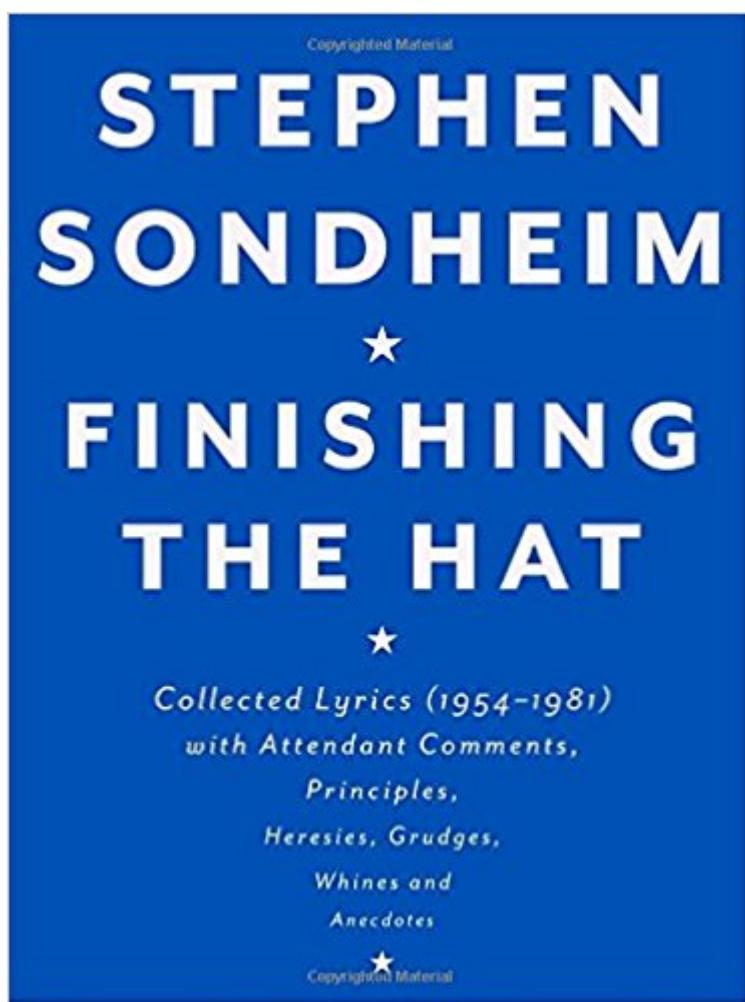


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Finishing The Hat: Collected Lyrics (1954-1981) With Attendant Comments, Principles, Heresies, Grudges, Whines And Anecdotes



Synopsis

Stephen Sondheim has won seven Tonys, an Academy Award, seven Grammys, a Pulitzer Prize and the Kennedy Center Honors. His career has spanned more than half a century, his lyrics have become synonymous with musical theater and popular culture, and in *Finishing the Hat* —titled after perhaps his most autobiographical song, from *Sunday in the Park with George*—Sondheim has not only collected his lyrics for the first time, he is giving readers a rare personal look into his life as well as his remarkable productions. Along with the lyrics for all of his musicals from 1954 to 1981—including *West Side Story*, *Company*, *Follies*, *A Little Night Music* and *Sweeney Todd*—Sondheim treats us to never-before-published songs from each show, songs that were cut or discarded before seeing the light of day. He discusses his relationship with his mentor, Oscar Hammerstein II, and his collaborations with extraordinary talents such as Leonard Bernstein, Arthur Laurents, Ethel Merman, Richard Rodgers, Angela Lansbury, Harold Prince and a panoply of others. The anecdotes—filled with history, pointed observations and intimate details—transport us back to a time when theater was a major pillar of American culture. Best of all, Sondheim appraises his work and dissects his lyrics, as well as those of others, offering unparalleled insights into songwriting that will be studied by fans and aspiring songwriters for years to come. Accompanying Sondheim’s sparkling writing are behind-the-scenes photographs from each production, along with handwritten music and lyrics from the songwriter’s personal collection. Penetrating and surprising, poignant, funny and sometimes provocative, *Finishing the Hat* is not only an informative look at the art and craft of lyric writing, it is a history of the theater that belongs on the same literary shelf as Moss Hart’s *Act One* and Arthur Miller’s *Timebends*. It is also a book that will leave you humming the final bars of *Merrily We Roll Along*, while eagerly anticipating the next volume, which begins with the opening lines of *Sunday in the Park with George*.

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Customer Reviews

"Finishing the Hat is a show stopper! If you love Stephen Sondheim, hate him, or never even heard of him, you'll still have a great ride—so take it! This book is filled with humor, controversy, stories about talented and glamorous people and, above all, life. And his lyrics! Everything you've ever wanted to know about anything is in those lyrics." —Phyllis Newman
"There is so much to be learned and appreciated from Finishing the Hat. It's filled with fascinating, entertaining, unique and compelling lessons from a man who encompasses the essence of what is truly great about American Musical Theatre." —Michael Feinstein
"Just as Stephen Sondheim is, without dispute, THE master lyricist for the theater of our generation (not to mention his superb music!), he now has written THE book on the art and craft of lyric writing. It is a book that will enrich and entertain anyone with an interest in music and theater, either as a life's work or a life's pleasure. It is like no other writing on the subject. It is Sondheim." —Alan & Marilyn Bergman
"Seeing my first Sondheim musical, *Follies*, I was like the farm girl brought to the Homes of Tomorrow exhibit; breathless, nose pressed to the glass. This book takes the glass away. It's a thrill to experience these shows again with Steve as your guide. What a gift to the theatre this book is! For actors, it's a must. For lyricists, it a primer." —Joanna Gleason
"The book is a masterpiece. There never has been and never will be one like it. It is about the grain of sand that produces the pearl and is indeed as honest and simple as that pearl. If you pay attention to this book you could learn how to write a song, though not a great song. That is forever mysterious as genius will always be. The main lesson is that this particular genius is dead practical. All the hocus pocus attached to art has no meaning in the mind of Sondheim. You must read it to see what does matter to him and you will marvel and read it again. And then again." —Mike Nichols
"Stephen Sondheim's book can be read for pleasure, information, wisdom, humor or inspiration; all of the pleasures I received. Or because it tells a few secrets about how genius works." —Stanley Donen

Stephen Sondheim has written award-winning music and lyrics for theater, film and television. He is also the coauthor of the film *The Last of Sheila* and the play *Getting Away with Murder*. Sondheim is on the council of the Dramatists Guild of America, having served as its president from 1973 to 1981. He lives in New York City.

Bought this for Father's Day and got a wonderful reaction!

For any aspiring lyricist (in theater or in any other songwriting arena) this book is indispensable. Sondheim's thoughts on clarity and his reasoning are crucial to any writer. The book is structured very well, with chapters organized by show and lengthy introductions to each show's set of lyrics. I particularly was intrigued by the introduction to the chapter on "The Frogs." The inclusion of first drafts of lyrics is especially useful, and the production photos and snippets of Sondheim's handwritten drafts is a nice touch. A book that provides new information every time you read it. My only complaint is that it's companion draft, "A Look, I Made a Hat: Collected Lyrics (1981-2011) with Attendant Comments, Amplifications, Dogmas, Harangues, Wafflings, Diversions and Anecdotes" isn't here yet! For lyricists who are also composers, I highly recommend buying this book along with "A Sondheim on Music: Minor Details and Major Decisions". It would be hard to imagine a more complete look into the creative process of theater songwriting.

Bought for son's birthday and he is really enjoying it. Lot's of great information.

Now we just need the second edition. Wonderful testimony to Sondheim!

Fantastic condition!!! I didn't like the plastic covering so I took it off. Thankfully it didn't ruin the book. The book was also extremely insightful and I thoroughly enjoyed it. Thank you!

I gave *Finishing the Hat* to two friends of mine in the theatre after I bought a copy for myself. It's a very witty book of lyrics that is alternately incredibly insightful and naughty. It's a joy to read, because, if you've heard these songs before, the lyrics and melody are like old friends and you can't help but sing along quietly (so as not to disturb the rest of the house). It even contains some photocopies of Sondheim's original lyrics, written in pencil, complete with scratch-outs and changes. By the way, my two theatre friends love the book as much as I do.

I looked forward to receiving this book and was therefore particularly disappointed when it arrived and I found the faint type face and the font size inadequate . I have had great difficulty in reading it even with my reading glasses, and so I have given up. How an experienced firm like Knopf can make this basic mistake, I don't know. I wrote to them about it, and I have not heard from them. This either means they have appalling public relations, or they recognised the truth of what I had to say to them and did not want to acknowledge it. They should supply a magnifying glass with each copy! How could they do this to a genius like Stephen Sondheim!

You know how you just start singing in your head and you get to lyrics and your stuck with simply humming...NO MORE, all of Sondheims lyrics are here...you can now finish the line! So when your humming "Am I losing my mind"...you'll KNOW the words and sing out! Great BOOK if your a Sondheim fan! Anyone interested in a musical legend and his ability to write lyrics about anything and make it work..this book is for you! Once again came through, lowest price, fastest delivery...Two things I really love, Sondheim and .com!

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