

Notes on *Company* (1970)

Original Broadway Production

Opening Night: April 26, 1970

Closing Date: January 1, 1972 (7 previews, 705 performances)

Creative Team of the Original Production

Music & Lyrics by: Stephen Sondheim

Book by: George Furth (based on 11 brief one-act plays he wrote in the 1960s)

Produced and Directed by: Harold Prince

Choreographed by: Michael Bennett

Scenic & Projection Design: Boris Aronson

Orchestrations: Jonathan Tunick

Casts of Various Productions

| Role | Original Cast (1970) | Broadway Revival (1995) | Broadway Revival (2006) | NY Philharmonic TV Concert (2011) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Robert | Dean Jones (Larry Kert) | Boyd Gaines | Raúl Esparza | Neil Patrick Harris |
| Joanne Larry | Elaine Stritch Charles Braswell | Debra Monk Timothy Landfield | Barbara Walsh Bruce Sabbath | Patti LuPone Jim Walton |
| Sarah Harry | Barbara Barrie Charles Kimbrough | Kate Burton Robert Westenberg | Kristin Huffman Keith Buterbaugh | Martha Plimpton Stephen Colbert |
| Susan Peter | Merle Louise John Cunningham | Patricia Ben Peterson Jonathan Dokuchitz | Amy Justman Matt Castle | Jill Paice Craig Bierko |
| Jenny David | Teri Ralston George Coe | Diana Canova John Hillner | Leenya Rideout Fred Rose | Jennifer Laura Thompson Jon Cryer |
| Amy Paul | Beth Howland Steve Elmore | Veanne Cox Danny Burstein | Heather Laws Robert Cunningham | Katie Finneran Aaron Lazar |
| Marta (“Another Hundred People”) | Pamela Myers | LaChanze | Angel Desai | Anika Noni Rose |
| Kathy (“Tick Tock”) | Donna McKechnie | Charlotte d’Amboise | Kelly Jeanne Grant | Chryssie Whitehead |
| April (“Barcelona”) | Susan Browning | Jane Krakowski | Elizabeth Stanley | Christina Hendricks |
| <i>Director</i> | <i>Harold Prince</i> | <i>Scott Ellis</i> | <i>John Doyle</i> | <i>Lonny Price</i> |

Tony Awards

The Original Broadway Production Won 6 Tony Awards in 1970: Best Musical, Book of a Musical (Furth), Original Score (Sondheim), Lyrics (Sondheim), Scenic Design (Aronson), Direction of a Musical (Prince) **It was also nominated for 8 additional awards:** Actor in a Musical (Larry Kert), Actress in a Musical (2 nominations: Susan Browning & Elaine Stritch) Featured Actor in a Musical (Charles Kimbrough), Featured Actress in a Musical (2 nominations: Barbara Barrie & Pamela Myers), Lighting Design (Robert Ornbo), Choreography (Bennett)

The 1995 revival was nominated for two awards (no wins): Best Revival of a Musical and Best Featured Actress in Musical (Veanne Cox).

The 2006 Revival won 1 Tony Award (Revival of a Musical) and was nominated for 2 others: Best Actor in a Musical (Esparza) and Direction of a Musical (Doyle). It ran for 246 performances.

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Other Performances and Recordings

In addition to the Cast Recordings of the 1970, 1995, and 2006 productions listed in the chart above, there have also been video recordings of the 2006 Broadway revival and the 2011 production with the NY Philharmonic; both are available on DVD and streaming. There is also a CD of a 1996 revival directed by Sam Mendes at the Donmar Warehouse in London and starring Adrian Lester as Robert.

Synopsis/Songs

Act I

1. After an instrumental **opening** (not really an overture), Robert enters his apartment to find that he is being thrown a surprise party on his 35th birthday by his best friends—five married couples who are intent on seeing Bobby married. Bobby hesitates to blow out the last candle. (At the beginning of Act II and at the end of the show, we will return to this same birthday scene.) The company sings **“Company”**—an ode to this particular set of friends and their relationship to Robert. (“That’s what it’s really about, isn’t it? Company!”) What follows is a sequence of scenes and musical numbers that flow by as if in flashback or fantasy.
2. Scene: Sarah and Harry host Bobby for dinner. Harry is off booze, and Sarah is dieting, so they indulge vicariously by forcing alcohol and food on Bobby. Sarah has been taking karate, and Harry challenges her to demonstrate her skills. She throws him on the floor. Joanne and others enter and sing **“The Little Things You Do Together.”** As Robert leaves, he asks Harry if he’s ever sorry he got married. Harry and two other husbands sing **“Sorry-Grateful.”**
3. Scene: Bobby visits Susan and Peter, who seem happy and devoted to each other. The source of their joy? They’ve decided to divorce.
4. Scene: Bobby gets stoned with Jenny and David. The topic turns to marriage, and Bobby says that he’d like to be married, but he just hasn’t found the right girl. Marta, Kathy, and April—presumably three women who have dated Bobby—enter and sing **“You Could Drive a Person Crazy”** in three-part, Andrews-Sisters style: “You’re a deeply maladjusted / never to be trusted / crazy person / yourself.”
5. The husbands and wives enter and sing about trying to set Bobby up with dates: **“Have I Got a Girl For You?”** Bobby responds by wishing for a combination of his female friends: **“Someone is Waiting.”**
6. Scene: On a park bench Bobby chats with three girlfriends in succession. After conversations with April and Kathy, he talks with Marta, who tells Bobby he’s uptight and sings a song about fast-paced New York life: **“Another Hundred People.”**
7. Scene: Amy is marrying Paul, but she gets cold feet on her wedding day, expressed in the song **“Getting Married Today.”** She calls off the wedding, so Bobby proposes to her. She responds that she’s devoted to Paul, and runs off to find him.
8. In the original production, Act I ended with Amy running off and Robert back at the birthday party. In later productions, Act I closes with the song **“Marry Me a Little.”**

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Act II

9. Scene: The birthday party that opened Act I. Songs: The entire cast sings “**Side by Side by Side**” followed by “What Would We Do Without You?”
10. Scene: Robert has settled down for the evening with April, a flight attendant. The five married ladies voice their worry about Robert: “**Poor Baby.**” April and Bobby make love while Kathy dances “**Tick Tock**” (danced memorably in the original cast by Donna McKechnie).
11. Scene: The next day Bobby wakes up next to April, who has to fly away to “**Barcelona.**” Dialogue and song mix to provide a memorable scene.
12. Scene added in the 2006 New York Revival: Bobby takes Marta to Peter and Susan’s apartment (who are divorced but still living happily together). With the women out of the room, Peter propositions Bobby (“Have you ever had a homosexual experience?”), but Bobby rebuffs him.
13. Scene: Joanne and Larry entertain Robert at a nightclub. Joanne sings an anthem about women like her: “**The Ladies Who Lunch.**” While Larry is off paying the bill, Joanne makes a pass at Bobby, offering to take care of him. “But who would I take care of?” Bobby replies. Harry tells him “You’ve got so many reasons for not being with someone, but you haven’t got one good reason for being alone.” Dialogue overlaps with song, leading to Bobby’s epiphany in “**Being Alive.**”
14. Back at the birthday party, the friends are there, but Robert doesn’t show.