It ends with love
It ends with water in the river and the sun above
Part epic tale
Part fire sale
But all sincere
And standing here

I know I wasn't perfect,
I know my life was small,
I know that I pretended that I knew it all.
But when you tell my story,
And I hope somebody does,
Remember me as something bigger than I was

It ends with sons
It ends with wives
It ends with knowing when the pavement bends we find our lives.
So let it come,
And let me go.

Show me the waves,
And let them flow.
It all ends well,
This much, I know.

APPENDIX P

“Closer to Her” from *Big Fish*

Music and Lyrics by Andrew Lippa

EDWARD BLOOM If you tell me who she is
 I'll work night and day
 And you won't even have to pay me

AMOS CALLOWAY Okay.
 Once a month
 If you work
 If you slave
 If you cry for me
 Then I'll give you a clue
 Once a month
 If you clean
 If you haul
 If you die for me
 Then the clue will be true
 Once a month
 It could be what she thinks
 What she loves
 Where she lives
 What she drinks
 What she hopes
 And all you have to do
 Is pull the ropes

 Closer to her
 I'll get you closer to her
 You only need to be
 My devotee because
 I'll tell you where she was born
 Or if she plays the French horn
 Then you'll be closer
 Than you ever was

First clue: She likes dancing.

EDWARD BLOOM Dancing!

CIRCUS FOLK Closer to her
 You're one step closer to her

EDWARD BLOOM	I'm not afraid to stoop To scooping poop because
CIRCUS FOLK	He'll stoop for poop!
AMOS CALLOWAY	You'll learn what perfume she wears Or what she says in her prayers
EDWARD BLOOM	And be much closer than I ever was Mr. Calloway, it's time.
AMOS CALLOWAY	For what?
EDWARD BLOOM	My clue! About the girl I'm gonna marry.
AMOS CALLOWAY	If you got a clue, you wouldn't get married at all. Back to work!
CIRCUS FOLK	Days into weeks Into months into years Into clue after clue after clue
AMOS CALLOWAY	She likes blue!
CIRCUS FOLK	Seasons go by in the blink of an eye But the dream doesn't seem To come true
AMOS CALLOWAY	Barbecue!
EDWARD BLOOM	Year after year With the hope I would hear Something kind Something fresh Something new- Mr. Calloway, it's been three years!
AMOS CALLOWAY	Kid! There's other fish in the seas!
EDWARD BLOOM	But I'm already hooked. Why do you insist on keeping her name a secret?

AMOS CALLOWAY Secrets are the backbone of society
 Everybody ought to have a few
 I believe in secrets
 And I'll keep mine for awhile
 They keep me a success
 They make you work for less

But I'm a man of my word. Your girl- she's going to college.

EDWARD BLOOM Closer to her

EDWARD/ CIRCUS FOLK One textbook closer to her
 But I've/you've been working hard
 And time is flying by

EDWARD BLOOM I've paid his price, I should go
 Still, there's one thing I don't know...

AMOS CALLOWAY Hell. Her name is Sandra Templeton. She goes to Auburn University.

EDWARD BLOOM Thank you, Mr. Calloway. Thank you!

CIRCUS FOLK Like a cannon ball
 Soon to be a human comet above
 Like a cannon ball
 Circling a constellation of love
 Filling up the heavens
 Making waters part
 Aiming straight for
 His beloved's welcoming heart

Boom!

Closer it's true
 There's not much more he can do
 The years gone by will seem
 A kind of dreamy blur
 And when at Auburn he lands
 He'll do what Fortune demands
 When finally closer than closer to-

EDWARD BLOOM Oof!

APPENDIX Q

“Someone Like You” from *Jekyll & Hyde*

Music and Lyrics by Frank Wildhorn

I peer through windows,
Watch life go by,
Dream of tomorrow,
And wonder "why"?

The past is holding me,
Keeping life at bay,
I wander lost in yesterday,
Wanting to fly -
But scared to try.

But if someone like you
Found someone like me,
Then suddenly
Nothing would ever be the same!

My heart would take wing,
And I'd feel so alive -
If someone like you
Found me!

So many secrets
I've longed to share!
All I have needed
Is someone there,

To help me see a world
I've never seen before -
A love to open every door,
To set me free,
So I can soar!

If someone like you
Found someone like me,
Then suddenly
Nothing would ever be the same!

There'd be a new way to live,
A new life to love,

If someone like you
Found me!

Oh, if someone like you
Found someone like me,
Then suddenly
Nothing would ever be the same!

My heart would take wing,
And I'd feel so alive -
If someone like you
Loved me...
Loved me...
Loved me!

APPENDIX R

“What it Means to be a Friend” from *13*

Music and Lyrics by Jason Robert Brown

A friend's not a cheap little phony creep
Or a jerk trying to make a deal
A friend is a person who, most of all,
Cares about what you feel;
And nothing is harder
Than learning a friend isn't real

A friend sends notes back and forth all day
And doesn't care that you can't spell
A friend knows you've got a crush on your teacher,
But a friend would never tell
A friend's outside waiting
The minute you both hear the bell

And if your heart is always breaking
Cause the world is just not fair
When you're at your worst
Your friend's the first one there
Giving you something to lean on
And that's what it means to be a friend

A friend won't smoke when she's in your room
Or laugh at the poems you write
A friend won't go start kissing your brother
The minute that you're out of sight
A friend is the person
You call sixteen times every night

And if your heart is always breaking
And you want to run and hide
When your hope is gone
Your friend is on your side

If someone moves in 'round the corner
And you want to show him you care
So you give him all your last month of vacation
And all of the time you can spare
But then, on the first day of classes
He acts like you're not even there,

Then he doesn't know'
He doesn't know!
He'll never know what it means
To be a friend

APPENDIX S

“Still Hurting” from *The Last 5 Years*

Music and Lyrics by Jason Robert Brown

Jamie is over and Jamie is gone
Jamie's decided it's time to move on
Jamie has new dreams he's building upon
And I'm still hurting

Jamie arrived at the end of the line
Jamie's convinced that the problems are mine
Jamie is probably feeling just fine
And I'm still hurting

What about lies, Jamie?
What about things
That you swore to be true
What about you, Jamie
What about you

Jamie is sure something wonderful died
Jamie decides it's his right to decide
Jamie's got secrets he doesn't confide
And I'm still hurting

Go and hide and run away
Run away, run and find something better
Go and ride the sun away
Run away like it's simple
Like it's right...

Give me a day, Jamie
Bring back the lies
Hang them back on the wall
Maybe I'd see
How you could be
So certain that we
Had no chance at all

Jamie is over and where can I turn?
Covered with scars I did nothing to earn
Maybe there's somewhere a lesson to learn
But that wouldn't change the fact

That wouldn't speed the time
Once the foundation's cracked
And I'm
Still Hurting

APPENDIX T

“Goodbye Until Tomorrow/I Could Never Rescue You” from *The Last 5 Years*

Music and Lyrics by Jason Robert Brown

CATHERINE Don't kiss me goodbye again
Leave this night clean and quiet
You want the last word
You want me to laugh
But leave it for now

All you can say
All you can feel
Was wrapped up inside that one perfect kiss
Leave it at that:
I'll watch you turn the corner and go...

And goodbye until tomorrow
Goodbye until the next time you call
And I'll be waiting
Goodbye until tomorrow
Goodbye till I recall how to breathe
And I have been waiting
I have been waiting for you

I stand on a precipice
I struggle to keep my balance
I open myself
I open myself one stitch at a time

Finally yes!
Finally now!
Finally something takes me away
Finally free!
Finally he can cut through these strings
And open my wings!

So goodbye until tomorrow!
Goodbye until my feet touch the floor
And I will be waiting
I will be waiting!
Goodbye until tomorrow
Goodbye until the rest of my life
And I have been waiting

I have been waiting for you
Waiting for you
Waiting for you

JAMIE I called Elise to help me pack my bags
I went downtown and closed the bank account
It's not about another shrink
It's not about another compromise
I'm not the only one who's hurting here
I don't know what the hell is left to do
You never saw how far the crack had opened
You never knew I had run out of rope and

I could never rescue you
All you ever wanted
But I could never rescue you
No matter how I tried
All I could do was love you hard
And let you go

No matter how I tried
All I could do was love you
God, I loved you so
So we could fight
Or we could wait
Or I could go...

CATHERINE Goodbye until tomorrow!
Goodbye until I crawl to your door
And I will be waiting
I will be waiting

JAMIE You never noticed how the wind had changed

CATHERINE Goodbye until tomorrow!

JAMIE I didn't see a way we both could win

CATHERINE Goodbye until I'm done thanking God
For I have been waiting
I have been waiting for you
I have been waiting!

JAMIE Goodbye, Cathy

CATHERINE I have been waiting for you

JAMIE Goodbye

CATHERINE I will keep waiting -
 I will be waiting for you

 Just close the gate
 I'll stand and wait
 Jamie...

BOTH Goodbye

APPENDIX U

“Shiksa Goddess” from *The Last 5 Years*

Music and Lyrics by Jason Robert Brown

I'm breaking my mother's heart
The longer I stand looking at you
The more I hear it splinter and crack
From ninety miles away

I'm breaking my mother's heart
The JCC of Spring Valley is shaking
And crumbling to the ground
And my grandfather's rolling
Rolling in his grave

If you had a tattoo, that wouldn't matter
If you had a shaved head, that would be cool
If you came from Spain or Japan
Or the back of a van
Just as long as you're not from Hebrew school
I'd say, "Now I'm getting somewhere!"
I'm finally breaking through!"
I'd say, "Hey! Hey! Shiksa goddess!
I've been waiting for someone like you"

I've been waiting through Danica Schwartz and Erica Weiss
And the Handelman twins
I've been waiting through Heather Greenblatt, Annie Mincus, Karen Pincus and Lisa Katz
And Stacy Rosen, Ellen Kaplan, Julie Silber and Janie Stein
I've had Shabbos dinners on Friday nights
With every Shapiro in Washington Heights
But the minute I first met you
I could barely catch my breath
I've been standing for days with the phone in my hand
Like an idiot, scared to death
I've been wandering through the desert
I've been beaten, I've been hit
My people have suffered for thousands of years
And I don't give a shit!

If you had a pierced tongue, that wouldn't matter
If you once were in jail or you once were a man,
If your mother and your brother had "relations" with each other

And your father was connected to the Gotti clan
I'd say, "Well, nobody's perfect"
It's tragic but it's true
I'd say, "Hey! Hey! Shiksa goddess!
I've been waiting for someone like..."

You, breaking the circle
You, taking the light
You, you are the story
I should write
I have to write!

If you drove an R.V., that wouldn't matter
If you like to drink blood, I think it's cute
If you've got a powerful connection to your firearm collection
I'd say, Draw a bead and shoot
I'm your Hebrew slave, at your service
Just tell me what to do
I say, "Hey hey hey hey!
I've been waiting for someone
I've been praying for someone
I think that I could be in love with someone
Like You"

APPENDIX V

“Home Before you Know It” from *The Bridges of Madison County*

Music and Lyrics by Jason Robert Brown

BUD Fran, you know the drill.
 Now, look, if anything goes wrong -
 I know you think it never will,
 But if it does,
 They know next door
 You're here alone.

 Now Fran, you're free and clear,
 We got the fences fixed already,
 So while we're out with the steer,
 You should be fine.
 And if you're not,
 Pick up the phone.

 You know there's room for you to come,
 Although, I take it back, there's not.
 We got the cow, we got the kids,
 And then the tent, which I forgot.
 We better get out on the road
 Before the trailer gets too hot,

 But we'll be home before you know.
 We'll be home before you notice that we're gone.
 Three days isn't very long,
 And so if anything goes wrong,
 Just hold on tight -
 The end's in sight -
 And we'll be home.

MICHAEL I'm gonna drive!
 Last year, you said
 When I was sixteen,
 I could drive?
 And I'm sixteen!
 You gonna go back on
 your word?
 Come on! I drive
 Better'n you.
 I tell you now -

I won't be squeezin' in the middle
I'm not squeezin' in the middle!

BUD What?
I do not think so, Michael.

Right now I am talking to
Your mother!

Michael, get the lunch!
What did I say?
Go get the Lunch!
Jesus!

MICHAEL How 'bout if I just
Drive the last mile?
So we can come in that
Fair in style?
Oh!
I can't believe this.

BUD I've got to move it out right now
I don't have time to sit and wait,
We get a worse spot in the stall
For every minute that we're late!
And I can see by how you're lookin'
That you think it's really great
That we'll be home before you know it.
We'll be home
And then I won't do this again.
Year sure, you're laughin' at me now,
When I got two kids and a cow
I gotta show
We gotta go
Then we'll be home.

FRANCESCA Sweetheart, it's Mom.

CARLOYN Why does he have to be a jerk?

FRANCESCA I'm sorry you got upset with Dad, but you've worked so hard with Steve.
All you have to do now is go to Indianapolis? so he can win Steer of the
Year.

CAROLYN Why do you have to sound like him?
 Why do you have to say what he says?
 You don't care about the farm.

FRANCESCA Carolyn. This could be your college education right here.

CAROLYN You should have made him stay in Italy
 Then I could be Italian
 And you could be happy
 And I wouldn't have to marry a farmer.

FRANCESCA You don't have to marry a farmer.

CAROLYN Nobody asks me what I want!

BUD Carolyn!

CAROLYN Ti amo, mama. Coming!

BUD You'll be OK here, right?

FRANCESCA I've got a book I want to read, I've got new recipes to try,
 Or I might just spend 3 days sitting here and staring at the sky,
 But I can't get out of this kitchen 'till you finally say goodbye,
 And you'll be home before I know it.

BUD Ok then, we'll see you Thursday.

FRANCESCA You'll be home before I notice that you're gone.

BUD We'll call from the road. All right, here we go!

FRANCESCA You'll be home before I know it.

APPENDIX W

“One Second and a Million Miles” from *The Bridges of Madison County*

Music and Lyrics by Jason Robert Brown

ROBERT For the first time in my life,
I am not outside the moment
With a camera in between me and the world
I think I know.
For the first time in my life,
I am somehow part of something.
You surround me, you connect me,
And I think I can't let go.
For the first time in my life,
You have opened up a channel
There is nothing to contain us,
We are joined, and we are free.
For the first time in my life,
I am risking something precious.
I am asking you, Francesca:
Come with me.

I can't tell you I know what the future will be.
Who knows anything?
I just look at those eyes; you've got so much to see.
Let me know you. There's
Crowds and camels and hillsides to climb.
All I know is, in all of the time
From man's first breath
To God's last warning,
You and I are just one second,
Spinning by in one split-second.
You and I have just one second
And a million miles to go.

I don't need to be rich, I don't need something new.

FRANCESCA I don't want to go back to a world without this.

ROBERT All I need, all I've needed my whole life was you.

FRANCESCA If I left this behind?

Robert
Please just look at me:

You were born with a wanderer's soul.
 This is how you begin to be whole.
 The stars keep burning,
 Worlds keep turning

ROBERT AND FRANCESCA

And you and I are just one second,
 Spinning by in just one second,
 You and I have just one second

ROBERT And a million miles to go...

FRANCESCA Found and lost.
 Torn in half.
 Before and after you.

ROBERT Come with me.

FRANCESCA Open heart,
 Open door.
 Before and after you.

ROBERT Come with me.

FRANCESCA How do I go?
 Tell me.
 How do I go?
 How do I go with you?
 How do I pack a bag,
 Close a door,
 Turn a key,
 Walk away?
 Look at where I am
 And who I am
 And tell me.
 Is there something I don't know?
 How do I go?
 How can I go
 With you?

ROBERT I can't tell you I know what the answer will be.
 It's impossible.
 But this thing, this is bigger than what we can see.
 This is destiny.
 We are tied, we are locked, we are bound;
 This will not be reversed or unwound.
 Whatever fate the stars are weaving,
 We're not breaking,

I'm not leaving,
And you and I are just one second.
Spinning by in just one second.
You and I have just one second

FRANCESCA And a million miles to go.

ROBERT All my life I have been falling

FRANCESCA All my life I have been falling

ROBERT All my life I have been falling into

FRANCESCA All my life I have been falling

ROBERT You and I

ROBERT AND FRANCESCA
Have just one second

ROBERT And a million miles to go.

FRANCESCA Come with me.

APPENDIX X

“To Build a Home” from *The Bridges of Madison County*

Music and Lyrics by Jason Robert Brown

There's a boat that leaves from Napoli
Every Thursday in the morning
And a nervous bride can share a bed
With her soldier from the States.
For a week, the ocean carries them
Over lost and churning water
And they land in New York Harbor
Then to Pennsylvania Station
Where they board a train
That slices like a scythe
Through the fields of America.

This is Albany
This is Buffalo
This is Cleveland
This is South bend
This is Chicago
This is Osceola Station
Where a truck will take them
Deeper into Iowa
To Winterset
And three hundred Acres
Waiting to be tamed.

And blade of grass by blade of grass
And ear of corn by ear of corn
And bale of Hay by day by day
They build themselves a home.
And day by day and year by year,
From boy to man, from calf to steer,
What's lost from there may not grow here,
But comes the sun,
Look what they've done:
They've built themselves a home.

At Twenty-one, a girl begins
To grasp the world and how it spins.
She grabs a box of safety pins
And builds herself a home.

And home is safe, and home is fair,
The porch, the bath, the kitchen chair,
The sharp and unfamiliar air
That blow by blow
She comes to know
To build herself a home.

With a son.
And a daughter.
And a million miles between
The fires she used to set
The hearts she used to break
The lies she used to tell
And the woman she grew up
to be.

I learn to speak, I learn to sew,
I learn to let the longing go,

The tractor wheel, a food of snow,
I build myself a home.

I change my words, I change my name,
The fields go dry, the horse goes lame,
The county fair, the football game,
For eighteen years,
It stays the same,
For eighteen years,
I'm proud I came
And built myself a home.

APPENDIX Y

“The World Was Wide Enough” from *Hamilton*

Music and Lyrics by Lin-Manuel Miranda

MALE COMPANY One two three four

FULL COMPANY Five six seven eight nine—

BURR There are ten things you need to know

COMPANY Number one!

BURR We rowed across the Hudson at dawn
My friend, William P. Van Ness signed on as my—

BURR/COMPANY Number two!

BURR Hamilton arrived with his crew:
Nathaniel Pendleton and a doctor that he knew

COMPANY Number three!

BURR I watched Hamilton examine the terrain
I wish I could tell you what was happ’ning in his brain
This man has poisoned my political pursuits!

COMPANY Most disputes die and no one shoots!
Number four!

BURR Hamilton drew first position
Looking, to the world, like a man on a mission
This is a soldier with a marksman’s ability
The doctor turned around so he could have deniability

COMPANY Five!

BURR Now I didn’t know this at the time
But we were—

BURR/PHILIP Near the same spot
Your son died, is that
Why—

HAMILTON Near the same spot
My son died, is that
Why—

COMPANY Six!

BURR He examined his gun with such rigor?
I watched as he methodically fiddled with the trigger

COMPANY Seven!

BURR Confession time? Here's what I got:
My fellow soldiers'll tell you I'm a terrible shot

COMPANY Number eight!

BURR/HAMILTON/ENSEMBLE MEN
Your last chance to negotiate
Send in your seconds, see if they can set the record straight

BURR They won't teach you this in your classes
But look it up, Hamilton was wearing his glasses
Why? If not to take deadly aim?
It's him or me, the world will never be the same
I had only one thought before the slaughter:
This man will not make an orphan of my daughter

COMPANY Number nine!

BURR Look him in the eye, aim no higher
Summon all the courage you require
Then count:

COMPANY One two three four five six seven eight nine
Number ten paces! Fire!—

HAMILTON I imagine death so much it feels more like a memory
Is this where it gets me, on my feet, sev'ral feet ahead of me?
I see it coming, do I run or fire my gun or let it be?
There is no beat, no melody
Burr, my first friend, my enemy
Maybe the last face I ever see
If I throw away my shot, is this how you'll remember me?
What if this bullet is my legacy?

Legacy. What is a legacy?
It's planting seeds in a garden you never get to see
I wrote some notes at the beginning of a song someone will sing
for me
America, you great unfinished symphony, you sent for me
You let me make a difference
A place where even orphan immigrants
Can leave their fingerprints and rise up

I'm running out of time. I'm running, and my time's up
 Wise up. Eyes up
 I catch a glimpse of the other side
 Laurens leads a soldiers' chorus on the other side
 My son is on the other side
 He's with my mother on the other side
 Washington is watching from the other side

Teach me how to say goodbye

Rise up, rise up, rise up
 Eliza

My love, take your time
 I'll see you on the other side
 Raise a glass to freedom...

BURR/COMPANY He aims his pistol at the sky—

BURR Wait!

BURR I strike him right between his ribs
 I walk towards him, but I am ushered away
 They row him back across the Hudson
 I get a drink

COMPANY Aaaah
 Aaaah
 Aaaah

BURR I hear wailing in the streets

COMPANY Aaaah
 Aaaah
 Aaaah

BURR Somebody tells me, "You'd better hide."

COMPANY Aaaah
 Aaaah
 Aaaah

BURR They say

BURR /ANGELICA Angelica and Eliza—

BURR Were both at his side when he died
 Death doesn't discriminate
 Between the sinners and the saints

It takes and it takes and it takes
History obliterates
In every picture it paints
It paints me and all my mistakes
When Alexander aimed
At the sky
He may have been the first one to die
But I'm the one who paid for it

I survived, but I paid for it

Now I'm the villain in your history
I was too young and blind to see...
I should've known
I should've known
The world was wide enough for both Hamilton and me
The world was wide enough for both Hamilton and me

APPENDIX Z

“A Winter’s Ball” from *Hamilton*

Music and Lyrics by Lin-Manuel Miranda

BURR How does the bastard, orphan, son of a whore
 Go on and on
 Grow into more of a phenomenon?
 Watch this obnoxious, arrogant, loudmouth bother
 Be seated at the right hand of the father
 Washington hires Hamilton right on sight
 But Hamilton still wants to fight, not write
 Now Hamilton’s skill with a quill is undeniable
 But what do we have in common? We’re
 Reliable with the

ALL MEN Ladies!

BURR There are so many to deflower!

ALL MEN Ladies!

BURR Looks! Proximity to power

ALL MEN Ladies!

BURR They delighted and distracted him
 Martha Washington named her feral tomcat after him!

HAMILTON That’s true

COMPANY: 1780

BURR A winter’s ball
 And the Schuyler sisters are the envy of all
 Yo, if you can marry a sister, you’re rich, son

HAMILTON Is it a question of if, Burr, or which one?

BOTH Hey
 Hey
 Hey
 Hey
 Hey
 Hey
 Hey
 Hey
 Hey

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