

BOTH
HE MAY BE FULL OF HOKUM
BUT I'VE NO COMPLAINT.
HE OFTEN IS A BORE,
BUT ON THE FLOOR HE AIN'T,
AND OH BOY, OH BOY,
CAN THAT BOY F...OX-TROT!

(WOMAN #1 takes boas and puts them
on S.R. stool and sits. WOMAN #2
sits S.L., MAN X's to sit C.)

NARRATOR

Stephen Sondheim was born 48 years ago in New York. He grew up there till the age of ten when his parents separated and he went to live with his mother in Bucks County, very near the home of Oscar Hammerstein the senior American lyric writer. By the time he was 15, Sondheim had already written a number of musical plays at school. There was one that he was particularly proud of. He took it across to Hammerstein and asked him for a frank, professional opinion of the work. (READ) Sondheim recalls, "I knew that he and Richard Rodgers would want to produce it immediately and I'd be the first 15-year-old ever to have a musical done on Broadway." Well it didn't work out quite like that. The next day Hammerstein called him across and said, "Now you really want me to treat this as though it was being submitted to me by some professional writer?" So Sondheim said bravely, "Yes, please." And Hammerstein said, "Well, in that case it's the worst thing I ever read in my life." Seeing the adolescent Sondheim's lower lip trembling a little he said, "I didn't say it wasn't talented; I said it was terrible. And if you want to know why it's terrible, I'll tell you." And that afternoon he gave him a sort of class in the art of constructing a musical play from the very first stage direction to the final curtain call -- as Sondheim says,

NARRATOR (Cont'd)

"Rather like it was LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT." But that day he sowed the seeds of Sondheim as a musical dramatist. And it's to two of this dramatist's favorite themes that we now return: relationships, particularly in and around marriage, and the city of New York, which Sondheim calls "a city of strangers."

But I think that may be changing. I don't know if you saw a headline in the New York Times the other month. It read, "Murders by strangers drop in New York". Last year murders by strangers fell from 454 to 349, while murders by what the police charmingly call "acquaintances" rose from 592 to 633, which suggests New York is becoming a friendlier place; or that murderers are introducing themselves.

All the songs in this section come from the musical COMPANY which was based on a series of one-act plays by George Furth. "Marry Me A Little" is a song which Sondheim started to write for COMPANY but didn't finish at the time because Harold Prince, the director of the play, thought it wasn't quite right for the mood of the piece.

Fortunately, Mrs. Prince heard Sondheim playing it in her drawing room and she liked it so much that he finished it for her as a Christmas present. It's always difficult to know what to give the woman who has everything. It has one of his most exciting tunes and the lyric sums up that rather ambivalent attitude to marriage which you find in so much of his work.

"Barcelona" is a song from the main score of COMPANY. It's more than a song really; it's a little scene, almost a one-act play in itself, as the leading man wakes up in the small hours of the morning after a one-night stand with an airline stewardess.

NARRATOR (Cont'd)

What in England they call an
Entente Cordiale.

The lady's name is April, which is
important for you to remember.

The other song in this section is
"Another Hundred People". This is
a song for a young woman who's
just arrived in New York and she's
still open-eyed with wonder at the
whole town, and the song says all
she has to say, or rather sing,
about New York in 132 bars. In
comes "Company"!

(ALL three come D.S. WOMAN #2
R, WOMAN #1 L, MAN C.)

WOMAN #2

PHONE RINGS, DOOR CHIMES, IN COMES COMPANY!

WOMAN #1

PHONE RINGS, DOOR CHIMES, IN COMES COMPANY!

MAN

PHONE RINGS, DOOR CHIMES, IN COMES COMPANY!

WOMAN #2

NO STRINGS, GOOD TIMES, JUST CHUMS, COMPANY!

WOMAN #1 AND MAN

NO STRINGS, GOOD TIMES, JUST CHUMS, COMPANY!

ALL

THOSE GOOD AND CRAZY PEOPLE, MY FRIENDS!
THOSE GOOD AND CRAZY PEOPLE, MY MARRIED FRIENDS!
AND THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT, ISN'T IT?
THAT'S WHAT IT'S REALLY ABOUT.
WE'VE GOT COMPANY!
LOTS OF COMPANY!
YEARS OF COMPANY!
LIFE IS COMPANY!
LOVE IS COMPANY!

(WOMEN #2 X's to C., WOMAN #1
exits R. with boas. MAN removes
jacket and stands by U.S. piano)

"ANOTHER HUNDRED PEOPLE"

WOMAN #2

ANOTHER HUNDRED PEOPLE JUST GOT OFF OF THE TRAIN
AND CAME UP THROUGH THE GROUND