



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Playbill for Marie Christine

Extracted on Apr-17-2024 10:34:48

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fact, they sing 'Rich and Happy'-and they're having a party at their penthouse when in comes the younger couple," says Burnett, pressing on with her subtext. "In the first version of Putting It Together, the other girl was a maid, but this time she's part of a couple. They're dating. The younger man works for the husband, and the girl he's with is a bit of a sexpot, and the husband takes a kind of shine to her. "Everybody is drinking, and as the evening drags on, the couples start to dis-

[[bold words going across both columns]] "There's an underbelly to [Sondheim's] songs," says Burnett, "that makes them a joy to sing. You keep peeling away the layers." [[bold words going across both columns]]

integrate. The wife knows her husband is coming on the girl, and [towards] the end of the first act she sings, 'Could I Leave You?' from *Follies*. Like so many Sondheim songs, it has a fantastic surprise ending: 'Could I leave you?' 'Yes.' 'Will I leave you?' 'Guess.' There's an underbelly to his songs that makes them a joy to sing. You keep peeling away the layers."

The characters-save for Pinchot, the party's fifth wheel who's designated simply The Observer-have names in this current resurrection. "The main reason George Hearn and I have names is they come from songs we do. I sing 'Charlie' to him at the end of 'Like It Was' from *Merrily We Roll Along*, and when we do 'Getting Married Today,' he sings, 'Today is for Amy'-that's me. Then, arbitrarily, we gave names to the younger couple."

In the show's original incarnation at Manhattan Theatre Club in 19993 (starring Christopher Durang, Rachel York, Michael Rupert, Stephen Collins and Burnett's chum, Julie Andrews), the characters had no names-and, after the introduction of firearms late into the show, not much of a sense-making second act. "All that is gone now. In our second act, everybody's introspective. It's late-after midnight-they've been drinking, and now it's that time where everyone goes into their own lives, all with different thoughts."

Burnett didn't catch the MTC production, but she played the hell out of the recording-particularly when she was

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tapped to reprise the Andrews part for the West Coast in the fall of 19998. "I popped the tape in when I was getting dressed or in the car and just played it over and over so that I knew it backwards and forwards before I got into rehearsal. I always do that, and this was a great way to acquaint myself with the lyrics."

Sondheim, she says, is not as hard to sing as you might imagine-but he is "hard to learn, not just because there are so many words but also because the notes are not what you would expect at times. Once you know the song, though, it's not hard to sing it. It just flows so naturally with what he's writing that it couldn't be sung any other way.

"Some of the songs are very difficult to learn. I think the hardest is a number that George and I have called 'Country House' [written for Diana Rigg and Daniel Massey to sing in Mackintosh's 1987 London revival of *Follies*]. I spoke with him before rehearsals began, and he said, 'Oh, my God! "Country House"! I said, 'Don't worry. Once you have it, you never forget it.' But it's getting it. That song's tougher than 'Getting Married



Today."

The latter number, delivered by a wired bride-to-be in Company, got a Tony-nominated reprise from Veanne Cox in that show's last Broadway revival-and it helped Burnett win extravagant hosannas in L.A. "Veanne was fabulous. I do it slightly slower. Rather than trying to say, 'I'm getting through this in one breath'-which is the way it's written-I try to get the comedy out of it more. What Sondheim's saying is so damn funny I want the audience to understand it. I'm not as clipped in my speech-I guess that's the Texas in me-so I'm not as clear when I run the words together as Veanne and Julie were. My tongue doesn't work that well. I still do it fast-if you got a metronome out, I'm one or two ticks slower-but it also gives me a chance to have some timing in it, comedy-wise."

[[/column 2]]

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ONLINE

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OPIUM

[[image - a woman in dark makeup and fancy clothes sits in a chair with
a bottle of perfume on the table next to her]]

YVESSAINTLAURENT

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