Stephen Swanson was born in Minneapolis. He earned his B. Mus. and B. Mus. Ed. degrees from North Park College, Chicago, and a M. Mus. from Northwestern University. In 1971 he had his professional debut in Chicago and in New York’s Carnegie Hall with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in Arnold Schoenberg’s Moses and Aaron. In 1975 he received a scholarship to study at the International Opera Studio in Zurich, Switzerland, and remained in Europe performing in opera houses there until 1994. During this time, he expanded his repertoire to over 70 roles in operas, operettas, and musicals.

Mr. Swanson has sung on German, Dutch, and Austrian radio broadcasts and has been a featured soloist in the Berliner Festwochen, Assisi Festa Musica Pro, and Dresdener Tage der zeitgenossischen Musik. He has recorded Mendelssohn’s St. Paul and Ullman’s Der Kaiser von Atlantis. He has an extensive concert repertoire ranging from Baroque to avant-garde and has performed with many renowned conductors including Sir George Solti, Raphael Frubeck de Burgos, and Margaret Hillis. In 1994 he accepted a position on the music faculty at the University of Iowa.

A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC

SUNDAY in the PARK with GEORGE

Acknowledgements

David Nelson, director,
School of Music

All proceeds from this concert will go toward the School of Music Scholarship Fund

The University of Iowa
School of Music
The Center for New Music

presents

STEPHEN SONDHEIM:
A MUSICAL CELEBRATION

April 1, 1998
Clapp Recital Hall
8:00 p.m.
STEPHENVSONDHEIM: A MUSICAL CELEBRATION

Vocalists:
Katherine Eberle
Rachel Joselson
John Muriello
Stephen Swanson

Pianists/Arrangers:
Thomas Christensen
David Gomper

—PROGRAM—

Overture: Instrumental Medley
-Christensen and Gomper

Invocation and Instructions to the Audience
-Ensemble
From The Frogs (1974). Adapted from Aristophanes. In this opening number, the cast offers useful advice to the audience concerning proper behavior and etiquette.

Broadway Baby
-Eberle
From Follies (1971). A shy, aspiring actress comes to the Big Apple hoping to land an audition with the Follies.

Anyone Can Whistle
-Muriello
Title song from Anyone Can Whistle (1964). One of the many songs in which Sondheim explores the theme of fear of love and intimacy.

Move On
-Eberle and Muriello
Concluding song from Sunday in the Park with George (1984). The impressionist painter George Seurat is urged by his former lover Dot to persevere, both in art and in life.

You Could Drive a Person Crazy
-Ensemble
From Company (1970). In this superb parody of music in the style of the Andrews Sisters, the cast sings of the lead character (named “Bobby”) and of his infuriating aversion of commitment. (“Knock, knock, is anybody there?”)

Being Alive
-Swanson
From Company (1970). Bobby’s final realization that love requires risk and hurt: “Somebody to hold me too close; somebody to hurt me too deep.”

It Would Have Been Wonderful
-Swanson and Muriello
From A Little Night Music (1973). In this wickedly funny duet, two confused and chauvinistic husbands lament the fact that they both have competing interests—and designs upon—the same enticing female. “If she had only been fat,” they complain wistfully, “It would have been wonderful.”

You’re Not Dead Yet
-ensemble
Lyrics by Marvin Bell
Music by David Gomper
This semester, Marvin Bell and I are teaching a collaboration course called “Words and Music” for Writer’s Workshop poets and School of Music composers. One of the assignments in the course was to have the students write in the style of Sondheim or Gershwin, a difficult if not daunting task. Since we did not deem ourselves exempt, I asked Marvin for words, and he asked on what subject. We began talking about parents, grandparents, nursing homes, the trials of growing old and our mortality. This song was the result.

—INTERMISSION—
Waltz from A Little Night Music
-Christensen and Gompper, pianos

Remember
-Eberle and Swanston
From A Little Night Music (1973). Two old lovers meet and reminisce about the indiscretions of their youth.

Uptown, Downtown
-Muriello
Originally from Follies (1971), but dropped before the premiere. A ballad about a girl who tries to lead two lives in the city.

What More Do I Need?
-Joselson
From Saturday Night (1955), a musical never produced, which would have been Sondheim’s debut. The song “What More Do I Need” is a classic “belt” song from the 1950s Broadway tradition, though it foretokens Sondheim’s wit with lyrics. As long as one is in love, what does the grime of the city matter?

I Remember
-Swanston
From Evening Primrose (1966), one of Sondheim’s few attempts at writing for television. Although the production was deemed a flop, the song “I Remember” remains one of his most tender, melancholic love songs.

Not A Day Goes By
-Eberle
From Merrily We Roll Along (1981). Another classic torch song of Sondheim dealing with unrequited love.

No One is Alone
-Ensemble
From Into The Woods (1987). The concluding number—and moral—of Sondheim’s innovative “Fairy Tale” set to music. Cinderella consoles Little Red Ridinghood, Jack (of the Beanstalk) and the Baker man that in the end, there really are no happy endings, no simple morals, no snappy maxims—all we have is each other to rely upon.

You’re Gonna Love Tomorrow
-Ensemble
From Follies (1971). Two newlywed couples promise one another that the best lies ahead, no matter what short-term obstacles they may face.

—PROGRAM NOTES—

Stephen Sondheim is widely acknowledged today as the most important and original voice in the American musical theatre of the last thirty-five years. As both composer and lyricist, Sondheim has single-handedly extended the boundaries of the genre of the Musical. In all his diverse styles, though, Sondheim is able to weave a unique musical lyricism in his songs infused with lyrics of unparalleled wit, sophistication, and poignancy.

Recognized early on for his talent with words, Leonard Bernstein engaged in 1955 the 25-year-old Sondheim to write the lyrics for an experimental musical adaptation of Romeo and Juliet that he was then working out with Harold Prince. The successful premiere of West Side Story in 1957 put Sondheim’s name in the spotlight. Sondheim engaged in two further collaborative musicals with the composers Jules Styne (Gypsy, 1959) and Richard Rodgers (Do I Hear a Waltz?, 1965). But he was never happy in the secondary role of a lyricist. Having studied composition with the arch-modernist composer, Milton Babbitt, Sondheim felt he had honed his musical skills sufficiently to begin writing his own music.

Sondheim’s first solo opus premiered on Broadway in 1962: A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum. With an all-star cast (including Zero Mostel) and a musical score of unprecedented zest and wit, “Forum” went on to sweep the Tony awards of 1962. With Sondheim’s next solo Musical (Anyone Can Whistle) in 1965, as well as a series of film scores, Sondheim’s talent as a composer of the first rank was sealed.

It was in 1970 that Sondheim produced his first truly original Musical that would display his extraordinary genius as composer and lyricist. Company marked a turning point in Broadway history by capturing in its gritty lyrics and pastiche of musical styles the energy and frenetic pace of contemporary New York urban life. Sondheim’s songs for “Company” have a bitter poignancy to them, expressing emotions of lost love, loneliness, and regret—themes to which he would return again and again in subsequent songs. (Indeed, a frequent complaint of some critics is that Sondheim never seems to be able to write just a plain old-fashioned “happy” song in the style of Richard Rodgers or George Gershwin; while this is certainly an exaggeration, there is some truth to it—Sondheim always does seem more drawn to the darker side of human nature and existence.)

In subsequent Musicals—most produced with his old friend Harold Prince—Sondheim went on to explore variations of the human tragic-comedy. Follies (1971), though not a
commercial success, is appreciated today as one of the most sophisticated parodies of the classical musical Vaudeville as retold by aging performers gathering for a reunion many years after the close of the Ziegfeld Follies. *A Little Night Music* (1973), on the other hand, was a hit at the box office, once again sweeping the Tony awards. Based on a film by Ingmar Bergman, the story unfolds a complex sexual imbroglio of 19th-century Swedish characters; the topics of marriage, fidelity, lust, betrayal, and ultimately autumn love, are woven throughout the songs (all, incidentally, written in some version of triple meter). "Night Music" contained one of the few songs he wrote that became a true commercial hit: "Send in the Clowns."


—Thomas Christensen

**BIOGRAPHIES**

*Thomas Christensen* has been Associate Professor of Music Theory at the University of Iowa since 1992. He received his PhD in music theory from Yale University in 1985, and has taught at the Universities of Pennsylvania and Chicago. Although Professor Christensen’s main research area has been in the area of historical music theory and aesthetics, having written a prize-winning book in 1993 on the music theory of the 18th-century composer Jean-Philippe Rameau (*Rameau and Musical Thought in the Enlightenment* [Cambridge University Press, 1993]), he has been a life-long devotee of musical theatre. He has served as musical director, accompanist or composer for over 20 musicals since he was an undergraduate at Boston University in the mid 1970s, and was musical director of several professional theatre companies before attending graduate school (The Proposition Improvisational Theatre, Cambridge, Mass., 1975-77; The Kings Head Theatre, London, 1977-78; The Green Mountain Guild, Vermont, 1981, where he directed a touring company of Sondheim’s *Sweeney Todd*).

*Katherine Eberle* made her New York debut at Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall in 1994. She has performed as an artistic ambassador for the United States Information Agency doing solo tours in South America and Korea in 1995-96. Her recording *From a Woman’s Perspective* is available through Albany Records and was released internationally by Vienna Modern Masters.

In 1997, Interlochen Center for the Arts released a recording of Mozart’s Requiem that features Eberle as the alto soloist. In addition to her responsibilities at the University of Iowa, Eberle teaches voice at Interlochen each summer. Concert credits include solo performances with the symphonies of Detroit, Atlanta, and Lansing. Operatic productions include performances of Hansel, Mrs. Herring, Dame Quickly, and the mother in Amahl.

Eberle earned degrees from Baldwin-Wallace Conservatory, the University of Cincinnati and the University of Michigan. She has just become the State President of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS).

*David Karl Gompper*, an Associate Professor of Composition and Director of the Center for New Music at the University of Iowa, studied at the Royal College of Music in London, (MMus, Composition, 1978, ARCM, 1980) and at the University of Michigan (DMA, Composition, 1988). He taught for two years at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. His principal teachers of composition were William Albright, Leslie Bassett, Jeremy Dale Roberts and Humphrey Searle. He also studied piano with Phyllis Sellick (RCM), and received a BM degree in piano performance from San Diego State University.

Gompper is the President of the Society of Composers, Inc, a national membership organization for composers in the US. In 1996 he traveled to Kwangu, South Korea for the United States Information Agency, giving composition and theory master classes at Chonnam University. This past June, he was invited to perform and lecture at the Music College of Thessaloniki, Greece. Gompper’s compositions have been performed in this country and abroad, and they have won numerous awards.

*Rachel Joselson*, soprano, recently joined the School of Music Voice Area as an assistant professor. Rachel spent over ten years in Europe performing many roles in guest appearances and operatic engagements at the Staatsoper in Darmstadt, the Hamburg State Opera, the Theater and Philharmonic in Essen, and the Theater in Basel. As guest, she performed as soloist with opera companies and orchestras in Aachen, Barcelona, Berlin, Bilbao, Bonn, Braunschweig, Atlanta, Indianapolis, Essen, Brussels, Kiel, Gelsenkirchen, St. Gallen, Trier, and New Brunswick. For the 1995-96 season, she had her first engagement at the Metropolitan Opera, and was engaged by London’s Covent Garden for their 1992 Japan tour. This season she debuted with Madison Opera, and recorded the first CD of Help, Help, The Globelinks.

*John Muriello* joined the voice area as a visiting assistant professor for 1997-98. Dr. Muriello has been living in New York City for the past nine years, working as a freelance singer in opera, operetta, contemporary music theatre, and straight drama. He has performed regionally throughout the midwest and southeast, as well as in New York, Canada, Australia, Germany and the United Kingdom. He taught voice, foreign language diction, and vocal literature at Appalachian State University in 1987-88. This summer, he returns to Lyric Opera Cleveland to perform in Into the Woods as the Mysterious Man and the Narrator.