



NEW YORK CITY CENTER
EDUCATION



Into the Woods

MAY 2022

**BEHIND THE
CURTAIN:
ENCORES!
*INTO THE
WOODS***

Your personal guide
to the production.



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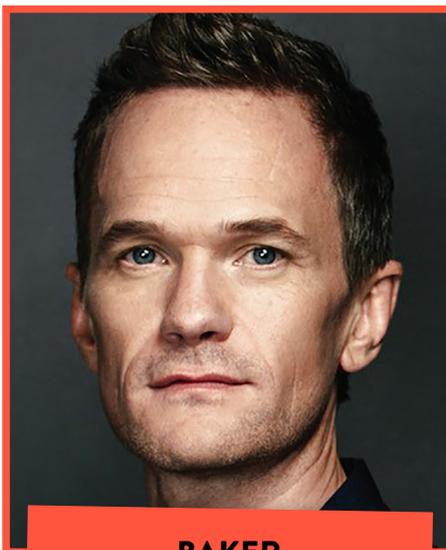
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BERMAN**
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MEET THE CHARACTERS



CINDERELLA
BEST DRESSED

“Wanting a ball is not wanting a prince.”



BAKER
MOST CHANGED

“No one is alone.”



BAKER'S WIFE
MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

“But if life were only moments, then you'd never know you had one.”



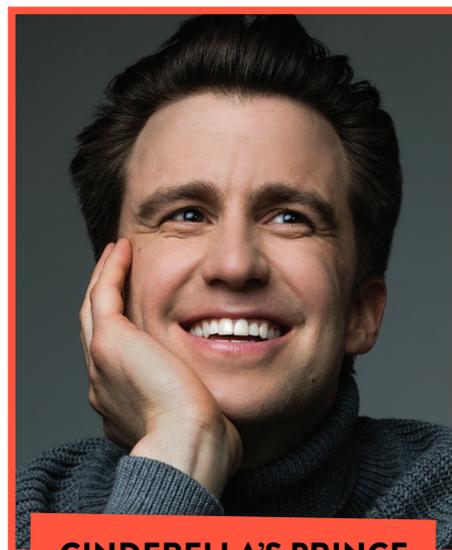
LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD
MOST COURAGEOUS

“Nice is different than good.”



RAPUNZEL'S PRINCE
BIGGEST FLIRTS

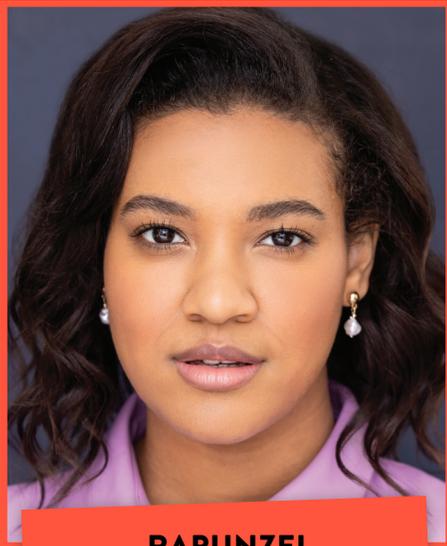
“You know nothing of madness...”



CINDERELLA'S PRINCE
BIGGEST FLIRTS

“I was raised to be charming, not sincere.”

MEET THE ACTORS playing these characters and read their bios [here!](#)



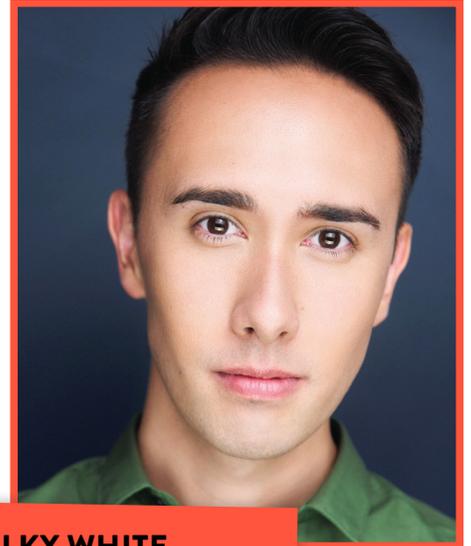
RAPUNZEL
BEST VOICE

“I wish to see the world.”



JACK AND MILKY WHITE
BEST FRIENDS

“Milky White is my best friend in the whole world!”



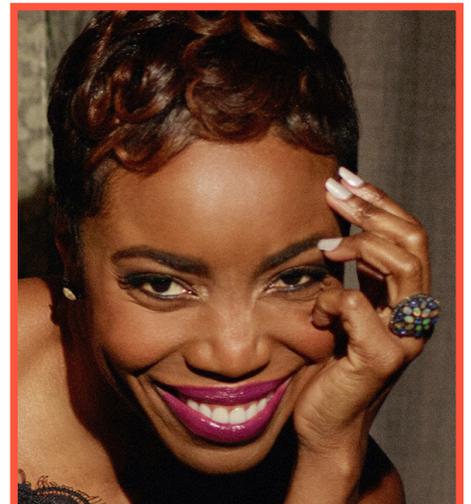
WOLF
BIGGEST APPETITE

“There’s no possible way to describe what you feel when you’re talking to your meal!”



JACK’S MOTHER
MOST PRACTICAL

“The slotted spoon can catch the potato.”



WITCH
BIGGEST GREEN THUMB

“Don’t ever never ever mess around with my greens!”

A black and white portrait of Stephen Sondheim, a man with a beard and long hair, looking thoughtfully to the right with his hand resting on his chin. The background is dark.

The Prodigious Legacy of Stephen Sondheim & the Windfall of American Musical Theater

By Marcus Scott

“Sometimes people
leave you / Halfway
through the wood /
Do not let it grieve
you / No one leaves
for good.”

When news broke that prestigious Broadway composer-lyricist Stephen Sondheim died on November 26, 2021, at the age of 91, there was a large outpouring of grief from the theater community. A part of the post-Rodgers & Hammerstein generational cohort that included New York songsmiths Jerry Herman, Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick, John Kander and Fred Ebb, and Charles Strouse and Lee Adams, Sondheim’s passing signaled the end of an era of songwriting in modern musical theater history. A prolific artist who tackled dark subjects over the course of his six-decade-plus career, Sondheim created such a critically acclaimed, genre-bending body of work that by the time he turned 50, all his major birthdays were celebrated with tribute concerts on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

Stephen Joshua Sondheim was born on March 22, 1930 in New York City, where he was raised in the affluent atmosphere of the San Remo skyscraper apartments on Manhattan’s Central Park West. His father Herbert Sondheim was a dress manufacturer, and his mother Etta Janet Fox was a fashion designer and interior decorator. Both neglected their son and did not nur-

ture his musical talent when he started playing piano at a young age. They divorced in 1942 when Sondheim was 12. Soon after, Sondheim and his mother moved to Bucks County near Doylestown, Pennsylvania. He soon befriended James, the son of award-winning lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II—who would eventually become Sondheim’s mentor. Hammerstein gave his young protégé a demanding curriculum, requiring that he write four full-length musicals: Adapt a good play, adapt a bad play, adapt a book or non-play, and write an original musical.

In 1950, after he finished studying music with Milton Babbitt at Williams College, Sondheim wrote his first professional show, *Saturday Night*. When the show’s producer passed away, the musical was shelved for a little over half a century. Nevertheless, the hustle eventually paid off. In 1955, Sondheim was introduced to Arthur Laurents at a house party and was invited to write the lyrics for a modern retelling of William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* that Laurents was developing with Leonard Bernstein. *West Side Story*, under the direction of Jerome Robbins, opened at The Winter Garden Theatre on September 26, 1957. Reviews were mixed-to-positive, and the production ran for 732 performances. It found greater success in 1961 when its film adaptation won 10 Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

Two years later, Laurents and Robbins approached Sondheim to write lyrics for a musical starring Ethel Merman. Based on the autobiography of renowned burlesque artist Gypsy Rose Lee, *Gypsy: A Musical Fable* opened on May 21, 1959, and ran for 702 performances. It has been revived four times on Broadway (a 2007 Encores! Production transferred to Broadway a year later).



Encores! *Follies* (2007); photo by Joan Marcus

With two critical successes under his belt, Sondheim was determined to make his mark as a composer. He earned acclaim with *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* in 1962. He eventually wrote both music and lyrics for 16 musicals, 13 of which made it to Broadway. They included *Saturday Night* (1954), *Anyone Can Whistle* (1964), *Evening Primrose* (1966), *A Little Night Music* (1973), *The Frogs* (1974; premiered on Broadway in 2004), *Merrily We Roll Along* (1981), *Passion* (1994), and *Road Show* (2008). The shows covered vast terrain: The Greek farces of Plautus (... *Forum*); New York City singles and the pressure to settle down (*Company*, 1970); a reunion of showgirls and their spouses longing for the follies of their youth (*Follies*, 1971); the rise of Western influence in nineteenth-century Japan (*Pacific Overtures*, 1976); a penny dreadful come to life in the form of a vengeance-seeking barber turned spree killer in Victorian-era London (*Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, 1979); a fictionalized origin of a French pointillist masterwork through the eyes of its painter Georges Seurat (*Sunday in the Park with George*, 1984); a phantasmal reality check for the storybook characters of the Brothers Grimm fairytales (*Into the Woods*, 1987); and a musical revue that flipped the script on the

American Dream by centering the figures who attempted to attack American presidents (*Assassins*, 2004; it premiered Off-Broadway in 1990).

For his efforts, Sondheim won numerous accolades including eight Tony Awards (more than any other composer, including a Special Tony Award), six Laurence Olivier Awards (including the Special Olivier Award), and eight Grammy Awards. In 1985, he shared the Pulitzer Prize for Drama with playwright James Lapine for their boundary-pushing magnum opus *Sunday in the Park with George*. In 1990, he received an Academy Award for Best Original Song for “Sooner or Later (I Always Get My Man)” as sung by Madonna on the *Dick Tracy* soundtrack. He also took home the Kennedy Center Honors in 1993, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama in 2015, and had two theaters renamed in his honor on Broadway and the West End respectively, cementing his legacy as perhaps the most influential tunesmith in the annals of American theater.

To date, the New York City Center Encores! series has produced four revivals of his work including *Follies* (starring Donna Murphy, Chris-

tine Baranski, Philip Bosco, Victoria Clark, Victor Garber, and Michael McGrath) in 2007; *Anyone Can Whistle* (starring Murphy, Raúl Esparza, Sutton Foster, and Edward Hibbert) in 2010; *Merrily We Roll Along* (starring Lin-Manuel Miranda, Celia Keenan-Bolger, Betsy Wolfe, and Colin Donnell) in 2012; and *Do I Hear a Waltz?* (starring Melissa Errico, Karen Ziemba and Claybourne Elder) in 2016. Two of his most controversial works—*Assassins* (starring Victoria Clark, Shuler Hensley, Steven Boyer, Alex Brightman, and Steven Pasquale) and *Road Show* (starring Esparza and Brandon Uranowitz)—were produced for Encores! Off-Center in 2017 and 2019, respectively.

It is apropos—poetic even—that Sondheim would pass at a time when he seemed to be at the epicenter of the zeitgeist, just as a new generation was starting to engage with his work. He made his final public appearance at the first preview of the Broadway revival of *Company* on November 15, 2021. A few days before that, Sondheim had attended the Off-Broadway

revival of *Assassins* at Classic Stage Company. Both shows were highly praised. And *West Side Story*, his breakthrough musical, was recently adapted for film by Steven Spielberg, earning seven Academy Award nominations at the 2022 Oscars.

Known for his encouraging personal letters to artists, Sondheim fostered a generation of protégés and followers who have been credited with revitalizing theater and film. These include Jonathan Larson (who observed a workshop of *Into the Woods* while he was writing *Rent*), Lin-Manuel Miranda, Lynn Nottage, Neil Gaiman, Howard Ashman, and Trey Parker, to name a few.

At the time of his passing, Stephen Sondheim revealed that he was working on a new musical with David Ives—adapted from two films by the Spanish director Luis Buñuel—titled *Square One*. That title is a reminder that even the greats will always find themselves back at the beginning.



Encores! Off-Center *Road Show* (2019) photo by Joan Marcus



DECODING THE LYRICS

Fairy tales are often used to share morals or lessons about how to behave in the world. And since *Into the Woods* weaves together five fairy tales, it makes sense that there are lots of messages we can receive from these stories. One of the elements musicals use to tell stories is **lyrics**, or the words of a song. Lyrics often use **idioms**, which are words or phrases that also mean something other than their actual meaning.

In the following activity, you will

STEP 1 Translate Lyrics

STEP 2 Identify Idioms

FINALE Create Your Own!

STEP 1 Translate the Lyrics

Below are some of our favorite lyrics from the show; read each one carefully, think about what it means to you, and then **write out a translation in your own words.**

EXAMPLE

“You may know what you need, but to get what you want, better see that you keep what you have.”

TRANSLATION

Don't throw away the good things in your life when going after a new goal.

“The harder to get, the better to have.”

“The prettier the flower, the farther from the path.”

“Opportunity is not a lengthy visitor.”

“Near may be better than far, but it still isn't there.”

FINALE Create Your Own!

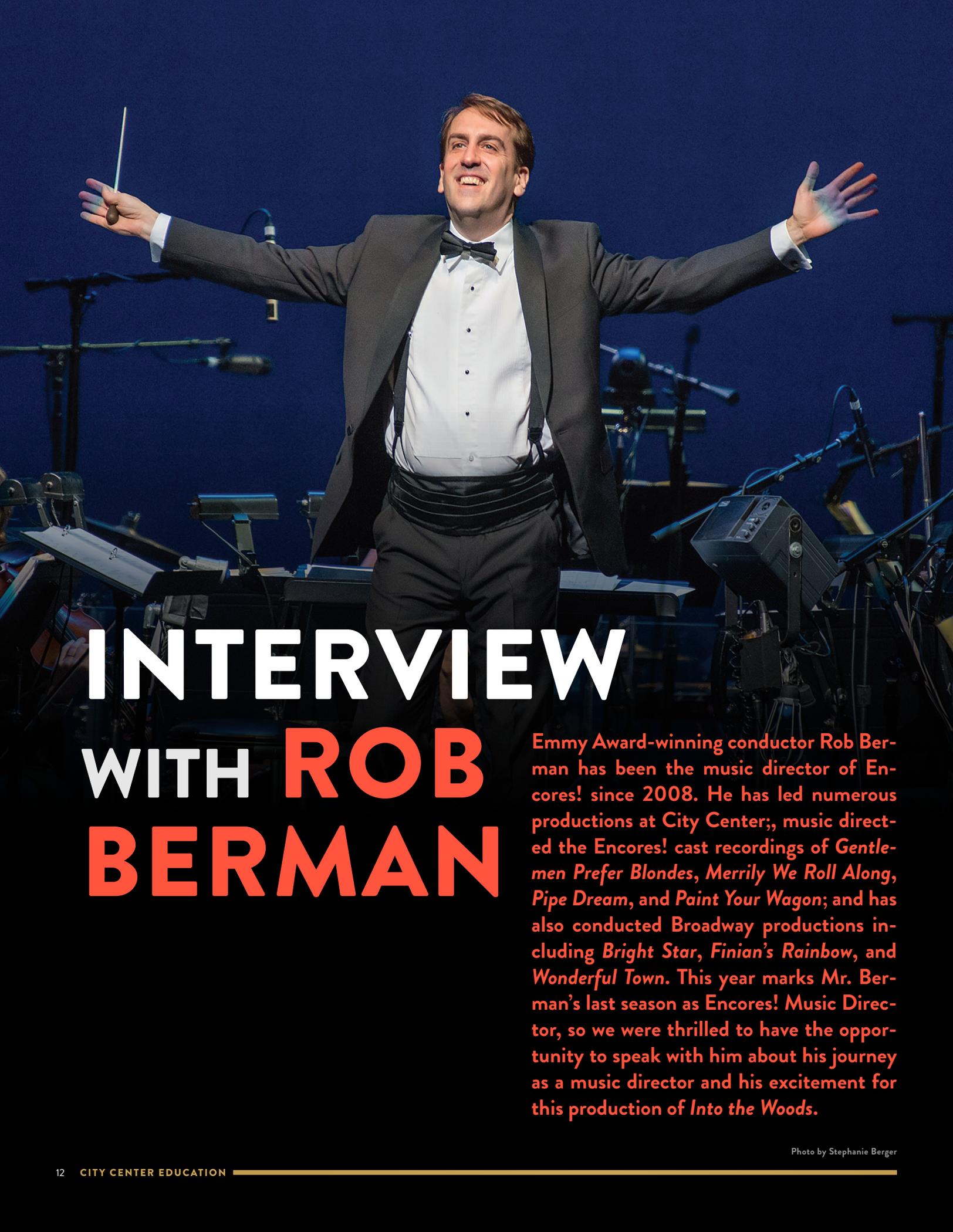
Now that you've translated some lyrics and explored idioms, it's time to create your own! Use what you know about idioms to **create new song lyrics** that could be added to the script of *Into the Woods*.

An example could be, "turn my face to the sun," meaning to decide to focus on good things.

Cinderella might sing, "There are so many chores to be done - but I will turn my face to the sun!" because she knows she gets to go to the ball after her chores are finished.

Give it a try! And remember: the phrase has to mean something other than its literal meaning.

Extra Credit Try adding a melody to your new lyrics and singing them out loud! What do your new lyrics tell you about how you should sing them? Should the melody be high or low? Fast or slow? Does the character who the lyrics are written for change the way the melody sounds? Try it out and see what happens!



INTERVIEW WITH **ROB** **BERMAN**

Emmy Award-winning conductor Rob Berman has been the music director of Encores! since 2008. He has led numerous productions at City Center, music directed the Encores! cast recordings of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, *Pipe Dream*, and *Paint Your Wagon*; and has also conducted Broadway productions including *Bright Star*, *Finian's Rainbow*, and *Wonderful Town*. This year marks Mr. Berman's last season as Encores! Music Director, so we were thrilled to have the opportunity to speak with him about his journey as a music director and his excitement for this production of *Into the Woods*.

Photo by Stephanie Berger

How did you become a music director?

I started playing piano at age six and through middle school and high school performed on-stage in musical productions. I guess I fell in love with musical theater at a young age. In college, I decided to focus on conducting and music directing which seemed like a really good fit for my skills and passions. I moved to New York right after college and began working as a pianist and as an associate conductor and then as a music director for productions on Broadway, Off-Broadway and in regional theater. I began working at Encores! in 2002 as an associate to founding music director Rob Fisher. When he stepped away from Encores! I was offered the job in 2007— 15 years ago! It has gone by fast.

Can you talk about some of a music director's responsibilities within the process of putting together a production?

I consider the music director to be like the hub of a wheel, connecting the many spokes of a production. I interact with almost all elements of the creative team, cast, orchestra, stage management, and design team. A music director supervises and makes decisions about every element that involves the musical performance of the show. When I music-direct a new musical I work closely with the composer, as well as the orchestrator and any dance or vocal arranger (sometimes I write the vocal and dance arrangements myself). At Encores! we only present revivals, so I spend time working with the director and choreographer to decide how we want to present the show. So there can be months of preparation and pre-production. Once we are in rehearsal, I work with the cast, coaching the singers, and then I rehearse the orchestra, and finally I conduct the perfor-

mances. My goal is to make it look easy in performance— but remember there were hours and hours of rehearsals and hundreds of decisions made to get to that point!

You've described being the music director of Encores! as your dream job; can you share some of your favorite memories of working with Encores! over the years?

Oh my, that's a hard one because there have been so many wonderful memories. It is a dream job; I love the classic, golden-age Broadway musicals when orchestras were large and lush and I am a student of musical theater history. If you're someone like me who loves to conduct musicals, I can't imagine a better job than standing onstage conducting great music with a 30-piece orchestra and working with the best actors and singers on Broadway today. I can mention a few of my very favorite shows we have done in my 14 seasons at Encores!

In 2010 we presented Stephen Sondheim's early cult musical *Anyone Can Whistle* with as starry a cast as we have had: Donna Murphy, Sutton Foster, and Raul Esparza. It's an unusual show but it has a magnificent score and it was a joy to work on. When we presented *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* in 2012, Megan Hilty sang a song called "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" and at one of the performances, the audience would not stop applauding and cheering;— it literally stopped the show for minutes and we couldn't continue until they finally settled down.— That was one of the most exciting live performance moments I have had. And I would also mention *The Most Happy Fella* (2014) which was Frank Loesser's quasi-operatic masterpiece. For that production we had an orchestra of 38 (our largest ever!) and a cast of 37, including Laura



Benanti, Cheyenne Jackson, and Shuler Hensley. To get to conduct that score was a dream come true for me!

Talk to us about the music from *Into the Woods*: What makes it different from other projects you've worked on, and how are you preparing for upcoming rehearsals?

Over the course of my career, I have had the good fortune of working with Stephen Sondheim eight or nine times on various revivals of his works, several at Encores! I learned so much from him and find it hard to believe he won't be around for *Into the Woods*— I'm still so saddened by his passing last fall. *Into the Woods* is a show I have never music-directed before, with the exception of a few selections in other concerts. Like with all of his scores, his music is intricate, sophisticated, not always easy, and his lyrics are brilliant. I love working on his material with actors— the goal with his music is always to make it flow as naturally from speech as possible. In terms of preparation, I do spend some time listening to previous

recordings and other versions, but at a certain point I put those away and just spend time with the vocal score at my piano, and then I spend a lot of time studying the orchestral full scores so I can learn the intricacies of the orchestration.

What advice do you have for future music directors and anyone else working towards a career in the arts?

For future music directors, I'd say two things: First, familiarize yourself with as many different styles and eras of music as you can; that will only make you more versatile. Secondly, study some orchestral conducting technique. Even if you end up conducting shows from a piano or keyboard, the conducting technique will really help you! As for anyone working towards a career in the arts, I'd say stay open, keep studying, and hang in there! If you really love it, you have to follow your dream. And remember there are many different career paths in the arts. I thought I wanted to be an actor when I was young but I'm so glad to have found my niche in the theater as a music director.

CHOREOGRAPHY



Dance is one of the primary elements of musical theater, and there are many ways dance can be incorporated into its storytelling. In the video below, City Center Teaching Artist Michael-Anthony Souza shares a special combination set to the opening song from *Into the Woods*, and demonstrates how a choreographer uses a song's lyrics to create corresponding movement.

KEY VOCABULARY:

CHOREOGRAPHY physical movement set to music or sound.

CHOREOGRAPHER

a person who composes the sequence of steps and moves for a performance of dance.

COMBINATION

a sequence of movements put together to create a full dance.

CHASSÉ

a gliding step in dancing in which one foot displaces the other; from the French for “chase.”

GRAPEVINE

a dance move that combines side steps and steps across the supporting foot.

PONY

a dance move where you hop from one foot to the other; made popular in the 1960's.

SONDHEIM THROUGH THE YEARS: A PRODUCTION TIMELINE

Composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim's career spanned several decades. **Explore some of Sondheim's major works** that made a lasting mark on the landscape of musical theater.

Saturday Night

Sondheim's first professional musical didn't have its world premiere until December 17, 1997 at the Bridewell Theatre in London. Set in 1929 Brooklyn, *Saturday Night* follows a group of friends looking to take advantage of the stock market and move up the social ladder.

[Saturday Night Opening Song](#)

1954

West Side Story

Sondheim was only 27 when his work first premiered on Broadway. He wrote the lyrics for *West Side Story*, which was adapted to film in 1961. The film was nominated for 11 Academy Awards, winning 10 including Best Picture.

["America" from the 1961 Movie](#)

[Highlights from the 2009 Broadway Revival](#)

[Clip of "America" Dance from the 2022 Movie](#)

1957

Do I Hear a Waltz?

On the suggestion of his former mentor, Oscar Hammerstein II, Sondheim worked as a lyricist with composer Richard Rodgers on *Do I Hear a Waltz?*

["Do I Hear a Waltz?" from the 2016 Encores! Production](#)

[Highlights from the 2016 Encores! Production](#)

1965

Company

Company earned Sondheim his first two Tony Awards for the Best Original Score and Best Lyrics categories. The 2018 West End Revival and most recent Broadway production re-envisioned the show by changing the genders of some characters, including the main character, Bobby.

[The 2021 Broadway Revival Cast on Good Morning America](#)

1970

Follies

Follies is based on the real-life *Ziegfeld Follies*, a series of theatrical revues on Broadway from 1907 to 1931. *Follies* won Best Original Score, earning Sondheim his third Tony Award.

["Could I Leave You" from the 2007 Encores! Production](#)

[Highlights from the 2011 Broadway Revival](#)

[Trailer for the 2021 National Theatre Live Production](#)

1971

Merrily We Roll Along

Merrily We Roll Along follows a trio of friends over the course of 20 years, with the story told in reverse. After its opening on Broadway, the musical went through many changes and rewrites, with Sondheim adding several new songs to different incarnations over the years.

["Not a Day Goes By" from the 2012 Encores! Production](#)

["Opening Doors" from the 2012 Encores! Production](#)

1981

Sunday in the Park with George

Sunday in the Park with George was Sondheim's first collaboration with playwright James Lapine, who wrote the musical's book. The show won them both the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

["Finishing the Hat" from the 2016 Encores! Production](#)

["Sunday in the Park with George" from the 2016 Encores! Production](#)

1984

Into the Woods

Sondheim once again worked with James Lapine for *Into the Woods* and won his sixth Tony award for Best Original Score.

["Giants In the Sky" from the 2010 Regent's Park Open Air Theatre production](#)

[Highlights from the 2012 production at The Public Theater](#)

["To Grandmother's House" from the 2014 Film](#)

1987

Gypsy

When offered the role of lyricist for *Gypsy*, Sondheim became worried about being known as only a lyricist, wanting opportunities to write both music and lyrics. However, he was convinced to accept the role by his mentor Oscar Hammerstein II, as he would be writing for star Ethel Merman.

"Rose's Turn" from the 2007 Encores! Production

"Everything's Coming Up Roses" from the 2015 Revival

1959

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum marked Sondheim's first opportunity to act as both composer and lyricist on a Broadway show.

"Comedy Tonight" from the 1966 Film

1962

Anyone Can Whistle

Though *Anyone Can Whistle's* original run was brief at only 21 performances, the show has since become a cult favorite.

"Me and My Town" from the 2010 Encores! Production

"Anyone Can Whistle" from the 2010 Encores! Production

1964

A Little Night Music

Based on Ingmar Bergman's comedy *Smile of a Summer Night*, *A Little Night Music* won Sondheim his fourth Tony Award.

Highlights from the 2009 Broadway Revival

1973

Pacific Overtures

Set in 1853 Japan, *Pacific Overtures* includes elements of Kabuki theatre, a traditional and highly stylized form of Japanese drama.

"Someone In a Tree" from the 2017 Off-Broadway Revival

1976

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

The tale of the murderous barber first originated in 1800s serialized fiction known as penny dreadfuls. Christopher Bond's play *Sweeney Todd*, based on the penny dreadfuls, served as a basis for the musical.

"Worst Pies In London" 2001 Concert

"No Place Like London" from the 2007 Film

"God, That's Good!" from the 2014 NY Philharmonic Concert Performance

1979

Assassins

Sondheim was inspired to create *Assassins* after reading Charles Gilbert Jr's play of the same name which also featured a presidential assassin.

Highlights from the 2017 Encores! Production

"The Gun Song" from the 2017 Encores! Production

1990

Passion

Passion's inspiration came from the Italian film *Passione d'Amore* and its source material the novel *Fosca* by Iginio Ugo Tarchetti. It marks Sondheim's third collaboration with James Lapine, who wrote the book.

"Loving You" from *Passion*

1994

Road Show

Road Show has been through several title changes and rewrites since it premiered at the New York Theatre Workshop in 1999. The current incarnation premiered Off-Broadway at the Public Theater in 2008. It was recently revived at City Center as part of the 2019 Encores! Season.

Highlights from the 2019 Encores! Production

"The Best Thing That Ever Has Happened" from the 2019 Encores! Production

2008

BEGET

to bring into existence as in the procreation of a child
Baker/Baker's Wife: "Then to beget a child ..."

BIER

a stand that a coffin is laid on
Rapunzel's Prince: "And you cry on their biers ..."

CARNALITY

relating to bodily pleasures such as crude appetites
Wolf: "Think of that scrumptious carnality twice in one day!"

DELETERIOUS

causing harm or injury
Mysterious Man: "When first I appear, I seem deleterious ..."

DELL

a small valley in the woods
Little Red Riding Hood: "Into the woods and down the dell, the path is straight, I know it well."

EAVES

the part of a roof that hangs over the wall
Cinderella: "Birds in the sky, birds in the eaves, in the leaves, in the fields ..."

GLADE

an open space in the forest

Baker/Cinderella: "There's something in the glade there ..."

KNOLL

a small hill or a mound

Rapunzel's Prince: "Two leagues from here, due east, just beyond the mossy knoll."

LEAGUE

a unit of distance that is equal to three miles

Little Red Riding Hood: "A good quarter of a league further in the Woods; her house stands under three large oak trees."

PITCH

a thick, black, sticky substance created from the residue of the distillation of tar

Cinderella: "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."

STEWARD

a royal official responsible for maintaining the household, obtaining food, and directing the servants

Rapunzel's Prince: "You? Investigating news of a Giant? Father would not even do that! That is business for your steward — or less."

WITHER

to weaken or deteriorate

Jack's Mother: "Son, we've no time to sit and dither, while her withers wither with her."

REFLECTION JOURNAL

What does it mean to go “into the woods?”

The idea of going “into the woods” is used in this show as an image, meaning to take on a difficult journey where we have no clue what the end result will be. We see the characters in the show do this when they need to accomplish a goal: to get to the ball, to sell the cow, to bring important things back for the Witch. The tests they face during their adventure through the “woods” symbolize the challenges we face every day when we are trying to reach our goals.

Have you ever gone “into the woods?” Think back to a challenging moment when you weren’t sure what would happen next. It could be something like taking a test you didn’t feel prepared for, or like the early months of the pandemic when things were changing very quickly. How did you respond? What were some of your thoughts? Did you go to anyone for help or advice? How did things turn out in the end?

Use the space below to reflect on your own experience of going “into the woods.”



NEW YORK CITY CENTER EDUCATION

VISION STATEMENT

The mission of New York City Center Education is to ignite an appreciation of the performing arts, cultivate the creative mind, and create a culture of inquiry and exploration. Committed to drawing inspiration from works on the mainstage, New York City Center Education strives to provide innovative, accessible arts education to schools and communities across New York City.

ABOUT NEW YORK CITY CENTER EDUCATION

Each year City Center reaches over 11,000 students from NYC public and private schools, kindergarten to grade 12, through dance and musical theater performances and in-school workshops. In-depth residencies engage young people in building technical and expressive skills, personal voice, and collaborative spirit. Innovative workshops are crafted for families, seniors, and other special groups that express an interest in collaborating with City Center.

