

Sondheim 102 • Class 2 • Sunday in the Park with George (1984) • Act II
Music & Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim • Book by James Lapine

Act II: 1984, A US Art Museum

“Putting It Together” [excerpts]

[Cocktail party guests—a museum trustee, a museum director, a visiting curator, a composer, other artists—comment on George’s series of “Chromolume” multimedia works. They agree that “Art isn’t easy.” George enters, they applaud him.]

GEORGE: [to himself]
All right, George,
As long as it's your night, George—
You know what's in the room, George:
Another Chromolume, George.
It's time to get to work . . .

Say “cheese,” George.
And put them at their ease, George.
You're up on the trapeze, George.
Machines don't grow on trees, George.
Start putting it together . . .

Art isn't easy
Even when you're hot.
Advancing art is easy,
Financing it is not.

A vision's just a vision
If it's only in your head.
If no one gets to see it,
It's as good as dead.
If has to come to light!

Bit by bit,
Putting it together.
Piece by piece—
Only way to make a work of art.
Every moment makes a contribution,
Every little detail plays a part.
Having just a vision's no solution,
Everything depends on execution:
Putting it together,
That's what counts.

Ounce by ounce,
Putting it together.
Small amounts
Adding up to make a work of art.
First of all you need a good foundation,

Otherwise it's risky from the start.
Takes a little cocktail conversation,
But without the proper preparation,
Having just the vision's no solution,
Everything depends on execution.
The art of making art
Is putting it together
Bit by bit.

Link by link,
Making the connections.
Drink by drink,
Fixing and perfecting the design.
Adding just a dab of politician
(Always knowing where to draw the line),
Lining up the funds, but in addition
Lining up a prominent commission,
Otherwise your perfect composition
Isn't going to get much exhibition.

Art isn't easy.
Every minor detail
Is a major decision.
Have to keep things in scale,
Have to hold to your vision.

Every time I start to feel defensive,
I remember lasers are expensive.
What's a little cocktail conversation
If it's going to get you your foundation,
Leading to a prominent commission,
And an exhibition in addition?

[Guests opine . . .]

GEORGE: [to himself]
Dot by dot,
Building up the image.
Shot by shot—
Keeping at a distance doesn't pay.
Still, if you remember your objective,
Not give all your privacy away,
A little bit of hype can be effective,
Long as you can keep it in perspective.
After all, without some recognition
No one's going to give you a commission,
Which will cause a crack in the foundation.
You'll have wasted all that conversation.

Art isn't easy,
Even if you're smart.

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You think it's all together,
And something falls apart.

Art isn't easy.
Overnight you're a trend,
You're the right combination.
Then the trend's at an end,
You're suddenly last year's sensation.

So you should support the competition,
Try to set aside your own ambition,
Even while you jockey for position.
If you feel a sense of coalition,
Then you never really stand alone.
If you want your work to reach fruition,
What you need's a link with your tradition,
And of course a prominent commission,
Plus a little formal recognition,
So that you can go on exhibit—
So that your *work* can go on exhibition.

Be nice, George . . .
You have to pay a price, George.
They like to give advice, George.
Don't think about it twice, George . . .

"Be new," George.
They tell you till they're blue, George:
"You're new or else you're through, George."
And even if it's true, George,
You do what you can do . . .

Bit by bit,
Putting it together.
Piece by piece,
Working out the vision night and day.
All it takes is time and perseverance,
With a little luck along the way,
Putting in a personal appearance,
Gathering supporters and adherents—

HARRIET [A Trustee]:
But he combines all these different trends—

GEORGE:
Mapping out the right configuration,
Starting with a suitable foundation—

BETTY [A Young Artist]:
He's an original—

ALEX [Another Artist]: Was.

GEORGE:
Lining up a prominent commission
And an exhibition in addition—
Here a little dab of politician,
There a little touch of publication,
Till you have a balanced composition.
Everything depends on preparation,
Even if you do have the suspicion
That it's taking all your concentration—

*[overlapping conversation of various
GUESTS, ending in . . .]*

GUESTS:
That is the state of the art,
And art isn't easy.

GEORGE:
The art of making art
Is putting it together
Bit by bit,
Link by link,
Drink by drink,
Mink by mink,
And that
Is the state of the—

ALL:
Art!

"Children and Art"

MARIE *[to Dot in the painting]*:
You would have liked him,
Mama, you would.
Mama, he makes things.
Mama, they're good.
Just as you said from the start:
Children and art . . .
Children and art . . .

He should be happy.
Mama, he's blue.
What do I do?
You should have seen it,
It was a sight.
Mama, I mean it—
All color and light!

I don't understand what it was,
But, Mama, the things that he does—!
They twinkle and shimmer and buzz.

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You would have liked them . . .
It . . .
Him . . .

[To George, about Dot, in the painting]
Isn't she beautiful? There she is—
There she is, there she is, there she is.
Mama is everywhere.
He must have loved her so much . . .

This is our family, this is the lot.
After I go, this is all that you've got,
Honey.
Wasn't she beautiful, though?

You would have liked her.
Mama did things
No one had done.
Mama was funny,
Mama was fun.
Mama spent money
When she had none.

Mama said, "Honey,
Mustn't be blue.
It's not so much do what you like
As it is that you like what you do."
Mama said, "Darling,
Don't make such a drama.
A little less thinking,
A little more feeling—"

I'm just quoting Mama . . .

The child is so sweet
And the girls are so rapturous.
Isn't it lovely how artists can capture us?

You would have liked her—
Honey, I'm wrong,
You would have loved her.
Mama enjoyed things.
Mama was smart.
See how she shimmers—
I mean from the heart.

I know, honey, you disagree,
But this is our family tree.
Just wait 'til we're there, and you'll see—
Listen to me . . .

Mama was smart . . .
Listen to Mama . . .

Children and art . . .
Children and art . . .

"Lesson #8"

[After Marie's death, George returns to the island of La Grande Jatte. He reads from the primer she has bequeathed to him.]

GEORGE: [spoken]
"Charles has a book . . ."
"Charles shows them his crayons . . ."
"Marie has the ball of Charles . . ."
"Good for Marie . . ."
"Charles misses his ball . . ."

George misses Marie.
George misses a lot.
George is alone.

George looks around.
He sees the park.
It is depressing.
George looks ahead.
George sees the dark.
George feels afraid.
Where are the people
Out strolling on Sunday?

George looks within:
George is adrift.
George goes by guessing.
George looks behind:
He had a gift.
When did it fade?
You wanted people out
Strolling on Sunday—
Sorry, Marie . . .

See George remember how George used to
be,
Stretching his vision in every direction.
See George attempting to see a connection
When all he can see
Is maybe a tree,
The family tree—
Sorry, Marie . . .

George is afraid.
George sees the park.
George sees it dying.
George, too, may fade,

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Leaving no mark,
Just passing through,
Just like the people
Out strolling on Sunday . . .

George looks around
George is alone,
No use denying
George is aground,
George has outgrown
What he can do.
George would have like to see
People out strolling on Sunday . . .

“Move On”

GEORGE: [sings]
I've nothing to say.

DOT: [spoken]
You have many things . . .

GEORGE:
Well, nothing that's not been said.

DOT: [sings]
Said by you, though, George . . .

GEORGE: I do not know where to go.

DOT: And nor did I.

GEORGE:
I want to make things that count,
Things that will be new . . .

DOT: I did what I had to do:

GEORGE: What am I to do?

DOT:
Move on.

Stop worrying where you're going—
Move on.
If you can know where you're going,
You've gone.
Just keep moving on.

I chose, and my world was shaken—
So what?
The choice may have been mistaken,
The choosing was not.

You have to move on.

Look at what you want,
Not at where you are,
Not at what you'll be.
Look at all the things you've done for me:
Opened up my eyes,
Taught me how to see,
Notice every tree—

GEORGE: Notice every tree . . .

DOT: Understand the light—

GEORGE: Understand the light . . .

DOT: Concentrate on now—

GEORGE:
I want to move on.
I want to explore the light.
I want to know how to get through,
Through to something new,
Something of my own—

GEORGE & DOT:
Move on. Move on

DOT:
Stop worrying if your vision
Is new.
Let others make that decision—
They usually do,
You keep moving on.

DOT:
Look at what
you've done,
Then at what
you want,
Not at where
you are,
What you'll be.
Look at all the
things
You gave to me.

Let me give to you
Something in
return.
I would be so
pleased . . .

GEORGE:
Something in
the light,
Something in
the sky,
In the grass,
Up behind the
trees . . .
Things I hadn't;
looked at
Till now:
Flower in your
hat.
And your smile.

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GEORGE:
And the color of your hair,
And the way you catch the light.
And the care,
And the feeling.
And the life
Moving on!

DOT:
We've always belonged together!

GEORGE & DOT:
We will always belong together!

DOT:
Just keep moving on.

Anything you do,
Let it come from you.
Then it will be new.

Give us more to see.

“Sunday” (Reprise)

ALL:
Sunday
By the blue
Purple yellow red water
On the green
Purple yellow red grass,
As we pass
Through arrangements of shadows
Towards the verticals of trees
Pausing on a Sunday
Through arrangements of shadows
Toward the verticals of trees
Forever . . .

By the blue
Purple yellow red water
On the green
Orange violet mass
Of the grass

DOT:
In our perfect park,

GEORGE:
Made of flecks of light
And dark

ALL:
And parasols . . .

People strolling through the trees
Of a small suburban park
On an island in the river
On an ordinary Sunday . . .
Sunday . . .
Sunday . . .

GEORGE: [reading, spoken]
“White. A blank page or canvas. His favorite.
So many possibilities . . .”

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A Parody

“Sunday”

**From the 1993 musical *Tick, Tick, Boom!*—
music and lyrics by Jonathan Larson**

JONATHAN:
Order!

MAN:
No—I’m sorry—these people were here first.
We don’t have tables for seven.

WOMAN:
Are we in Smoking?

JONATHAN:
Tension!

MAN: I’ll have the Salad Nick-oyz and some
Holly bread

JONATHAN:
Balance!

WOMAN:
I said I wanted an omelet with no yolks!
That’s why you’re a waiter!

JONATHAN:
Brunch.

Sunday
In the blue,
Silver chromium diner
On the green,
Purple, yellow, red stools
Sit the fools
Who should eat at home
Instead, they pay on

ALL:
Sunday

JONATHAN:
For a cool
Orange juice or a bagel
On the soft,
Green cylindrical stools
Sit the fools
Drinking cinnamon coffee

Or decaffeinated tea

ALL:
Forever
In the blue,
Silver chromium diner

JONATHAN:
Drips the green,
Orange, violet drool

ALL:
From the fools

JONATHAN:
Who’d pay less at home
Drinking coffee

ALL:
Light
And dark

JONATHAN:
And cholesterol
And bums, bums, bums
Bums, bums, bums, bums, bums, bums

MAN & WOMAN:
People screaming for

ALL:
Their toast
In a small, Soho café

JONATHAN:
On an island in

ALL:
Two rivers
On an ordinary
Sunday
Sunday
Sunday

JONATHAN:
Brunch

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Later Versions of “Putting It Together”

1985 Revision for Barbra Streisand’s
The Broadway Album—new lyrics by
Sondheim

BARBRA: *[To herself.]*
Be nice, girl.
You have to pay a price, girl.
They like to give advice, girl.
Don't think about it twice, girl.
It's time to get to work.

Art isn't easy
Even when you're hot.
Advancing art is easy,
Financing it is not.

A vision's just a vision
If it's only in your head.
If no one gets to share it,
It's as good as dead.
It has to come to life!

Bit by bit,
Putting it together . . . etc. . . .

Ounce by ounce,
Putting it together . . . etc. . . .

Link by link,
Making the connections,
Drink by drink,
Taking every comment as it comes.
Learning how to play the politician
Like you play piano, bass, and drums.
Otherwise you'll find your composition
Isn't gonna get an exhibition.

Art isn't easy
Every minor detail is a major decision . . .
etc. . . .

What's a little cocktail conversation
If it gets the funds for your foundation
. . . Every time I start to feel defensive,
I remember vinyl is expensive . . . etc. . . .

Dot by dot
Building up the image . . . etc. . . .

Even when you get some recognition,
Everything you do, you still audition . . .
etc. . . .

. . . All they really want is repetition.
All they really like is what they know.
Gotta keep a link with your tradition,
Gotta learn to trust your intuition,

While you re-establish your position
So that you can be on exhibit—
So that your *work* can be on exhibition!

Be new, girl.
They tell you till they're blue, girl.
You're new, or else you're through, girl.
And even if it's true, girl.
You do what you can do!

Bit by bit,
Putting it together . . . etc. . . .

Mapping out the songs, but in addition
Harmonizing each negotiation,
Balancing the part that's all musician
With the part that's strictly preparation,
Balancing the money with the mission
Till you have the perfect orchestration,
Even if you do have the suspicion
That it's taking all your concentration.
The art of making art
Is putting it together—

Bit by bit,
Beat by beat,
Part by part,
Phrase by phrase,
Chart by chart,

[overlapping voices]

Track by track,	Take by take
Reel by reel,	Break by break,
Snack by snack,	Snit by snit,
Deal by deal,	Fit by fit,
Shout by shout,	Hit by hit,
Doubt by doubt,	Bit by bit,

And that
Is the state of the art!

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1993 Revision for Julie Andrews in the stage revue *Putting It Together*—new lyrics by Sondheim

FOUR CAST MEMBERS [variously]:
Bit by bit . . . etc. . . .

Note by note,
Working on projection.
Lips, teeth, throat,
Looking for a moment to inhale.
Keeping the emotional connection
Even when your fellow actors fail—
Pointing up the subtext by inflection—
Helping your director reach perfection—
Even though you have a strong objection
To the way she's handling the direction.

Art isn't easy . . . etc. . . .

Even when you're feeling apprehensive
That you're looking bland and inoffensive—
And you wish your wardrobe was extensive—
Don't forget that spangles are expensive.

JULIE:
The light, luv—
A little to the right, luv.
It isn't very bright, luv,
And must it be so tight, luv?
He does that every night . . .

ALL: [variously]
Beat by beat,
Losing inhibition.
Head, hands, feet,
Trying to relax but not too much,
Trying to lay out the exposition
But without exposing it as such.
Trying to perform but not audition,
Trying to establish recognition,
Trying to persuade the electrician
That he should destroy the competition . . .

Art isn't easy.
Every word, every line,
Every glance, every movement
You improve and refine,

Then refine each improvement . . .

Bit by bit,
Putting it together.
Piece by piece,
Working out the vision night and day.
What it takes is time and perseverance,
Dealing with details along the way:
Dealing with producers' interference,
Waiting for the author's disappearance,
Filling up the holes with animation,
Covering the flaws in the construction.
Lacking any scenic ostentation
(This is not a Mackintosh production),
Finding every tiny syncopation
Hidden in the tiny orchestration,
Working for a tiny compensation,
Hoping for a thunderous ovation—

The art of making art
Is putting it together
Bit by bit,
Part by part,
Fit by fit,
Start by start,
Stride by stride,
Kick by kick,
Glide by glide,
Shtik by shtik,
Side by side,
By side
By side
By side
By side—

And that is the state of the art!

In 1994 Sondheim revised the lyrics for Bernadette Petters to perform as the opening number of that year's Academy Awards Ceremony—as a tribute to the collaborative art of filmmaking.

Link to the performance (about 6 min):
<https://youtu.be/gdr-vxUsu-l?si=2yIXi1iC8PQbjwko&t=320>