How Sondheim Found His Sound
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Steve Swayne

University of Michigan Press
Ann Arbor
to my parents

Louis Swayne, Jr. and
Lelia Catherine Swayne

for their high expectations,
great sacrifices
and boundless love
Acknowledgments

This book represents the culmination of work that began more than fifteen years ago in a classroom at the University of Washington. I had no idea that a term paper on *Merrily We Roll Along* would lead to graduate study at the University of California at Berkeley, a serendipitous lunch with an outgoing professor there, and a stimulating apprenticeship with an incoming one. Neither did I think that a letter from Sondheim—the first of many, as it happened—would lead me to abandon my plan to mine my doctoral thesis for this book and choose instead to prospect another, more challenging claim.

There have been many who have assisted me thus far, and if I fail to name them all in these pages, it is one more of the errors this book undoubtedly contains. I take full responsibility for these errors, even as I take pleasure in thanking those who have helped me get a few things right.

Among my academic colleagues, pride of place must go to Larry Starr, who taught that class in Seattle. His curious spirit and unorthodox views gave me courage to begin down this path. Thanks also to Stephen Rumph, a former Berkeley colleague who, as of this writing, is Larry’s colleague. He invited me to return to Seattle and share a little of what I’ve learned over the years. Thank you both.

The list of Berkeley supporters is necessarily longer. Joseph Kerman counseled me over lunch, and he occasionally still follows up on me. Wye Jamison Allanbrook and I talked about the importance of Jane Powell and Doris Day in our lives. Katherine Bergeron endured more than any advisor should be called upon to endure. And my student colleagues at Berkeley gave me courage to continue. Thanks to all of you, especially Danielle Fosler-Lussier and David Schneider. You two helped me stay on track in so many ways.

My colleagues at Dartmouth College are also numerous and supportive. Sondheim is not Bill Summers’s thing, but Bill has never flagged in encouraging me to become the best scholar I could. Ted Levin critiqued
my early work and sketched out a trail for me to blaze. Jon Appleton, Larry Polansky, and Melinda O’Neal offered perspectives and incentives that I needed. Jennifer Matsue Milioto gave me permission to write this book and not a different one. Mark Williams, Lynn Higgins, and Mary Desjardins opened my mind to discoveries in their fields. Sydney Stowe and Bill Pence were gracious with their time and resources. Jane Carroll was always eager to talk Broadway with me and find funding for me. Jamshed Bharucha and Lenore Grenoble gave me confidence to keep on working. And Jean Callahan helped me to arrange the tasks of life in their correct order. Thank you all.

I am grateful to the Dartmouth students who have looked over my work and have wrestled with me on some of the issues presented in these pages. Jason, Daniel, Lisa, Greg, Carl, John B., Nathan, Tyler, Kamil, Oliver, Justin G., Jamie, Laura, Bill, Clinton, Craig, Amanda, Alison, Amish, Shayne, Andrea, Justin M., Eric, Emily, Wendy, Lauren, Derek, Christena: you all helped me more than you will know. Tom: thanks for the good research and probing questions you provided. And Brian: “as iron sharpens iron . . .”

Other people in other places also have made this book possible. Geoffrey Block, John Breglio, Patricia Chute, Mark Dinham, Wayne Dynes, Lara Housez, Michael H. Hutchins, Nancy Kieffer, Gregory King and Peter Sultan, Linda Kirland, Ray Knapp, Kim Kowalke, Jim Leve, Ralph Locke, Cathy Loeb, James Lovensheimer, Stephen Murray, Gregory Nigosian, Richard Rosendall, Paul Salsini, Caldwell Titcomb, Paul Varnell, John and Lynn Wadhams, Scott Warfield: there are traces of all of you in these pages. Thank you.

Then there are the institutions that have made this book possible. A grant from the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation gave me time to write this book, and the other fellows gave me motivation to extend my reach. The staff at the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research at the University of Wisconsin made research there a pleasure. Special thanks go to the members of the AMS Publications Committee for their subvention from the Lloyd Hibberd Publication Endowment Fund of the American Musicological Society. Other colleagues in the AMS (especially the New England chapter) and the Society for American Music have helped me refine some of my ideas over the years. The newsletters and news from the Sondheim Society (United Kingdom) have broadened my understanding and appreciation for Sondheim. And the good people of Opera North (Lebanon, New Hampshire) have always been kind and encouraging.

The world of publishing creates its own list of those who aid and
comfort. Thanks to Mary Francis at the University of California Press, Gayle Sherwood and Jeffrey Magee at Indiana University Press, and Michael Flamini at Palgrave, all of whom, in various ways, helped this book arrive safely in Ann Arbor. The same goes for Rosemary Gawelko, Hope Chirino, Juliet Perez, Arminda Trevino, Victoria Traube, Robin Walton, Frank Korach, Marie Carter, Melinda Mondrala, and Clemens Morgenroth, who provided permissions for copyrighted material. Myrna Katz Frommer and Harvey Frommer, whose last-minute gift was an unexpected delight, are angels. Chris Hebert at the University of Michigan Press has been a remarkable editor, and my indebtedness to him will continue long after I finish writing this. And I thank him especially for inviting Polly Fallows to serve as my text editor. Both Chris and I can avouch that you have been a joy to work with.

Four other colleagues helped in unexpected ways. Linda Hall at Williams College has answered my every query with the thoroughness that her job demands and an amiability that transcends it. Stephen Banfield at the University of Bristol has cheered and challenged me as I followed him in an enterprise that he has already treated in impressive detail. Mark Eden Horowitz at the Library of Congress lent both his professional skills and his personal interest to advise and direct me. And Charles Hamm in Norwich, Vermont, offered guidance that was as invaluable as it was timely. I thank you all for making this book stronger, and I apologize for those passages where I failed to heed your counsel.

Words hardly suffice to thank those who remain. Paul McKibbins (Rilting Music): I will always remember our first meeting, your question about Sondheads, and your kind words and gentle interventions on my behalf. Maxyne Lang (Williamson Music): I have yet to meet you in person, and yet already I owe you so much. Steven Clar: How you manage to do all the things you do, I will never know. Stephen Sondheim: I will always marvel at how generous you have been in making your work and your thoughts available to me. Thank you.

And Mike Backman: For the birthday gift twelve years ago of every Sondheim Broadway score, for the daily gift of your love, and for so much more: thank you.
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A Chronology of Sondheim’s Creative Career

1946  *By George* (musical; book, music, and lyrics by Miriam Dubin, James Lincoln, and Steve Sondheim; George School)

1948  *Phinney’s Rainbow* (musical; book and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and Josiah T. S. Horton; Williams College)

1949  *All That Glitters* (musical; book by Stephen Sondheim; Williams College)
      (ca.) *Bequest* (novel; abandoned)
      Variations on a Theme (Katie Malone) for Piano

1950  Sonata for Piano in C major
      “No Sad Songs for Me” (song in revue, *Where To From Here*, Williams College)
      *Mary Poppins* (musical; abandoned)

1951  *High Tor* (musical; abandoned)
      *I Know My Love* (play by S. N. Berman; song, a Christmas carol)
      Sonata in G minor for Violin Solo ("A Very Short Violin Sonata")

1952  (ca.) Concertino for Two Pianos (three out of a projected four movements)

1953  *Topper* (screenplays for television series [with George Oppenheimer])
      *Climb High* (musical; unproduced)
      *The Man with the Squeaky Shoes* (television show; unproduced)

1954  *The Lady or the Tiger?* (television musical [with Mary Rodgers]; song, “I Wonder Why”; unproduced)
Saturday Night (musical, first version; book by Julius J. Epstein)

1955
A Mighty Man Is He (play by George Oppenheimer and Arthur Kober; song, “Rag Me That Mendelssohn March”)
The Madwoman of Chaillot (musical treatment; based on play by Jean Giraudoux; abandoned)

1956
The Girls of Summer (play by N. Richard Nash; song, “The Girls of Summer”)
I Believe in You (television play; song, “They Ask Me Why I Believe in You”; unproduced)
The Last Resorts (musical; song, “Pour le sport”; abandoned)

1957
West Side Story (musical; lyrics; music by Leonard Bernstein; book by Arthur Laurents)
Ring Round the Moon (musical; abandoned)

1958
The Jet-Propelled Couch (television musical; abandoned)

1959
Gypsy (musical; lyrics; music by Jule Styne; book by Arthur Laurents)
Happily Ever After (television musical; abandoned)

1960
Invitation to a March (play by Arthur Laurents; incidental music)

1962
A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum (musical; book by Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbart)
The World According to Jules Feiffer (revue by Jules Feiffer; song, “Truly Content,” and incidental music for Passionella; incidental music for monologue, George’s Moon)

1963
Hot Spot (musical; music [with Mary Rodgers]; lyrics [with Martin Charnin]; book by Jack Weinstock and Willie Gilbert; two songs: “Don’t Laugh” and “That’s Good, That’s Bad”)

1964
Anyone Can Whistle (musical; book by Arthur Laurents)

1965
Do I Hear a Waltz? (musical; lyrics; music by Richard Rodgers; book by Arthur Laurents)

1966
Evening Primrose (television musical; screenplay by James Goldman)
The Mad Show (revue; book by Larry Siegel and Stan Hart; song: “The Boy From...,” lyrics by “Estaban Ria Nido”)
1968 *The Exception and the Rule* (alternately, *The Race to Urga* and *A Pray by Blechti*) (musical; lyrics; music by Leonard Bernstein; book by John Guare; abandoned) crossword puzzles for *New York* magazine

1969 *The Thing of It Is* (film; screenplay by William Goldman; song, “No, Mary Ann”; unproduced)

1970 *Company* (musical; book by George Furth)

1971 *Follies* (musical; book by James Goldman)
*Twigs* (one-act plays by George Furth; incidental music)

1973 *A Little Night Music* (musical; book by Hugh Wheeler)
*The Last of Sheila* (film; coauthor with Anthony Perkins)
*The Enclave* (play by Arthur Laurents; incidental music)

1974 *Candide* (musical; additional lyrics; music by Leonard Bernstein; book by Hugh Wheeler)
*Stavisky . . .* (film score; Alain Resnais, director)
*The Frogs* (musical; book by Burt Shevelove)

1976 *Pacific Overtures* (musical; book by John Weidman; additional material by Hugh Wheeler)
*Side by Side by Sondheim* (musical revue)
*The Seven Per Cent Solution* (film; song: “I Never Do Anything Twice”)

1979 *Sweeney Todd* (musical; book by Hugh Wheeler)
*Madwoman of Central Park West* (play; book by Phyllis Newman and Arthur Laurents; two songs [see *Hot Spot*, 1963])

1980 *Marry Me a Little* (musical revue; book by Craig Lucas)

1981 *Merrily We Roll Along* (musical; book by George Furth)
*Reds* (portion of film score; Warren Beatty, director; song: “Goodbye for Now”)

1984 *Sunday in the Park with George* (musical; James Lapine, director)

1985 *Merrily We Roll Along* (La Jolla production; additional material by James Lapine)

1987 *Follies* (revised for London production)
*Into the Woods* (musical; book by James Lapine)

1990 *Dick Tracy* (film; Warren Beatty, director; five songs: “Sooner
or Later (I Always Get My Man),” “More,” “Live Alone and Like It,” “Back in Business,” and “What Can You Lose?”

1991  *Assassins* (musical; book by John Weidman)

1992  *Putting It Together* (musical revue)
      *Singing Out Loud* (film musical; screenplay by William Goldman; songs: “Dawn,” “Sand,” “Water Under the Bridge,” others; unproduced)

1994  *Passion* (musical; book by James Lapine)

1995  *The Doctor Is Out* (play, coauthor with George Furth; San Diego)

1996  *Getting Away with Murder* (new name for *The Doctor Is Out*; New York)
      *The Birdcage* (film; two songs: “Little Dream” and “It Takes All Kinds” [cut])

1997  *Saturday Night* (premiere in London)

1999  *Saturday Night* (premiere in Chicago)
      *Wise Guys* (workshop production; book by John Weidman; later, *Gold!*, then *Bounce*)

2000  *Moving On* (musical revue)

2003  *Bounce* (musical; Chicago and Washington, D.C., productions)

2004  *The Frogs* (revised by Nathan Lane; Broadway premiere)
      *Opening Doors* (musical revue; revision of *Moving On*)